

Press Release III:

Effective Policies and Strong Institutions Needed to Address Food Crisis

21 June 2008

FANRPAN Board Chairman

The Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) Board Chairman and COMESA Secretary General ad Interim, Mr. Sindiso Ngwenya, has urged Southern African countries to formulate and implement effective policies to ensure regional food security.

"The ongoing food crisis presents an opportune moment for Southern Africa to review its policies and put in place long term strategies that will transform the region into the world's food basket," Mr. Ngwenya said in key note remarks at the FANRPAN technical and financial partners' meeting in Johannesburg yesterday. He added that Southern Africa had abundant land and highly skilled people that would be boosted by appropriate technologies and policies.

The meeting brought together over 50 delegates representing governments, UN agencies, funding and technical partners. It is a follow up to the 2007 partners' meeting held on the sidelines of the general assembly of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in Sandton, South Africa. Convened under the theme, "Policy Interventions for a Food Secure Southern Africa", the FANRPAN meeting comes in the wake of a growing food crisis which has sparked public unrest globally. The meeting enabled FANRPAN to promote its policy research and advocacy programmes which include food systems, agricultural productivity, natural resources and environment and HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Ngwenya said Southern Africa was living from hand to mouth and called for a complete shift in food production and consumption patterns.

"As Africans we have been very good at producing what we do not eat and eating what we do not produce. The time for Africa's green revolution is now," he said.

World food security is currently at its lowest since 1960. As of 20 June 2008, the world had just enough grain for 50 days, which was half of the traditional reserves kept during the days of plenty.

Mr. Ngwenya noted that Southern Africa's food insecurity has been worsened by the HIV and AIDS epidemic which has reversed the gains made in economic growth and food security at household level. Southern Africa remains the epicentre of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Its impact cuts across Southern Africa's natural resource base, agricultural productivity and food availability, One of FANRPAN's thematic thrusts is on the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security.

However, Mr. Ngwenya said it was good news Africa had now seriously embarked on its green revolution. The political leadership has given its full support under the African Union's Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

"As we share and interact as partners in development with a single goal of ensuring that Southern Africa shall never be hungry again, may this not be a slogan. Let us stand resolute and be bold enough to declare that through appropriate policies Southern Africa will overcome food insecurity," Mr. Ngwenya said.

FANRPAN has just launched its 2007-2015 strategic Plan whose vision is for a food secure Southern Africa. FANRPAN's Board members include; Mr. Ajay Vashee, Prof. Mandi Rukuni, Ms. Margaret Nyirenda, Ms. Vangile Titi, Dr. Sam Mundia and Prof. Johan Kirsten.

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