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Throughout the SADCC region, policy makers require research results that can be used to design and implement policies that will improve food security in their countries. The objectives of the food security research project is to contribute to strengthening the regional knowledge base by conducting policy relevant research. In implementing this research, the project provides training for young researchers to strengthen their research skills; holds seminars and workshops; and publishes working papers reporting initial findings.

The annual conference provides an opportunity for the collaborating researchers to present their findings, receive feedback from policy makers and government officials as a basis for identifying future research priorities, and to stimulate debate on food security policy issues. This proceedings contains revised versions of research papers prepared under the sponsorship of University of Zimbabwe/Michigan State University (UZ/MSU) Food Security Research Project in Southern Africa and presented at the University of Zimbabwe’s Third Annual Conference on Food Security Research in Southern Africa, held at the Holiday Inn, Harare, November 1-5, 1987.

The papers included in this volume address critical food security issues in Southern Africa, organised around six themes. In the Official Opening, Professor W.J. Kamba, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe, highlights issues in building research capacity in SADCC universities. Representing the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, and Rural Resettlement, Dr. Sam Muchena provides an overview of the challenges and accomplishments of SADCC’s Food Security Programme.

The second section of the proceedings--SADCC’s Food Security Programme--presents an update on the current activities of the regional Food Security Programme; including papers on the early warning system, the inventory of agricultural resource bases, postproduction activities, and the regional grain reserve.

The third section--Market Liberalisation and Food Security--reports on research that analyses the history and impact of market liberalisation in Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Mali.

The fourth section--Household Food Security in Sorghum Based Farming Systems in the SADCC Region--includes papers by social and biological scientists that report on issues in designing household level food security research, traditional strategies for coping with food security, the state of the art for sorghum research in communal areas, the history and characteristics of food insecurity in two communal areas in Zimbabwe, and the implications of farming systems research in Botswana and Northern Nigeria for household food insecurity.
The fifth section—Access to Food—includes papers that analyse the role of the Government of Botswana in increasing rural and urban access to food, and the role of nonfarm activities in the rural economy.

The sixth section—Communal Maize Production, Storage, and Marketing in Zimbabwe—reports on analysis of the factors responsible for the rapid increase in maize production since independence, and the policy implication of household grain marketing and storage decisions.

The seventh section—Wheat Production and Imports in the SADCC Region, What are the Tradeoffs?—includes papers that provide insights into the political economy of wheat production and consumption in Sub-Saharan Africa, the economics of expanding wheat production in Zimbabwe, and the comparative advantage and policy incentives for wheat production in Zimbabwe.

The final section—Food Trade and Food Aid in the SADCC Region—includes papers that give an overview of grain trade, barter and triangular trade in the SADCC region; and agricultural marketing and trade policies with a potential to promote food security. In addition, these papers propose research needed to better understand trade policy issues and constraints to expanding intraregional trade.

As the breath of the papers presented at the conference suggests, the Food Security Research Project views food security as much more than simply expanding food production. Food security will only be achieved when all households have the ability to acquire a calorie-adequate diet throughout the year. Improving food security involves two interrelated components: increasing the national availability of food through production, storage, and trade; and increasing household access to food through greater access to production resources, income (from the sale of agricultural products, off-farm work, and nonfarm activities) and government transfers. Therefore, to improve household food security, research needs to address not only micro level issues, but also to evaluate the overall policy environment to determine its impact on producer incentives and the distribution of the benefits of development.

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