

TERRAVIVA

FANRPAN 2009 High Level Regional Policy Dialogue,
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**PUTTING
DEVELOPMENT
ON THE AGENDA**

2

**TIME TO
DIALOGUE**

3

4

**TERRAVIVA
SPEAKS TO
DR FIRMINO
MUCAVELE
ON REDUCING
POVERTY**

**A SUPERMARKET
REVOLUTION**

5

**REWARDING
VISION: THE
POWER OF
FARMING**

6

8

**GETTING
REDD-Y FOR
COPENHAGEN**

**REPORTING
THE TRUE
CONTRIBUTION OF
AGRICULTURE**

9

**CLIMATE
CHANGE
AND HUMAN
RIGHTS**

10

11

**SONG AND
DANCE TO
EMPOWER
WOMEN
FARMERS**

**SPEAKING
OUT:
POVERTY
AND TILLING
THE SOIL...**

12



TERRAVIVA

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Putting Development on the Agenda

MAPUTO - Over two hundred representatives from government ministries, the private sector, farmers and researchers from around southern Africa have gathered to discuss how agriculture development can lead to a better life for Africans.

The annual Food Agriculture Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) dialogue will platform much of the research done across southern Africa to reduce poverty and improve food security in the region and the continent.

The dialogue comes less than a week after the African Union (AU) proposed the continent be awarded billions of dollars in compensation for the effects of climate change.

Africa has contributed the least to climate change but the continent has suffered the most from the resulting effects such as severe droughts and increased average temperatures. The AU intends to use the compensation funds to develop energy-efficient projects that will support the continent's development.

FANRPAN chief executive Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda spoke to Nalisha Kalideen about the regional policy dialogue and the AU's united position on climate change ahead of the United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen.

Nalisha Kalideen: Africa is looking to sustain food security through trade in carbon emissions. What are some of your thoughts on this?

Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda: It's amazing how many companies, non-governmental organisations and even banks are prepared to be part of this new economy of carbon trading. Most of the initial interest was around African countries keeping their forests and developed countries buying their (carbon) offsets. At the time we said that left out about 90% of other African countries. It's only a few countries that have the dense forests like the DRC.

Ideally it's about other sources of green and that can absorb carbon dioxide and mitigate against climate change. It means that agriculture, forests and soils can also contribute in generating wealth for Africa. So we are fighting for a bigger share (of the carbon emissions trade). It could be the new trillion dollar industry for Africa.

NK: What chance of success does Africa have in achieving this and food security?

LS: I'm totally convinced that this will be a success. Development is just not about assisting in money form it's about recreating institutions in a win-win partnership.



In most cases Africa has always been accused of lagging behind and not being proactive. But in this case we are proactive. And we have a united agenda because every African leader, through the African Union, has supported the Africa with one voice policy on climate change.

NK: How does this translate into the United Nations conference on climate change being held in Copenhagen, Denmark, this December? The African Union plans to present its united position on climate change here.

LS: The big race is the Copenhagen one. And for me it's 50 percent run. Africa has a united voice, we have shared our platform with the (US administration, the European donor platform) Obama's administration and they have supported our position.

More exciting is that the agriculture agenda is back on the map, thanks to the recent global food crisis – a blessing in disguise.

NK: What are some of the challenges ahead?

LS: Some of the challenges that Africa faces are the dual challenges of economic growth and poverty reduction. As long as we don't develop dual policies to address both these (challenges) we will be drawing deeper into poverty and not success.

NK: How can this be addressed?

LS: In proper policy implementation all stake holders should participate. In as much as government plays a role in creating policy, civil society has to implement and monitor this. It's the farmers who have to buy the inputs, the ordinary persons who buy the product. It's been a success of FANRPAN that we don't talk against government. We engage in talk with government, with high-level policy makers, with leaders in government, with the farming community and the private sector using research evidence to guide policy dialogue.

Copenhagen

No Deal Without Agriculture

By Mohamed Fofanah

CLIMATE change was centre-stage as the chair of the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), Sindiso Ngwenya, opened the network's annual regional dialogue in Maputo, declaring "there should be no deal without agriculture".

He urged more than 200 delegates from 18 African countries, the UK, U.S., Germany, the Philippines and Trinidad & Tobago, to lobby for increased and more accessible global funds to establish mechanisms for adapting to climate change, and for clean development.

Ngwenya, who also chairs the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, declared that Africa could play its part in meeting the global climate challenge, if all of its countries joined the world in endorsing the "African Climate Solution" (ACS).

The ACS proposes reducing greenhouse gas emission while realising forest resources, and leaving lighter carbon footprints through best practice in agriculture, and the optimal husbanding of forests and land.

A group of 26 African countries from East, Central and Southern Africa decided at the UN climate change talks in Poznan, Poland, in 2008 to deal with climate change through the ACS.

The FANRPAN chair added that this position had been endorsed by the African Union, and was the one Africa would take to Copenhagen.

The FANRPAN Regional Dialogue is an annual meeting for senior officials of national governments, representatives of regional economic organisations, farmers' unions, agri-business, and development partner agencies.

Setting the pace for this year's dialogue, themed "True Contribution



Zahira Kharsany/IPS

Ready for dialogue ... Cecilia Khupe, USAID Senior Regional Agriculture Programme Manager; Dr Firmino Mucavele; José Filipe Fonseca, Senior programme coordinator/Regional Partnership CTA, and Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, CEO of the Food and Agriculture Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) at the opening of the annual stakeholders meeting.



Zahira Kharsany/IPS

Delegates at the annual FANRPAN Stakeholders meeting.

of Agriculture to Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction in Southern African Countries", the FANRPAN chairman reminded African countries that they all faced food insecurity.

The word "research" featured 27 times as he stressed the need for home-grown data collection and analysis, which he said would guide Africa towards lasting solutions to the food crisis.

He lamented that Africa had relied on "externally generated data and an

externally driven research agenda that does not effectively address our issues". He pointed out that Africa needed 4.4 billion dollars a year for agricultural research and development.

Like a doctor prescribing drugs for his patient after diagnosis, Ngwenya said "As long as Africans do not collect their own data to tell the African story, (we) will not be able to benchmark ourselves against development targets."

TECHNOLOGICAL INVESTMENTS TO IMPROVE YIELDS

Nalisha Kalideen interviews FIRMINO MUCAVELE, Eduardo Mondlane University

MAPUTO - In rural Mozambique, increasing numbers of families are growing their own food and lifting themselves out of poverty.

Over the last decade the country has reduced rural poverty by 15 percent through agricultural growth. But the industry is still technologically underdeveloped and harvests are still not sufficient to sustain an increasing population.

Currently over 70 percent of 21 million Mozambicans live in rural areas. The majority are smallholder farmers who grow food crops. Three-quarters of these farmers are too poor to buy necessary items needed to increase their harvests. Many cannot afford the seeds to plant, let alone the harvesting equipment. Figures show that less than 1 in 50 use fertilisers or pesticides and lack of suitable irrigation also affects the number of crops produced.

Population growth already outstrips growth in agricultural output, and without close attention to the use and adoption of improved agricultural technologies, the productivity level will likely slow and rural poverty will remain widespread.

TerraViva spoke with Dr Firmino Mucavele, Director for Academic Reform and Regional Integration at Mozambique's Eduardo Mondlane University and a member of the steering

committee of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN). Excerpts from the interview follow.

IPS: Are there ways that the cash crop sector could have substantial yield increases to meet the growing population?

Dr Firmino Mucavele: There are several. We have about 10 agro-ecological zones in Mozambique and of these, six of them are in the northern parts of the country. In all those six zones it is possible to raise something like ten times the yield we are currently producing, provided that we use the right seeds, have irrigation, and have the right equipment for harvesting. The losses in production can be reduced if we have the proper technology.

IPS: What are some of the immediate problems facing expansion of agriculture?

FM: The lack of access to credit is problem in crop agriculture and also undermines the livestock sector. Poor families cannot raise credit to purchase animals, and women have difficulty accumulating livestock. If widowed, they are stripped of all family assets upon the death of their husbands, including family animals.

The first problem with agriculture is that it does have a lot of risk and uncertainty as a result most banks don't really want to finance agriculture.

Also, most of the farmers are involved in subsistence agriculture and for them to move from this they need investment. And the return on that investment doesn't come immediately, it takes about two or three years and usually banks can't wait that long.

IPS: Does that mean government can play a role here?

FM: Government can certainly play a role in providing the infrastructure. The rural areas do not have electricity, they do not have roads and these are the minimum conditions required if someone wants to put a bank there. When these things are not in place the cost of lending money becomes very high.



Dr Firmino Mucavele, Director for Academic Reform and Regional Integration at Mozambique's Eduardo Mondlane University.

IPS: What are the agricultural-related economic potentials for Mozambique?

The development of agriculture provides agro-industries (food processing, extraction industries and so on). And where you have these, you usually have social development. It would also result in the development of the manufacturing sector.

As farmers in rural areas get increased incomes they also would want to purchase manufactured goods and it creates a domino effect for development.

Although constraints exist, Mozambique possesses the fundamentals to realise its considerable agricultural potential. The country is endowed with natural resources, including numerous fertile agro-ecological zones but only about 10 percent of its 36 million arable hectares are cultivated. Mozambique has 104 river basins, 20 million hectares of forests, and a long coastline with three major ports.

IPS: The Mozambican government has launched several programmes including the New Green Revolution Strategy in 2007 which aims to increase the agriculture production and productivity of smallholder farmers. What impact are these programmes having?

FM: The impact is very high and very good. In the last ten years, the growth in the agricultural sector has been significant in terms of employment and income-generation.



“Supermarket Revolution”



Zahira Kharsany/IPS

The “supermarket revolution” could be on its way to African cities.

By Vusumuzi Sifile and Salma Ahmad

MAPUTO – The “supermarket revolution” could be on its way to African cities.

But it is up to African governments to use increasing trends of urbanisation to their advantage.

Previously, the mass movement of people from rural areas to the cities meant the neglect of agriculture. But as demand for food in urban areas grows, the increased food trade can lead to the development of the agricultural industry, said Jose Filipe Fonseca, from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation.

Fonseca was speaking at the official opening dinner of the Food Agriculture Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network stakeholders’ conference in Maputo.

Fonseca said demand for food has triggered the creation of thousands of small informal enterprises across Africa. He added that particularly women have been able to adapt and diversify their offerings of crops to the market and have added value.

He said Africa would benefit in other areas as investment in agriculture improved.

“For African countries to seize the opportunity offered by urbanisation, the productivity of land, water, plants, animals, people and other factors

(will) drastically improve as a result of consistent investment in agriculture. A performing agriculture sector will also enable domestic trade and export to thrive and earn foreign currencies which can be invested in other sectors.”

He said domestic markets and international exports were major catalysts of economic development as they provide incentives to produce more goods of better quality. As a result the productivity of the labour force increases to meet the demands.

He emphasised that the future of agriculture in Africa, and the extent to which it can play a role in the continent’s future, depends on Africans.

Development activists at the dinner challenged African governments to prioritise agriculture development and honour commitments to keep investment in the sector high in their agenda.

Although a number of agreements and declarations have been made to support agriculture in Africa, most of these have not been implemented delegates said. This has impeded the continent’s fight for food security.

This lack of action, and failure to link agriculture with other sectors, has turned a number of meaningful resolutions into ‘buzzwords’, and left many wallowing in poverty, delegates said.

Fonseca said there should be movement towards applying government promises on agriculture in order to change this.

“In Africa, the food crisis has been a

permanent one and the vulnerability of African countries to all types of shocks has not been reduced.”

Fonseca added that changing demographics – increasing urban populations and a declining agricultural community – have complicated the mix.

“If sub-Saharan countries are unable to feed their populations today, what will happen in the next decades when the agricultural population will for sure continue to decline and the urban population will increase to unprecedented levels?” Fonseca asked.

Permanent Secretary in Mozambique’s Ministry of Agriculture, Daniel Clemente, said his government was preparing to start implementing a plan of action on agriculture.

“The major objectives of this plan are to increase production and reduce the deficit in food production. We cannot guarantee the food security to our population without producing above the level of need,” Clemente said.

The most important thing, noted Cecilia Khupe from the United States Agency for International Development, is for farmers to benefit most.

“We do not want our farmers to be short changed. We want our farmers to move with the times,” said Khupe.





Award-winning ... Celina Cossa was honoured as a FANRPAN Civil Society Policy Movers and Shakers.

FEMALE FARMER SCOOPS AWARD FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

CELINA COSSA AND HER FAMILY ONCE WENT TO BED HUNGRY, BUT TODAY SHE RUNS A SUCCESSFUL COOPERATIVE FOR WOMEN FARMERS.

By Menesia Muinjo and
Geline Fuko

IN the past, Celina Cossa would queue for days and even nights just waiting to buy a bag of maize. But even that didn't guarantee she would be able to purchase it. Some nights she, her husband and two children would go to sleep hungry.

"It was hard at first. Many husbands forbade their wives to leave home."

She was one of thousands of Mozambican women looking for a way to feed her family.

And she found it, by forming a farming cooperative. Along with 250 other women, Cossa began

growing crops and raising poultry. The women sold the excess for profit.

The cooperative grew, with other women farmers getting credit to start their own businesses, and today it embraces nearly 3000 women farmers.

As the founder of this network of mostly women farmers (now called the General Union of Cooperatives), Cossa has been recognised and

praised for her efforts in providing food security for thousands of Mozambican families.

Cossa has been named winner of this year's Food Security Policy Leadership Award for "Civil Society Policy Movers and Shakers" presented to her by the Food Agriculture Natural Resources and Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) in Maputo.

Food shortages in Mozambique were





the norm in the 1980s. Colonialism and war left many, especially women, extremely poor.

Sharing her inspiring story with journalists from across Africa, she spoke about some of the obstacles that women had to face.

“It was hard at first. Many husbands forbade their wives to leave (their homes) early and return late,” Cossa said.

“The success of the cooperative is thanks to all these women farmers, not me alone.”

This affected most women’s participation in food production and marketing activities.

Many of the women would end up at her home, seeking shelter after their husbands fought with them. Her own marriage also broke down, with her now ex-husband blaming her for breaking up marriages of these women.

Yet despite this, Cossa managed to increase membership from 250 farmers to just over 2900 mostly female members today.

They have also diversified their production from crops to poultry and live stock farming. The farmers produce 8000 chickens a month and are supplying the local markets with their fresh products.

Cossa said she ran the cooperative with limited funds, that many of the women would bring their own agricultural tools and money to support the project.

Today the cooperative continues to help women farmers to get loans to start and run their businesses, giving them expert advice and assistance in starting farms and selling their produce at markets.

Cossa said her achievements are thanks to the combined efforts of the women who work with her, adding that she did not elevate herself above any other union member.



Zahira Kharsany/IPS

One of thousands of Mozambican women looking for a way to feed her family.

Getting REDDy For Copenhagen

By Servaas van den Bosch

NAIROBI – “African farmers will play a major part in the solution of climate change mitigation,” predicts Dennis Garrity, head of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

“Deforestation contributes to 20 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. Counting the loss of trees on agricultural land this number increases to 34 percent,” says Global Coordinator of the Alternatives to Slash and Burn Partnership, Peter Minang.

For both agroforestry scientists, planting trees on farms on a massive scale will yield more than just timber, fruits and fertiliser.

“Agroforestry provides an important carbon sink and takes pressure off remaining tropical forests,” Garrity says. “Already 70 percent of Kenya’s wood is grown on farms.”

The tree cover exceeds 10 percent on 46 percent of the world’s farmlands - or 1 billion hectares, according to a newly-released ICRAF study.

Reason, according to scientists at the recently-held World Agroforestry Congress in Nairobi, to include agroforests in the negotiations over a Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) climate deal at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Copenhagen this December.

“Through agroforestry-mitigation, Africa can tap into the \$118 billion carbon market and use the

proceeds for crucial adaptation efforts,” says Minang. “But the continent is divided on what REDD should entail.”

While the 10 Congo basin countries, united in the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), want a deal on forests alone, the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) favours a broad AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and other Land Use) perspective, proposing a REDD Plus that includes agriculture.

“Which makes sense for countries like Kenya that are 80 percent semi-arid,” explains Minang.

The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) supports REDD, but is wary of its potential to access markets and wants to include agriculture in a redesigned Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

“The problem,” says Minang “is that CDMs have not worked in Africa. Only 4% of global CDM project are on this continent. Of the forty projects involving forests, only four are in Africa and none has passed the registration stage.”

The African Union, in a concept note for the Conference of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) that met in Addis Ababa on 24 August, resolved that: “A REDD-Plus mechanism should be designed in such a way as to accommodate different national circumstances and respective capabilities.”

Some fear Africa’s fragmented position will diminish its chances in Copenhagen.

“Africa should go to Copenhagen with a united voice and tell the industrialised countries they have a moral issue on their hands. They should not allow Africa to suffer of a disaster that is not of its own making. Yet, if we are fragmented we will be taken advantage off,” Nobel laureate Wangari Mathaai told IPS in Nairobi.

But United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) chief Achim Steiner seemed sceptical of a comprehensive climate deal in December.

“We are just a hundred days away from Copenhagen and the negotiations are in a state of mutual frustration and lack of progress. I find that very worrying. Looking at the pace and scale of the negotiating process at the moment one would be naïve not be concerned at what can happen in just a few months,” Steiner told journalists.

“REDD’s not dead. Even if it doesn’t have legs to it coming out of Copenhagen, there’s the market that’s happening outside of Kyoto as well,” says Jay Samek, researcher with the Global Observatory for Ecosystem Services of Michigan State University and involved with the institute’s Carbon2Markets initiative.

“Carbon is sold for \$25 cents a metric tonne on the Chicago Climate Exchange in quantities of one Carbon Financial Instrument (CFI), or 100 metric tonnes,” says Samek. “Carbon sequestration on one hectare is perhaps 10 metric tones a year, so if ten farmers work together to offer 1 CFI each year to the markets, after 15 years they each get \$375.”

“The big risk involved for buyers of carbon in treed landscapes though is that of permanence,” he warns. Although scientists are relatively sure about tropical forests, determining carbon sequestration in the agricultural-forest mosaic of agroforestry projects is a headache, compounded by a variety in farming practices, land reform and economic upheavals.

But trees will become a carbon cash crop in the future, argues Rodell Lasco, senior scientist at the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) “Right now financial barriers and governance issues make it seem unpractical, but when the countries of the world get their act together and start addressing climate change seriously, agroforestry can very well turn out to be a cheap alternative compared to other options in the West.”

Samek agrees. “There is a lot of money being invested getting ready for REDD and prices will go up when legislation catches up and companies are forced to cap and trade.”





Reporting the true contribution of agriculture

AHEAD of the Food and Agriculture Natural Resources Policy Advocacy Network's (FANRPAN) annual regional policy dialogue, journalists from as far afield as Sierra Leone and Benin joined their Southern African counterparts a training workshop jointly organised by FANRPAN and Inter Press Service Africa.

The journalist training had the immediate objective of preparing to cover the week's discussions, while strengthening reporting of food, agriculture and natural resources reporting by participants in the future.

One of the growing challenges facing African agriculture is the impact of climate change. Frank Kayula, of PANOS Zambia presented research - and vividly demonstrated by means of a survey of participants - the generally weak grasp of climate change issues, terminology and underlying science. This has led to poor coverage of the issues in Africa.

Participants agreed that it was important for journalists to develop an understanding of the issues in order to be able to cover them meaningfully. This did not necessarily

mean becoming experts in their own right; more realistically, it meant the cultivation of reliable and informed analysts and perhaps establishing a network of agriculture writers with whom to exchange information.

IPS Africa editor Terna Gyuse spoke of the importance of presenting climate change in the compelling terms of the people at its heart: bringing the research and policy recommendations to the front pages of newspapers by taking stories of hunger, of flat or falling agricultural productivity, of floods and unexpected diseases. Succeeding in bringing the real stories of both vulnerability and resilience of African agriculture to prominence is key to a stronger and more effective role for media in supporting improved livelihoods for rural people and building Africa's economies.

The workshop took early steps to begin filling in gaps in the knowledge, listening to presentations from FANRPAN's Wole Olaleye and David Kamchaha on climate change fundamentals and the place of Africa's agriculture in responding to global warming, as well as an expose on the four pillars of Africa's programme for agricultural renewal, the Comprehensive Africa

Agricultural Development Programme: managing land and water, improving market access, promoting appropriate agricultural research and dealing with hunger and food security.

Michael Hoevel, from the Farming First campaign, walked journalists through his campaign's model for promoting sustainable agriculture.

“Succeeding in bringing the real stories of vulnerability and resilience of African agriculture to prominence is key to a stronger and more effective role for media.”

He also demonstrated the value of constantly examining agricultural issues from multiple perspectives - government, business, civil society viewpoints - and understanding both the common interests and the conflicts between them.

TerraViva Reporter

Climate Change Now a Human Rights Issue

By Vusumuzi Sifile

Climate change is no longer just about changing temperatures and rainfall patterns: it is also about human rights.

Until now, climate change has been discussed within the domains of mining; agriculture; the environment; and industry – among others. But the effects climate change has had on people's human rights have been ignored.

"Climate change is not purely an environmental issue; it is also not purely an agricultural policy issue. It is a much larger issue - it is a human rights issue," said Brian Kagoro, the Pan African policy manager for Action Aid.

"(This is) partly because there are various human rights that are violated when we deal with climate change. (Among these are) the right to development and the right to a clean and healthy ecology."

He was speaking during a panel discussion on climate change at the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) annual conference. Kagoro said people in poor countries were now bearing the brunt of unfair practices by developed nations.

He said it went far beyond effects on the climate to the effects on people. This includes increasing numbers of people getting ill and of governments being unable to provide social services for their people.

"We must view it as a problem of politics, of economics, of development and of morality," said Kagoro. "The self evident consequences of this rapid climate variability have been enumerated by our colleagues in the developed world and some emerging economies through their over consumption."



With the upcoming United Nations conference on climate change taking place in Copenhagen this December, Kagoro said one of the issues should be about the world taking responsibility for climate change.

"It should not be a matter of assisting Africa and the developing worlds (to) adjust to climate change, it should be about the whole world taking responsibility and being accountable. We should not go to Copenhagen as beggars, but as those who were unjustly wronged and continue to be unjustly victimised."

Kagoro said "instead of blaming each other, countries should work with affected nations."

"If you look at climate change within the (human) rights context, essentially over consumption in the north and in some emerging economies has resulted in the sort of dastardly consequences that we witness in Africa. The question of responsibility, accountability and liability must re-enter our language."

But one big challenge remains. The continued lack of political will to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Helping the Most Vulnerable

Busani Bafana
interviews **UNITY**
CHIPFUPA, researcher

JOHANNESBURG – The Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) has developed a new tool to accurately measure the vulnerability of rural households to shocks such as the illness or death of a household member from AIDS. The Household Vulnerability Index (HVI) is being tested by FANRPAN in conjunction with World Vision International (WVI) in order to better target the provision of food aid in WVI programmes in Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

Household vulnerability refers to the capacity – or lack thereof – to withstand shocks which affect the food security or asset status at the household level.

Unity Chipfupa, a main driver of this work, explains.

IPS: How did this tool come about?

Unity Chipfupa: The HVI concept was developed by FANRPAN from a seven-country study within the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). The 2004 study highlighted impacts of HIV and AIDS on rural livelihoods, but could not quantify their vulnerability to this shock. Thus, the HVI was developed to answer two important questions: How can the most vulnerable households be identified and assisted? How can the effects of the epidemic on household food security be monitored over time?

IPS: So how does the HVI tool improve targeting of responses?

UC: The HVI improves targeting of mitigation responses in three ways. It

makes it possible to classify households according to the level of vulnerability, allowing better targeting of the most affected households. This is important where there are limited resources for interventions.

Secondly, the tool makes it possible to identify the source of vulnerability within livelihood strategies in a household, paving the way for intervention programmes to deal with these problems.

Thirdly, where a development agency has a package of interventions e.g. food aid, income generation or agricultural production, we use the HVI to identify households for intervention within the community. During intervention we can verify if a household has graduated from a given level of vulnerability, and thus no longer qualifies for a particular intervention. This allows graduation to



Song and Dance Empower Women Farmers

By Sholain Govender-Bateman

PRETORIA – Community theatre will be the main thrust of an innovative pilot project to give women farmers stronger influence in agricultural policy-making in southern Africa.

The Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Network (FANRPAN) launched the Women Accessing

Realigned Markets (WARM) project in July, with funding from the Gates Global Development Foundation.

“Song and dance are integral parts of African culture, and act as a powerful communication medium, while stimulating dialogue. So this is what we are going to use,” says FANRPAN Natural Resources and Environment Programme manager Thembi Ndema.

WARM’s main objective is to provide a platform for rural women farmers to express specific needs, and help realign research agendas to meet them.

“Women are already engaged in farming, and are seeking ways in which to increase their production and earnings.”

Ndema says women farmers are often marginalised in business relations, and have little access to land, seed and fertilizer, or credit and technology.

Women make up 70 percent of the agricultural workforce in sub-Saharan Africa. They are responsible for 100 percent of the processing of basic foodstuffs, according to the latest Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) statistics.

Ndema is convinced community theatre will help bridge the gap between researchers’ knowledge and the communities involved in the project.

“We need to get to the local level, and increase these farmers’ understanding of input markets, while educating researchers once we gain insight from the communities,” says Ndema.

“Policy-makers lack the right information needed to inform policy development and more analytical statistics, which can be used to fine-tune programmes and policies to reach the most vulnerable and needy segments of the population.”

The project’s planned interventions include giving participants access to credit and research services, as well as technology and input and output markets, while boosting their participation in policy-making at community and national level by working in agricultural organisations. FANRPAN will interact at grassroots level by encouraging the mobilisation of women farmers, in order to communicate key agricultural messages on productivity, development plans and access to services.

“We will identify community champions who will help spread the message,” says Ndema.

FANRPAN CEO Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda says WARM will be extended if it succeeds. It is set to run for three years in Malawi and Mozambique, with universities, national agricultural and research organisations and organisations like the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Oxfam, World Vision, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Graça Machel Development Foundation on board.

TERRAVIVA

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Households

other development-aid interventions.

When HVI data are collected it is possible to compare across communities and check the trends over time. This is important in tracking the effects of interventions.

IPS: How does the HVI tool achieve this?

UC: The HVI achieves this by comparing wealth or livelihood assets available to a household. These include human capital, financial capital, natural resources, social capital and physical capital. It classifies the households according to three levels of vulnerability: coping level (the household is in a vulnerable situation but still coping), acute level (hit so hard it badly needs assistance in an acute health-care unit) and the emergency level (an intensive-care scenario – almost a point of no return – but could be resuscitated with the best expertise).

IPS: How important is the tool to development?

UC: In development work, at last we have an objective measure that can compare how households are fairing, given a particular issue. This is critical. Not only are we able to tell who is most affected, but we do this objectively, and even know the source of vulnerability. We are thus able to calculate how much is required. The reverse is also true. If we have limited resources, it is possible to know how much our efforts will yield. The HVI is not an imported tool. It is home-grown, and seeks to unpack the complexities of the African way of life, exposing what was not possible to quantify before. Like all other tools, its value can be derived only if the tool is applied appropriately.

Go to <http://africa.ipsterraviva.net> for the full interview



SPEAKING OUT TO REDUCE POVERTY

More than 200 delegates are in Maputo for the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) Annual General Meeting. The delegates include stakeholders from regional governments, private sector and civil society organisations.

FANRPAN director of communications advocacy Francis Hale said the meeting would not only review progress since the Maputo Declaration, but would also look ahead to the Climate Change summit in Copenhagen in December.

IPS TerraViva spoke to some of the participants and asked them what role agriculture could play in alleviating poverty...

Amy Sullivan
Project leader of the
Limpopo Basin
Focal Project,
FANRPAN, South
Africa:



As a researcher, I think research can and should take the lead in putting the best possible information into the hands of the poor rural populations. If we can do that, we can help them survive. For this meeting we are trying to convey to policy makers and decision makers what their role in this can be.

José Filipe Fonseca
Senior programme
coordinator/Regional
Partnership CTA
(Technical Centre for
Agricultural and Rural
cooperation),
Netherlands:



Firstly, food and nutrition security is the most important. If agriculture fails to deliver food and nutrition, then there is a problem.

Agriculture is a basis for development in most African countries. It is a catalyst for development of other areas such as trade, the economy and tourism. And conservation of natural resources is a must. Agriculture uses these resources, and at the same time we must protect these resources.

Wynand J. van der Walt
Senior partner:
Agriculture
biotechnologies
at FoodNCropBio,
South Africa:



Agriculture in each African country is the backbone of the economy. In a nutshell, without food there is no economy.

Tinaye Nyanhongo
PA to the Minister of
Agriculture, Minister
Holland, Zimbabwe:



First and foremost agriculture is a food source. Out of the surplus, people can use it as a means of trading. People can sell whatever surplus there is to help their families. In a rural situation, people can send their children to school using grain or cattle and so on.

Mildred Sandi
CEO of the DP
[Dinah Falala and
Phoebe Sandi]
Foundation,
Bulawayo,
Zimbabwe:



For me it's the key to poverty eradication. Agriculture is about subsistence and there are different dimensions to it. There is the food aspect, the work aspect and the educational aspect. When I look back it was just yesterday that we grew up in rural areas where farming was a basic human need and a way of life. Looking back at my grandparents, my great grandparents and my entire family, they socialised in agriculture. Agriculture is the wealth of the land. What happened to that? Somehow we have deviated.

Ian Mashingaidze
Regional director
for Oxfam Southern
Africa:



You can start off from the fact that over 70% of people in Sub-Saharan Africa live in rural areas. By far the largest majority rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Unfortunately now subsistence farmers are facing major challenges that make it difficult to live out of poverty. These challenges include the impact of climate change resulting in erratic weather patterns which have adverse impact on farmers relying on rainfall dependent agriculture. Another major challenge in the region is the impact of HIV/Aids. SADC has a 38% HIV prevalence globally. It is prevalent in the 15-49 year age group. These are the people who are supposed to be working on agriculture and on your farms. Access to input – seeds, fertilisers, and markets – is another factor hampering farmers. Finally, agriculture can play a role in alleviating poverty, but not unless these factors are addressed. So let's address those challenges, so we can use agriculture as a vehicle to alleviating poverty.

Words and photos by Zahira Kharsany

