



Speech by EAGC Chairman, Mr. David Mutazindwa, at the 10th African Grain Trade Summit held from 5th -7th October 2023, at Speke Hotel, Kampala, Uganda.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, and fellow participants of the Grain Trade Summit.

A warm greeting to each one of you. As the Chairman of the Eastern Africa Grain Council, it is an honour to welcome such a diverse and esteemed assembly to this crucial summit, convened to shape the future of grain trade in our beloved continent. Welcome to the 'Pearl of Africa,' which provides a fitting backdrop for our discussions and deliberations on a subject so crucial to the heart of our continent.

When the Eastern Africa Grain Council was founded, we held a vision – a vision where the potential of every grain harvested in our lands would be fully realized, nourishing not just our families, but fueling our economies. Today, as we convene under this banner, that vision remains more pertinent than ever. The African grain – it's more than just sustenance. It is a symbol of our resilience, our heritage, and our commitment to a brighter tomorrow.

Eighteen years ago, when the African Grain Trade Summit embarked on its journey, the challenges before us seemed insurmountable. Fluctuating prices, post-harvest losses, poor infrastructure, and a lack of knowledge exchange were some of the many issues plaguing the grain trade in Eastern Africa. But, through collective effort, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to our shared vision, we have achieved significant milestones.

Today, as the Eastern Africa Grain Council, we stand testament to what is possible when public and private stakeholders come together with a shared vision and purpose. Our commitment to building a vibrant, efficient, and sustainable grain trade sector has borne fruit in various ways.

From facilitating investments in storage and logistics to championing policies that promote cross-border trade; from building the capacity of smallholder farmers to embracing technology for market information and transparency, our journey has been both transformative and inspiring.

But, while we have much to celebrate, our work is far from over. Africa is on the cusp of a new dawn, with its youthful population, technological advancements, and unparalleled agricultural potential. Yet, challenges like climate change, pests, and diseases, and global market dynamics require us to be ever-vigilant and adaptive. Over the past decade, Africa has faced unprecedented challenges – from erratic weather patterns to locust invasions, from economic hurdles to the global pandemic. But in every instance, our grain sector has demonstrated not just survival, but the capacity for growth and innovation.

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Looking around this hall, I am reminded of the famous African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." Our gathering here is a testament to our collective commitment to not just surviving but thriving in this ever-evolving grain trade landscape.

The Eastern Africa Grain Council has been at the forefront of promoting structured grain trade. This has meant advocating for better policy environments, facilitating trade linkages, and creating avenues for capacity building. As we reflect on our achievements, it is crucial to also set our sights on the future. As we project into the next decade:

1. **Sustainability** is no longer an option; it is a necessity. As stewards of the earth, we must seek methods that are not just profitable, but also kind to our environment and sustainable for generations to come.
2. **Innovation** should be our middle name. From adopting digital tools to understanding new-age farming techniques, from seeking alternative uses of grain to optimizing supply chains, innovation will be the key to unlocking our immense potential.
3. **Inclusivity** must define us. The grain trade is not just the domain of large corporations or a privileged few. We must, and we will, create space for the smallholder farmers, for the young entrepreneurs, for the visionary women who often are the backbone of our agricultural communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Uganda, teaches us that nature's bounty is rich, but we must nurture it with care, respect, and wisdom. This land, with its fertile soils and vibrant communities, is a mirror to much of our great continent. It is from such rich terrains and from such resilient spirits that our grain grows, feeds nations, and fuels economies.

Therefore, this summit is not just a reflection of our past achievements but a clarion call to chart the way forward, to dream bigger and to set our sights even higher. This is particularly important given that Africa still spends so much on food imports. The Covid 19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine have exposed our underbellies as a continent. It's time we smelt the coffee and worked towards food security for our beloved Continent.

Let us envision an Africa where:

- Every grain produced reaches the market and fetches a fair price.
- Smallholder farmers, who are the backbone of our agricultural systems, have access to the best tools, knowledge, and markets to thrive.
- Technology and innovation drive every aspect of the grain value chain, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and sustainability.
- Cross-border trade is seamless, and policies are harmonized to unleash the full potential of our regional markets.

Achieving these goals requires collaboration. It requires us to break down silos, to listen, to learn, and most importantly, to act.

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This summit provides the perfect platform for that. I urge every one of you to engage deeply, to forge new partnerships, and to commit to actionable outcomes.

In conclusion, let us remember that the grain we trade is more than just a commodity. It is a symbol of life, of hope, and of continuity. As we engage in discussions, make trade deals, and forge partnerships, let's keep at the heart of it all, the African spirit of Ubuntu - I am because we are. I therefore to take this opportunity wish to reiterate my deepest gratitude to all our partners, donors, and stakeholders who have journeyed with us over the past decade. Your belief in our mission and your continued support is the wind beneath our wings.

As we look to the next decade and beyond, let the spirit of Munyonyo, a symbol of resilience, beauty, and promise, inspire us to soar even higher. For in unity, in purpose, and in action, lies the bright future of the African grain trade.

Here is to another decade of unity, prosperity, and growth! I look forward to participating in the deliberations of this Summit, which are important for shaping the future for generations to come. I hope you took a few extra days off: do remember to make time to enjoy our country after the Summit.

Thank you.



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