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## **PRESS RELEASE IV May 2005**

### **The Agriculture Sector is Disproportionately Affected by HIV and AIDS**

A group of 108 experts agreed that the HIV & AIDS pandemic is disproportionately affecting agriculture relative to other sectors. This is mainly because the structure of the agricultural sector, especially the smallholder sector, is less able to absorb the impacts of the human resource losses associated with the pandemic. Given the fact that about 70% of the population in most of the SADC countries depends on agriculture as a means of livelihood, HIV & AIDS will have far-reaching impacts in this sector, if not specifically checked.

The experts in the food, agriculture and natural resources sector (FANR) examined the results, findings, conclusions and recommendations of a FANRPAN-led two-year study of the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security in the seven countries of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The study was funded by the EU through the SADC regional secretariat HIV and AIDS programme.

The group recommended that the results and findings of the current studies should be used as a benchmark for a wider regional longitudinal study on the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security – to track the impact over a longer period. The group called for an urgent and intentional increase in governments' involvement in the design of new and innovative programmes and interventions to mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security in the SADC region in order to avert the looming “new variant famine”.

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