The IGAD Minimum Integration Plan and Livestock

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THE IGAD MINIMUM INTEGRATION PLAN\(^1\) AND LIVESTOCK

At the formal legal and policy level, IGAD has had the vision and road map of Regional Economic Integration for over a decade now. As the 2003 IGAD Strategy puts it: “the trade programme has been focusing on coordinating the efforts of the Member States to gradually harmonize their trade practices and policies and eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade\(^2\). ... The long-term goal of the trade programme is the creation of an economic and customs union among the IGAD Member States.” The Strategy document goes a step further: “IGAD is convinced that this can only be accomplished in incremental stages. During the period of this strategy, IGAD will focus on changing and harmonizing the policies, procedures and standards necessary to foster an increase in trade among the Member States in two areas: grains and livestock.”\(^3\)

IGAD sees the livestock sector as a ‘pioneering’ sector for IGAD’s regional economic integration agenda. The IGAD region is widely accepted to have a significant comparative advantage in livestock and this initial focus is a response to both the quantity of livestock within its borders and to the trade and movement patterns across the region. Furthermore, livestock underpin the livelihoods of over 40 million of the region’s poor. Regional economic integration will therefore be structured in order to capitalize on the livestock sector’s potential. It is not realistic to expect regional integration of livestock sector policies to be delivered in isolation. Other areas of economic cooperation outside the livestock sector will also have to be addressed. Indeed, a free trade area, by definition, requires the elimination of duties and restrictive regulations of commerce on substantially all areas of trade.

\(^1\) The Minimum Integration Programme embodies the activities of the projects and programmes which the RECs need to implement to speed up and ensure the successful conclusion of the regional and continental integration process and IGAD’s road map therefore needs to focus on the two areas of grains and livestock.

\(^2\) The depth of integration varies from region to region. In response to its 2003 Strategy, reaffirmed by its 2008 Summit Meeting, IGAD will establish a Free Trade Area (FTA) among its members, as an intermediate step towards further economic integration. An FTA will require tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade to be largely eliminated within the region, though each country will still set its own tariffs with respect to third countries.

\(^3\) Grains and livestock are then described as “the most immediately critical agricultural products in terms of moving toward the achievement of food security within the Region. To this end, IGAD will focus its efforts during the first years of the strategy on the development of mutually accepted policies and procedures by the Member States necessary to facilitate a substantial increase in trade in the above-cited agricultural areas. This will include the establishment of mutually accepted quality standards, Phytosanitary standards, customs procedures and paperwork to ensure timely transactions and movement of commodities.”
Through its Livestock Policy Initiative (LPI), IGAD has taken many of the initial steps in implementing a livestock based IGAD minimum integration plan. This also responds to the premise that the IGAD minimum integration plan should take into account the strategic directives of IGAD’s 12th Ordinary Summit held in June 2008. During this Summit, IGAD Heads of State and Government gave IGAD the mandate to make an inventory of achievements made to date in terms of harmonization and regional integration and make recommendations on the way forward. IGAD LPI has been involved in the process of developing a Policy Framework on Animal Health and Trade for the IGAD Region. This will be an agreement between IGAD member states on common, regional objectives that they will then work towards through the development of national policies. The process is now maturing and IGAD on behalf of LPI are convening IGAD’s livestock ministers in December 2009 to agree a fairly comprehensive framework of harmonized policies, in the context of regional economic integration. This is IGAD’s first tangible step towards meeting the revitalized mandate it was given in June 2008. The development of the Regional Policy Framework on Animal Health will, in itself, be an important step towards the development of an IGAD Free Trade Area for two reasons: the harmonization of policies is an essential step in delivering a FTA, and conversely the existence of an FTA is likely to increase the benefits of harmonizing policies.

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4 Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is implementing the IGAD Livestock Policy Initiative in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) and with the financial support of the European Commission (EC). The IGAD-LPI’s purpose is to strengthen the capacity in IGAD, its member states, and other regional organisations and stakeholders, to formulate and implement livestock sector and related policies that sustainably reduce food insecurity and poverty.

5 The IGAD minimum integration plan should take into account the strategic directives of IGAD’s 12th Ordinary Summit held in June 2008 among which IGAD Heads of State and Government gave IGAD the mandate to: Implement the sub regional plan of NEPAD on environment; Launch a process of harnessing natural resources for sustainable development; Start the regional launching of renewable energies and the protocol on security strategy in order to mitigate the effects of global oil prices; Implement the recommendations of the Declaration on high prices of food products; Make an inventory of achievements made to date in terms of harmonization and regional integration and make recommendations on the way forward; Elaborate and implement regional integration and policies designed to make IGAD an effective pillar of the AU.

6 Although the overall policy framework will be agreed at the regional level, it is the member states that drive the process by developing national positions, which will then be harmonized at the regional level.
To reach the objective of a FTA, it will be necessary to establish capacity within IGAD to convene and coordinate expertise and decision making at the regional level. The institutional demands on IGAD of delivering on their regional economic integration agenda are considerable. As the IGAD secretariat’s livestock arm, IGAD LPI currently provides that capacity, though the function will need to evolve from a project approach to one more deeply embedded in IGAD’s structure. The regional cooperation and harmonization that IGAD has put in place now sets the foundation for a more detailed work-plan, in order to economically integrate the livestock sector regionally. Specifically this will involve working with member states to:

- Gradually reduce and eliminate import and export restrictions to trade amongst the member states, subject only to compliance with regionally-agreed health, environmental and other standards and quality control requirements;
- Harmonize customs procedures and formalities to ensure speedy movement of products, services and people across borders;
- Agree health, environmental and other standards at the regional level which are effective but which are also proportional and do not unduly restrict trade; and
- Establish a system for mutual recognition, then gradual harmonization, of national standards.