

COMMUNIQUE

MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

1.SADC Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Food Security met on 5th February 2010 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. Ministers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Republic of Mozambique, the Republic of Namibia and The Republic of Zambia attended the meeting. The Republic of Angola and the Republic of Zimbabwe were represented by their Ambassadors accredited to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Senior Officials of the Republic of Malawi, Republic of Botswana, Republic of South Africa, the Kingdom of Swaziland and the United Republic of Tanzania were also present at the meeting. The Minister of Agriculture of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Honourable Norbet Katintima, hosted and chaired the meeting.

2.The meeting was convened in order to consider the establishment of a regional centre for coordination of agricultural research, review the regional food security situation and to sign a memorandum of understanding for the implementation of the SADC harmonized seed regulatory system.

3.Ministers noted that the overall food security situation for the 2009/10 marketing year has been favourable, with a regional cereal surplus of 476,000 metric tonnes, compared to a deficit of 1.78 metric tonnes recorded in 2008/09. They also noted that during the current marketing year, the region has recorded an estimated surplus of 4.37 million tonnes on its key cereal crop – maize. However, the Ministers observed that despite having a good surplus of cereals, the region had 3,26 million people who are food insecure. Ministers noted that non-cereal food crops, livestock and fisheries are playing a critical role in food security in the Region, and directed the Secretariat to ensure that data on these food commodities are adequately captured in all the reports. They also urged Member States to promote the production and utilization of these food commodities.

4.Ministers noted that good rains have been received in most parts of the region, except for the south-eastern parts of the region which has had low rainfall. Ministers particularly noted the insufficient rainfall received in Southern Madagascar, southern and central Mozambique, eastern Botswana, southern Zimbabwe, southern Malawi, southern half of South Africa and southern Lesotho. In this regard, they called on Member States to closely monitor the developing rainfall situation in their countries and take appropriate measures to mitigate against hunger and malnutrition.

5.Ministers expressed their commitment to strengthening the capacity of the region in coordinating agricultural research and the need for the establishment of an appropriate organization that will coordinate agricultural research within SADC. In expressing their commitment, they recommended to Council, the establishment of a sub-regional organization (SRO) which will coordinate agricultural research and development activities at regional level. In addition, the Ministers also recommended to Council the approval of a sustainability plan as well as a charter for establishing the SRO.

6.Ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System. The system aims at improving seed trade and increasing the availability of high quality seed to farmers in the region. The Harmonised Seed Regulatory System will facilitate easier movement of seed between SADC countries and will make more varieties of seed available throughout the Region. It will also integrate small isolated national seed markets into one large SADC market. This system has been developed through a consultative process and represents a direct response of the Member States to the low availability and limited access by farmers in the Region, to key agricultural inputs. Special attention in this regard is on small scale farmers who have limited resources and face challenges in sourcing seed of high quality.

7.The Development of the SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System has been supported by both the Member States and International Cooperating Partners (ICPs). The Ministers expressed great appreciation to the ICPs, especially the Swiss Agency for International Development and Cooperation, who provided most of the financial resources for this task to be accomplished.

8. Ministers thanked the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of Congo for hosting the meeting and for the warm hospitality extended to all the delegates.

5th
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

2010