

Press Release

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FANRPAN Launches Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Women Farmers' Influence in Agricultural Policy and Development Programmes in Southern Africa

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) announced today a three-year pilot project to help rural women farmers influence agricultural policy development in Southern Africa. Funding for the programme is provided by a \$900,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The project, Women Accessing Realigned Markets (WARM), seeks to strengthen women farmers' ability to advocate for appropriate agricultural policies and programmes. The goal is for women farmers to have access to the tools that help them farm more successfully, such as access to credit and better seeds, by ensuring that local and national policies and services address their needs.

In Africa, the majority of rural farmers are women. At the same time, research demonstrates women are often excluded from the decision-making process and local governance. As a result, the needs of women farmers are often not reflected in local and national agricultural policy. By empowering women farmers to advocate for their concerns, the WARM project aims to ensure women farmers have what they need to increase their income and provide for their families.

Women are often marginalised in business relations and have minimal control over access to factors of production like land, inputs such as seed and fertilizer, credit and technology. Due to a combination of logistical, cultural and economic factors, they are often not able to benefit fully from development programmes and services. The WARM project will use an innovative tool, Theatre for Policy Advocacy, to engage leaders, service providers and policymakers, encourage community participation, and research the needs of women farmers. Amakhosi Theatre Company from Zimbabwe will lead theatre groups in crafting policy messages to amplify the voices of women and demonstrate the challenges they face.

FANRPAN is piloting the project in two countries — Mozambique and Malawi. Results and findings from these two countries will be extended to other Southern and East African countries with a combined total population of 400 million.

The WARM project will leverage FANRPAN's experience as a regional multi-stakeholder policy research network to bridge the divide between women farmers, researchers and agricultural policy processes, with the goal of increasing women farmers' access to markets. FANRPAN will partner with other foundation grantees, including regional and national farmers organisations, national research institutions and universities, community based groups, and national and regional policymakers to ensure farmers have access to markets, extension services, better seeds, adequate fertilizer and other important resources.

This grant is part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Agricultural Development initiative. This initiative is working with a wide range of partners in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to provide millions of small farmers, most of whom are women, in the developing world with tools and opportunities to boost their yields, increase their incomes, and build better lives for themselves and their families. The foundation is working to strengthen the entire agricultural value chain — from seeds and soil to farm management and market access — so that progress against hunger and poverty is sustainable over the long term.

About FANRPAN:

FANRPAN is a multi-stakeholder, multi-national network that supports the development of better food, agriculture and natural resources (FANR) policies in southern Africa. The thriving multi-tiered network consists of more than 670 members (a diverse group of organisations including universities, farmer organisations, businesses, government agencies and civil society organisations that have a stake in the FANR policy process) organised into national nodes in thirteen Southern African countries.

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