

Strengthening Policy Analysis and Representation Capacity of Farmer Based Organizations in SADC

In collaboration with CTA (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation) and SACAU (Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions), FANRPAN hosted a regional dialogue in Windhoek, Namibia as part of its initiative to strengthen the capacity of farmer based organizations in the SADC region. This initiative is a response by FANRPAN to support SACAU's efforts to promote the interests of all farmers in the SADC region. A detailed report of this workshop is available on FANRPAN's website, www.fanrpan.org. A summary of the conclusions drawn from this workshop and the research conducted by FANRPAN ensues.

From the on-going analysis and dialogue, it is noted that the role of Farmer Organizations in agriculture and rural development in SADC cannot be easily substituted. However, the relevance of such farmer Organizations to the members they represent can only be sustained if there is cognisance of the change in the operational environment, especially with respect to the challenges and constraints fuelled by globalization and trade liberalization.

(continued on page 2)



Participants at the regional workshop held in Windhoek, Namibia 19 -20 July 2004

Strengthening Policy Analysis and Representation Capacity of Farmer Based Organizations (FOs) in SADC

(continued from page 1)

For this reason, serious efforts should be made to try and enable Farmer Organizations to depart from their historical and traditional functions (lobbying and advocacy and information provision), and move towards creating sustainable business partnerships with the private sector for their sustenance and effective influence.

Leadership and good governance structures are also essential ingredients for the development of FOs with the capacity to articulate the aspirations of farmers and competence to take a central role in driving forward agricultural development in the region.

Constraints affecting existing FOs in SADC are many but surmountable, especially if FOs in the region unite through their regional body SACAU, particularly in the areas of market and trade facilitation and effective information sharing. Thus, strategic regional FOs alliances are crucial.

IMPLICATIONS THEREOF

Given the afore-mentioned challenges, constraints, and FOs development assistance needs, **the following recommendations are crucial as FANRPAN & SACAU strive to strengthen FOs' policy analysis and representation capacities in the SADC region:**

The role of FOs in agricultural development is indispensable. Thus, support to nurture these organisations and make them formidable representative organisations and custodians of farmers' interests in the region should aptly and timely be provided, at least for sometime to come.

Both small and large-scale FOs require interventions in areas of policy analysis skills and advocacy (influence). Consequently, the need to increase their capacity in self governance and constitutional matters with a view for building sustainable leadership structures and other organizational functions is crucial.

FOs capacity to carry out well-researched position papers in relevant commodity sector industries should be strengthened.

There is need for increased participation of FOs in trade discussions and analysis. This will enable FO's to make well-informed decisions on both external and internal factors affecting agricultural development. This role could be achieved through the formation of agricultural trade fora (ATF) both at national and regional levels. At regional level, SACAU is appropriate to take up this function.

Partnership building and the need for farmers and agribusinesses to work together in a formalised manner should be the principal focus of every FO.

This will enable the FOs to sustain the provision and delivery of services to members. Alternatively, all players in the agricultural industry i.e. farmers, processors, input suppliers, and those in the marketing and trade, should coalesce to establish a consolidated position if their influence on agricultural development at national and regional levels is to be noteworthy.

SACAU as a regional FO should be provided with the capacity to take a leading role of being a regional information desk in market and trade matters and in the development of a workable and sustainable network to reach out to all its membership.

SACAU should also consider admitting to its membership, commodity based FOs as they are well placed in terms of business entrepreneurship, and these could significantly contribute financially towards meeting the operational costs of the organisation thereby improving its capacity to service the membership.

The greatest areas of need are: (i) market and trade; and (ii) input supply facilitation. Therefore, it is only prudent that all interventions should be directly or indirectly

Strengthening Policy Analysis and Representation Capacity of Farmer Based Organizations (FOs) in SADC

designed in such a way that they are tailored towards addressing these challenges.

While it has long been established that the **core functions of FOs are; lobbying and advocacy; and information and communication**, it is critical that FANRPAN considers support interventions in enhancing FOs' capacity in; **policy research; business development; institutional**

governance; and fostering partnership between the FOs and the private sector.

This policy brief is based on the report, "Strengthening Policy Analysis and Representation Capacity of Farmer Based Organization in SADC"
By Ndombi E.M. Ndombi of the Zambia National Farmers Union

FANRPAN/IITA Conducts an Assessment and Prioritization of Constraints to Agricultural Trade and Rural Economy Diversification



Delegates at the Regional Workshop held in Maputo, Mozambique, 19-20 August 2004

FANRPAN/IITA Conducts an Assessment and Prioritization of Constraints to Agricultural Trade and Rural Economy Diversification

In June 2004, conducted rural livelihoods studies in four countries, namely Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Mozambique and held policy deliberations at a Regional High Level Policy Dialogue in Maputo 19 - 20 August 2004 to assess and prioritize agricultural policy constraints to regional trade and rural economy diversification. These studies were conducted through FANRPAN's partnership with International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). The goal of this partnership is to contribute towards strengthening policy frameworks and putting in place business development services essential for diversifying rural economies and enhancing regional trade in Southern Africa.

This newsletter highlights a priority list of domestic and regional policy constraints plaguing agricultural development. A detailed report is available on the FANRPAN website. Visit www.fanrpan.org.

Growth in agricultural production over the last ten years has been encouraging but per capita growth has been slow or negative over much of this period. To reverse trends in declining farm income and productivity, SADC countries need to address issues of diversifying production and increasing regional trade.

- Agriculture is still a priority sector for stimulating economic growth and poverty reduction in the region.
- Governments should commit themselves to allocate an increasing share of the national budgets to agriculture.
- While countries in the region have espoused open trade policies for export crops, they have pursued de-jure liberalization and de-facto state control of domestic marketing and international trade of staple crops.
- The policy environment in the agricultural marketing should be more consistent and stable in the long-run.
- The removal of restrictions on export crop production has improved livelihoods of rural communities involved at different market stages.
- Domestic production and marketing structures are inflexible because of limited market access and weak institutional development.
- Inter-sectoral diversification cannot be obtained in the absence of adequate human capital.
- Weak infrastructure remains a challenge.

The views expressed in this brief are those of the author(s) and not necessarily endorsed by a representative of the co-sponsoring or supporting organisations

Funding of this publication is made possible by (CTA) Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (ACP-EU). FANRPAN is a regional policy network of the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Sector in the SADC Region. For further details on the network, please contact: The Chief Executive Officer, FANRPAN, PO Box CY 2365, Causeway Harare, Zimbabwe. E-mail: policy@fanrpan.org or visit www.fanrpan.org