

Africa urged to boost trade for food security

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LUSAKA (Reuters) - African countries should increase farm trade amongst themselves to guarantee food security and boost incomes on the world's poorest continent, East Africa Farmers' Federation (EAFF) President Philip Kiriro says.

He told Reuters in an interview in Lusaka late on Monday that Africa would continue battling to penetrate markets in developed countries.

"The issue of food security is linked to incomes and what we should be targeting is to improve African farmers' markets within the continent," Kiriro said on the sidelines of an International Food and Agricultural Policy Council (IPC) summit.

Kiriro said annual trade within the 19-member Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) represents \$7.5 billion, of which 40 percent or \$3 billion is in agriculture.

Penetrating international markets would remain difficult mainly because of regulations and non-tariff barriers.

"There will be no transparent liberalisation in the big markets in Europe because the market is always crowded with undisclosed interests and we need to change emphasis by focusing on our own markets," Kiriro said.

Farming had the potential to contribute significantly to the development of Africa and more should be invested in improving infrastructure like roads for easier access to markets.

Increased trade within the continent would also help in developing Africa's capacity to do business in more developed markets.