

# ADDRESSING THE WORLD FOOD CRISIS: FANRPAN CALL TO ACTION

## Declaration by Participants of the FANRPAN Regional Dialogue 2008

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From 2 to 5 September 2008 more than 180 delegates to the 2008 Food Agriculture Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) Regional Dialogue gathered in Lilongwe, Malawi to focus on addressing the global food crisis. The delegates, drawn from 12 Southern African Member Countries of the Network and other stakeholder groups called for greater, more rapid, informed and inclusive action to address the effects of the global food crisis on the peoples of Southern Africa.

Since the 1980s African Governments have abandoned policies of food self-sufficiency and instead relied on global markets to provide cheap imports. Stocks are at a fifty year low and prices have increased rapidly. Severe increases in food prices and the related challenges of access have provoked social unrest in many countries and caused some countries to limit exports. For Southern Africa, a net importer of grain and major recipient of food aid, the global food crisis is worsening and deepening hunger. The crisis has a basis in global demand rising rapidly against a backdrop of a much slower supply response. The already limited import capacity of African countries is severely strained.

The rising demand is largely explained by the increased use of grains and oilseeds for the production of bio-fuels and bio-degradable products, increased demand in China and India where economic booms have created a large middle class, and greater demand from oil-rich countries where rising oil prices have substantially raised earnings. The supply response has been constrained by inefficient value chains which have so far failed to transmit increased global prices back to farmers as higher incomes. Rising energy costs have increased production costs, and weak market linkages and regulations constrain farmers' abilities to take advantage of price differentials between markets. Climate change is leading to increasing weather extremes and variability, in turn reducing crop production. Safeguarding food access requires measures to address the effects of high prices on access and improving production. Combinations of short, medium and long-term measures are necessary for an effective response to the crisis.

Africa and its development partners have made pledges to address the impacts of the food crisis. The commitments are welcome. However, there is need to act with urgency and speed and at the same time engage and involve all relevant stakeholders. Africa cannot afford delays. Increasing investments in agriculture is key. The investments must be spread across the key elements for successful improvements in food security. The key elements are: research, policy, productivity, access, and multi-stakeholder dialogue to reflect on and refine actions.

FANRPAN welcomes the establishment of the SADC Ministerial Task Force on the food crisis and the development by FAO of guidance on response options for governments. Particularly significant is the composition of the SADC Task Force that brings in Ministers of Agriculture, Trade and Finance. FANRPAN urges the Task Force to engage stakeholders in identifying, planning and implementing responses to the crisis. Among the measures identified by FAO are improvements in regional trade, efficiency in the value chain, input subsidies and the strengthening of safety nets.

Malawi has already demonstrated to the world the effectiveness of a well-planned input subsidy programme. Over the last three agricultural seasons, Malawi has assisted smallholder farmers to increase grain production leading to the country achieving grain surpluses. Although Malawi's Agricultural Input Subsidy Programme needs further refinement and additional measures to reduce vulnerability to the vagaries of weather, the programme has demonstrated that bold short-term measures can produce considerable gains. The gains now need to be placed within a long-term framework. FANRPAN urges other governments to learn from the Malawi experience.

The Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) offers a framework in which effective responses to the long-term nature of the global food crisis can be developed and coordinated. The institutional arrangements for implementation have been developed and clarified. What is now required is the speeding up of the CAADP process, strengthening the participation of stakeholders at

country and regional levels, strengthening accountability, and increasing the resources to support identified investments. It is imperative that African Governments deliver on their funding commitments to agriculture and sustain the higher levels of funding they have committed to.

FANRPAN welcomes the increased goodwill towards improving agriculture on the African continent. Africa's many well-wishers and development partners must work within the existing framework to ensure greater impact through synergies. By working in a coordinated way, not only will the waste of resources be minimised but also the time investment of stakeholders will be used effectively not only for planning but also for learning. Initiatives such as those of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) create scope for implementation lessons that can be widely shared. FANRPAN urges the implementers of this and similar initiatives to work within the CAADP framework and make their experiences and lessons widely available.

FANRPAN, whose stakeholders comprise governments, researchers, farmers, civil society organisations, the media and parliamentarians drawn from 13 Southern African countries, pledges its support in the form of its policy dialogues, to the implementation of CAADP. Through regular interaction, the FANRPAN Dialogues provide platforms for sharing information and ideas, building trust between stakeholders, and offer spaces for discussion of issues that ordinarily may be invisible in national and regional policy processes. FANRPAN pledges to assist the CAADP process by supporting country and regional level CAADP dialogues and bringing citizens' voices to such dialogues. Through its country nodes and the regional secretariat, FANRPAN will provide frequent and quick turnaround process support to share information on programmes and provide stakeholder feedback on performance and recommended actions. Agreed on the value of the Network, FANRPAN stakeholders will mobilise financial resources to enable the network to support the CAADP process, contribute to efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the attainment of a green revolution in Africa.

In concluding the FANRPAN 2008 Regional Dialogue, FANRPAN stakeholders agreed that greater urgency is needed in responding to the food supply situation and ensuring food security in Africa.

***"We cannot keep polishing the same things we have been doing over time. Real solutions will be found by jumping the chasm."***

Dr. Wynard van der Walt, FANRPAN Regional Dialogue 2008 participant.

The delegates made the following observations that should inform the development of the Network's activities in response to the global food crisis:

#### Threats to Agriculture

Agriculture faces several threats that must be kept in mind in policymaking. These include:

- Climate change – variability and extreme events
- HIV/AIDS
- Increasing input prices
- Competition between cash and food crops
- Low productivity
- Post harvest losses
- Lack of information
- Food safety
- Monoculture
- Unfair global trading environment in which unsubsidised African farmers must compete with heavily subsidised products
- Poor investment in agriculture by national governments

#### The Malawi Success Story

- The Malawi success story should be documented further and used to illustrate one form of short-term intervention. In documenting the case study there is need to compare the experience with

that of other countries to highlight key success factors and constraints. Learning process should include exchange programmes.

- To strengthen the gains of the Agricultural Input Subsidy Programme, the Government of Malawi should a) strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the programme; and b) make the programme part of a clear longer term strategy for the transformation of the lives of programme beneficiaries
- Documentation of experiences with input subsidies must also include cost comparisons of 'with' and 'without' situations to bring out the relative costs of subsidy provision and importation of grains. The documentation must also bring out alternatives where current practices fall short.

#### Participation in Policy

- There is need to strengthen the participation of communities in policymaking processes. To support such participation, there is need to empower communities so that their participation is informed and understood by all to be an entitlement rather than privilege.
- Effective empowerment of communities is essential for policies to be relevant and effective in overcoming the challenges faced by small holders.
- In formulating policies, there is need to envision desired future outcomes and keep these in mind in developing short, medium and long-term interventions to address food shortages.

#### Implementation of Commitments

- Governments must strengthen implementation of existing commitments
  - Despite having made a commitment in 2003 to allocate at 10% of their national budgets to agriculture, only a few governments have achieved this target.
  - There is need to undertake analysis to identify the best possible application of additional resources for agriculture. To this end, the AU has developed a guidance note that should be used as part of budget advocacy activities on the 10% commitment.
  - While progress has been reported on implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), the implementation has been slow. There is need to speed up implementation and ensure ownership of the products by citizens.
  - Many governments will not be able to meet the MDG targets owing to inadequate actions.

#### Regional Trade

- There is need to strengthen regional trade in the Southern and East African regions which are lacking streamlined processes to facilitating trade. Policies must be harmonised and applied consistently to ensure predictability.
- To facilitate trade within the region, common standards that can be the basis of trust but are sufficiently simple and do not serve as a barrier must be introduced.
- Ordinary citizens must be informed and able to take advantage of such policy harmonisation to access markets.

#### Vulnerable Groups (especially women, youth and children)

- Southern Africa has some grim realities that must be taken into account in the development of inclusive agricultural policies and programmes. These include, among other challenges, the following:
  - Gender disparities between men and women in access to resources (whether private or in the form of support programmes)
  - Children comprise almost 50% of the population and some of these head households
  - Young people are disproportionately represented among the unemployed.

- Agricultural policies and programmes cannot continue to be gender and age insensitive or neutral. Data for all stages of policy and programme development must be disaggregated by gender and age to allow tracking of impacts and to ensure adequate attention to the specific needs of women, youth and children.

### Communication

- To attain the maximum benefit from knowledge to improve the situation of rural communities, a number of communication interventions must be made. These include:
  - The translation of materials from and to the different languages spoken in the region
  - Improve the use of ICT to link various actors with relevant services
  - Ensure that the search for solutions is expanded to include other regions and experiences from outside the African continent

### Linkages – concepts and practices

#### Understanding of food security

- The understanding and discussion of food security must be broadened to look beyond production as well as looking beyond grains. The concept of food security should be looked at inclusive of nutrition security.

#### Use of value chain analysis

- There is need to focus on value chains so as to identify the possible interventions to support communities to improve their situations. Adopting such an approach allows for the identification of different opportunities and the support that different groups would need to perform roles that expand the benefits from agricultural activity.
- There is need to examine options and tools that can be used to strengthen market development. For example, what role do commodity exchanges play and where can they add value?

### Linkages – people

#### Researchers-Policymakers and the public

- There is need to improve the understanding of technologies and reduce fear of the unknown so that Africa's search for solutions can utilise the best available knowledge and technologies

#### Governments-Researchers

- Africa continues to under-invest in and underutilise skills resident within the continent. There is need to build greater confidence among governments to use local capacities.

#### Researcher-communities

- Researchers have often used communities for research and not returned to share their findings. Where sharing has occurred it has been tokenism. There is need for researchers to partner with community-based organisations and extension services to share their research findings.

#### Farmers, researchers, government and private sector

- FANRPAN is playing an important role in helping farmers and researchers to have access to high level government officials and policymakers. This role needs to be maintained and the dialogues should be more frequent.

### Investment

- Governments to take strong action to meet the 10% CAADP commitment to agriculture. This proportion should be viewed as a guide and depending on the state of infrastructure and other services, some governments may need to invest more.
- Governments must adopted an integrated approach to investments and must include:
  - irrigation infrastructure
  - Agricultural infrastructure such as roads, telephones, electricity, etc.
  - Support services such as extension, research and development, etc.

- Alternative energy sources (solar, wind, biofuels, etc)
- Monitoring and evaluation

#### Capacities of the Resource Poor

- There is need to adopt approaches that aim at transforming the situations of the resource poor rather than seeking to make them happy in their poverty. Transformative approaches must build the livelihoods capital of the resource poor.
- Greater effort is needed to recognise and indigenous knowledge and ensure that resource poor communities benefit from the resources they own.
- While accepting the constraints faced by resource poor farmers and celebrating any changes that interventions bring about, it is important to gauge such interventions against the potential of the resources of the resource poor. Strategies to assist the resource poor to change their circumstances should include:
  - intensive agriculture
  - Crop diversification
  - Capacity for alternative livelihoods

#### Research and Development (R&D)

- Governments must strengthen research and development services and systems. A number of interventions are needed and these include:
  - Development of research and development policies in some countries
  - Strengthening investment in long-term policy-relevant research implemented by national and regional institutions
  - Strengthening extension services to utilise products of research and development
  - Undertake analysis on practices and provide advice on possible improvements
  - Engage the private sector to contribute to research and development as part of their corporate social responsibility

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