Welcome to the second issue of the ACF Newsletter. We are glad to mention that the first issue of the ACF Newsletter received a lot of positive feedback from stakeholders in the agriculture sector. This was encouraging to the ACF staff that work hard in trying to compile stories and articles for sharing with the readers.

The second issue of the ACF Newsletter focuses on highlighting the growing importance of promoting participation of youths in agriculture value-chains in view of growing unemployment levels; and increasing global population and food requirements. This forms the head story for this issue based on the discussions, experiences and ideas shared at the just ended high-level policy dialogue meeting organized by FARNPAN in Tanzania. The newsletter also shares among others some information on the Zambian CAADP process so far and what the expectations of NGOs and private sector are for the CAADP Investment Plans to be developed.

We hope that the readers will find this issue interesting to read. We will be glad to receive more feedback to help us improve our efforts to share information with stakeholders.

Joseph Mbinji (Mr.), Executive Director

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The theme of the dialogue meeting was “youth participation in agriculture value chains, moving from policy to practice”. The dialogue meeting was graced by his Excellency President J. Kikwete of Tanzania. The ACF being a National Node Institution of the FANRPAN participated in this dialogue meeting.

The dialogue meeting discussed the importance of youths’ participation in agriculture value-chains and policy dialogue as critical in bridging the widening food and financial gap between the urban and rural poor households and communities. Youths are known to poses huge potential, if well tapped could greatly contribute to increased agriculture production, value addition and improved commodity marketing. This potential can only be fully harnessed if youths actively participate not only in agricultural production but also in planning and implementation of policies and programmes. The message from the youths was that “there should be nothing about them without them”.

The dialogue meeting highlighted the need to identify value chains that are attractive to youths as a way of arousing their interest to participate in agriculture value chains. These include value-chains such as fisheries, horticulture, gardening & small livestock (goats) among others. This is because youths have little interest in value chains that take much of their labour and time (time to produce and market) and have minimal profit margins such as maize. Secondly, establishing micro, small and medium enterprises based on agro commodities could also absorb many unemployed youths.

Value addition to agriculture products is also critical as this increases profit margins that would attract youths’ participation. Value-chain support services such as rural transportation of agriculture produce provides more opportunities for youths’ employment. The use of modern ICT in agriculture is also a good strategy that would not only attract youth’s participation in policy dialogue but would also provide employment opportunities for servicing and repairing of ICT equipment.

In addition, provision of incentives and financial support services such as the CEEC and ZDA including tax rebates/exemptions in the context of Zambia, as well as additional support in the form of business management training, exposure visits, mentorship and apprenticeship is required to equip youths with requisite skills and motivation to produce agricultural goods and services that will be able to compete favorably on the market.

**ACF to engage civil society and poor farmers at sub-national levels in shaping agriculture and food security policies in Zambia**

ACF with support from the Zambian Governance Foundation (ZGF) has embarked on a pilot project to strengthen engagement and participation of small scale and poor farmers in shaping agriculture and food security polices in Zambia. The 18 months pilot project to be implemented in Monze and Kazungula Districts is part of the on-going efforts by ACF to broaden its outreach and engagement of stakeholders not only at national level but also at sub-national levels, at district and community level. The ACF Director, Mr. Joseph Mbinji, described this project as a new initiative that will add value and a completely new dimension to the way ACF has engaged agriculture stakeholders in the past. “Through this project, the country will see more poor farmers engaged in agriculture policy dialogue at district and community levels,” said Mr. Mbinji. He mentioned that he was optimistic that with this approach that will have a strong linkage with national level policy dialogue, the county will have pro-poor agriculture and food security policies. The ACF will work with district based partners who will include District Farmers Associations (DFAs), Civic Society forums and District Land Alliances.

Through this initiative, effective mechanisms for increased civic engagement and participation of poor farmers in advocating for pro-poor policies on agriculture and food security will be established and strengthened in the project districts. The district and community level forums that will be established will provide long-term channels for awareness creation and consultations on various national policies and programmes, which will include the livestock policy, e-voucher and CAADP Investment Plans etc. In addition, the project will build capacity & empower poor farmers with advocacy skills and social accountability tools to enable them undertake their own lobby and advocacy on issues affecting them.

The initial implementation phase of this initiative will provide useful lessons and experiences for up-scaling the initiative to other districts with support from cooperating partners.
The Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) was launched in Zambia several years ago and a Country Compact was signed in 2011. Following the signing of the Compact the country has embarked on the process of developing a CAADP Investment Plan being led by a team of independent consultants selected for each of the CAADP pillar. The development process of the CAADP Investment Plan follows a participatory approach involving all key stakeholders ranging from the public sector, NGOs to private sector and cooperating partners. As part of its core mandate to facilitate stakeholder engagement in agriculture policy dialogue, ACF supported the CAADP consultants’ team in soliciting preliminary input from the NGOs and the private sector before the provincial consultations were held. This was achieved through two separate consultative meetings that were organised in August 2012. Preliminary input from the two dialogue meetings helped enrich the process through the various contributions and issues raised by the two stakeholder groups, which they felt should be given priority in the Zambian CAADP Investment Plan.

ACF also made use of this opportunity to widely distribute the 2012 calendar carrying advocacy messages on the e-voucher. The stand was manned by ACF staff which interacted with visitors wanting to know more about ACF’s mission and operations with some visitors expressing interest to join the forum as members.

The major challenge that ACF encountered during the show was that most farmers did not know about ACF despite it having operated for more than twelve years. Another challenge was that visitors whose associations were already members of ACF did not know that their association belonged to ACF and were asking how they could become members. This shows challenges of lack of information flow within some member organizations of ACF.

Going forward, ACF should continue participating in such national events for information sharing. Members of ACF are also encouraged to share information about ACF internally.

The 86th Agricultural and Commercial Show of 2012

‘Feedback on the E-voucher’

By Nakuze Chalomba

The 86th Agricultural and Commercial Show started on 2nd of August and ended on 6th of August 2012. The theme for 2012 was “Building On Today’s Promise”. This annual event was officially opened on 4th of August by his Excellency, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe who was the Guest of Honour. The Show brought together farmers and manufacturers from around the country including neighboring countries to showcase agricultural technology innovations, products as well as services.

The Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF) participated as an exhibitor. ACF’s main highlight of this year’s exhibition was to show case information on the electronic voucher and how it would help address the challenges of agricultural input delivery to smallholder farmers under the Farmer Input Support Programme. The Agriculture Show provided an excellent opportunity to popularize the e-voucher concept to farmers and the general members of the public. The ACF staff worked tirelessly in explaining the e-voucher to farmers and visitors to the stand. Most of them indicated that they did not know much about the e-voucher and how it works. After providing explanations most visitors expressed delight and showed great support for the e-voucher as a good idea to improve efficiency and transparency in the delivery of subsidized farming inputs.

ACF Exhibition at the 86th Agriculture and Commercial Show

More than 300 people visited the ACF Stand at the Show.

Among other things that ACF exhibited included the first edition of the e-newsletter, organizational brochures, Annual Report (2011) and Policy Briefs.

Priority Issues in the Zambian CAADP Investment Plan - Perspectives of NGOs & the Private Sector

by Nakuze Chalomba

The Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) was launched in Zambia several years ago and a Country Compact was signed in 2011. Following the signing of the Compact the country has embarked on the process of developing a CAADP Investment Plan being led by a team of independent consultants selected for each of the CAADP pillar. The development process of the CAADP Investment Plan follows a participatory approach involving all key stakeholders ranging from the public sector, NGOs to private sector and cooperating partners. As part of its core mandate to facilitate stakeholder engagement in agriculture policy dialogue, ACF supported the CAADP consultants’ team in soliciting preliminary input from the NGOs and the private sector before the provincial consultations were held. This was achieved through two separate consultative meetings that were organised in August 2012. Preliminary input from the two dialogue meetings helped enrich the process through the various contributions and issues raised by the two stakeholder groups, which they felt should be given priority in the Zambian CAADP Investment Plan.

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The common issues raised included the need to invest in providing an enabling policy and legal environment that would enhance consistency in policy implementation; efficient commodity markets; agricultural diversification; value-addition; supply chain efficiency and competitiveness and generally an environment that would promote private sector participation and investments in the agriculture sector. Government was also urged to prioritize infrastructure and technology development that would support growth of the agriculture sector in areas such as irrigation, high quality storage facilities and efficient commodity transportation.

The private sector would also like to see more investments towards increased access to agriculture credit by smallholder farmers; investment in research and development and greater consultation of the private sector in regulating agriculture commodity trade, especially in enforcing import and export bans.

NGOs were also particularly interested to see how the CAADP Investment Plans would contribute to capacity building needs of sector players; harmonization of donor support in the sector; improved collaborations and partnerships between NGOs and the public sector including PPPs; and improved financial accountability of the public sector involving the use and impacts of both local resources and resources invested by cooperating partners.

With continued stakeholder participation in this process at both national and sub national levels, we are hopeful that the final product will be a more comprehensive and stakeholder owned CAADP Investment Plan that will help propel the agriculture sector to meaningful growth levels.

**Upcoming Events**

Consultation meeting with policy makers on the quarantine and phytosanitary measures for seed.................31st October 2012
Budget Analysis Meeting.................................................1st November 2012

**TWO INTERNS JOIN ACF IN JULY 2012**

Ms Nakuze Chalomba

Nakuze joined the ACF as an intern in July 2012. She was recruited to assist on stakeholder engagement, policy advocacy and information and knowledge management. She finished her Bachelor’s Degree in Commerce in June 2012 at Mulungushi University with a major specialization in Economics and a minor in Accounting and Finance. Nakuze intends to pursue post graduate studies in Finance.

Mr. Ernest Mupemo

Ernest is a graduate from the University of Zambia from the School of Agriculture Sciences with a major in Animal Science. With Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF), Ernest is working as an intern on research and policy analysis. His desire is to pursue further studies in the field of research.