

## SmartFish Trade Event 2014: A true platform for concrete meetings and exchanges in Africa

Entebbe, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 – Since yesterday, one hundred delegates from 13 countries - Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the SmartFish Trade Event 2014. The event is being hosted by Uganda and was officially opened by the Minister of Agriculture, Animal, Industry and Fisheries and the European Union.

This event brought together producers, traders, retailers and distributors and aims to promote regional trade. The event provides an opportunity for fish traders in the region, encourages value-added products and the emergence of new products.

*"The SmartFish Trade Event is proving itself as a productive forum for regional producers and traders – they are actually making deals!"* said Chris Short, Fish Trade Specialist for the SmartFish Programme. *"However, more importantly they get to see what others are doing in terms of value-addition, packaging and labelling, product development and also the various challenges for specific markets and products"*, he concluded.

The fisheries sector is important to most of the countries in the Eastern Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean region (ESA-IO). As a group, all these countries produce about 1.9 million tonnes of fish products every year, representing about 23%<sup>1</sup> of Africa's total fishery production. In total, only 4.3% of the value of fish imports comes from the ESA-IO region, while only approximately 1.2% of the value of exports goes to countries in the region. This clearly indicates a need to encouraged fish trade in the region.

During this important meeting, various products is being presented in various forms, such as dried, salted, smoked, powdered, fried, fresh and frozen varieties. From one participant to the next, the packaging is different, each producer being careful to present their products in the best possible light. There are many types of freshwater sardines being presented, as well as Nile Perch, tilapia, octopus, rabbit fish, mud crabs and various other products.

An association of women from Lake Turkana (Kenya) participated to the event: Christine Auma explained that they are now exporting to DRC. *"This event is helping us to get new markets in DRC but also to network with other traders and learn from their experiences to better cope with the challenges we face."*

The SmartFish Trade Event continues to grow and will be developed further in the coming months to ensure that up-and-coming producers and traders will get a chance to expand their knowledge and their opportunities in the region.

SmartFish is one the biggest regional fisheries Programme in Africa. It is implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission jointly with FAO and is funded by the European Union.

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<sup>1</sup> The Trade Assessment Study, SmartFish Programme - 2011