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### Allow the Private Sector to Import Maize During Deficit Periods

There are increasing maize deficits in the SADC region. These deficits are increasingly being filled by maize imports from South Africa or outside the region.

Smallholders in SADC need support to efficiently grow surpluses and find market outlets, but they are increasingly being left out of the equation as deficit requirements are sourced from elsewhere. When locally produced surpluses are depleted, informal channels become thinly traded. Small millers and traders tend not to procure grain from South African suppliers because they generally unable. Imports are coordinated between formal channel suppliers in RSA or USA and large millers, which in turn implies much higher milling and retail margins, and hence relatively high maize meal costs to consumers (approximately 25–40% higher).

In Zambia, these findings have led to two major policy changes by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agriculture and Cooperatives (MACO): Inter-district grain levies have been reduced and MACO announced the waiving of maize import tariffs, although this is not yet enacted.

**Other SADC countries, too, should create a conducive environment for the private sector to import maize particularly during deficit periods.**

This was the conclusion of a group of 108 experts in the food, agriculture and natural resources sector, who met during the FANRPAN 2005 Multi-stakeholder Annual Policy Dialogue in Johannesburg.

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