Strengthening the Capacity of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network

PROJECT PROPOSAL
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region, with a population of 200 million people, is faced with many agricultural and food insecurity challenges. While agriculture is recognised as the prime driver of economic development in most SADC countries, investments by governments have remained low. As a result, agricultural yields have been level or declining for many crops and livestock in most SADC countries. Yields of most important cereal grains, tubers and legumes such as maize, millet, sorghum, cassava and groundnuts are no higher today than they were in 1980 in most of the countries. Cereal yields average 1.12 tonnes per hectare, compared with 2.07 tonnes per hectare for the world as a whole. As a result, average per capita dietary energy supplies are 2.16 kcal compared to a requirement of 2.70 kcal per day (FAO, 2000). Food aid and food imports have almost doubled in the last fifteen years.

An increase in the productivity and output of the agriculture sector depends on conducive policies and the consequent levels of commitment by governments, management of natural resources and decisions of millions of smallholder farmers throughout the region. Governments should, therefore, provide a conducive policy and legal framework, including functional input supply and markets for surplus products. The presence of a conducive environment would encourage small-scale farming communities, who comprise 70% of African populations, to make the necessary investments to increase the productivity of crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry and improve rural livelihoods.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has exacerbated the region’s efforts to ensure food security due to a rapid loss of agricultural labour force. In addition, natural disasters such as droughts, floods and civil conflicts have also compounded food insecurity. Low agricultural productivity has seriously eroded the competitiveness of African agricultural products on world markets. This is evidenced by the fact that Africa’s share of total world agricultural trade declined from eight percent in 1965 to three percent in 1996. This has been caused by low levels of investment and ineffective use of available resources. The terms of trade within the SADC have been unfavourable due to both tariff and non-tariff barriers imposed by member states. For example, most SADC countries’ products are competitive rather than complementary since most countries produce similar ranges of products.

As a result, countries compete for the same regional and world markets, with little or no intra-regional trade.

Development of regional trade has been the overriding policy issue facing the SADC where the agricultural production systems are characterised by small and large scale farming systems. Small scale farming, however, has remained stagnant in most countries, contributing little surplus production for exports. The surplus and deficit periods in many of the member countries occur at the same time, further reducing intra-regional trade opportunities.

One of the main reasons for creating the SADC was to promote regional integration and achieve food security. Through the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Directorate, the SADC secretariat has been managing several programs aimed at promoting regional trade, providing early warning systems and promoting exchange of information across member states. However, the goal of ensuring regional food security has remained elusive and part of the reason has been the failure by SADC to integrate and harmonize national agricultural policies across the region and relate such policies to regional and international trade protocols. A meeting convened by SADC Ministers of Agriculture in 1994 recommended the establishment of a regional policy analysis network that would tackle the policy vacuum that existed. This recommendation was implemented when the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FARNPAN) was established in 2001, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).