

Trade hub improves competitiveness

By Booster Mogapi

GABORONE - The overall goal of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Southern Africa Trade Hub (SATH), is to increase international competitiveness, intra-regional trade and food security in the Southern Africa region.

Responding to a BOPA questionnaire, AGOA Trade Specialist, Mr Cosmas Mamhunze, said SATH delivers targeted technical assistance to governments, the private sector and civil society organisations in support of advancing regional integration and increasing the trade capacity of selected value chains within Southern Africa.

He said they are assisting more than 500 Southern African firms with advice and information about exporting to the US, including facilitating nearly 2000 buyer-seller relationships through trade shows, business to business events and buyer engagement.

Mr Mamhunze said their activities have benefited all 15 countries in SADC and as a regional programme, they work to ensure the effective implementation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Free Trade Area (FTA) by developing a monitoring mechanism for the agreement, working with member states to assist in their accession to the FTA.

He said they also help in identifying and redressing non-tariff barriers and supporting trade in services negotiations.

Mamhunze said SATH improves the regional trade and investment climate through addressing legal and regulatory constraints to increase foreign direct investment.

He further said they work to reduce time and cost of transporting goods across borders, by deploying proven trade facilitation tools such as integrated border management, one stop border posts, customs connectivity, port efficiency and authorised economic operators along key transport

corridors.

Mr Mamhunze said in 2010, Botswana generated revenue amounting to over P82 million from apparel exports, over P37 000 from chemicals and related products and about P22 000 from miscellaneous manufactured goods. He said in 2011 Botswana revenue exports in apparel increased to about P112 million and P11 million in miscellaneous manufactured goods that include jewellery, furniture, arts and crafts.

The AGOA specialist, said countries that use AGOA benefit in the sense that AGOA is a tariff preference programme covering over 6 500 products.

"This means eligible products benefit from duty-free and largely quota free access into the US market," he said.

Furthermore, he said, SATH acts as preferred partner of the World Customs Organisation and World Trade Organisation, to conduct studies on cross border trade and come with recommendations. **BOPA**