Stakeholder consultations are key to effective policy formulation and implementation

By Dr Tobias Takavarasha, Chief Executive Officer

Many countries in the SADC region are beginning to involve stakeholders in the policy formulation and implementation process. Consultative forums are being created to provide a channel for information gathering, consensus building and a framework for broader understanding of agriculture and policy related issues.

Effective policy analysis depends on the ability to identify and measure the impact of various economic options, to assess trade-offs, and to present well thought out choices to policy makers and managers. In order for policy researchers to synthesize and weigh various alternatives for solving complex problems in a dynamic environment with competing interests, and with a limited time span, there is need to engage stakeholders in consultative dialogues. Policy advice must be founded on technical competence, practical insight and effective communication skills. Policy operates in a social, cultural, political and bureaucratic environment which requires sensitivity and skills in public administration, negotiating techniques and consensus building.

For the policy process to be effective, both policy analysis and economic management must interact to ensure that different perspectives are examined in the search for the best policy choices. Efforts are being made to regularly call upon groups from many different segments of society that include farming unions, consumer groups, agri-business, chambers of commerce, academic institutions, professional associations, government policy units, commodity leaders, non-governmental organizations and grass-roots organizations, so as to tap into a wide range of view points. This not only increases the prospect of generating quality advice, but also improves the likelihood of its acceptance and eventual implementation and achievement of the desired objectives.

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New Chief Executive Officer for FANRPAN

FANRPAN's stakeholders adopted a new Constitution and Strategic & Business Plan in March 2002. The new organizational structure of FANRPAN has a Chief Executive Officer and a lean team of supporting staff.

Dr Tobias Takavarasha recently took over as the new Chief Executive Officer with effect from 1st October 2002. Prior to that Dr Takavarasha worked for the past 22 years with the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture in Zimbabwe. Dr Takavarasha was Permanent Secretary during the last four years of his career in Government. He holds a Doctorate in Agricultural Policy from the University of Zimbabwe and has vast experience in agricultural policy and agricultural development in the SADC region. He is a devoted Christian and is married to Nancy with one daughter. The FANRPAN network takes this opportunity to wish Dr Takavarasha the very best in this challenging task. The network hopes to benefit tremendously from his regional experience.
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FANRPAN is stakeholder-driven

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FANRPAN is a stakeholder-driven policy analysis and advocacy regional co-ordinating institution, designed to ensure that policy makers have continual access to well researched and analysed policy advice both at the national and regional level. The absence of effective policy dialogue capacities has on many numerous occasions resulted in a flawed policy process which in turn has led to severely negative effects on development and the achievement of food security on a sustainable basis. FANRPAN is addressing these issues by facilitating the establishment and strengthening of stakeholder co-ordinating nodes in each of the participating countries. The country nodes are responsible for organizing stakeholder meetings whenever a policy matter is being researched on both at formulation, designing and operational stages. FANRPAN will establish national databases and promote effectiveness among private-public sector partnerships and through networking and information exchange. Policy managers and analysts from various stakeholder institutions are also actively involved in the research process and training courses made available including attachments at reputable national and international policy institutions. Conferences and workshops are used not only for disseminating research results but are also being used as tools to train policy cadres in making presentations and policy debates. A database of policy advisors and analysts is currently being compiled by the FANRPAN network to ensure that there are permanent regional experts on the various policy-related disciplines.

During the month of November 2002 a joint CTA (Technical Centre of Agricultural and Rural Co-operation ACP - EU Cotonou Agreement) and FANRPAN Regional Stakeholder Conference on Capacity Building for Policy Analysis among Stakeholder Institutions, with a particular focus on farming organizations, will be held in South Africa. The aim of the workshop is to establish mechanisms for building the capacity for policy analysis among the farming groups, strengthen the national nodes so that they can effectively interact with stakeholders, and identify ways for improving collaboration with other national and regional organizations doing similar policy research work. An Institutional Directory for the SADC Region which highlights major institutions (policy research, advocacy training, input supply, marketing, trade) will be an expected output from this forthcoming workshop.

FANRPAN acknowledges that there are many institutions doing similar or related work and there is need to create synergies through fostering partnerships and collaborative research programmes. FANRPAN as a regional SADC policy network will facilitate the co-ordination of stakeholder consultative processes in the area of food, agriculture, natural resources and rural development.

Policy research agenda for FANRPAN

Active consultations are in progress within FANRPAN to operationalise some of the research agenda topics as they emerge. Selection and prioritisation of research topics are undertaken through a number of inter-related processes. Country nodes through their national stakeholder consultations held in the past few months have identified several topics of immediate relevance. The SADC FANR Development Unit through the Council of Ministers from time to time highlights and recommends critical policy issues that they would like the network to research on. Many collaborative institutions and donors operating in the region often have indicated to FANRPAN their areas of interest for co-operative policy analysis. The network and the Board of Governors in their various regional and international interactions have also assisted in highlighting key research topics.

At every workshop and conference where research papers are discussed, areas for follow up and for in-depth analysis are frequently identified. From a combination of the above processes the following is a summary of the FANRPAN policy research issues at the different stages of execution and formulation:

- Short-term food and farm input supply (study being finalised)
- Regional Trade Policy (Study underway)
- Harmonization of seed policies
- Fertilizer Supply and Distribution Policy Study for the region
- HIV/AIDS and Impact on Agriculture and Food Security
- Strategic Food Reserves and Futures Markets
- Strengthening of farmer organizations in policy analysis
- Commodity Comparative Advantage and Competitiveness Studies
- Water and Irrigation Management Strategies
- Relationships between Food Security and Natural Resources and Environment
- Animal Health and Livestock Policy Issues
- Evolution of a comprehensive regional policy framework for the food, agriculture and natural resources sector
- Biodiversity issues.

The FANRPAN network is mobilizing its stakeholders for funding of these studies.
Farewell Sigwele

FANRPAN bids farewell to its Coordinator, Mr Howard K. Sigwele. Mr Sigwele was called in for a year to establish the coordinating office and spearhead the network. Howard did a sterling job of setting up the network structure to what it is today. Some of Howard's achievements include the Constitution and the Strategic & Business Plan. Mr Sigwele was also instrumental in getting the network to discuss about stakeholder issues especially trade at a regional level. The major research areas he initiated are namely the Short Term Food and Farm Input Supply Study, Review of Trade Policy Studies in the SADC Region and the soon to be commissioned Impact of HIV / AIDS on Agriculture in the SADC Region. We would like to thank Mr Sigwele for his commitment to the network and wish him the best in his endeavours.

FANRPAN Board of Governors

The FANRPAN Constitution specifies that the Association shall be managed by a Board of Governors which shall consist of up to ten persons elected from Government Ministries or Departments of the SADC member states, policy research units or departments of agriculture or agricultural economists at universities within the region, private sector organizations, farmers organizations and SADC Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Directorate. The Board is chaired by Dr Lindiwe M. Sibanda (shown below) with Professor Haidari Amani as Deputy Chairperson. The following are the current members of the FANRPAN Board of Governors for the next two years with effect from October 1, 2002:

- two farmer representatives (Namibia and Zambia)
- two private sector representatives (Mozambique and Zimbabwe),
- two policy researchers (South Africa and Tanzania),
- two government representatives (Malawi and Botswana),
- two donor representatives (USAID, French Government)

The Board is responsible for the management and control of the affairs of the Association and developing its policies, implementing decisions passed at general meetings and overseeing the operations of the Secretariat, among other functions.

In addition to the Board of Governors, there is a Technical Committee elected by the Board of Governors which consists of six distinguished policy researchers, four drawn from within the SADC region, one from an internationally reputed policy research institute outside Africa and one from a reputed policy research institute within Africa other than the SADC Region.

The Technical Committee assists FANRPAN through approval of guidelines for project appraisal, the provision of advice to the Secretariat on the format for preparing proposals and monitoring projects as well as the review of quality of the products of such projects.

Dr Lindiwe M. Sibanda, FANRPAN
Board Chairperson
Applications are invited for the following post:

PROGRAMME OFFICER (Policy Research and Communications)

Duties Include:

* Undertaking policy research in liaison with regional and national research teams and co-ordinating the production of research reports;
* Assisting the Chief Executive Officer in co-ordinating the operations of country policy nodes, arrangement of conferences and production of conference reports;
* Preparing project proposals and terms of reference for the FANRPAN research agenda and assisting in the selection and supervision of research activities;
* Developing and monitoring a readily accessible database, network website and communication strategy with interested parties within and outside the network;
* Managing the publication of the network's research outputs, network Newsletter and policy briefs series; and
* Any other duties as delegated by the Chief Executive Officer

Requirements:

* At least a first degree and preferably a Master's degree in Agricultural Economics, Agriculture, Natural Resources or related field
* A minimum of five years working experience in a national or regional policy related institution and strong understanding of agricultural and rural development issues in the Southern African region;
* Good communication skills and experience in information technology applications, and
* Ability to produce reports and project proposals and present conference papers fluently and review policy papers.

An appropriate remuneration package will be negotiated. Ability to write and speak other international languages in addition to English will be an added advantage. Only applications meeting the stated criteria from persons (male or female) who are SADC nationals will be shortlisted.

Interested candidates should submit their applications with a detailed curriculum vitae and contact addresses of three referees to the following address:

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
FANRPAN
P.O. Box CY2765
Causeway Harare
ZIMBABWE
or fax on ++263 4 792411
or email to: policy@fanrpnan.org

UPCOMING EVENT

CTA/FANRPAN Regional Conference on strengthening institutional capacity for policy research and analysis among stakeholdes - November 13-15, 2002

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