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BIENNIAL REVIEW BRIEF
COMESA

Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard: Performance and Lessons

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2021 CAADP Biennial Review Brief: COMESA

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About ReSAKSS
Established in 2006 under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) supports efforts to promote evidence- and outcome-based policy planning and implementation. In particular, ReSAKSS provides data and related analytical and knowledge products to facilitate CAADP benchmarking, review, and mutual learning processes. AKADEMIYA2063 leads the work of ReSAKSS in partnership with the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD), and leading regional economic communities (RECs).

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1. Introduction

The 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods (AUC 2014) outlines the vision of Africa's leaders for accelerating agricultural growth and transformation on the continent between 2015 and 2025 through the pursuit of seven broad commitments:

1. Upholding the principles and values of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP),
2. Enhancing investment finance in agriculture,
3. Ending hunger in Africa by 2025,
4. Reducing poverty by half by 2025 through inclusive agricultural growth and transformation,
5. Boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services,
6. Enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and related risks, and
7. Ensuring mutual accountability for actions and results by conducting a Biennial Review (BR) continent-wide to monitor progress in achieving the seven Malabo Declaration commitments.

The third (2021) BR report and the associated Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard were launched at the 35th African Union (AU) Summit in February 2022 (AUC 2021, Matchaya et al. 2021). This brief draws on that report to summarize the performance of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region in pursuit of the seven Malabo Declaration commitments and to analyze challenges faced and lessons learned. Recent changes in policy and programs for accelerating agricultural growth and transformation in the COMESA region are also reviewed. Many of these were induced by lessons drawn from the inaugural BR of 2017 (AUC 2018), the second BR of 2019 (AUC 2020), and the most recent BR. The final section of the brief highlights several policy actions COMESA countries must take to meet more effectively their Malabo Declaration commitments by 2025.

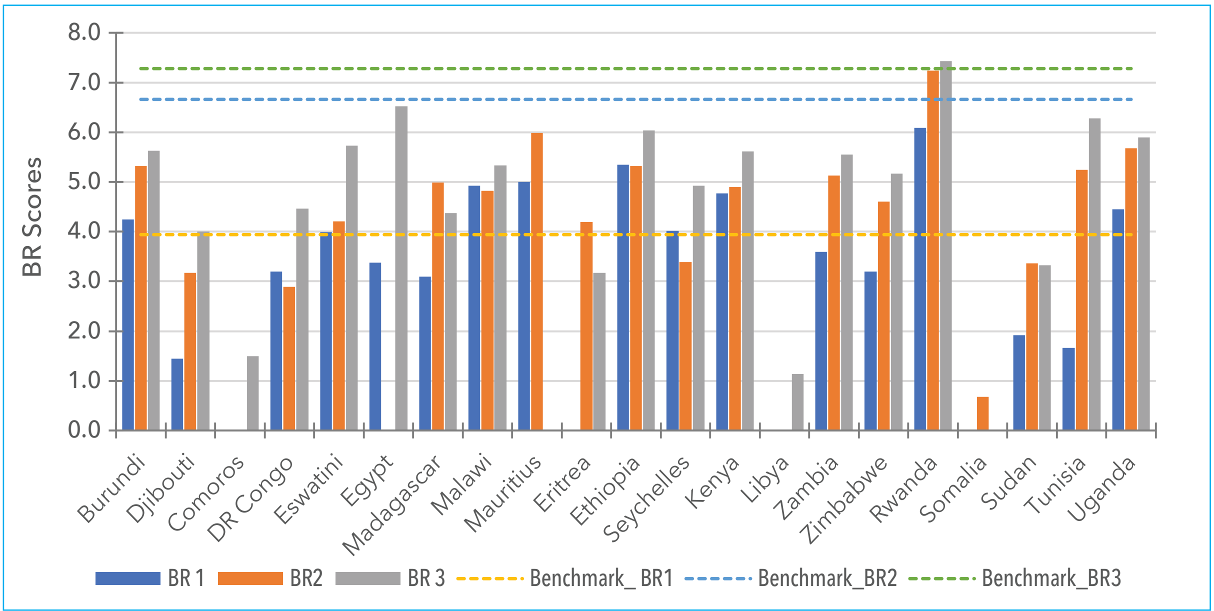
COMESA comprises of 21 countries—Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

2. Progress in Achieving Commitments at Regional and Country Level

Performance overall

With a reporting rate of over 90 percent, the participation of COMESA's member states in the third BR process was outstanding—the only countries that did not report were Mauritius and Somalia.

Figure 1: Overall Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme Biennial Review performance by COMESA member countries over the three Biennial Review cycles



Source: AUC 2022

The results from the 2021 BR3, presented in Figure 1, show that among the COMESA countries only Rwanda is now on track to achieve by 2025 the targets of the Malabo Declaration. The benchmark score for judging whether a country is on track was 7.28 for the BR3. Rwanda was the only country across all of Africa to meet this benchmark. While the weak performance of the COMESA countries might paint a grim picture of agriculture transformation in the region, performance recorded in the third BR varied quite significantly across the countries. Some, such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Ethiopia, demonstrated strong progress, even if they did not meet the third BR benchmark score. Moreover, the fact that the only country on the continent on track is from the COMESA region suggests that reaching the Malabo Declaration targets is possible by many COMESA countries if they learn from Rwanda and those other countries that are doing well on some commitments. However, Libya, Comoros, Eritrea, and Sudan have a challenging path to achieving these targets, as their scores all fell below 4.0, well below the 7.28 benchmark. All COMESA member states must accelerate the implementation of both the COMESA Regional Agriculture Investment Plan and their individual National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIP) if they expect to meet the aspirations specified in the Malabo Declaration by 2025 or soon thereafter.

The performance of the COMESA member states also was evaluated in the third BR report by zooming in on performance across the region for each of the seven Malabo Declaration commitments. This more detailed assessment was done to inform the COMESA Secretariat as to the specific commitments in which interventions were needed to accelerate progress in their achievement in the region. The performance of the COMESA region across the seven Malabo Declaration commitments is presented in Table 1.

The overall BR3 score for the COMESA region stood at 4.85, a 7.5 percent increase from the score of 4.51 obtained for BR2. However, this increase was not enough to push the region as a whole back on track in meeting the Malabo Declaration commitments by 2025. The aggregate score of 4.85 for countries in the COMESA region falls short of the benchmark score of 7.28 that needed to be met in the third BR process for the region to be considered as being on track in meeting the seven commitments.

Looking at performance by each commitment shows that some COMESA member states made notable improvements from BR1 to BR2 (Matchaya et al., 2021) and from BR2 to BR3. The most significant positive changes from BR2 to BR3 were on eradicating poverty through agriculture, which showed an almost 50 percent improvement in commitment; on that to enhance resilience to climate change, which improved by almost 20 percent; and on that to end hunger by 2025, which improved by 14 percent. Smaller improvements were seen in the commitments to increase agricultural finance and on mutual accountability.

Table 1: Overall CAADP Biennial Review performance by COMESA countries as a whole across the seven Malabo Declaration commitments over the three Biennial Review cycles.

Malabo Declaration commitment	Biennial Review 1 (2017)	2 (2019)	3 (2021)	Percentage change between BR2 and BR3	BR3 Benchmark	Status
1. Commitment to CAADP principles	5.82	7.97	7.83	-1.8	10.00	Not on track
2. Enhance agricultural finance	4.35	4.31	4.46	3.5	7.50	Not on track
3. End hunger by 2025	2.05	2.85	3.25	14.0	6.32	Not on track
4. Eradicate poverty through agriculture	2.37	2.10	3.15	49.6	5.81	Not on track
5. Boost intra-Africa trade	2.33	3.13	2.14	-31.7	5.00	Not on track
6. Enhance resilience to climate change	3.94	5.39	6.39	18.7	8.00	Not on track
7. Mutual accountability	5.79	6.58	6.70	1.9	8.33	Not on track
Overall	3.78	4.51	4.85	7.5	7.28	Not on track

Source: AUC 2022. The overall benchmark score for BR1 was 3.94; for BR2, 6.66; and for BR3, 7.28. Red shading means not on track and deteriorating; yellow means not on track but improving between BR2 and BR3.

However, a decline was seen between BR2 and BR3 in overall performance on two commitments—that on commitment to the CAADP principles and especially that on boosting intra-Africa trade, which fell by over 30 percent. The drop in commitment to CAADP is discouraging, as COMESA's commitment to CAADP was shown to be strong in BR1 and BR2. The commitment to boosting intra-Africa trade by the COMESA member states unfortunately was also seen as deficient in BR1 and BR2.

While the improvements on several of the commitments are laudable, they are not enough to help COMESA achieve the targets set for each of the seven commitment areas by 2025, which is just a few years away. The COMESA region as a block is off track for the achievement of the commitments of the Malabo Declaration—the aggregate performance scores computed in the BR3 process for the region for each of the seven commitments trail their benchmarks. Even for the Malabo Declaration commitments which registered some improvements in the COMESA region between BR2 and BR3, achievement of those commitments by 2025 is off track. If the pace of progress remains the same in coming years, the COMESA region will not reach the commitment targets set out in the Malabo Declaration by 2025. It is imperative that the COMESA member states address more forcefully the issues of ending hunger, boosting intra-regional trade, eradicating poverty through agriculture, and financing agriculture to achieve the Malabo Declaration targets.

In the first BR of 2017, nine countries in the COMESA region were found then to be on-track to meet the Malabo Declaration targets—Burundi, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, and Uganda (Matchaya et al. 2018). By the second BR (2019), only Rwanda remained on track among all of the COMESA countries (Matchaya et al. 2021). This remains the case in the recently concluded BR3.

However, it is worth noting that thirteen COMESA member states registered improvements in their overall scores between BR2 and BR3—Burundi, Djibouti, DR Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Table 2). Only three

Table 2: Third CAADP Biennial Review performance for COMESA countries, by Malabo Declaration commitment and country

	Com-mit-ment to CAADP principles	Enhance agricul-tural finance	End hunger by 2025	Eradicate poverty through agric.	Boost intra-African trade	Enhance resilience to climate change	Mutual ac-countability	BR2 overall score	BR3 overall score	Change (%)	Progress
BR3 Benchmarks	10.00	7.50	6.32	5.81	5.00	8.00	8.33	6.66	7.28		
Burundi	9.20	2.24	3.81	4.38	3.18	8.44	8.12	5.32	5.63	5.7	Not on track
Comoros	6.19	0.68	0.00	0.00	1.25	0.00	2.38		1.50		Not on track
Djibouti	7.02	4.56	1.56	1.46	1.69	6.72	5.02	3.18	4.00	26.1	Not on track
DR Congo	5.49	5.40	2.88	5.75	2.14	3.84	5.70	2.89	4.46	54.1	Not on track
Egypt	8.74	8.56	3.96	6.20	3.17	8.60	6.40		6.52		Not on track
Eritrea	9.05	1.06	0.55	0.03	0.00	5.83	5.67	4.20	3.17	-24.5	Not on track
Eswatini	5.58	8.54	3.97	5.02	2.96	5.85	8.23	4.21	5.73	36.3	Not on track
Ethiopia	9.62	2.86	4.62	3.60	2.69	8.90	9.93	5.32	6.03	13.3	Not on track
Kenya	8.30	4.48	6.40	5.00	2.79	6.26	6.08	4.89	5.62	14.8	Not on track
Libya	4.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.24		1.14		Not on track
Madagascar	7.49	4.05	2.65	1.00	2.53	7.12	5.77	4.99	4.37	-12.4	Not on track
Malawi	8.70	4.82	3.38	3.74	0.96	8.09	7.63	4.82	5.33	10.5	Not on track
Mauritius								5.98			
Rwanda	10.00	6.86	5.43	6.95	3.18	9.70	9.87	7.24	7.43	2.6	ON TRACK
Seychelles	2.89	8.87	3.43	1.05	1.83	8.33	8.06	3.39	4.92	45.2	Not on track
Somalia								0.68			
Sudan	7.14	1.41	2.35	1.72	1.68	3.59	5.38	3.37	3.32	-1.3	Not on track
Tunisia	8.96	5.91	3.93	5.88	2.67	7.25	9.35	5.24	6.28	19.7	Not on track
Uganda	9.80	3.99	4.99	5.51	2.7	7.65	6.61	5.68	5.89	3.7	Not on track
Zambia	9.85	8.07	2.88	1.51	3.56	6.57	6.40	5.13	5.55	8.2	Not on track
Zimbabwe	10.00	2.45	4.97	0.97	1.59	8.76	7.45	4.60	5.17	12.3	Not on track

Source: AUC, 2022. Green means on track; yellow means not on track but improving; and red means not on track and with a BR3 score that falls below 5.0, which is half of the final target score of 10.0 which countries must achieve by 2025.

COMESA countries saw their performance scores regress—Eritrea, Madagascar, and Sudan. Note, however, that trend analyses between BR2 and BR3 could not be conducted for Comoros, Egypt, Libya, Mauritius, and Somalia, because these countries did not participate in both BR2 and BR3.

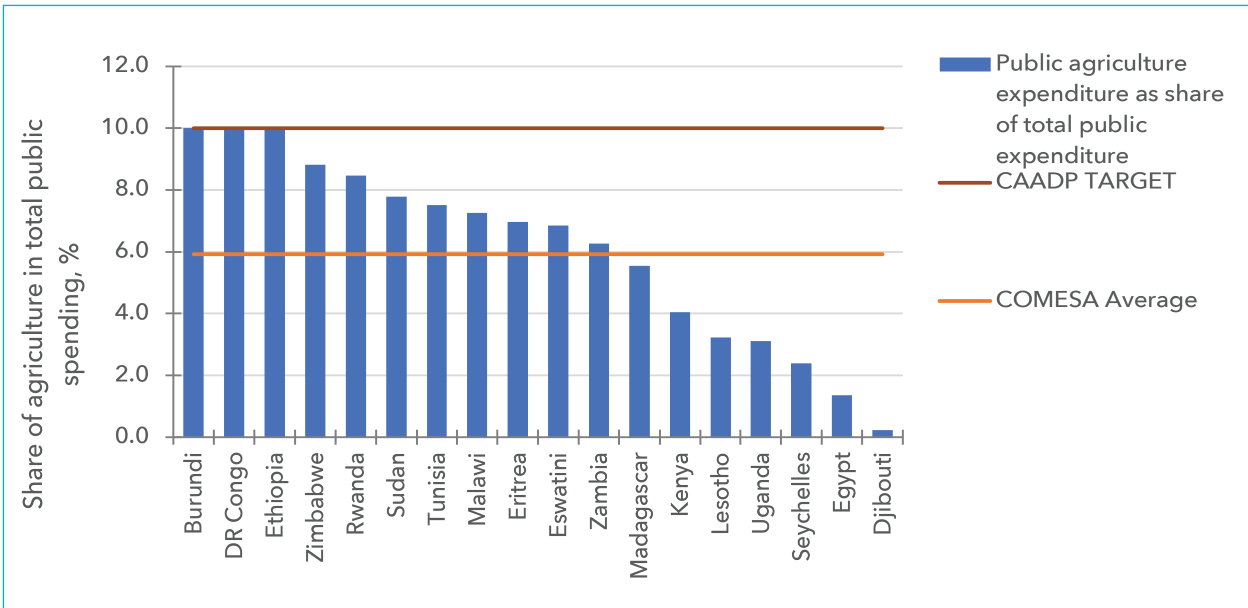
While general performance for the COMESA region is weak across all commitments, Table 2 shows that individual country performance was much more variable. Eight countries (Comoros, Djibouti, DR Congo, Eritrea, Libya, Madagascar, Sudan, and Uganda) were off track in all of the seven commitment areas based on the BR3 process analysis. On the other hand, Rwanda and Egypt were found to be on track in four and three commitment areas, respectively. Ethiopia and Tunisia are on track in at least two commitment areas. Burundi, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia all exceeded the benchmark for one commitment area.

Across the seven commitment areas, best performance has been achieved for enhancing resilience to climate change, with seven countries achieving the benchmark for this commitment. The benchmark for enhancing agricultural finance was exceeded by four countries, while three countries exceeded the benchmarks for eradicating poverty through agriculture and for mutual accountability. However, no countries attained the benchmark for boosting intra-African trade, the worst performing Malabo Declaration commitment for the COMESA countries.

Selected sub-sectoral performance trends

Despite the weak performance overall for the COMESA region in BR3, the COMESA member states with relatively good agricultural data management systems produced better reports for the BR process compared to earlier BR processes. Several of these countries were able to produce reports that covered above 90 percent of the data required. We review here results presented on the share of public expenditures devoted to agriculture in each country reporting, the intensity of inorganic fertilizer use, and the share of agricultural GDP devoted to agricultural research and development.

Figure 2: Share devoted to agriculture of total national public expenditure among COMESA member states reporting for the third CAADP Biennial Review

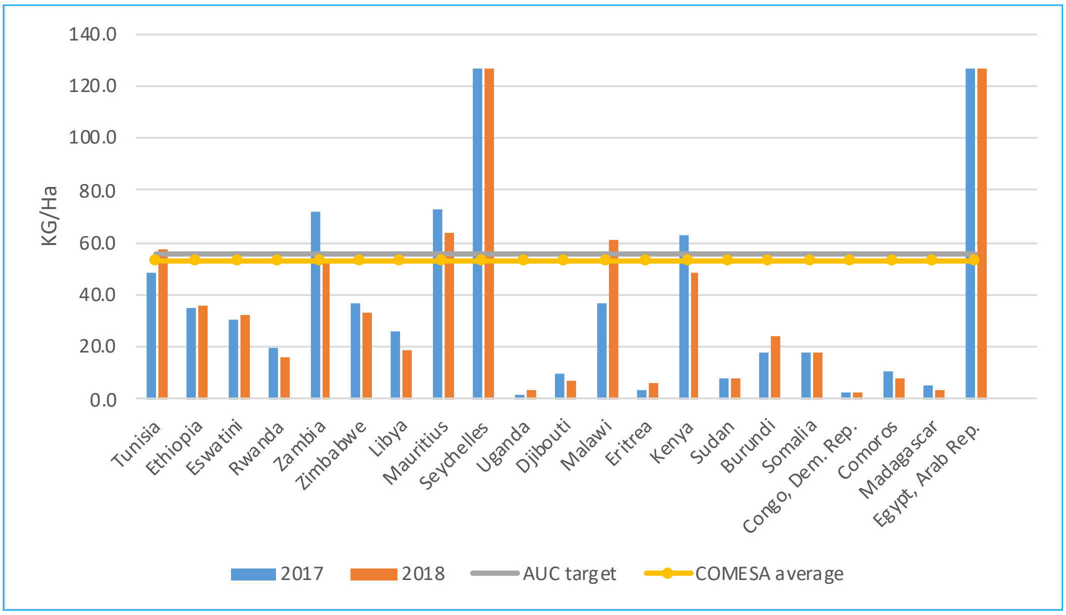


Source: AUC, 2022

With regards to public expenditures devoted to agriculture, as per the second Malabo Declaration commitment on increasing financing to agriculture, countries are expected to invest at least 10 percent of their national budget to the agriculture sector every year. This target originates from the 2003 Maputo Declaration and was carried into the 2014 Malabo Declaration. Of the 21 countries in COMESA, only Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia reported investing 10 percent of their national public budgets to the sector (Figure 2). Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Sudan, Tunisia, Malawi, Eritrea, Eswatini, and Zambia all made significant public budget allocations to agriculture of above the COMESA member state average. The lowest levels of public investment in agriculture were observed in Uganda, Seychelles, Egypt, and Djibouti. Programs at both the COMESA level and within the COMESA member states to drum up support for increased public spending in agriculture should be strengthened.

Turning to fertilizer, Tunisia, Malawi, Kenya, Egypt, Zambia, Mauritius, and Seychelles all reported relatively high levels of inorganic fertilizer use per hectare of cropland (Figure 3). The continental target for fertilizer consumption is a modest 50 kg/ha, but most COMESA countries reported application rates significantly lower than this target.

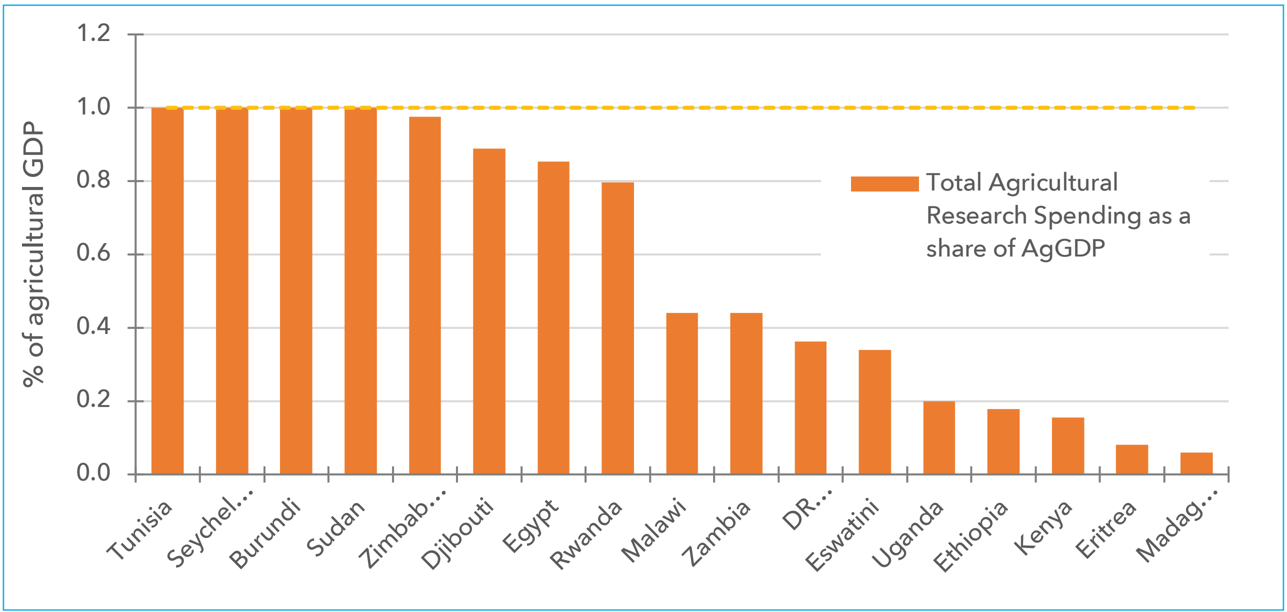
Figure 3: Average inorganic fertilizer use among COMESA member states, kg per hectare



Source: AUC, 2022 and World Bank 2022

With regards to agricultural research and development, African Union member states are supposed to invest at least one percent of their agriculture GDP to agricultural research and development because of the catalytic function of research and development to overall sectoral growth. Figure 4 shows that Tunisia, Seychelles, Burundi, and Sudan all reached this target in the BR 3 cycle. However, the rest of the COMESA member states did not invest as much. Zimbabwe, Djibouti, Egypt, and Rwanda devote considerable amounts to agricultural research and development of above 0.6 percent of agricultural GDP, but the rest of the countries reported spending that fell far short of the one percent mark. There is an urgent need to increase spending in the COMESA member states on agricultural research and development.

Figure 4: Agricultural research and development spending as a share of agricultural GDP among COMESA member states, percent



Source: AUC, 2022

3. Challenges and Lessons Learned from the Third CAADP Biennial Review in the COMESA Region

Process challenges and lessons

The third CAADP Biennial Review did not have many significant challenges. This was primarily due to the use of the electronic BR platform (eBR), which removed the burden of manual calculations for indicators at country level and also simplified the process of checking for missing or absurd data or for outliers. Moreover, the cumulative lessons learned from the first and second rounds of the BR were used to improve the third BR. The COMESA Secretariat also hosted a validation workshop during the third BR which led to better quality of data from many of the COMESA member states. Nevertheless, several challenges remain noteworthy:

Country BR data reporting remained a challenge for several countries because the process was undertaken under COVID-19 conditions when gatherings of country officials were restricted to various degrees. Only Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe created Cluster Groups aligned to the seven Malabo Declaration commitments to improve reporting rates on each. Several countries, including Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe, reported that they began data collection for the third BR with a review of the challenges and opportunities observed in conducting the earlier BRs. This resulted in improved capacity and BR reporting rates.

After the member countries had reported on their BR performance, the COMESA Secretariat worked with ReSAKSS to conduct a BR validation at the regional level. This involved subjecting the country reports to close assessment and review. Comments from this exercise were given back to countries for their BR teams to address. This was followed by a write-shop gathering to further improve the data reported by identifying data gaps in both the physical data and in the eBR reports. These processes uncovered several data challenges, many of which were addressed. This support from the COMESA Secretariat and ReSAKSS was important for improving the quality and rates of reporting for the BR3 by the COMESA member states.

Continent-wide, the African Union Commission (AUC) trained one or two experts from each country involved in BR3. However, demand for better data requires that more people in each country be trained for future BRs. The COMESA region should expand its CAADP team to effectively meet these demands. The thin staff at COMESA Secretariat makes it difficult for these staff members to attend all Biennial Review process meetings, particularly those held continentally.

Data challenges and lessons

Coordination of the BR process is pivotal for a successful review in every country. Coordination improved in the third BR compared to the first and second. This is shown by the increased number of countries which instituted inclusive multi-stakeholder mutual accountability mechanisms and peer review processes to implement the BR country roadmaps. However, data availability and quality challenges continue to affect the BR process. Member states face missing data for some indicators, notably those on post-harvest losses, commodity-specific trade, and food safety. Countries also are struggling with implementing data standards and data collection protocols required for improving data accuracy, tracing, and verification. The use of the digital platform, eBR, for capturing data for BR3 was pivotal to easing data cleaning and verification processes for all countries involved. As a result of the continued engagement with the COMESA member states by ReSAKSS, AUC, COMESA Secretariat, and partners, there was a marked improvement in data reporting rates, with the most visible increase in DR Congo, Djibouti, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Tunisia, and Kenya.

4. Selected Policy and Programmatic Changes at COMESA Regional Level following the First and Second Biennial Reviews

Many of the countries within COMESA indicated having made policy, procedural, and investment changes in their agricultural sectors partly in response to the results of the first two rounds of the Biennial Review. For example, ten COMESA member states —Burundi, Eswatini, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—reported making programmatic changes to improve investments in the agriculture sector since BR1. Among the policy and programmatic changes reported are:

- In Malawi, the BR process was reported to have led to an increase in dialogue between public and private players in the agricultural sector, which, in turn, has generated interest in initiating policy changes in the sector. Some of the policies influenced include a Fertilizer Policy and a Fertilizer Bill, a Seed Bill, and an Agricultural Extension and Advisory Strategy.
- In Eswatini, the BR revealed weaknesses in financing for the agricultural sector. This partly led to the country launching in 2019 a program to promote private sector investment in agriculture. Eswatini also launched the Country Agribusiness Partnership Framework to promote targeted contract farming for staple food production, including maize, beans, and vegetables. This framework resulted in the leasing of more than five thousand hectares of government land to private producers to increase production. All these findings are in line with the findings by Ulimwengu, et al. (2020), which showed a positive effect of mutual accountability on investments.
- Reflecting its commitment to the CAADP process, Zambia changed how the BR results were publicized. The results of the second BR report were shared with all stakeholders and a road map drawn for the next BR. Zambia also reviewed its first NAIP (2014-2018) and made improvements to the investment plan.

5. Recommendations for Ensuring Achievement of Malabo Commitments by 2025

The outcomes of the third Biennial Review indicate that the COMESA region as a whole is not on track to meet by 2025 the goals and targets of the Malabo Declaration, although there are signs of good progress among individual member states. The following are some of the key recommendations that the COMESA region should consider in order to advance its achievement of the Malabo Declaration commitments:

- *Recommitment to CAADP principles:* Most COMESA member states did not perform well on this indicator. It is important that there is a regional effort to ensure countries complete the CAADP process and implement Malabo Declaration-compliant National Agriculture Investment Plans by (i) domesticating their NAIPs, (ii) appraising their NAIPs, (iii) implementing their NAIPs; and (iv) putting in place robust NAIP monitoring and evaluation and reporting infrastructure. It is also important that COMESA member states develop high quality multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder coordination bodies for NAIP implementation that are inclusive, representative, and orientated towards action, guided by Joint Sector Reviews or similar inclusive review mechanisms.

- *Enhancing investment finance in agriculture*: With the exception of Egypt, Eswatini, Seychelles, and Zambia, the COMESA countries are off track on the goals of increasing levels of investment in agriculture. In addition to investing 10 percent of their total public budget in agriculture, COMESA member states should leverage both private domestic finance and foreign direct investment into agriculture. Improving the enabling environment for agricultural value chain development can attract foreign direct investment and result in expanded private sector involvement in agricultural financing. Establishing Agriculture Development Funds or Banks in each country or regionally would also be helpful in this respect. In parallel, countries that are members of COMESA should increase spending on agriculture research and development.

- *Ending hunger by 2025*: Although there is some improvement in the region on this commitment, performance is still lower than the threshold. Therefore, the region is not on track. At national level, only Kenya is on track on this indicator. In ending hunger, it is important for the COMESA member states to allocate resources to social protection, to invest in postharvest loss prevention technologies, to tighten food safety standards through improved and better enforced legislation, and to more effectively popularize modern agricultural production technologies. As fertilizer consumption rates are low, it is important that these are increased across COMESA member states in order to boost crop productivity and increased the availability of food.

- *Halving poverty through agriculture by 2025*: Only Egypt, Rwanda, and Tunisia were found to be on track towards meeting this target in BR3. It is important that there be innovative ways to develop inclusive public-private partnerships to strengthen and expand participation in commodity value chains. At the same time, targeted efforts are needed to attract youth and women to be more intensively involved in agriculture or in agri-business through carefully developed targeted programs on agricultural finance.

- *Intra-African trade in agriculture commodities and services*: No COMESA member state was found in BR3 to be on track towards achieving this indicator. All COMESA member states should ratify the African Continental Free Trade Area in order to enhance African intra-regional trade. They should also take deliberate efforts to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade regionally and to improve transport and communication infrastructure.

- *Enhancing resilience to climate change:* Although seven of the 21 COMESA member states are on track on this Malabo Declaration commitment on climate change, most are not on track. The region needs to formulate plans to ensure that member states significantly increase investments that strengthen the resilience of their countries to climate change, that improve and sustain the performance of the agriculture sector in general, and that support programs that build assets and adaptive capacity and establish social safety nets for the vulnerable. COMESA is a region that recently has been prone to adverse weather conditions, therefore resilience to climate change should be among its development priorities. Increased social protection, accelerated skills development for farmers, sustainable land and water management, climate smart agricultural production, and agricultural digitization all may be options for realizing increased resilience to climate change at both household and community levels.

- *Mutual accountability for actions and results*: Further efforts are needed to improve monitoring and evaluation in agriculture as well as agricultural data collection and management systems in the COMESA member states. Such efforts will need to involve coordination within and across the member states of data collection and management processes with regards to the BR and Joint Sector Review processes. Capacity development in monitoring and evaluating sectoral programs, including the use of robust statistical analysis techniques for decision-making, will be a critical input to enabling NAIP implementation across the COMESA member states to be evidence-based and successful.

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