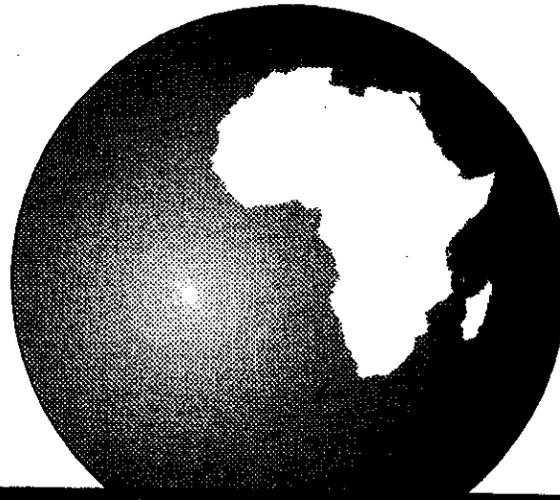




United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

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Multidisciplinary
Regional Advisory Group

REPORT OF A FACT-FINDING MISSION TO THE COMMON MARKET
FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (COMESA) SECRETARIAT
ON:
FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD PROCESSING ACTIVITIES
TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

18 - 22 MARCH, 1996

By

Wanjiku E. Mwangi
Regional Advisor on Gender and
Sustainable Development
MRAG-ACW

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Addis Ababa
April, 1996

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

COMESA has two top priority areas within its programmes namely Agriculture and Food Security. During the last two years, a number of workshops have been convened by COMESA and other organizations to address the subject of food security and of measures to reduce pre- and post-harvest food losses.

The debate also included the involvement of women not only in their capacity as the main procedures of food, but also in terms of their potential as entrepreneurs in food processing, packaging, storage and marketing activities. For example, (i) The ECA/FAO/IGADD/PTA/SADC Expert Group Consultation Workshop for the formulation of a PTA Food Security Strategy, Lusaka Zambia, 18-21 April 1994; (ii) The Workshop on Initiative of a Regional Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis and Research Network, convened by the SADC Food Security, Technical and Administrative Unit, Harare, Zimbabwe, 25-29 July 1994; (iii) The Regional Workshop on the PTA Food Security and Programme convened by COMESA in collaboration with FAO, Kampala, Uganda, 22-24 August 1994; (iv) The FAO Workshop on Improving Food Supplies and Nutrition through Household and Village Level Processing and Preservation of Vegetables and Fruits in Eastern and Southern Africa, February 1996.

These activities led to two developments:

- (a) Consultations were initiated by the ECA's JEFAD Division, with both COMESA and the ECA-Lusaka MULPOC, concerning proposals to undertake projects on
 - (i) Post-harvest food losses and storage in Ethiopia, Uganda and

Mozambique; (ii) The Development of Food Processing Projects to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship in Eastern and Southern Africa.

- (b) ECA-Lusaka MULPOC proposed the convening of a Symposium on Food Security in Eastern and Southern Africa, prior to embarking upon the projects in Ethiopia, Uganda and Mozambique, in order to establish the needs and the gaps and to come up with realistic strategies and proposals for action.

Subsequently COMESA wrote to ECA requesting the services of two regional advisers - on Agriculture and Gender - to assist in identifying the pertinent issues in preparation for the planned Symposium, as well as for the proposed subsequent country-based projects.

It was in response to this request that a mission of Assistance to COMESA was planned as a fact finding activity on "Food Security and Food Processing Activities to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship in Eastern and Southern Africa".

**2. BRIEFING AND PREPARATORY MEETING HELD IN THE
ECA-LUSAKA MULPOC OFFICES, 18 MARCH 1996**

At the start of the mission, a briefing and preparatory meeting was held in the offices of the ECA-Lusaka MULPOC on the morning of 18.3.96. It was attended by members of the COMESA Secretariat, members of the ECA-Lusaka MULPOC and the ECA Regional Advisor on Gender viz:

- (1) Mr. S.A. Ochola, OIC ECA-Lusaka MULPOC - Chaired the meeting;
- (2) Mr. Gondwe, ECA-Lusaka MULPOC;
- (3) Mr. V. Kachoka, ECA-Lusaka MULPOC;
- (4) Dr. W. Mwangi, ECA Regional Advisor on Gender;
- (5) Dr. E.A. Mohamed, Senior Agricultural Expert, COMESA;
- (6) Mr. P.T.M. Mutiwanyuka, Agricultural Expert (Livestock), COMESA;
- (7) Ms. A. Khozi-Mukwashi, Coordinator, Women in Business Unit (WIB), COMESA.

The purpose for the meeting was:

- (a) To plan for the successful execution of the mission to COMESA in terms of the logistics, the programme of work, and the offices and organizations to be visited;
- (b) To obtain views of the COMESA officers regarding the needs of the Secretariat, and the most pertinent issues to be addressed during the mission within the context of the terms of reference of the mission;
- (c) To receive an update from the ECA-Lusaka MULPOC, and to exchange views on preparations, theme and expected inputs and participation for the planned Symposium on Food Security, Food Processing and the Promotion of Women's

Entrepreneurship in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Regarding the offices and the organisations to be visited during the mission, it was agreed that, besides meeting with members of the relevant divisions and units within COMESA, the mission would have to touch base with certain offices of the Zambian Government, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, and the National Commission for Development Planning within which is located the Department of Women in Development (WID). It was further agreed that since the NGO sector in Zambia, particularly those NGOs working on gender and development, is quite active, it would be useful to obtain their perspectives in order to have a comprehensive and realistic overview of the situation.

On preparations, theme and expected inputs for the Symposium on Food Security, several ideas and suggestions were discussed namely:

- The venue of the Symposium was expected to be South Africa and some level of support was expected from both the Governments of South Africa and Zambia. Financial and other kinds of support was also expected from the ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa.
- An extensive review of past symposia, conferences and workshops on food security within the COMESA countries and beyond should be undertaken in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and repetition of the issues covered. Papers prepared for the forthcoming Symposium must provide new information, new approaches and contemporary and relevant strategies. Proposals should be action-oriented and realistic. It was expected that the outputs of the Symposium would be published jointly by COMESA and the ECA-Lusaka MULPOC.
- A More appropriate and less lengthy title for the Symposium should be thought about and agreed upon before the end of the mission to COMESA.

- The representatives of COMESA gave suggestions on the issues that the Symposium ought to address in keeping with the programme of work of the Secretariat and the critical areas of concern on the subject of food security within the sub-region. These ideas are included in the sections of this report dealing with the meetings held with the relevant divisions of COMESA.

It was agreed that a de-briefing meeting would be held after completing the round of the planned visits and discussions with the various organizations and offices.

3. MEETING WITH OFFICIALS OF THE COMESA SECRETARIAT

Several visits were made to the offices of COMESA and discussions were held with the heads and staff members of various divisions and units within the Secretariat. A summary of the salient issues discussed at these meetings now follows:

3.1 Meeting at the Women In Business (WIB) Unit

Discussions were held with the Coordinator of COMESA's WIB Unit, Ms. Amanda Khozi-Mukwashi. The unit was established in 1992 and its focus is to facilitate and enhance the business acumen and activities of women entrepreneurs in the COMESA countries. The economic empowerment of women is regarded as the key and most critical variable in the advancement of women in Africa, particularly through their financial independence. Women lag behind in the business and private sector and support mechanisms should be established at all levels and for all socio-economic categories of women. The WIB Unit targets the Small, Macro and Medium Enterprises (SMES) run by women.

The medium-scale operators are usually urban-based and are engaged in a variety of largely informal sector activities such as tailoring, small cafes for food catering, hair and beauty saloons, etc. On the whole, women operators in these enterprises have no technical skills, no capital and no marketing skills either. What they do have is high motivation and great determination to succeed. The WIB Unit makes efforts to mount training programmes for the women entrepreneurs. Such training could be in packaging, marketing, in advertising and in business management. Negotiation skills and the ways of acquiring information also form part of the training process. A great handicap for women entrepreneurs is the lack of access to credit. A lot of women fall back on their own informal networks of support such as revolving funds and rotating credit.

In this connection, governments have an important role to play for instance by removing all discriminatory laws in relation to eligibility criteria for loan acquisition, property ownership and customs laws and practices that inhibit cross-border trade at border points within COMESA countries. In some countries e.g., Swaziland, women are considered as minors and cannot therefore engage in any level of decision-making or investment. There is a lot of gender sensitization work to be done by the WIB Unit, in close collaboration with the ECA's African Centre for Women (ACW), and with national women's machineries in the respective countries.

At the small or micro scale grassroots level of enterprises, there are many more problems and difficulties that confront women entrepreneurs. Women operators lack any level of training or expertise and are continually harassed by law enforcement officers. In a real sense, these women are more or less like hawkers and informal sector operators who lack training, credit, legitimate business premises, elementary business skills and a host of other obstacles. COMESA/WIB intends to concentrate on this group and provide it with as much support as possible.

Amongst COMESA's sectoral concerns, the two top priority areas are Agriculture and Food Security. In both of these areas women are the key movers.

The COMESA Treaty has a specific WID/WIB Chapter that addresses the particular issues and problems facing women entrepreneurs in Eastern and Southern Africa. The Treaty provides that COMESA member States have undertaken to eliminate all discriminatory laws which are obstacles to women, through appropriate legislation and other measures. In addition, taking into account that most business women are engaged in small-scale and medium-scale business enterprises, COMESA/WIB has placed emphasis on the role and contribution of these businesses in regional economic cooperation and integration.

In July 1993, in Harare, Zimbabwe, a Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa (FEMCOM) was established. It was subsequently

endorsed by the Authority comprising Heads of State and Government of COMESA member countries. The COMESA Treaty recognizes FEMCOM and deems it one of its created institutions. Membership of the Federation is open to Umbrella national associations or federations of women in Eastern and Southern Africa involved in industrial, mining, commercial, agricultural, fishing and service entrepreneurial activities.

The interim secretariat of FEMCOM is located within COMESA. The Federation serves as a representative body and link between women in the region and the policy organs of COMESA member States, regional and subregional organisations, and international organisations whose objective is to promote trade and development. The mandate of FEMCOM has six components namely to:

- (a) represent the interests of member States and promote their business interests;
- (b) promote the establishment, in the member States, of enterprises owned wholly or jointly by women;
- (c) promote subregional and regional networking among women and enterprises owned by women to facilitate access to resources;
- (d) act, in collaboration with the COMESA/WIB Unit, as a subregional facilitating body to identify and sensitize governments of the COMESA on the needs and strategies for achieving women's full integration into national and subregional trade and development activities;
- (e) promote programme activities at national level in concert with COMESA/WIB Programme activities;

- (f) encourage women from various business backgrounds to participate in programme activities of the Federation through their national association.

FEMCOM's specific areas of support to women in business, through its approved integrated Trade and Investment programme are:

- (i) Access to credit;
- (ii) Provision of enterprise level technical assistance (tailor-made) and training;
- (iii) Identification of investment opportunities;
- (iv) Preparation of investment project documents, training, business management and evaluation;
- (v) Export promotion strategy, and export related market research and produce development;
- (vi) Collection, processing and dissemination of technical and business information.

The WIB Unit in joint collaboration with FEMCOM has prepared a number of proposals with respect to:

- Setting up a Revolving Fund for Women in Business in the COMESA countries;
- Dissemination of Technical and Business Information for Women in Business in the COMESA countries;
- Training Project for Business Women in COMESA countries.

3.2 Meeting with Members of COMESA's Agriculture Division

A meeting was held in the COMESA Offices on the morning of 20.3.96, with members of the COMESA Secretariat's Agriculture Division. These were:

- (1) Senior Agricultural Expert (crop economics), Dr. E.A. Mohamed;
- (2) Agricultural Expert (Livestock) Mr. P.T.M. Mutiwanyoke;
- (3) Fisheries Expert, Mr. R. Matipa.

The ECA was represented by Mr. V. Kachoka of ECA Lusaka MULPOC and Dr. W.E. Mwagiru, Regional Advisor on Gender.

The ECA team gave a brief background of the Mission to COMESA, its purpose and objectives and what it expected to achieve. The critical nature of the role played by women in the agricultural, food processing and food storage activities within the COMESA countries was given particular emphasis. In the discussions and exchange of views that ensued, several issues were underscored:

- In the rural development of COMESA countries, women's inputs comprised one of the most important denominators;
- Trends prevailing in the agricultural sector of the COMESA region dictate that a shift be made away from focusing solely on women's production role in agriculture, and to focus more attention and analysis on women's actual and potential roles in agricultural processing, marketing and storage.
- Training of women with a view to increasing and enhancing their technical and marketing skills is another important aspect. The life span or 'shelf life' of most agricultural products after harvesting is quite short. In fishing for instance, the handling of the catch prior to processing, transporting and selling is very

important. Icing should be done soon after the catch to maintain low temperatures. Sanitation through insulation of containers, preservation through freezing, drying and smoking all need to be understood and managed by the women. In fishing, as in most other activities of production, processing and storage, women are already involved. The task is now to improve on the methods and techniques that women use in the various stages between production, processing and consumption.

- Agricultural diversification that is complementary is necessary and overdue in the COMESA region and within the respective countries. Each administrative unit (province, district), ecological zone or geographical area has its own comparative advantage and mutual complementarity with the other zones and areas. Within this situation, women should concentrate and maximise their efforts in activities where they perform best, and where they are already participating. Agriculture within the region is characterised by high seasonality of the products due to the virtual dependence on rainfed farming. Undertaking broad diversification and ecological/geographical complementarity would mitigate against such seasonality and ensure a continuous supply of food and cash crops.
- Credit facilities must be made accessible to women if a successful shift is to be made from production to processing, preservation, storage and marketing. In some instances, it might be more advantageous and cost effective for women to operate more in groups or cooperatives and less as individuals. The issue of how women are to be organized then becomes an important one.
- At the individual country level, as well as at the subregional level, integrated planning is a prerequisite for a meaningful transformation of the agricultural sector.

3.3 Meeting in the Industry Division of COMESA

A meeting was held at the COMESA Secretariat in the office of the Senior Expert in Industry Mr. J.E. Mwencha, on the morning of 21.3.96. ECA was represented by its Regional Advisor on Gender. The purpose of the meeting was to obtain more specific information on the involvement of women in small-scale industrial food processing, preservation and storage activities for the enhancement of food security in the COMESA countries. The issues discussed were:

- COMESA has an on-going project on pre-and post-harvest food losses, which is aimed at increasing crop yields through proper treatment and preservation of seeds. Certain chemicals and machinery are required for seed dressing, for planting (to increase yields), and for storage to reduce post-harvest food losses. Similarly, the tools and implements used in farming, such as hoes, ploughs and tractors have a bearing on food security. COMESA has plans to establish a Research Network on Post-Harvest Food Losses Reduction, with the objective of establishing the factors that contribute to post-harvest food losses, and developing strategies and methods of mitigating against such losses.
- Enhancement of food security requires a broader and more integrated context, incorporating the consideration of systemic and cross-sectoral issues that might include:
 - Sustainability of rainfed versus irrigation farming;
 - Use of appropriate irrigation techniques, equipment and chemical inputs;
 - Marketing techniques in relation to the shelf-life of certain agricultural products such as horticultural crops (fruits, vegetables, etc.);
 - Improvement of the nutritional value of the food eaten;
 - The most appropriate income-generating activities for women in agriculture, in

terms of, for example, operating capital, technology and techniques required, storage facilities, etc.;

- Food security and food processing/storage policies, strategies and methods must be formulated and developed in conjunction with increasing the income-generating capacity of women;

- COMESA is collaborating with UNIDO to prepare an industrial strategy which can address small-scale industries. Such a strategy would give COMESA a comparative advantage. In 1995, COMESA, with the support of UNIDO, the Government of Zambia and The Technology Exchange Ltd. U.K. organized a Technology Marketing Forum in Lusaka, Zambia. - "Techmart COMESA '95" - with a view to assessing and identifying the needs and types of technology in agro-based and agro-related industries. The objective of the Industrial Marketing Forum was to promote direct contacts between technology seekers and technology suppliers from the developing and developed countries. Emphasis was placed on technologies which would improve the small and medium-scale agro-related industries. A parallel strategy would be to create Capital venture with a smaller bank (because the PTA Bank is too big) which would administer a Fund on behalf of COMESA and PTA Bank. This Fund would be used to advance small-scale women entrepreneurs with minimal but adequate and manageable operating capital, with which they can start their own small-scale industrial operations in agricultural and food security related activities. The most pressing problem is lack of capital. Locally produced and imported materials are usually available but without capital no processing can be undertaken. Accessible banks that can offer women credit are what is most needed in the COMESA region, along the lines of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

- Another major constraint stems from absence of an enabling environment within which women entrepreneurs can operate and conduct their businesses without

harassment. Most Local Governments' "formal" legislation, licensing, location, premises and health requirements do not accommodate the informal sector and small-scale operatives because by their very nature, structure and scale, they are "informal". Business and trade laws and regulations will have to be amended or reformed, in order to enable women and men in the small-scale informal sector to conduct their activities without hinderance and harassment.

- Empowerment of women - economic, political, decision-making - is a most important input in the whole process of transforming the agricultural production and processing sectors. Women must be enabled to contribute in the workplace. The whole focus is to increase productivity in agriculture in a broad-based and integrated manner. Women constitute the most critical target group in this approach; they are the vehicle.

Information was provided to the effect that in the very near future, probably before the end of 1996, COMESA with the support and collaboration of UNIDO was planning to hold a subregional meeting at which all women's groups and cooperatives would participate. The objective of the meeting was to initiate consultations and dialogue with such groups and cooperatives, with a view to laying the basis for women's involvement in entrepreneurial and private sector ventures.

**4. MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS OF ZAMBIA'S MINISTRY
OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FISHERIES**

**Meeting with the Deputy Secretary and Assistant
Secretary for Technical Cooperation**

On the afternoon of 18.3.96, a meeting was held with Mrs. L. Chisuta and Mr. George Kabubi, Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretary for Technical Cooperation respectively, in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries.

The main issues arising from the problem of food security and women's participation in food processing and storage in Zambia, were summarised as being:

- Large scale rural availability of hammer mills, and placing affordable prices on them, would greatly ease women's arduous burdens while at the same time increasing the amounts of food (especially maize, other cereals and groundnuts) being processed and stored. Women should also be advised to retain more food (maize), instead of selling it at cheap prices during peak or bumper harvest periods.
- Improvement of dietary habits to control malnutrition is an important dimension of food security and food value. To this end, the Government, as well as NGOs and other development agents working in the field, should undertake widespread promotion of soya bean production and of other oil crops. These had been quite popularised 4 or 5 years back but their production has never taken root in Zambia. As a parallel measure, Government and the private sector should be prevailed upon to make oil extraction machines and pressing kits affordable and accessible to the majority of rural households.

- It is imperative for Zambia to introduce rural diversification in agricultural food production and to integrate agricultural policies in order to link up the different provinces, ecological zones or geographical area specialising in the production of certain food or cash crops. At the regional and subregional level, the country should establish liaison and development/economic cooperation with other African countries in order to enhance complementarity in trade and exchange of products and experiences.
- The withdrawal of Government (Ministry of Agriculture) from the cooperative movement had precipitated near-chaos in the production, distribution and marketing of food and cash crops. Alternative mechanisms have to be put in place as a matter of urgency in order to fill the vacuum. Strengthening the private sector and enabling women to become small-scale entrepreneurs in food processing and storage could constitute an immediate remedy with the potential for long-term sustainability.
- The impacts of SAPs and recurrent droughts should be analyzed and understood better than is the case at the moment.
- The rural extension service and the extension agents need to be revitalised and strengthened in order to reach and assist more women.
- There is great potential for the role of NGOs in encouraging women and women's groups to embark on income-generating activities.

Critical Areas

- (a) More rural women should be reached, even in the remote areas by developing better infrastructure, more accessibility and effective communication strategies;

- (b) Construct more storage and preservation facilities, impart more knowledge and skills in these area;
- (c) Food processing should be targeted to ease scarcity and short falls during the dry season;
- (d) Availability of information is a critical need, particularly pertaining to markets, prices, outlet points and accessible credit;
- (e) Gender disaggregated data are lacking. These need to be generated in order to reveal the gaps and the areas of greatest need for both women and men.

4.2 Meeting at the Food Security Division, Department of Marketing and Cooperatives

A meeting was held in the afternoon of 20.3.96, with two officers in the Department of Marketing and Cooperatives. They were:

- (1) Mrs. T. Mwiya, Provincial Marketing and Cooperatives Officer;
- (2) Mr. C. Mwansa, Research and Planning Officer.

ECA was represented by Mr. V. Kachoka of the ECA-Lusaka MULPOC, and Dr. W.E. Mwangiru, Regional Advisor on Gender.

Discussions and exchange of information covered a wide range of pertinent issues, the most important ones being:

- The agriculture sector in Zambia is currently in the throes of liberalization and decentralization in conformity with on-going economy-wide structural adjustment programmes. For some time prior to the onset of liberalization, the country had

been pursuing a socialist path in its overall economic development. With the change in economic and social policy, emphasis now was on capital formation and privatization. The agricultural sector has been hard hit by the new economic development focus. This has been most marked by the collapse of the cooperatives which were hitherto centralised and run by the Government, for the principle purpose of marketing agricultural produce as well as distributing agricultural inputs. The view of the two officials was that the cooperatives could still be very useful, especially for storage of surplus harvests to ensure food security. Other important changes in the structural adjustment process have been associated with the establishment of the Agricultural Sector Investment Programme (ASIP) and the creation of the Marketing Credit Revolving Fund (MCRF), and the Food Reserve Agency, which has storage sheds all over the country. The operational arrangements for these bodies are explained in a little more detail in the section below that has outlined the "Maize Marketing Arrangements for 1995/96".

- Previously and even up to the present time, women have been closely involved in the cooperative movement. To a certain extent they have also been active in food processing besides their usual participation in food production. Some women's groups, cooperatives or individual entrepreneurs operate grinding mills and hammer mills. The status of women's organizations is a critical factor, and similarly, the role of women's NGOs which facilitate greatly in the mobilisation of women. There are many of these, including women's "clubs" and community based groups and organizations. The Home Economics Division of the Department of Agriculture works closely with and supports community development with a focus on women.

- Training is a most important component in overall efforts of the Government to promote women and to improve their social and economic status. The officers expressed the view that for training to be relevant, it should be tailored towards what women can do or are doing. It should not be too generalised but should be focused on helping women to acquire the skills and know-how in specific areas and activities. There is a general lack of technical support and advisory services for women, as well as a prevailing lack of appropriate information relevant to the areas and activities that are of interest to women and particularly women entrepreneurs. A revived and better organized extension service could be used for, information dissemination and outreach for women.
- The development of a strong private sector could provide widespread trigger effects which could catalyze women towards substantive entrepreneurial initiatives and ventures. Zambia has very few women entrepreneurs; it is estimated that only 5 per cent of the people currently engaged in some kind of entrepreneurial activities are women, i.e., 5 per cent of 200 registered entrepreneurs in agricultural related activities are women. There should be a marked shift away from cooperatives to private sector development, especially the kind that could provide support services to say agricultural, marketing and promotion. The Credit Revolving Fund is accessible to entrepreneurs and the private sector. Additional support to potential and practising women entrepreneurs, as well as men, is provision of entrepreneurial training which can be offered through the existing training institutions. An assessment of needs, however, ought to be undertaken prior to undertaking such training, especially for women trainees whose needs are likely to be different from those of their male counterparts. It was suggested that sponsorship of women trainees could act like an important, 'pull factor'. A necessary accompaniment to private sector development and women's entrepreneurship is the development of an extensive infrastructure particularly roads - both trunk and feeder roads - that can render even the most

remote areas more accessible. However, there must be prior assessment and identification of where they are needed most, and where they can enhance ecological and economic complementarity as discussed earlier on in this report.

- A women's desk/office for the promotion and support of women entrepreneurs was due to be established soon, within the Department of Marketing and Cooperatives. This move was part of the restructuring currently going on in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries.

Maize is the one agricultural crop whose production, storage, processing and marketing play a very important part in influencing the linkages between the agricultural sector, the economy of the country and the actual and potential participation and contribution of women in their capacities as producers and entrepreneurs. Additional information was therefore obtained regarding the most recent measures instituted to regulate its storage, distribution and marketing.

4.3 Zambia Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries:

Maize Marketing Arrangements for 1995/1996

Maize is Zambia's staple food crop and to a large extent food security measures in the country are almost solely targeted on maize. During the visit to the Ministry, discussions were held on the food security situation in Zambia and information was provided on the special measures adopted by the ministry for the marketing of maize during 1995/1996. The following are the salient points of this arrangement:

- (1) The Government would not set or enforce producer or floor prices of maize. Farmers and traders were expected to determine these prices themselves on the basis of the demand and supply conditions prevailing, and taking account of the regionally and seasonally differentiated prices of maize or of any other crop.

- (2) There would be no Government - appointed maize - Buying Agents and anyone was free to participate in the buying and selling of maize on their own account. However, all those wishing to trade in maize or agricultural inputs were required to register with the Food Security Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. This registration was for statistical purposes only so as to enable the Ministry to collect and disseminate information to all marketing participants.
- (3) Primary Societies, District and Provincial Cooperative Unions as well as Lending Institutions and Banks were encouraged to service the financial requirements of their members for restoration and improvement of their financial viability; the Government would not make specific credit resources available to these institutions.
- (4) In 1994 a Marketing Credit Revolving Fund (MCRF) was established to provide financial resources to private sector operators, traders and cooperatives for the procurement, handling and storage of maize. The MCRF would operate on an expanded scale throughout 1995/96. However, beneficiaries of the 1994/95 credit disbursements who had not repaid their loans would not be eligible for credit from the Revolving Fund during 1995/96.
- (5) Previously, the Government had decentralised the collection and storage of the maize crop; since then it introduced the system of leasing the Government-owned storage facilities to traders, millers etc., at economic lease rates so as not to discourage the private sector from investing in its own storage facilities. These Government-owned storage facilities would be available for lease during 1995/96. Individual traders, companies and cooperative societies should make their own transport arrangements and negotiate transport costs because unlike 1994/96, the Government would not set any transport rates or be involved in commercial transport of commodities or agricultural inputs in 1995/96. However, the Food

Reserve Agency would buy its maize stocks from disadvantaged areas where private sector operators are unlikely to venture. This would ease the burden of the transition towards crop diversification in these areas.

- (6) With regard to market information and extension, the Government would continue to provide market information to farmers, traders and cooperatives by disseminating crop and input prices prevailing in various markets in the country, within the subregion and internationally. Such information would be made available through the media (television, radio, newspapers) as well as through the Weekly Market Bulletin published by the Ministry.

- (7) The Food Reserve Bill was passed in March 1995 following which the National Food Reserve Agency would be established to manage the National Food Security Reserve. The Agency would buy, store and sell reserve stocks, and anyone would be free to bid for sales to or from the agency, or to store stocks on behalf of the Agency. Sales of reserve stocks would only be done as a last resort. The buying, storing and selling by tender is expected to provide further encouragement to the private sector operators to enter maize marketing and storage, thereby minimizing the financial and man-power resources required by the Food Reserve Agency. Since the 1994/95 drought would result in a shortfall in domestic production, especially toward the end of 1995, involvement of the private sector millers, traders and transporters would contribute towards meeting the shortfall requirements.

The Office of the Vice-President and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries would undertake coordination and implementation of food relief operations in drought-affected areas, and the post-drought recovery programme respectively, in order to restore productive capacity among drought-affected farmers.

The above measures are meant to harmonize overall market arrangements and to facilitate the transition towards a liberalized maize marketing process.

5. MEETING WITH THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (NCPD), WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (WID) DEPARTMENT

A meeting was held on the afternoon of 19.3.96, in the offices of the National Commission for Development Planning (NCPD) which houses the Women in Development Department (WID), between the Deputy Director of NCPD Mrs. Edwidge Mutale, ECA Regional Advisor on Gender, and a member of the ECA-Lusaka MULPOC. The subject for discussion and exchange of views was Zambia's Strategic Plan for Implementation of the National Gender Policy. The objective of the mission, namely to explore possibilities for greater involvement of women entrepreneurs in food processing, storage and marketing, was also discussed at some length. The issues covered included:

The National Gender Policy

Although the gender gap in Zambia is narrowing, more women than men are still illiterate-illiteracy rates for women stand at 43 per cent as compared to 23 per cent for the men. Women work more hours and are mostly found in low-paying jobs. This disparity creates inefficiencies, hampers growth and lowers the potential well-being of the society at large. Since independence in 1964, Zambia has not articulated a national policy on women, other than one chapter on Women in Development that was included in the Fourth National Development Plan, 1989-1993. This Plan was subsequently shelved, following the democratisation process which ushered in the Third Republic, led by the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD), which developed instead a new policy framework paper.

The Government has embarked upon formulation of a National Gender Policy through the women in Development Department of the National Commission for Development Planning (NCPD), which will help redress the existing gender imbalances by facilitating gender responsive development planning. The National Gender Policy will adopt a gender-based approach rather

than the Women in development Approach because GAD adopts a holistic view which seeks to change and enhance the status and position of women in society vis-a-vis the men. Women are not considered in isolation but in terms of their relationship to men which defines and reinforces women's status. Changing women's status implies changing gender relations and roles in which women play a subordinate role relative to men. The development of the National Gender Policy has involved a consultative process involving all stakeholders country-wide - Government ministries, Provincial and District levels, NCDP/WID, NGOs, churches, private sector and donors.

The Draft National Gender Policy (January 1996) states in part:

"Women in Zambia are the main providers and traditional managers of food at the family and household level. Their role in contributing to improved nutrition and national as well as household food security is therefore crucial. Yet they often lack access to productive resources such as credit, land, improved technology and capital".

National Policy on Agriculture

Zambia cannot be said to have a genuine national agricultural policy; it has a maize policy instead. There is undue emphasis on cash crops and maize is the most important cash crop.

Food Security

The country is dominated by a monoculture based on maize which makes it vulnerable and which renders the prevailing diet less nutritious. To redress this imbalance, an indigenous crop mix has to be reintroduced and popularized. A more integrated agricultural policy should be based on crop diversification based on complementarity and exchange of regionally-specific agricultural and food production.

Food Processing

The value and simplicity of drying food (especially root crops such as cassava, yams, sweet potatoes, arrowroots etc.), as a method of processing should be revisited and re-examined. Re-thinking on the subject should draw on existing or remembered indigenous methods and techniques of food processing and storage, that have sustained populations for milenia. Traditional methods of food packaging should also not be considered obsolete or of no value. At a very simple and pragmatic level, for most African countries, dependence on the sun as a food preserving medium makes much more sense than planning for making ice as a food preservative.

Women's Entrepreneurship

The order to encourage greater participation of women entrepreneurs in food processing, packaging, storage and marketing, the switch to a diversified crop mix referred to above is a corner-stone of such entrepreneurial ventures. There would be more competition and more alternative activities to choose from. Food consumption patterns would also change and more balanced dietary practices would develop in response to the available diversity of food products. All this would contribute significantly to the enhancement of food security.

Lack of Training and Mass Education

Potential women entrepreneurs lack confidence, assertive and affirmative behaviour which are prerequisites to embarking upon business ventures. They tend to lack a competitive spirit and avoid taking risks. Training programmes designed for and targeted to women entrepreneurs would contribute greatly towards teaching women the art of negotiation, how to add value to what they already know and do, and how to identify business niches that they can fill successfully

Exchange of Experience

An exchange of experience and expertise between Zambia and her counterpart neighbours and countries in COMESA is another way of creating the conditions necessary for attaining self sufficiency in food and of involving women in entrepreneurial and income-earning activities. Partnerships, joint ventures or just exchange of information would facilitate the building of networks between Zambia and other countries, and between the women entrepreneurs of Zambia and others within the subregion.

6. VISIT TO THE OFFICES OF THE ZAMBIA NGOS' COORDINATING COMMITTEE (NGOCC)

The Non-Governmental Organisations' Coordinating Committee (NGOCC) is an umbrella body for NGOs addressing gender and development issues in Zambia and who seek to attain peace, equality and development for the empowerment of all women in Zambia. The Committee seeks to consolidate maximum utilization of NGOs' resources through cooperation in order to improve efficiency and to avoid duplication of effort.

A meeting was held at the NGOCC Offices on the afternoon of 23.3.96, between the ECA Regional Advisor on Gender and the Programme Officer of NGOCC, Ms. Alice Slinger-Munalula. The following information was obtained during the meeting:

- The NGO Coordinating Committee was formed towards the end of the UN Women's Decade and was fully established in 1985 when the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies were developed during the Third World Conference on Women. Fifty-one gender and development NGOs country-wide are affiliated to NGOCC. The Committee's Operations are supported by NORAD, CIDA and the Dutch Government. Its principal activities are:
 - Outreach and training of all NGOs and individual women;
 - Undertaking advocacy and providing support for homeless and street children in Zambia, and also to female-headed households who are hardest hit by the on-going economic reforms and adjustments, and who are amongst the poorest and marginalised groups during this crisis.
 - Enhancement of food security through support of women's groups involved in agriculture, particularly during periods of drought and famine.

- Conceptualising integrated approaches for the advancement of women in the country.

- organizing food storage and food preservation activities, especially during bumper harvests, at the village/community level on a contributory basis; and encouraging women NGOs and women's groups to initiate small-scale industrial food processing activities.

- NGOs affiliated to NGOCC should have a membership of 100 or more; they should have been in existence for at least 2 years; be registered with the Registrar of Societies; and have a constitution and governing board.

- Some major achievements in the work of the Committee include:
 - Advocating and pressurising for the passing in 1989, of the Laws of Inheritance which sought to protect widows/widowers and children after death of a spouse, and keeping NGOs informed about implementation of these laws.

 - Publication of a report on the situation and status of women in Zambia between 1985-1994, with a focus on the widening gender gap in areas such as health, education, economy and political power.

 - Lobbying and pressurising the Government for the creation and establishment of a National Women's Machinery, which would be the focal point for planning and implementing gender-based policies in all ministries. Proposals to this effect were submitted to the Head of State in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

- Lobbying and pressurising the **Zambian Legislature** for the repeal of sections of the **1991 Constitution** which allow the discrimination of women under personal and customary law.

- Coordinating **Zambian NGOs** during preparations for the **Fourth World Conference on Women**, held in **Beijing, China, September 1995**.

- **NGOCC** is a member of **FEMNET (African Women's Development and Communication Network)**, and since **1994**, it hosts the secretariat for **FEMNET's South Subregion** which caters for **14 countries**.

**7. MEETING WITH THE ECA-LUSAKA MULPOC
REGIONAL ADVISOR ON ENERGY**

A brief meeting was held with the ECA-Lusaka MULPOC Regional Advisor on Energy, Mr. Haile Lul Tebickie on the afternoon of 21.3.96, in his office. The linkages between energy and food security were discussed during the meeting as highlighted below:

- Women in Africa are at the frontline in food production but all the activities for this production were powered by their own energy, from tillage, planting, harrowing, harvesting, processing, storage to distribution. This greatly limits the capacity and turnover of agricultural production. It is also extremely strenuous for the women which leaves them with very little energy to undertake other chores and responsibilities at the household level. Availability of alternative forms of energy for agricultural production, to ensure long-term sustainability of food security measures, has to be addressed as an urgent and critical issue.
- The search for alternative energy sources is a challenging and complex undertaking at several levels, for example:
 - Electricity is too expensive and unaffordable by the average rural households. In any case the rural regions of most African countries were not linked to the electric grid, which still tends to be confined to the urban areas or rural market/service centres;
 - Mechanisation of rural-agricultural production is also not a panacea to the problem of relieving women's arduous labour. This would virtually take away their livelihoods and thereby create widespread unemployment since rural women cannot find alternative employment in the formal urban industrial or service sector; they have no skills for this. The challenge is therefore to pitch energy

sources and technology at the level of relieving women's work burdens without creating unemployment and dislocating the rural households.

- Improvement of food security should be integrated and should have in-built checks and balances for protecting rural livelihoods, while also raising the standard of living for rural families.
- African governments and organizations such as ECA and COMESA need to look farther a field and to learn from other countries which have put "successful measures" in place for dealing with food deficits and food security, such as, Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan, China, etc. In these countries food production, especially vice production, is still on a small-scale rural level.

8. CONCLUSION

A wrap-up de-briefing meeting was held on the afternoon of the last day of the mission Friday 22.3.96. It was convened by the Officer-in-Charge of the ECA-Lusaka MULPOC and was attended by members of the Lusaka-MULPOC and of the COMESA Secretariat.

The ECA Regional Advisor on Gender and Sustainable Development gave a brief report of the activities undertaken during her mission, the officials met and organisations visited, as well as the major issues discussed and the information provided.

It was agreed that there was now enough ground gained in preparation for the Symposium, whose title theme was agreed upon as:

"Food Security: Recipe for Survival". A number of essential sub-themes for the Symposium were also agreed upon: "An Aide memoire" for participants at the Symposium especially for those who would be preparing and presenting papers would be prepared and circulated by mid-April 1996.