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## → Policy brief

# Promoting sustainable access to markets for the Southern African Development Community Member States

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a regional economic community comprising 16 Member States: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Figure 1). The SADC Vision 2050 is to be a peaceful, inclusive, competitive, middle- to high-income industrialized region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice and freedom. The main objectives of SADC are to achieve economic development, peace and security, and growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of its people and support the socially disadvantaged through Regional Integration. Under the economic development theme and through the establishment of a SADC common market, SADC aims to facilitate trade and financial



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liberalization, establish competitive and diversified industrial development, increase investment, and eradicate poverty (SADC, 2020). Both intra and interregional trade occur in the SADC region comprised of different sectors. The total aggregated SADC real gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated at 59.44 percent. Sector-wise, agriculture is a major source of exports in several SADC Member States, contributing approximately 13 percent to total export earnings and 66 percent to intraregional trade. It is also regarded as strategic to industrialization, political stability and socioeconomic growth, contributing between 4 and 27 percent of GDP in the different Member States, with 70 percent of the region's population depends on agriculture for food, income and employment. However, transboundary plant pests threaten food and nutrition security and adversely affect the trade and competitiveness of the agricultural sector of countries in the region. Trade in the region has grown in recent years with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reporting a quadruple growth between 2020 and 2011 from USD 91 089.52 million to USD 353 636.4 million respectively. Petroleum oils, agricultural products, electricity and textile products form the main intra-SADC trade export items. Mineral resources remain the major exports to the rest of the world with Asia-Pacific (45 percent), and the European Union market (27) being the top markets for SADC. While the great potential for regional trade integration exists, SADC like many other regional economic blocks and Africa in general, have several obstacles (Box 1) that limit its achievement.

Under Pillar 1 (Industrial Development and Market Integration) of the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), 2020–2030 comprises efforts directed toward realizing an industrialized regional economy that utilizes its natural resources sustainably. Key focus areas include priority sectors of agroprocessing, mineral beneficiation, and pharmaceuticals. The transformation of the agricultural sector to promote sustainable management of the environment and natural resources, while ensuring productivity and improved market access for agro-products

is another priority. The RISDP also aims at deepening efforts toward the free movement of goods, services, and skills, with increased attention to strengthening cooperation and coordination among the Member States in the tourism sector and ensuring macroeconomic convergence, increased financial integration, monetary cooperation, and investment. The findings of an online needs assessment conducted in the first phase of the Support Towards the Operationalization of the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy Project (STOSAR) in 2021 showed that Member States required support in understanding the feasibility and practical applications of International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) publications, ISPM 4 and ISPM 10 for market access in the region.

## Global and regional frameworks on market access

Figure 1. Map of Southern African Development Community



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries.  
Source: SADC Secretariat



## BOX 1: OBSTACLES AND BARRIERS TO REGIONAL TRADE INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

### 1. Trade infrastructure

- Inadequate infrastructure connectivity (transport and communication), costly and unreliable power/energy.
- The absence of appropriate regulatory frameworks and the inadequacy of infrastructure have hampered the uptake of ICTs in Africa; the high cost of the internet (broadband and satellite) has limited access to export markets.

### 2. Productivity capacity

- Limited production capacity by many firms and farmers affects the proper utilization of market access opportunities in many African countries.
- Problems adjusting to policy changes, shortages of working capital, policy imposed distortions, and delays in getting inputs due to poor trade related infrastructure.
- Inefficient technologies (production processes, management practices, organizations structures, seeds and agronomic practices etc.).

### 3. Non-Tariff barriers, rules of origin and regulatory policies

- Web of non-tariff barriers (time delays and hassles involved in trade facilitation services) further constrains private business and trade.
- Complex and lengthy procedures regulating private business activity.
- Complex customs arrangements.
- Restrictive rules of origin, and limited regional harmonization of policies, regulations, and procedures.
- Poor transit systems and numerous informal roadblocks along trade corridors create additional obstacles.

### 4. Implementation of regional trade agreements (RTAs) and multiple (overlapping) memberships in regional economic communities (RECs)

- A small fraction of the RECs has achieved their targets for trade among members; similarly, few have undertaken concerted efforts towards common labour laws, free movement of labour, and rights of residence and establishment.
- Many countries are also lagging on almost all critical elements necessary for the success of the next integration phases, such as customs and monetary unions. For example, SADC has postponed the creation of the customs union.
- Overlapping memberships and responsibilities of the RECs constrain the effectiveness of Africa's own efforts to achieve progress in integration.
- Inadequate mandates, capabilities, insufficient and unpredictable funding and weak capacity by RECs limit their ability to take lead role in successful regional cooperation and integration.

### 5. External market access and trade policy

- Differences in the market access treatment and associated rules of origin that apply in major export markets have implications for integration efforts among African countries.

Source: Mbekeani, K. K. 2013. [Understanding the barriers to regional trade integration in Africa](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/September_2013_-_Understanding_the_Barriers_to_Regional_Trade_Integration_in_Africa.pdf). Tunisia. The African Development Bank. [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/September\\_2013\\_-\\_Understanding\\_the\\_Barriers\\_to\\_Regional\\_Trade\\_Integration\\_in\\_Africa.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/September_2013_-_Understanding_the_Barriers_to_Regional_Trade_Integration_in_Africa.pdf)



The WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) sets out the basic rules on how governments can apply food safety and animal and plant health measures (sanitary and phytosanitary or SPS measures) to protect health and facilitate trade.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that entered into force on 30 May 2019 seeks to create a single continental market for goods and services and is expected to enhance continental market access, while the SADC Free Trade Area offers similar benefits to its members although South Africa leads in exports to other SADC countries.

## Market access

### A phytosanitary perspective

Globally, trade in plants and plant products is increasing both in volume and in complexity. With the growth in trade, the risk of pest introductions and spread is also increased. This threatens food and nutrition security, adversely affecting the agricultural sector's trade and competitiveness nationally, regionally and internationally. It also increases the challenge for plant health regulatory authority in any country in facilitating the international movement of plants and plant products. Against this background, gaining market access by any country requires a balance between the importance of trade flows and the need to protect plant resources from quarantine pests. To help address some of these challenges, The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) framework has been developed to prevent the introduction and spread of pests while being as least trade-restrictive as possible (FAO, 2013). It covers the rights and obligations of national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) as they apply to facilitation of safe trade in plants and plant products; a practical guide for achieving market access; and maintaining trade.

## Importance of IPPC market access guide to NPPOs

- Trade creates new opportunities and welfare for countries.
- Phytosanitary issues are key factors in the decisions on allowing trade.
- Phytosanitary import requirements need to be established in a transparent and participatory way.
- It increases the capacity of the IPPC membership to undertake the necessary procedures to negotiate market access.

## Gaining market access in the SADC

### a) Phytosanitary perspective for market access

The agreed interpretation for phytosanitary measures is, 'any legislation, regulation or official procedure having the purpose to





## BOX 2: ACHIEVING MARKET ACCESS. COMPONENTS OF MARKET ACCESS PROPOSAL

1. In some cases, gaining market access can involve a straight forward process while in other circumstances the process can be protracted.
2. The complexity of the process will reflect the nature and the level of phytosanitary risks the importing country might be exposed to, and whether regulatory measures are available to address those risks.
3. A written submission from the relevant government authority of the exporting country to the counterpart agency of the importing country or in some cases a request for an import permit from one country to another originating from industry or government sources initiates the process.
4. Information that countries commonly request upon receipt of a market access proposal includes:
  - proposed commodity/plants;
  - production area;
  - production and cultivation;
  - pests associated with the proposed commodity;
  - post-harvest management;
  - current export programme;
  - results of pest risk analysis (PRA) carried out in other countries and
  - relevant references.

Once the submission is lodged with the target country, a consultation phase between both parties will most likely follow.

prevent the introduction or spread of quarantine pests, or limiting the economic impact of regulated non-quarantine pests' (FAO, 2021). The term is well defined in the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) number 5 Glossary of phytosanitary terms. ISPMs are standards adopted by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM), which is the governing body of the IPPC. They help to: protect sustainable agriculture and enhance global food security; protect the environment, forests and biodiversity and facilitate economic and trade development.

Phytosanitary measures are key for market access to demonstrate compliance of plant products to new markets.

### b) The WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

The WTO SPS Agreement is an agreement on how governments can apply food safety, animal health and plant health measures without unnecessarily becoming obstacles to trade (WTO, 1994).

Concerning plant health, the SPS Agreement allows countries to set their measures to protect their economy or environment from damage caused by the entry, establishment or spread of pests (FAO, 2017). This agreement encourages countries to use international standards, guidelines and recommendations when developing their SPS measures as guided under Article 3 of the SPS Agreement. The agreement applies to all SPS measures that may affect directly or indirectly international trade. In recognition of the possible challenges encountered by least developed countries to comply with SPS measures, this agreement allows for a phased introduction of new measures, when appropriate, to allow exports to continue with minimal interruption while aiming to meet the appropriate level of protection needed to safeguard human, plant and animal health.

Various instruments facilitate the systematic evaluation of the SPS capacity in the member countries such as:



- Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization Codex Alimentarius and World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) standards guidelines to assess national food safety systems. These are WTO reference standards for international trade in food. For food safety, the SPS Agreement specifically recognizes the standards, guidelines and recommendations developed by the Codex Alimentarius, and for animal health and zoonoses, the SPS Agreement specifically recognizes the standards, guidelines and recommendations developed by the WOAH.
- The Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) was developed by the International Plant Protection Convention to conduct a situational analysis of the existing phytosanitary system, and to help the NPPO assess its progress over time in the implementation of the IPPC and the international standards on phytosanitary measures.
- Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) developed by the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) to empower national Veterinary Services by providing them with a comprehensive understanding of their strengths and weaknesses using a globally consistent methodology based on international standards

However, these standards and tools need to be incorporated into national legislation before they can be applied in workflows.

### c) Prioritizing SPS investments for market access (P-IMA) framework

The P-IMA framework helps to inform SPS decision-makers by engaging all the relevant stakeholders in a discussion of possible SPS investment needs, identifying and using decision criteria and weights to prioritize investment options and making transparent all the data and information utilized. It makes use of multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) to consider and evaluate decision criteria and prioritize a range of possible SPS investments (Henson, 2016).

It seeks to move towards greater efficiency in the use of scarce resources and to enhance the transparency and accountability of resource allocation decisions.

While decisions might still be made to pursue SPS investments that are not prioritized highly (e.g. for political or other reasons), using P-IMA makes transparent all the information on which priorities are established, and puts the onus on decision-makers to justify their choices. **Box 3** provides the guide on P-IMA.

#### BOX 3: GUIDING PRINCIPLES P-IMA

The P-IMA framework is based on four key principles:

**Flexibility:** It can be applied to as many potential capacity building needs as considered relevant, as well as diverse decision criteria that might be measured in distinct ways given available data.

**Pragmatism:** The design balances rigour in establishing priorities with the almost inevitable problem of scarce and/or weak data. The framework seeks to make use of the best data and information available. When new or better data become available, this can be easily incorporated.

**Participation:** Inputs are encouraged from stakeholders (e.g. government, private sector, research and academia) with an interest in strengthening SPS capacity.

**Transparency:** The framework makes clear the criteria and information on which priorities are established so that they are open to scrutiny and can be challenged.



## Steps in using the P-IMA framework

The P-IMA framework proceeds through a logical sequence of steps, which are outlined in **Figure 2**. Whilst no prior knowledge of MCDA is required, it is assumed that the framework is applied by a multidisciplinary team (the so-called “Working Group”), which in addition to SPS experts also includes some experts with basic knowledge of economic analysis principles. SPS stakeholders from the public and private sectors are engaged and consulted throughout the process (Henson, 2016) (**Figure 2**).

While the knowledge and awareness of a national SPS status are important, it is worth noting that for market access, there is no turnkey solution. Each situation, whether value chain, pest, country or region is context-specific and there will be variation depending on this from one country to the next in its implementation. In meeting the objective of SADC and the community's economic integration, NPPOs have a critical role in preventing the introduction and spread of pests while facilitating trade through market access. Evaluating the current capacity of NPPOs and properly resourcing them to the desired situation is one way of improving sustainable market access in the region. NPPOs will also be important in ensuring compliance with new market guidelines that are fluid and dynamic.



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Figure 1. Steps involved in using the P-IMA framework

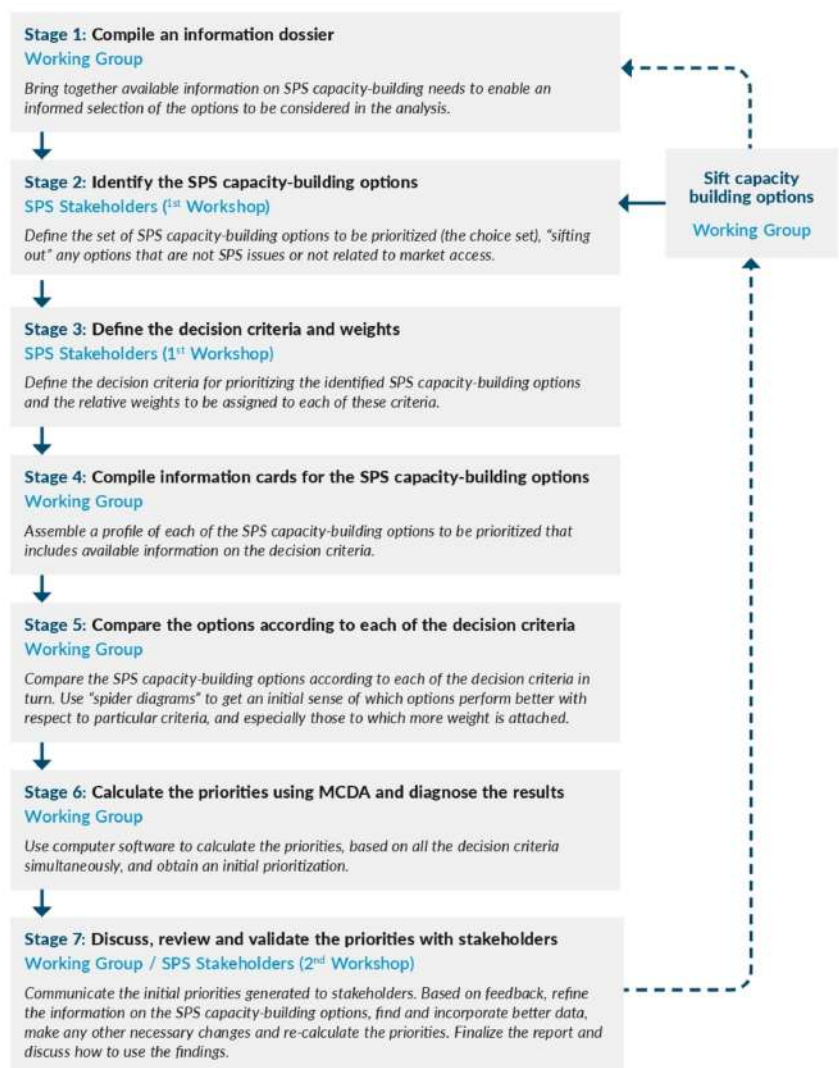


Figure 1. Steps involved in using the P-IMA framework. (Henson, S. 2016. Canada. Prioritizing SPS Investments For Market Access). <https://standardsfacility.org/prioritizing-sps-investments-market-access-p-ima>



## Recommendations

1. Implement the Africa Food Safety Strategy to reduce the occurrences of food safety hazards in tradeable plant products to attain continental standardization of food safety control systems and the overall improvement in food safety status by the Member States.
2. Harmonize technical regulations that restrict plants and plant products from market access if they do not meet certain standards.
3. Strengthen the capacity-building efforts of the SADC SPS committees to improve compliance of Member States to import and export conditions.
4. Increase awareness creation efforts of the AfCFTA as an incentive for promoting trade.
5. Engage the public and private sectors in ensuring the economic viability of market access for plants and plant products.
6. Facilitate resource mobilization for the effective implementation of the Plant Health Strategy for Africa (PHSA) as a tool for promoting market access.

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