

# Intra- Regional Trade in Staple Foods in Eastern and Southern Africa: Does Trade Protection Still Exist?

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**Abstract:** This study accesses tariff protection measures for selected staples food products among COMESA member countries and their key regional trading partners from Eastern and Southern Africa. The staple foods products analyzed include: maize grain, rice grain, dry legumes, live bovine animals, milk and cream, bovine meat, fish and crustaceans, tomatoes, maize flour, wheat flour, cassava and onions. Average tariffs are ranked while existence of tariff peaks, tariff escalation and other non-transparent tariffs, particularly specific tariffs are analysed. The study finds that staple food products import protection exists in terms of high tariffs (tariff peaks), tariff escalation and specific duties (in some years). EAC Partner State countries of Tanzania, Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Kenya have the highest protection for their staple food markets. Staple food product exports from Congo D.R., Djibouti, Sudan and South Africa face most severe restrictions in terms of import tariff barriers in intra-regional trade. On average maize, rice and milk products are the most protected staple foods with high tariffs. Tariff escalation exists for meat, wheat, maize, rice and related products. For an improved food security through increased food products' trade, it is recommended that countries in the region facilitate and increase intra-regional staple foods trade by eliminating existing tariffs on imports of staple food products from the region; eliminating high tariffs and tariff escalation; and encouraging value addition of staple foods traded in the region.

**Index Terms:** COMESA, intraregional trade, tariff protection, Staple food products, food security

## 1.0 Background

Regional integration can contribute to food security through regional trade integration and through cooperation in regional initiatives both of which can improve availability, access, sustainability and safety of food. Towards this end, cooperation in the field of agriculture including the adoption of a common agricultural policy, enhancement of regional food sufficiency, cooperation in the export of agricultural commodities, and enhancement of rural development among other agricultural cooperation areas remain important specific undertakings towards achieving the aims and objectives of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). The importance of regional trade integration in addressing regional food security is indeed evident in COMESA's implementation of programmes to enhance regional cross border trade through its Cross Border Trade Reform Programme.

The process of integration and trade liberalization in COMESA has been cumulative leading to the adoption of a Customs Union in 2009 with common external tariffs (CET) set at 0 percent, 5 percent, 15 percent and 30 percent on capital goods, raw materials, intermediate goods and final goods respectively. By 2012, fourteen (14) of the 19 COMESA member countries were part of the COMESA Free Trade Area (FTA) trading on duty-free bases with the non-FTA members trading on reduced duty basis. Although trade liberalization in COMESA has led to an increase in intra-regional trade in general, intra-regional trade in staple food products in the region has remained low, accounting for about 12 percent of the total staple food products imports in the region.

Some progress has been made with respect to tariff and non-tariff liberalization under COMESA integration process but general trade restrictiveness still exists in the region. Restrictiveness varies from one country to another and from one product to another. Ad hoc application of export and import quantitative restriction measures by COMESA member countries combined with other non-tariff measures limit intra-regional trade in staple food products. This has acted to diminish the gains expected from the COMESA Regional Trading Arrangement (RTA), especially those related to increased food security.

Production of staple foods for the expanding urban markets and rural areas with food deficit presents a growth opportunity for the region's rural areas. This opportunity remains unexploited due to political and physical boundaries that separate food surplus regions from food deficit ones. These barriers and the associated trade protectionist measures often lead to price collapse in surplus areas during periods of high production and price hikes in food deficit areas during periods of low production leading to limited availability and access to food. To address these concerns, it is necessary to encourage and facilitate cross-border trade by reducing and ultimately eliminating barriers to trade. An important step towards this direction is to assess the existence and or the level of such barriers.

## 1.2 Objectives of the study

The Purpose of this study is to assess tariff protection measures for selected food staples among COMESA member countries and their key regional trading partners on bilateral bases. The staple foods analyzed include: maize grain, rice grain, dry legumes, live bovine animals, milk and cream, bovine meat, fish and crustaceans, tomatoes, maize flour, wheat flour, cassava and onions.

The countries analyzed comprise nineteen (19) COMESA member countries of Burundi, Comoros, Congo D.R, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. COMESA member countries key staple food trading partners from Eastern and Southern Africa analyzed include Mozambique, Tanzania and Southern Africa. The 'region', therefore, as used in this study refers to the 19 COMESA member countries plus these three additional countries making a total of 22 countries (COMESA plus). More specifically, this study analyses the existence of various tariff based protection measures in staple food products trade between the above countries.

## 2.0 Literature view

Various studies have shown that COMESA countries are protected by both tariffs and non-tariff protection measures. Policies, regulations and laws such as import and export tariffs, quantitative restrictions including import/export quotas, import/export bans, voluntary export restraints (VERs), production and export subsidies and foreign exchange rates have often been used in COMESA as protection measures. Laws and regulations used to achieve the objectives of protectionism include anti-dumping and countervailing measures (applied as escape clauses and safeguards), export and import licensing, export and import permits and national patenting systems. Regulations with respect to compliance with standards including food safety, environmental standards, and electrical safety can also become administrative barriers to trade, thereby becoming de-facto trade protection mechanisms.

In addition to these formal protectionism measures, requirements such as customs and transit procedures, roadblocks and weighbridges may also lead to delays in trade processes, thereby creating administrative barriers to trade and acting as protectionist practices.

### 2.1. General Tariff Protection

Compared to the rest of the World, trade in COMESA countries is relatively more restricted and heterogeneous. Dimaranan, and Mevel, (2008) showed that COMESA countries were more restrictive compared to the rest of the world. Similar findings are also made by Nzuma et al., (2009) who finds that average tariffs in COMESA are relatively higher than in non-COMESA countries. The World

Bank(2010) also shows that in general, trade in COMESA member countries are more trade restrictive compared to other countries globally.

Nzuma et al., (2009) and Dimaranan, and Mevel, (2008) found the applied average tariffs for COMESA to be 16 percent, while (World Bank 2010) found that for the period 2006-2009 this stood at 13.2 percent. While Dimaranan, and Mevel, (2008) found that the least restrictive countries in COMESA were Madagascar, Swaziland, and Uganda, World (2010) showed that based on average applied tariffs in the region, the least restrictive countries in COMESA were Mauritius, Swaziland and Seychelles.

## 2.2 Sectoral Tariff Protection

Nzuma et al., (2009) and Dimaranan and Mevel, (2008) observe heterogeneity in trade restrictiveness across sectors within various countries in COMESA, with some countries having small and others having large variations. Egypt, Seychelles, Mauritius, Zimbabwe and Swaziland were the only countries found to have a coefficient of variation of the applied tariff rates of greater than 1, across all goods. Dimaranan, and Mevel, (2008) compare average tariff protection for aggregate food and agriculture products and non-agricultural sectors in COMESA and observe a pattern of higher protection in the agricultural sector. They find that for most countries, the average tariff for agricultural and food products are 31 percent.

Protection through specific duties has also been observed (Nzuma et al., 2009; World Bank 2010). World Bank (2010) show that specific duty is mostly used in Zimbabwe with a frequency ratio of non-advalorem tariffs (percentage of all lines) being about 6.5 percent. Zimbabwe was followed by Mauritius and Swaziland in use of specific duty. High tariffs or international tariff peaks (tariffs which are above 15 percent) are also found to exist in COMESA, with Djibouti having the largest proportion of her goods with tariffs above 15 percent and with these products accounting for about 72 percent of all goods. (Former) Sudan has over 50 percent of her goods on a tariff level of over 15 percent and Comoros has the lowest proportion of its goods on a tariff rate above 15 percent.

Nzuma et al.,(2009) also confirm the use of tariff rate quotas (TRQ) in COMESA. The share of agricultural products subjected to tariff rate quota, however is limited as all COMESA countries showed insignificant use of TRQ in the agricultural sector in comparison to all imports (World Bank 2010). Some countries in COMESA however used TRQ especially under the COMESA safeguard measures. Kenya applied TRQ on imports of sugar from COMESA (Southern African Competitiveness Hub, 2008) and on imports of wheat (Gitau et. al., 2011).

Tariff escalation is also shown to exist in the region (World Bank, 2010). FAO (2003) observed positive tariff escalation in Uganda particularly on the manufacture of foodstuffs, beverages, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, and wood and wood products. Tariff escalation in COMESA has also been cited by Karingiet. al., (2006) and Khandelwal (2004).

## 2.3 Non-tariff Protection Measures in COMESA

An account of non-tariff barriers and measures, and policies restricting trade especially in COMESA countries is documented by several authors including Govereh, (2007); Nyoro et. al., (2007); FAO (2009); Jayne et. al., (2009); Karugiaet. al., (2009); Tripartite Coordination Mechanism (2009), Viljoen (2011); and Kirk (2010). The non- tariff measures commonly cited in the above studies include export and import bans, restrictive trade policies, and licensing and technical barriers to trade; particularly standards. Trade in specific foods particularly trade in maize, is controlled through licensing and regulation of exports or imports, with tendering process being an important tool.

The most common non-tariff barriers in COMESA, EAC and SADC (Tripartite Coordination Mechanism, 2009) include: restrictive single channel marketing, un harmonized trade regulations, non-acceptance of certificates and trade documentation, cumbersome visa requirements, national food security restrictions, transiting procedures and road blocks and business registration and licensing. Non-standard customs documentation and administrative procedures and cumbersome licensing of export and import licensing or permit requirement; technical barriers to trade including duplicated processes due to functions of agencies involved in quality, quantity of dutiable import or export; quality inspection procedures, unnecessary import bans and quotas, quantitative restrictions, temporary bans on selected products and charges in roads and border tolls are all common non tariff barriers existing in COMESA, EAC and SADC.

Non-tariff measures specifically affecting staple food products in COMESA are: import bans, quotas and levies which affect wheat, wheat flour, maize and meat. Import permits and levies affect livestock and maize, while single market channels affect wheat, maize, meat and dairy intra regional trade. Rules of origin affect wheat flour while export taxes affect dried beans, live animals, maize, wheat and beef, with standards affecting maize, milk and meat (Viljoen, (2011).

## 3.0 Methodology

This study uses tariff-based protection measures to investigate if or not trade protection for staple food products exists in COMESA member countries and their major trading partners in the region.

Average tariffs are ranked while existence of tariff peaks, tariff escalation and other non-transparent tariffs, particularly specific tariffs is analyzed for some 12 selected staple products traded among 22 countries who are COMESA member countries and their major

food products trading partners (COMESA plus).The staple food products analyzed include: maize grain, rice grain, dry legumes, live bovine animals, milk and cream, bovine meat, fish and crustaceans, tomatoes, maize flour, wheat flour, cassava and onions.

In total 22 countries are studied including: Burundi, Comoros, Congo D.R, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Other countries that trade heavily in food products with COMESA members analyzed are Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa.Bilateral staple food products trade data analyzed used is for the year 2009.Trade value and tariff levels for the 12 products at Harmonised System (HS) 6-digit level was obtained from UN TRAINS and was accessed through WITS data access system.

#### 4. Results and discussion

##### 4.1 Tariff protection of general agricultural products

Our estimation results for general tariff protection in the region are reported in Table 1. Tariffs for agriculture and food products in the region are much higher than those for non-agricultural products with average tariffs of about 7.3 and 4.7 percent, respectively.On average; a larger proportion of intra-regional trade in agricultural and food products is dutiable and is subject to specific duty than imports of non-agricultural goods. In agricultural and non- agricultural product sectors, there is protection through tariff peaks (i.e.tariffs above 15 percent). The staple foods analyzed show a higher average tariff with a larger proportion being dutiable compared to the general agricultural and food products.

**Table 1: Intra-regional protection in Agriculture and Non-Agricultural products (2009)**

Trade description	Tariff rate (%)				Proportion (%)		No. of Int'l Peaks
	Simple Ave.	Weighted Ave.	Min Rate	Max Rate	Dutiable	Specific duty	
Agri- foods intra-regional	7.3	10.5	0	75	39.6	4.4	2048
Non- agricultural- intra regional	4.7	2.7	0	60	25.1	0.03	8984
Intra-regional staple foods	7.4	28.9	0	75	64.0	0.01	206

Source: Authors' estimates using UNTRAINS (2011)

Our results on tariff protection are in agreement with the findings of Dimaranan, and Mevel, (2008); Nzuma et al,(2009); and World Bank (2010).

##### 4.2 Tariff protection on country basis

Table 1 summarizes the average import tariff rates charged on aggregate staple food products imports from the 22 countries analyzed. The Table ranks 14 countries depending on the size of their average import duty on the staple food products imported in 2009. On average, of the 22 countries, Tanzania has the highest applied tariffs for the staple food products, while Swaziland has the lowest. All the staple foods imported from the region by Ethiopia were dutiable, while almost all imports by Swaziland and Mauritius were non-dutiable.

Results in Table 1further show that the key tariff protection measures applied on staple food products imports by various regional countries include tariff peaks and specific duty. It is evident that several countries had tariff peaks (tariffs above 15 percent) with the highest tariffs of 75 percent being charged by some EAC Partner State countries.

In the same breadth, a small proportion of imports by Comoros (about 3 percent of total staple food imports) had specific duties applied. In 2008, however, Djibouti, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa also applied specific duty on some staple food imports.

**Table 1: Average Tariffs Charged on Staple Food traded in the Region in 2009**

Rank	Importing country	Average tariff rate (%)			Proportion of imports (%)		No. of products with average tariff over 15%
		Simple	Weighted	Max	Dutiable	Specific duty	
1	Tanzania	23.7	19.0	75.0	60.2	0.0	58
2	Burundi	20.8	2.2	75.0	8.4	0.0	23
3	Ethiopia	15.9	10.4	30.0	100.0	0.0	12
4	Rwanda	7.9	1.9	75.0	3.7	0.0	44
5	Kenya	6.1	46.8	75.0	93.6	0.0	8

Rank	Importing country	Average tariff rate (%)			Proportion of imports (%)		No. of products with average tariff over 15%
		Simple	Weighted	Max	Dutiable	Specific duty	
6	Malawi	4.3	1.1	25.0	13.5	0.0	9
7	Madagascar	3.9	1.1	20.0	9.7	0.0	8
8	Zambia	2.7	0.3	25.0	2.3	0.0	21
9	Sudan	2.1	1.4	10.0	18.7	0.0	0
10	Mozambique	1.6	2.1	20.0	32.5	0.0	2
11	South Africa	1.3	3.0	30.0	28.4	0.0	1
12	Comoros	1.1	1.3	5.0	26.9	3.0	0
13	Mauritius	0.1	0.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0
14	Swaziland	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Average		7.4	29.0	206	64.0	0.01	

Source: Authors' estimates using TRAINS (2011)

We also estimated the average tariffs faced by different countries on exports of staple foods to other regional markets. The results are reported in Table 2. The results show that Congo D.R. (DRC) faced the highest average tariffs in the export of staple food products to the region, followed by Djibouti and Sudan. South Africa, however, faced the highest weighted average tariff on exports of staple foods in the region.

**Table2: Average Tariffs faced on Exports of Staple Foods (2009)**

Exporting country	Tariff rate (%)				No. of products (tariff lines)	No. of products with tariff peaks	Imports value ('000US\$)
	Simple average	Weighted average	Min	Max			
Congo, D.R.	20.5	0.1	0.0	60.0	13	5	927
Djibouti	19.4	12.6	0.0	27.0	7	5	570
Sudan	16.8	10.9	0.0	27.0	13	7	4920
South Africa	10.9	21.8	0.0	60.0	490	159	214518
Zambia	9.3	9.5	0.0	50.0	61	10	46605
Swaziland	8.7	2.4	1.0	18.0	4	1	132
Egypt.	8.1	1.7	0.0	60.0	61	10	14574
Zimbabwe	6.8	3.5	0.0	60.0	76	10	5294
Rwanda	5.8	6.2	0.0	20.0	26	2	7896
Burundi	3.6	0.5	0.0	20.0	7	1	62
Malawi	3.2	4.2	0.0	25.0	45	4	3852
Uganda	3.1	3.4	0.0	20.0	115	6	39593
Ethiopia	3.0	3.1	0.0	13.5	52	0	16299
Mozambique	2.8	0.2	0.0	25.0	46	4	41093
Kenya	2.4	0.7	0.0	30.0	151	8	20823
Madagascar	2.0	0.7	0.0	30	32	2	4335
Tanzania	1.8	0.1	0.0	25	125	7	29015
Mauritius	0.8	4.6	0.0	10	16	0	1096
Eritrea	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	1	0	119
Libya	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3	0	1025
Seychelles	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14	0	6032

Source: Authors' estimates using TRAINS (2011)

### 4.3 Tariff Escalation

Estimates of tariff escalation (tariffs increasing with processing) in COMESA are reported in Table 3. The results show that tariff escalation exists on trade in meat, wheat, maize and wheat-related products. Average tariffs applied on live bovine animals are far less than those applied on meat (whether fresh, chilled or frozen). It is also evident that the value of imports of live animals is much higher than those of bovine meat.

Average tariffs for flours of wheat and maize are also much higher than those of the respective grains, reflecting the level of protection existing in the member countries' respective milling industries.

**Table3: Tariff escalation**

Product Name	Tariff rate (%)				Import Value (US \$'000)
	Simple Ave.	Weighted Ave.	Min	Max	
<b>Meat products</b>					
Live bovine animals	2.8	2.2	0.0	25.0	13269.4
Meat of bovine animals, frozen	9.4	10.3	0.0	25.0	1113.5
Meat of bovine animals, fresh or chilled	12.3	7.2	0.0	30.0	2182.8
<b>Wheat</b>					
Durum wheat	0.7	0.1	0.0	5.0	1112.6
Wheat or meslin flour	16.3	2.1	0.0	60.0	19368.1
<b>Maize</b>					
Other (maize-other than seed)	9.8	46.2	0.0	50.0	330979.4
Maize (corn) flour	10.4	14.9	0.0	50.0	2606.1
<b>Rice</b>					
Rice in the husk (paddy or rough)	6.5	0.0	0.0	75.0	11601.9
Husked (brown) rice	13.3	0.0	0.0	75.0	2086.6
Broken rice	17.4	1.6	0.0	75.0	3159.9
Semi-milled or wholly milled rice, whether or not polished or glazed	17.8	0.4	0.0	75.0	12898.5

Source: Authors' own estimates using TRAINS (2011)

### 4.4 Tariff products on product basis

Estimates of intra-COMESA tariffs on staple foods are reported in Table 4. On average, the most protected staple foods in intra-COMESA trade based on simple average tariffs were milk and cream, wheat or meslin flour, and meat of bovine animals while the least protected were wheat, rice and cassava.

Much of the trade in live bovine animals is duty-free with about a third of it (29 percent of the total trade value) being dutiable. The average (simple) tariff applied in 2009 was 3.7 percent, and the tariff range was 0-25 percent. Three tariff lines (from South Africa) attracted a tariff of above 15 percent (international peaks). Countries charging import duty on live bovine animals in 2009 were Burundi, Comoros, Tanzania and Zambia.

**Table5: Intra-COMESA Staple Food Tariffs (2009)**

Food product	Tariff rate (%)				Proportion of imports (%)		No. of products with tariff peaks
	Simple Ave.	Weighted Ave.	Min	Max	Dutiable	With specific duty	
Milk and cream, not concentrated nor containing added sugar	13.2	8.9	0	60	43.4	0.0	23

	Tariff rate (%)				Proportion of imports (%)		No. of products with tariff peaks
	Simple Ave.	Weighted Ave.	Min	Max	Dutiable	With specific duty	
<b>Food product</b>							
Wheat or meslin flour	12.4	7.2	0	60	70.7	0.8	5
Meat of bovine animals, fresh or chilled	12.3	10.3	0	25	79.8	0.0	9
Milk and cream, concentrated or containing added sugar	11.0	4.1	0	60	42.5	0.0	45
Dried vegetables, whole, cut, sliced, broken or in powder, but not further prepared	10.4	14.1	0	31.5	67.7	45.7	20
Meat of bovine animals, frozen	9.4	7.2	0	30	60.5	0.0	8
Cereal flours other than of wheat or meslin	9.0	10.3	0	50	88.3	0.0	13
Onions and shallots	8.9	4.0	0	27	80.9	0.0	8
Tomatoes, fresh or chilled	7.1	0.7	0	27	50.8	0.0	3
Maize (corn)	5.8	24.7	0	50	56.3	0.0	9
Fish & crustacean, mollusk & other aquatic invertebrates	5.0	0.8	0	25	6.7	0.0	80
Live animals	4.8	1.3	0	30	21.0	0.0	40
Manioc (cassava)	3.9	1.1	0	25	11.1	0.0	1
Rice	3.1	2.1	0	15	20.9	0.3	4
Wheat and meslin	2.6	0	0	35	0.0	0.0	4

Source: Authors' own estimates using TRAINS (2011)

Intraregional trade in live bovine animals is mainly on duty free basis, with duty being applied by Burundi, Comoros, Tanzania and Zambia on imports from Tanzania, South Africa and Ethiopia. Results confirm that specific duty is not applied on live bovine animals traded in the region. The highest tariff rate of 25 percent was charged by Burundi and Tanzania imports of these products from South Africa. Ethiopia exports to Zambia faced a duty of 13.5 percent; about 90 percent of the MFN tariff rate for live bovine animals charged by Zambia. These results suggest some level of protection in the trade of live bovine animals by some member countries. In 2009 for instance, Tanzania, imported two products – pure-bred animals for breeding and other live bovine animals at duty rates of 0 percent and 25 percent respectively.

There is limited trade in fresh or chilled bovine meat in the region, which is mainly on duty free bases, with the dutiable imports only being those sourced from South Africa. Out of all the countries importing from South Africa in 2009, only Mauritius did not charge import duty on fresh, chilled or frozen bovine meat. Specific duty is not applied.

For frozen bovine meat, only imports from South Africa face import duty in Burundi, Malawi and Mozambique, with Burundi charging the highest duty at 25 percent.

For fish and crustaceans, only 5 countries (including Burundi, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia) in 2009 charged import duty on ad valorem bases, with the others trading duty-free in these commodities. Import markets were South Africa, Mauritius, Ethiopia, Uganda, DRC and Mozambique. The highest tariff in fisheries products of 25 percent are charged by EAC countries (Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania) on all imports from non-EAC member countries. Zambia also charged the same duty rate for similar imports from South Africa. Fisheries are therefore relatively more protected, with high tariffs.

Intra regional trade in milk and cream products (HS codes 0401 and 0402) are mostly on duty-free bases. For milk and cream (not concentrated nor containing added sugar), only imports from South Africa, Zimbabwe, DR Congo and Egypt face duty, with Burundi and Tanzania applying the highest duty rates. For milk and cream, concentrated or containing added sugar, more countries charge duty, with EAC member countries of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania charging the highest duties of 60 percent. Intra-EAC imports and intra COMESA FTA member countries imports on these products are traded only on duty-free bases.

Trade in onions in the region especially between EAC member countries and intra -COMESA FTA member countries is on duty-free basis. Trade between countries not in the same regional trading arrangement including between EAC countries and South Africa, Rwanda and DRC, Zambia and South Africa face duties, charged on ad valorem basis, with the highest duty of 25 percent being charged by EAC member countries on imports of onions from South Africa, DR. Congo and Zambia.

Results show that intra regional trade in cassava is limited with most of it being on a duty-free basis. In 2009 for example, the total intra-regional trade in COMESA amounted to about US\$ 0.6 Million with only Rwanda's imports from DRC attracting a duty of 25 percent.

Intra regional trade in dried legumes in the region is largely on duty-free bases. Countries applying duty on importation of these staple products from non-regional trading arrangement member countries include EAC countries, Madagascar, South Africa and Sudan. The highest tariff of 30 percent in 2009 was applied by South Africa on imports from Madagascar. Imports of dried legumes by EAC member countries from non-EAC countries were also high at 25 percent.

Intra regional trade in wheat (including durum wheat) is limited and mainly on duty-free bases. In 2009, only imports by Comoros from Tanzania attracted an import duty of 5 percent. Intra-regional trade in maize is relatively unrestricted through tariffs with most intra- COMESA FTA, EAC and SADC member countries trading on duty-free bases. The highest duty on maize imports in 2009 of 50 percent was applied by Kenya and Rwanda on imports from South Africa and DRC respectively. Findings also show that much of the trade on Wheat and Meslin flour is on duty-free bases, and with the highest duty of 60 percent applied by EAC countries.

Intra-regional trade in rice is mainly duty-free with EAC member countries applying highest tariffs of 75 percent on imports from extra-EAC and from non COMESA FTA member countries. Comoros charged specific duty on rice imports from Tanzania and South Africa. Trade on maize is also mainly on duty-free bases, with duty being applied on maize flour imports from DRC and South Africa by a few countries (including Burundi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Rwanda and Tanzania).

## 5.0 Conclusions and recommendations

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that although a lot of trade in major staple food products among Eastern and Southern Africa countries is duty free, trade protection in form of tariffs still exists. EAC countries apply the highest tariffs for some staple food products, when imported from non EAC Partner State and non COMESA FTA member countries. Countries charging the highest tariffs on staple food imports from the region are Tanzania, Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Kenya, with average tariffs of 23.7, 20.7, 25.9, 7.9 and 6.1 percent, respectively. Protection through application of specific duty is limited to rice (and by a few countries). High tariffs above 15 percent (tariff peaks) exist for maize, wheat, rice, milk and cream, sugar, among other products. Protection through tariff escalation particularly in meat, wheat, maize, rice and related products also exists in the region.

The 12 staple foods analyzed in this study are the most critical for food security in the Eastern and Southern Africa region. In order to improve food security through increased food trade, particularly food availability, access and safety, it is necessary that countries in the region facilitate and increase intra-regional trade in staple foods. Towards this end, the member countries should work to;

- i. Eliminate existing tariffs on imports of staple food imports from all countries in the region including South Africa, Congo D.R., Djibouti and Sudan, among others.
- ii. Eliminate the high tariffs (tariff peaks) on staple foods.
- iii. Eliminate tariff escalation.
- iv. Encourage local value addition of staple foods traded in the region.

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