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## Regional Trade in Staples for Equitable Food and Nutrition Security and Ecosystems Services in Uganda

**Implementing trade policies that mainstream gender and ecosystem management can steer sustainable agriculture production and ultimately improve food security.**

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establishing a functional integrated framework that embeds ecosystems into trade will harmonize and strengthen inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral collaboration between key sectors. Optimizing collaboration will result in synergies and ultimately reduced costs, while attaining sustainable ecosystem management.
- Undertaking valuation of ecosystem services can help to ensure that pricing policies are responsive to conserving and sustaining natural resources. If resource users pay a price that reflects the cost of resource replacement or rehabilitation of ecosystems, as enshrined in the Environment Policy, 2014, then ecosystems and ecosystems services can be preserved into the future, which is critical to national food security.
- Implementing strategies that support the realization of policy statements 126 (a) and (b) under the Land Policy, 2013, that target designing and implementing a comprehensive framework for proper stewardship of land resources will support optimal use and sustainable management of land resources in an integrated manner.
- Implementing strategies that support the realization of policy statement 66 (a) and (b) of the Land Policy will ensure greater equality in access to land for both men and women. Reducing gender inequalities in access to land resources will ensure improved management and utilization of land resulting in increased and sustainable agricultural production.
- Removing the impediments faced by women in business and proactively promoting the participation of women in trade will boost exports and revenue for the country. Thus, incorporating and implementing comprehensive strategies of gender mainstreaming into the national trade policy will facilitate fair involvement of women and youth in trade.
- Establishing suitability zones for production of different crops in which crop and agro-ecosystems match, as well as designing and promoting strategies to ensure production according to crop suitability will increase adoption of appropriate ecosystem management practices for sustainable land and water resources use and ultimately improve food security.

### THE CHALLENGE

Deterioration of food security and ecosystem degradation in Uganda is escalating. For instance, the country's Food Security Indices for 2014, 2015, and 2016 are 45.6, 42.8, and 44.2, respectively (GFSI, 2014; 2015; & 2016), while the annual soil nutrient depletion is 87 Kg (38N; 17P & 32K) of nutrients per hectare (MAAIF, 2014); and the annual cost of loss of soil nutrient due to erosion was estimated at about US\$ 625 million per year (NEMA, 2009). In addition, wetlands cover shrunk by 12.3% between 1999 and 2008, i.e., from 30,000 Km<sup>2</sup> to 26,308 Km<sup>2</sup>. (NEMA, 2011). This deterioration imposes a huge cost on the country's economy.

For instance, wetlands destruction alone costs Uganda nearly 2 billions shs annually, and contamination of water resources, which is partly caused by reduced buffering capacity of open water bodies, costs the country nearly 38 billion shs annually (NEMA, 2011).

### THE APPROACH

A major approach to mitigate this trend of ecosystem degradation is to understand and address the gaps in the complex inter-relationship existing between food trade, agriculture, ecosystem management, gender and food security; a relationship that evidently lacks coordination and holistic representation in the various policies addressing ecosystem management and food security.

Thus, Kilimo Trust together with other institutions in East Africa<sup>1</sup> led a review of how relevant policies and agricultural production systems influence regional trade as well as on how the inter-linkages between agriculture production systems, gender and the state of ecosystems influence food security in the EAC region. In Uganda, two

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Implementing  
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Kenya Agricultural & Livestock  
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Agro Ecological Zones (AEZs), i.e., Kyoga Plain and Southern Montane, were used as case studies, while the national policies and strategies under trade, agriculture, environment, land and water were reviewed.

## THE EVIDENCE

### Gaps in national policies hamper sustainable management of ecosystems and gender equality

- Environment is inadequately embedded in the national trade policy, which does not address ecosystem concerns.
- There is no valuation of ecosystem services to guide production of food staples; and neither the environment nor trade frameworks have mechanisms of attaching ecosystem value in pricing and marketing of agricultural goods and services.
- There is ad hoc and insufficient collaboration and management of land resources among public sector institutions, which hinders optimal, productive and sustainable management and use of land resources.
- Weak enforcement of rights of women and other marginalized groups on access to and control of land is eminent.
- Gender mainstreaming is weak in the national trade policy.

### GIS databases and maps show that crop production does not match agro-ecological suitability

- Production of food staples does not necessarily match agro-ecological suitability. For example, over 80% of arable land under the southern Montane (Kabale and Kisoro districts) is marginally suitable for bush bean production, but the crop is widely grown in the area.
- Crop production under unsuitable agro-ecologies increases the need for inputs such as water and nutrients for the crops' growth, but far beyond what the environment can provide. This subsequently exacerbates degradation of the ecosystem services. To the contrary, producing under suitable areas is capable of providing significant productivity increases and enhanced ecosystem services (FAO, 2011).

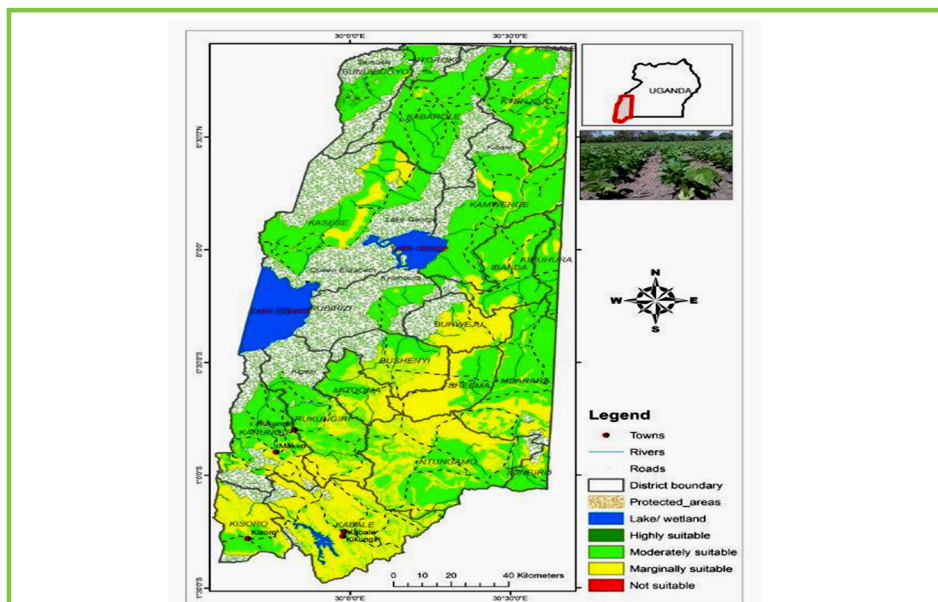


Fig 1: Rain fed bush beans suitability map for Southern Montane AEZ



Fig 2: Sustainable Land use through intercropping



Fig 3: Soil erosion due to poor land management

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