

**Meeting the Demand for Effective Food, Agriculture and Natural
Resources Policy Analysis in Southern Africa:**

Report on the FANRPAN Strategic Planning Workshop

The Farm Inn, Pretoria South Africa

26-27 September 2006

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1. FANRPAN: Creation and Renewal

A total of 35 experts met in Pretoria, South Africa to help FANRPAN position itself to meet the Demand for Effective Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis in Southern Africa. Participants consisted of stakeholders with experience in policy making (former Minister and former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture), Policy advisors, policy analysts from universities in the region, regional and international consultants in the FANR sector, representatives from CGIAR centres in the region, farmers and farmer organisations, the SADC, COMESA and NEPAD Secretariat, International donor organisations, as well as, social and scientific research institutions. Alongside the two-day workshop, the strategic planning core team members met with funding and technical partners from SIDA, DfID; USAID, IFDC; IFPRI; GECAFS, COMESA. The output of such a vast knowledge base cannot be under-estimated.

The Workshop was intended to re-position the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), in terms of institutional sustainability and ability to meet the demand for policy analysis in a rapidly changing environment. It was part of a process that began in June, 2006. Stakeholders from various sectors around southern Africa participated actively and passionately to help renew and reposition the network.

WHO NEEDS FANRPAN? FANRPAN was created out of the need for a strong and informed regional voice to support policy making in southern Africa. This need exists more than ever in a time of rapid economic, political and technical change in the region. New institutions have appeared that exert demands on the research and development agendas. Regional Economic Communities (SADC, COMESA) require analysis in support of efforts to plug Africa into regional and world markets. Africa-wide institutions (AU-NEPAD, FARA) and sub-regional organizations are creating frameworks for agriculture (CAADP, FAAP, and RISDP). All of these frameworks call for policy changes and the demand for policy analysis is derived from the demand for policy change. But which policy changes? FANRPAN is poised to provide relevant analysis at the national and regional levels.

ORIGINS OF FANRPAN The founders of FANRPAN were a group of economic and agricultural economics research institutes in universities, public policy units or para-public research institutes. Their regional network to encourage the exchange of skills, information and experiences and to coordinate comparative research is a logical response where skills in the region may be dispersed, there is little institutional memory and individual expertise is isolated. It was endorsed by the Ministers of Agriculture and ten research and policy institutions signed the Constitution of FANRPAN.

In order to achieve the original intention to promote appropriate agricultural and natural resources policy, FANRPAN focused on: 1) improving policy research, analysis and formulation on key themes in the southern Africa region; 2) developing human and institutional capacity for coordinated policy dialogue, and 3) improving policy decision-making through the generation, exchange and use of policy-related information. In recent years, FANRPAN has placed increasing emphasis on managing policy dialogues and knowledge management, complementing its research and analysis roles.

In its Strategy 2002-2007, FANRPAN highlighted priorities for policy research in seven thematic areas: 1) technology development and adoption, 2) natural resources management as a source of comparative advantage, 3) trade and market liberalization, 4) capacity building to enhance productivity, 5) natural resource conservation, 6) land reform, and 7) information and communications management.

Since the publication of the initial strategy in 2002, FANRPAN has carried out useful research and analysis in four key areas, all consistent with its mandate and important to the region, but primarily reflecting the willingness of donors to provide funding. These four areas were: 1) markets and trade, 2) HIV/AIDS and agriculture, 3) biotechnology policy, and 4) rural livelihoods.

The critical issue of funding is highlighted in the nature of FANRPAN's activities and adaptation to funding: 1) governance has been assured through the voluntarism of a few key board members; 2) coordination has been constrained by the lack of core funds for secretariat services at regional and national level (in only one year out of four, has there been funding for a full-time coordinator, and 3) the ability to develop and sustain longer-term research or to implement the full policy-change cycle is compromised (over 30 short term projects commissioned, with only 2 with a duration of over 15 months).

2. The Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process (June- September) has followed a six-step procedure (following Bryson¹), and leads into a 4-step implementation cycle that can be described as strategic "management" (Workshop Workbook see www.fanrpan.org).

The planning has involved a review of FANRPAN's mandate and mission, stakeholders' needs, diagnosis of the internal and external environments for policy research; a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and a discussion of alternatives for FANRPAN's evolution. These were compiled in a background paper that was shared in advance of a stakeholder consultation with invited participants and other stakeholders not attending the meeting.²

Ideas contained in the background paper were developed into a Workshop Workbook for use in a two-day stakeholder consultation. The Workbook recast information into a set of "assumptions" that could be discussed in working groups and refined in a way that would affect the nature of the plan that would result. Analytical detail was confined to Annexes and key ideas became the subject of working groups. In this case, participants who had received a background paper in advance and had reference material in the annex were not brainstorming from first principles but adding value to the plan as they worked through the workbook in working groups and plenary.

The outcomes of these formative discussions were captured by rapporteurs and incorporated into an internal Workshop Report that complements the original Workbook. In this way, the resulting Plan, to be further elaborated by the core team, will be recognizable to workshop participants.

3. Value Added through the Stakeholder Consultation

Workshop participants contributed significantly to the development of the plan, such that the workshop became an act of joint development more than a just a consultation or endorsement. Significant changes included the revision of the Vision and Mission Statements; recognition of the

¹ Bryson, John M. Strategic Planning for Public and Non-profit Organizations (Rev. Ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

² Background paper: Meeting the Need for Effective Food, Agricultural and Natural Resources Policy Analysis in Southern Africa.

need to include the development of the business plan earlier in the process to take account of uncertain funding outcomes; and elaboration of several strategic thrusts.

Second, the importance of capacity building at the national level was reinforced. Most policy requires implementation at the national level even if it is designed with regional objectives. In return, the participants became aware of FANRPAN's situation: it is a connected organization with links to 12 country networks supported by node hosting organizations. While it is poised to coordinate and even take initiatives, its effective capacity to act is limited by its precarious funding situation.

4. Meeting Needs of FANRPAN's stakeholders

A stakeholder is any individual or organization that can make a claim on FANRPAN's resources or effort or is significantly affected by FANRPAN's output. FANRPAN has a wide range of external stakeholders at the national, regional and even international levels. Many are "primary" stakeholders...the users of FANRPAN's products or services; some are "secondary" in that they must be convinced of FANRPAN's value for it to succeed and achieve sustainability. Participants added the distinction of "critical stakeholder"...without whom FANRPAN would not exist. These included donors who sustain the organization beyond the research they contract; member-volunteers who contribute to governance and management; and the membership organizations that deliver the goods.

The electronic consultation had confirmed the importance of FANRPAN's forum function and the desirability of its brokering and information potential. It also highlighted stakeholders' insistence that the quality of FANRPAN's work would determine its future role (and even existence).

A desk analysis of important stakeholders included in the Workbook³ (such as ministries, RECS, NARI directors, farmers' associations, NGOs, scientific partners, donors, and agribusiness) stimulated participants to identify additional stakeholders. This obliges FANRPAN to consider carefully who are its "critical" stakeholders and the instruments that FANRPAN has to serve them. Additions included: parliamentarians and parliamentary agricultural committees, chambers of agriculture and industry; and scientific and professional associations.

A rapid questionnaire survey of participants generated increased detail of what different groups expected from FANRPAN (Table 1):

Table 1. Mutual Expectations of FANRPAN by its Main Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Expectation of FANRPAN	Stakeholder	Expectation of FANRPAN
NARI Director	Help with issues requiring integrated approaches Market access research Productivity-enhancing studies	Farmer Organization	Access to policy makers Research that improves prices to farmers and market access
Ministries of Agriculture	Research not available from SROs due to structural constraints Timely and relevant policy options	University-based Members	Independent research Funding channels Improved networking with like-minded colleagues Improved teaching material
Permanent Secretary, Ag Planning	Evidence-based and demand driven advocacy for change	Information manager	Information on FANRPAN; Knowledge for repackaging and dissemination

³ Workbook, p. 14-15.

Consultants	Specific links to people and knowledge Forum for contact	CGIAR, IARCs	Platform for interaction with the sub-region Forum for joint planning Information on regional priorities Technical partners
Development Projects	Information on food strategies, current situation	Private sector	Help transfer productive knowledge from private sector to poor farmers Effective business communication platform to reach policy makers
Biotechnology and Bioscience Programs	Policy and regulatory harmonization; Harmonization of approaches to risk assessment	Agriculture and Health Projects	Technology assessment and health Impact of agricultural projects on health Approaches to cross-sectoral collaboration.

The key words that are appropriate to a regional network demanding adequately funded coordination, are “integrated”, “approaches”, “links”, “harmonization”, and “platform”.

5. The scope and roles of policy analysis

Participants agreed with several key propositions about policy analysis:

1. The demand for policy analysis is derived from the demand for policy change.
2. There are important differences between economic analysis, policy analysis, and policy advice.
3. The demand for and provision of policy analysis and policy advice is not restricted to the public sector.
4. The larger policy disequilibrium, the greater the potential gain from policy change and presumably from policy analysis to get it right. The probability of effecting policy change is influenced by the importance of the group desiring it, its geographic and political concentration, and the nature of the gain or prevented loss.
5. Policy analysis may appropriately be in the form of 1) data and information, 2) ideas, and 3) advocacy. The nature of the analysis must be tailored to the context.

FANRPAN (its nodes and members) must prepare itself for the many roles and images that could be ascribed to them or demands placed on them⁴. The Secretariat will be called to facilitate capacity building in the areas where gaps exist in skills, knowledge, experience or simply numbers. Some of these activities are more objective and “rational” (e.g. research, analysis; design and recommendation; clarifying values and arguments) while others are process-oriented and interactive (e.g. advise strategically; democratize; mediate).

6. The SWOT Analysis of FANRPAN

The Workbook presented the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of FANRPAN as drawn from various exercises and critical knowledge of the core team⁵. Participants identified a few additional strengths and various opportunities. Table 2 is an aggregate of the contributions of four working groups and complements the original draft SWOT. Their views can be integrated with those of the core team when assessing directions for FANRPAN.

⁴ Following a taxonomy by Mayer, I.S. (et al) 2004, “Perspectives on policy analysis”.

⁵ Table 4.2.

Table 2. Additions to SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Described	Recommended Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum for various stakeholders to share information and discuss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase FANRPAN profile as a dialogue forum of choice for stakeholders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional organization developed by the region and operating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to project this profile
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong association in some national nodes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replicate in all other nodes; • Upscale good practices: e.g., build on national consultative forum
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and expertise creates synergy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize on existing synergies to expand FANRPAN to new nodes
Weaknesses	Described	Recommended Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loose links with the institutions it services at the national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of FANRPAN and what it can do for stakeholders...value proposition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability of skills in some areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw upon NARS, Universities and seek synergies; Broker capacity building
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of FANRPAN is not easily measurable or imputable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop appropriate instruments for M&E to get more buy-in of stakeholders, including donors. Implement long-term programmes than enable engagement in full policy cycle.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional environment in which there are varied degrees of interest at national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance regional policy interests and national interests: choice of activities and by harmonizing regional and national work.

Opportunities	Described	Recommended Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalization and formation of regional trading blocs: changing institutional environment with regard to trade in agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FANRPAN should reposition itself at the national level to strengthen national capacity to analyze the regional challenge
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing demand for research and consultancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FANRPAN should advertise its services outside the region (vs. FANRPAN should not be diverted from priority thrusts to become a consultant)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing demand for capacity building in policy analysis from all sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FANRPAN should refine its approach to “policy analysis” and position itself to strengthen its members and others
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FANRPAN should be an advocate for the implementation of the Maputo Declaration (and 10% budgetary commitment to agriculture)
Threats	Described	Recommended Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous competitors, “briefcase NGOs” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FANRPAN must provide quality research, policy analysis and advice

		and create a “brand image” as a quality provider
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competing priorities and diminishing resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With CAADP, Gates-RF, and recommitment of DfID seek new sources of funding; Promote priorities of members at national level; Pursue regional funding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations such as NEPAD and SADC have mandate overlap and domain consensus problems (CAADP vs. RISDP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FANRPAN is a means for each to achieve research and analysis agenda. It should be possible to work with both of them.

Addition SWOT elements that were recorded without recommended actions were (Table 3):

Table 3. Other SWOT Elements

SWOT Element and Description
Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment of Board Members working without pay Representative board (skills) Experience in cross-country comparative studies Support of top level economists in region Access to RECs Recognition and credibility Access to regional political and economic organizations (RECS) Multi-partner organization (SACAU, Private Sector) Nodes functioning in spite of meager resources
Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of resources to implement intentions Need to strengthen secretariat Links between country node and regional node Gap between expectations and expertise available Countries without node hosting arrangement Peer review of proposals to ensure realism Nodes receive meager resources
Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage location of Secretariat in South Africa: stability and efficiency Strengthen communication Help solve the gap in policy advisory skills. Cross-country comparative studies Increased attention to natural resources management
Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed perception of FANRPAN: seen as both stronger and weaker than it really is No flagship activities that continue over many years; core business Competing networks with “dialoguing mandate” Relationship with SADC not formalized: FANR recommends agreement across all directorates but this is yet to be accomplished.

The above SWOT analysis by the Stakeholder Consultation is recorded in detail as part of the workshop record. As a taxonomy, one could categorize much of this detail under headings such as “human-resources”, “institutional,” “financial” and “brand image”. However, the detail is relevant in cross-checking against the proposed agenda.

Vision, Mission and Goals The group reviewed several suggestions for the revision of FANRPAN's vision, mission and goal statements. The suggested statements in the Workbook stimulated considerable discussion. The consensus was that we should end up with more focused vision, mission and goal statements. The vision could be a shared vision with other organizations and relate to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal number one- reduction of poverty and hunger. As revised by the participants, the recommended vision and mission statements are as follows:

<p>Vision</p> <p>Productive agriculture as a basis for widely shared food security and prosperity using natural resources sustainably in Southern Africa</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>FANRPAN's mission is to promote, influence and facilitate quality agricultural and natural resources policy research, analysis and dialogue at the national, regional and global levels.</p>

7. Strategic Positioning of FANRPAN

The Workbook presented several questions where FANRPAN would be required to make strategic choices:

1. It would look at key policy constraints in the region and the role that policy analysis could make to their resolution.
2. It would have to choose how far down the continuum from policy analysis to policy advice to supporting the policy process it would go.
3. It would have to decide if its action would be focused on impact at the national level or collective synthesis and policy action at the regional level.
4. Dependent on this determination, it would have to look at the skills found among its membership and propose actions for capacity building.

Working group discussions confirmed the importance of current thematic priorities, some of which remained unaddressed due to inadequate funding, while making adjustments and suggesting new ones. The changing opportunities resulting from the CAADP process and FANRPAN's collaboration with COMESA and SADC as well as growing cooperation with the NEPAD Secretariat led to broad agreement on the themes listed in Table 4. However, clearly these need to be further elaborated and discussed before any final decisions are made.

Table 4. Proposed FANRPAN Thematic Areas in support of CAADP, RISDP and FAAP Frameworks

Thematic Areas	Current opportunity
Regional trade policies	Harmonization of policies Regulatory frameworks Biosafety policies and trade
Food security	Policies and strategies for targeting the poor
Agriculture and health nexus	HIV/AIDS, malaria, and the two-way link of health to agricultural productivity: cross-

	sectoral policy implications
Agricultural productivity	Livestock-pastoralist and crop-livestock systems Contract farming Innovation Systems (e.g., proposal to facilitate the Southern Africa Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer Network)
Transboundary issues	Water, disease and pest migration, collective action FANRPAN co-leadership of Challenge Program on Water and Food Limpopo Basin Focal Project
Cross-cutting issues: Capacity building	Improving the link between research, policy analysis and policy making

The participants endorsed the relevance of all of these themes. There was no formal attempt to prioritize, but rather an heuristic application of criteria such as the magnitude of the policy disequilibrium involved, the numbers and economic importance of the potential beneficiaries of policy change, and the ability of FANRPAN members to effect a difference.

8. The internal environment

FANRPAN has already carried out an analysis of its internal environment and constraints to the achievement of its mission. The key tool, which maps well into the proposed balanced scorecard approach, is the PIVA (Partnership Institutional Viability Assessment). A team of external consultants assessed FANRPAN on six criteria: 1) governance, 2) operations and management systems, 3) strategic planning, 4) resource mobilization strategy, 5) external relations and advocacy⁶.

In most of these domains, FANRPAN was considered to be in a “nascent” stage. FANRPAN has set itself some targets, striving to reach 50% viability by the end of year 2007, and attaining full viability by the year 2010. The actions to deal with the observations are underway but some decisions depend on strategic positioning. For example, in an uncertain funding environment, FANRPAN is unable to establish a permanent secretariat (three technical staff and administrative support). This is where the recommendation of early development of a business plan concurrently with the strategy is pertinent.

The key issue for the coming 18 months will be actions to strengthen the national nodes. Participants were clear in confirming that action must take place at the national level. They further were in alignment with the Workbook assumptions that 1) most national nodes lack critical skills, 2) they have different degrees of “convening” power; 3) that there is a willingness if not preference to source skills within the southern Africa region, 4) capacity building is a priority for all nodes, 5) links need to be forged with international policy training institutions, and 6) facilitation of training is in FANRPAN’s mandate.

The stakeholders are the owners of the national nodes. The PIVA has looked a two node hosting institutions (Zambia-Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF), Malawi-CISANET) and is a source of some insights for the setting up of node hosting arrangements in other countries. The “Zambia Model” is the achievement of a node-hosting arrangement with an established Agricultural Consultative Forum. The credibility, viability and convening power of the ACF already exist; the arrangements are designed to bring value added to both partners. The importance of “convening power” was one of the motivations for FANRPAN-SA to shift the node hosting to the Agricultural

⁶ Sibanda, Simbarashe, Busi Ncube Francis Hale. 2005 Baseline. Assessment of Institutional Capacity of FANRPAN.

Marketing Council, a research and advisory group that has more convening power in policy matters than the University of Pretoria. Working groups underlined the further importance for a node host to have good communications, and a reputation for quality, objectivity and independence in its work.

9. A balanced scorecard

The concept of the balanced scorecard was introduced to highlight the link between mission and the effort that FANRPAN must put into four dimensions:

1. Customer performance: to achieve our vision, how must FANRPAN appear to our clients?
2. Financial performance: to succeed financially, how should we appear to our clients?
3. Internal business systems: to satisfy our investors and stakeholders, what business practices must we excel at?
4. Learning and growth: to achieve our vision, how will we sustain our ability to change and improve?

The PIVA is consistent with the financial and internal business systems parts of the balanced scorecard. The planning will have to look programmatically at how it satisfies customers.

Participants understood the pulls in various dimensions that the balance scorecard puts on the Secretariat and the national nodes to manage the implementation of their commitment to the vision of FANRPAN.

10. The way forward

In the final plenary, stakeholders provided suggestions on the way forward.

First, the planning team will use this communication and the incorporation of workshop information into the Workbook as a document of record as a sign of its commitment to move forward vigorously.

Second, it will concentrate on the development of a business plan within the next 4-6 weeks, to guide action over the coming 18 months. This will give investors concrete actions to finance in line with the Strategy: 1) support to a dynamic Secretariat for its coordination and promotional functions, 2) accelerated diagnosis of the strengthening needs of the nodes and critical actions to move them forward, and 3) program proposals in the priority thematic thrusts identified.

THANK YOU The CORE Strategy Planning Team⁷, under the leadership of Prof Haidari K. R. Amani expresses sincere gratitude and appreciation to all stakeholders who have contributed to the process both electronically and through face-to-face engagements. Special appreciation is due to the USAID Regional Office for Southern Africa, for providing financial support for the strategy planning process including the stakeholder workshop.

⁷ Strategic Planning Core Team members: 1. Prof HKR Amani-Team Leader; 2. Dr Howard Elliott-Lead Consultant; 3. Prof J. Kirsten-FANRPAN Board; 4. Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda; 5. Dr Doug Merrey; 6. Mr Fred Kalibwani.

II. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	NAME OF PARTICIPANT	ORGANISATION	POSITION	CONTACT DETAILS
1.	Abdool H. Goolam Mahomed	Auditors	Partner Associate	Telephone+27 11 656 6021 Mobile+27 82 870 7359
2.	Abie	FANRPAN Accountant	Lecturer	Telephone+27 11 6566021
3.	Bruno Araujo	University of Eduardo Mondlane		Telephone+258 21 492177 Email-barajous@yahoo.com
4.	C. S. Prakash	Agbioworld Foundation	President	Telephone- +334 727 8023 Mobile- +334 444-7884 E-mail- Prakash@tuskegee.edu
5.	Carla Erasmus	Octoplus Information Solutions	Creative Manager	Telephone+27 12 346 4823 Mobile+27 82 309 2239 Email-carla@octoplus.co.za
6.	Cebile Tebele	University of Zululand	Student	Mobile+ 27 82 7247511 Email-cebiletebele@webmail.co.za
7.	Charles Mataya	University Of Malawi	Principal	Telephone+ 265 1 870 411 Mobile+ 265 9511104 Email-cmataya@yahoo.com/ cmataya@poly.ac.mw
8.	Clifford M. Mutero	International Water Management Institute (IWMI)	Coordinator (SIMA)	Telephone- +27 12 845 9100 Mobile+27 82 828 6735 Email-c.mutero@cgiar.org
9.	Cris Muyunda	COMESA	CAADP Office	Telephone+260 1 229725 Email-cmuyunda@comesa.int
10.	Diran Makinde	AfricaBIO	President	Telephone+27 12 667 2689 Mobile+27 82 327 0289
11.	Douglas J. Merrey	FANRPAN	Director of Research	Telephone+27 12 845 9100 Mobile+ 27 82 473 4185 Email-djmerrey@fanrpan.org
12.	Francis Hale	Limited Edition Africa	C.E.O.	Telephone+ 263 4 338 142-5 Mobile+263 11 863 098 Email-enquiries@leafafrica.com/ franchale@yahoo.co.uk
13.	Fred Kalibwani	FANRPAN	Project Officer	Telephone: +27 12 845 9100

					Mobile: +27 72 779 7045 Email: fkalibwani@fanrpan.org
14.	Haidari K Amani	Economic and Social Research Foundation		Executive Director/FANRPAN Board Chair	Telephone- +255 (-22) -2760260 /2760758 Email: amani@esrf.or.tz
15.	Howard Elliott	Regional Consultant		Consultant	Telephone+ 204 487 4797 Email-h.elliott@cgiar.org
16.	Idah Sithole-Niang	Program for BIOSAFETY		Regional Coordinator	Telephone- +263 4 308 047 Mobile-+263 23 412 01 Email-isn@mwweb.co.zw
17.	Innocent Modisaotsile	SADC Secretariat		Project Manager	Telephone+267 395 163 Mobile+267 717 3204 Email-imodisaotsile@sadc.int
18.	Ishmael O. Sunga	SACAU		C. E. O.	Telephone+27 12 663 1480 Mobile+27 82 944 4480 Email-ceo@sacau.org/info@sacau.org
19.	Johann F. Kirsten	University of Pretoria		Head of Department	Telephone+27 12 420 3248 Email-johann.kirsten@up.ac.za
20.	John Howell	ODI		Senior Research Associate	jhowell@mwweb.co.za
21.	John Ingram	Global Environmental Change		Executive Officer	Telephone- +44 1491 692410 Mobile- +44 7771 854870 Email-jsi@ceh.ac.uk
22.	Lindiwe M. Sibanda	FANRPAN		C.EO.	Telephone+27 12 845 9100 Mobile+27 72 Email- lmsibanda@fanrpan.org
23.	Lloyd Manokore	IBIS Africa		Director	Mobile+ 27 82 863 7441
24.	Lufingo Mwamakamba	FANRPAN		Programme Administrator	Telephone- +27 12 845 9100 Mobile - +27 761 698 554 Email – lmwamakamba@fanrpan.org
25.	Luke E. Mumba	NEPAD/ SANBIO		Director	Telephone- + 27 12 841 3904/03 Mobile+27 767807336 Email-lmumba@sanbio.co.za
26.	Makhala B. Khoeli	National University of Lesotho		Academic	Telephone- +266 223 40601 Mobile+266 58863074 Email- mbkhoeli@yahoo.com

27.	Manuel Vitongue	OAU-Angola			Telephone+244 9 14106068 Mobile+ Email-vitongue@hotmail.com
28.	Maria Wanzala	NEPAD		Coordinator	Telephone+27 11 313 3141 Mobile+27 76 604 5437 Email-mariaw@nepad.org
29.	Marnus Gouse	University of Pretoria		Academic	Telephone+ 27 12 420 5738 Mobile+27 82 561 7727 Email-marnugouse@up.ac.za
30.	Masiye Mawiko	Agricultural Consultative Forum		Programme Officer	Telephone+260 263 083 Mobile+260 9455696 Email-acfs@acf.org.zm
31.	Mildred Sandi	DP Foundation		C.E.O.	Telephone+263 9 888 669 Mobile+ 263 91 218 221 Email-dpfounda@mwweb.co.zw
32.	Ousmane Badiane	NEPAD		International Partner	Telephone- + 202-862-5650 Email- o.badiane@cgiar.org
33.	Pius Chilonda	IWMI SA-SAKSS		Coordinator	Telephone+27 12 845 9110 Mobile+27 82 446 2833 Email-p.chilonda@cgiar.org
34.	Richard G. Humphries	Human Science Research Council		Researcher	Telephone+ 27 12 302 2707 Mobile+27 82 560 6555 Email- rhumphries@hsrc.ac.za
35.	Ruth P. Beukman	Global Water Partnership Southern Africa		Executive Secretary	Telephone- +27 12 845 9119 Mobile+27 82 443 2259 Email-r.beukman@cgiar.org
36.	Sara C. Page	SAFAIDS		Deputy Director	Telephone+263 4 336 193/4 Mobile- Email-sara@safaid.org.zw
37.	Siboniso Moyo	International Livestock Research		Regional Representative	Telephone+258 21 461 775 Mobile+258 82 302 5588 Email-s.moyo@cgiar.org
38.	Sibusisiwe Ncube	Headstart Consulting		PIVA Consultant	Telephone+263 4 495365 Email-busi@headstart.co.zw
39.	Tendayi A. Kureya	Development Data Consultancy		Director	Telephone- +263 4 740 617 Mobile+263 11 218 747 Email-tendayi@developmentdata.co.zw

40.	Thomas Mupetesi	FACHIG Trust	Director	Telephone+263 91 234 477 Mobile+263 91 228 898 Email-fachig@afircaonline.co.zw
41.	Tobias M. Takavarasha	GOSQUIP Pvt. Limited	Consultant	Telephone+263 4 860 519 Mobile+263 11 602 239 Email-dr.taks@taurai.co.zw
42.	Toolsee Gunesh	Farmers Service Corporation	Manager	Telephone+230 433 2482 Mobile+230 726 3393 Email-fscho@intnet.mu
43.	Unity Chiptupa	Development Database Consultants	Consultant	Telephone+263 11218747 Email-unity@developmentdata.co.zw
44.	Victor Mhoni	CISANET	Coordinator	Telephone+265 1775 580/40 Email-cisanet@globemw.net
45.	Wilberforce Kisamba	IFPRI	Director	Telephone+251 11 6462325 Mobile+251 9 1749155 Email-w.kisamba-mugera@cgiar.org
46.	Wynand J. Van Der Walt	FOODNCROPBIO	Senior Partner	Telephone+27 12 347 6334 Mobile+27 83 468 3471 Email-wynandjvdw@telkomsa.net