PRESS RELEASE

REGIONAL AGRI-MARKET ACCESS CONFERENCE SETS OFF AMIDST GROWING FOOD SECURITY CONCERNS IN AFRICA

NAIROBI, KENYA: Wednesday, 19 February 2014 - Informal markets and small holder farmers today had the spot light following the launch of the first Regional Agri-Market Access Conference (RAMAC). The two-day conference brings together local, regional, and international private, public and developmental sector players under the banner: ‘Unmasking the Engine of African trade: Informal Agri-Markets and Small Holder Commercialization; to discuss how informal markets drive African agri-trade, practical solutions for graduating small holder farmers from subsistence to market-led production as well as addressing the major barriers that inhibit their participation in various Agri-trade value chains.

Research by Farm Concern International (FCI), the organizers of RAMAC 2014, indicate that informal markets drive trade worth billions of dollars across Africa. It further notes that 60-90% of food trade in Africa is facilitated by these same markets. Speaking at the launch, Mr. David Ruchiu, Director, Africa Operations, FCI, said, “We are happy to have come this far with informal markets and small holder farmers. Investors in Africa are beginning to appreciate that smallholder farmers remain as the critical supply base for agri-value chain in Africa.”

RAMAC 2014 offers an interactive platform for attendants from across the agri-business spectrum, to use experiential learning to analyze issues affecting smallholders and informal markets and seek sustainable solutions. “We are counting on this conference to offer appropriate combinations of new dynamics and specific innovations required to sustain competitiveness of smallholder farmers and informal traders”, said Mumbi Kimathi, Director, Innovations & Strategy at FCI.
Institutionalizing smallholder farmers and informal markets, was highlighted at the conference as a key strategy to fighting the growing food insecurity in Kenya, and Africa. Small holder farmers are known to specialize in subsistence farming which leaves little or nothing for trade. However, FCI interventions indicate that smallholder farmers have capacity to feed their nations and export the surplus. This was further underscored by experiences of Uchumi and Zucchini, supply chains that are highly supported by small holder farmers. The FCI pro-poor business models and developed strategic alliances have already enhanced agri-economic growth across several countries in Africa. “Our partnership with FCI in the Domestic Horticultural Markets project (DOHOMA) has allowed us to reach over 110,000 small holder farmer households in 4 countries in Africa. These are just but a fraction of the Millions of smallholder farmer households in Africa, directly benefiting from FCI’s pro-poor business models and strategic partnerships such as ours,” said Alesha Black, Senior Program Officer, Agriculture, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The RAMAC 2014 is grounded on the premise that small holder farmers and informal markets hold the keys to Africa’s food security concerns. With increased understanding on the role of informal trade in driving the Agricultural value chains in Africa, it is expected that trade systems and innovations will be developed to support this growing industry. Accordingly, these systems will aid our farmers to tap into the emerging domestic, regional and international opportunities by forming partnerships as a proven approach to unlock the commercial potential of small holder farmers.

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ABOUT FCI

Farm Concern International (FCI), is an Africa-wide Commercialization and Market Development Agency. FCI implements pro-poor business models and develops strategic alliances to enhance Agri-economic growth across several countries in Africa. We have extensive local, regional and Africa-wide experiences on market research, value chain analysis, smallholder commercialization and market development. FCI supports over 2.2 Million smallholder farmer households in Africa. Please find more on FCI from: www.farmconcern.org