Harmonised Seed Security Project

Harmonisation of Seed Legislation in SADC

The Harmonised Seed Security Project (HaSSP) is a FANRPAN project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the project seeks to address seed security in the SADC region by aligning national seed policies in order to increase availability of and access to quality affordable seed for smallholder farmers.

HaSSP was developed through a consultative process and is currently being piloted in four countries, namely, Malawi, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The period of the pilot project is 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2013.

The project also seeks to empower smallholder farmers, especially women farmers, by strengthening their capacity to produce and access high quality seed. Therefore, a major part of the project is the establishment and/or strengthening of community-based seed production enterprise by smallholder farmers (with a bias for women farmers) in each of the project pilot countries.

As a result there are funded activities for farmer selection and farmer mobilisation, procurement of inputs, seed production and processing, as well as seed certification and quality control. The HaSSP also funds farmer training through community seed workshops, as well as provision of small-scale seed processing and storage equipment.

HaSSP has five main objectives:
- Align seed variety release policies according to the SADC Seed Regulatory System
- Align seed certification policies according to the SADC Seed Regulatory System
- Align phytosanitary policies according to the SADC Seed Regulatory System
- Strengthen seed certification facilities and equipment
- Assess institutional and individual capacity needs, and capacity strengthening.
The SADC Seed Regulatory System

The SADC Seed Regulatory System has three pillars as follows:

- **The SADC Variety Release System** which makes it easier and cheaper for new and existing varieties to gain access to SADC Countries – thus stimulating availability of more varieties, encouraging more companies to invest in seed business in SADC countries and therefore, increasing farmers’ choice.

- **The SADC Seed Certification and Quality Assurance System** which ensures that seed of varieties listed in the SADC Regional Variety Catalogue and traded among SADC Member States is of consistently high and known quality, and that movement of the seed is more efficient and thus less costly.

- **The SADC Quarantine and Phytosanitary Measures for Seed** which reduce costs related to seed trade, and encourage faster and safer movement of seed. This will be reached through (i) establishment of transparent and science-based common Standards and Procedures for seed movement in the SADC region, supported by documentation; and (ii) through the introduction of rationalised SADC pest lists for the movement of seed between Member States, and from outside countries into the SADC region.

**Seed availability in Africa**

- The global seed market is worth $47 billion.

- Africa’s share of the global market amounts to 3%.

- Most farmers in Africa obtain their seeds from informal channels such as farm saved seeds, seed exchanges among farmers or/ and local grain/seed market.

- According to Maredia et al 1999 informal channels contribute to about 90-100 % of seed supply depending on the crop.

- Seed quality is a challenge as there is fake seed. Unscrupulous traders buy grain, colour the grain red or green, package it in new seed bags, and sell the ‘seed’ to unsuspecting farmers. This fake seed may not germinate at all.

- Farmers have difficulty in accessing the seed market – it is far from farmers.

- Majority of food crops are grown by smallholder farmers and most of them have little resources.

- In SADC trade barriers between member states have prevented seeds from moving quickly across borders when there is a seed deficit due to disasters such as flooding, drought or pest infestation.

- Fragmented seed legislation in SADC has meant that sourcing seeds between neighbouring countries is a complicated and lengthy process that leaves farmers without the seeds to grow crops.
The SADC Seed Sector

Smallholder farmers currently use almost 10% of improved seed varieties as a result of limited access to quality improved seed varieties at affordable prices. This limited access is caused by poor road infrastructure in communal areas where smallholder farmers reside thus restricting access to markets for their produce. The price of agricultural inputs is not affordable for the smallholder farmers. Therefore, improved market access drives productivity in that it provides a greater demand pool. This would encourage smallholder farmers to use improved seed varieties which improve crop productivity and profitability.

The HaSSP Community Seed Programme seeks to improve access to improved seed varieties at affordable prices to smallholder farmers. This will be achieved by capacitating smallholder farmers in seed production, processing, treating, packaging and marketing.

Seed companies can only market their seed in countries where it has been tested in yield and variety performance trials. The seed must also be registered under the national variety release and certification scheme. This makes the SADC region unattractive to investors as it takes a minimum of four years to register seed varieties and to market them in other countries. Through the harmonisation process varieties can be registered in the SADC Variety Catalogue. Seeds of varieties listed in the Catalogue can be sold in all SADC member states without restrictions related to variety. This therefore, opens up borders and increases the SADC seed sector and attracts more investors.

Seed stakeholders in a country find it difficult to import or export seed from other countries as minimum standards across SADC countries are quite different. This makes it especially challenging in times of need such as droughts. Therefore, by aligning to the SADC Seed Regulatory System through the harmonisation process there will be easier, cheaper and faster seed movement between SADC member states as import and export requirements will be uniform. This will also eliminate duplication of effort and cost in terms of conducting seed quality tests in both the exporting and importing countries.
HaSSP Mid-Term Review

2012 marks a Mid-Term for HaSSP, as a result a review was conducted. The purpose of the mid-term review (MTR) was to assess progress against the five project objectives; that is to assess to what extent the project is on track. The MTR provided lessons learnt to date with clear recommendations to inform future implementation and improve project delivery for the remainder of the project.

The review was done through country consultations where farmers (as project beneficiaries); implementing partners and other stakeholders were organised into focus groups to discuss the project. The MTR process culminated with a two day Regional MTR Findings, Validation and Dissemination Workshop.

Farmers (project beneficiaries)

The farmer consultations were to assess the level of satisfaction from project beneficiaries on how the project is being implemented. This is what the farmers had to say:

In Zambia farmers from Kapiri Mposhi, an agricultural community determined to commercialise agriculture, were consulted. These farmers have been part of the project since inception as seed growers, 2012 marked their second season of seed production. The farmers highlighted that, through HaSSP they have learnt a lot about producing seed ranging from isolation distances, roguing and grading. The project also improved access to seed in the community and seed producers were happy to say that the project also improved their livelihoods.

In Zimbabwe farmers from Fuve Panganai, were consulted. These farmers are also in their second season of seed production under this project. Through the project, the farmers have registering a company to process, package and market their own seed – Zaka Super Seeds.

In Swaziland, Imbali yaMadlenya farmers were consulted. This is a scheme of 29 farmers who have come together to produce seed. They are in their first season of seed production and are eager to learn more about seed production in order to impart the skills and knowledge to fellow smallholder farmers in the village. Although they are only starting out the commitment they have to their scheme and the project is evident as the MTR Team found them hard at work in the scorching heat.
In Malawi, a total of 15 farmers (5 females) and 14 farmers (6 females) participated in the focus group discussions in Lumbadzi and Mvera, respectively. Farmers were provided with basic seed, fertiliser, chemicals and trained in seed production as well as procurement of seed processing equipment and warehousing. These farmers are also in their second year of seed production. The farmers highlighted that the community seed enterprise has increased their staple food and income because of better access to improved seed at community level, which has improved community food security. In addition more than 50% of these seed producers are females. However, marketing, packaging and branding are still challenges. Some farmers were not able to sell their seed from the first season due to poor packaging.

Project Implementers

The second part of the country consultations was done through two day workshops with project implementers in the four countries. These include government officials; FANRPAN node institutions; private sector and FANRPAN seed elders. The scope of the group discussions looked at the following aspects and this is what came out of the discussions:

Design and initiation
The MTR noted that the initiation of the programme may not have adequately assessed the capacity of the nodes and provided for the capacity building towards the support for HaSSP activities. The process of alignment is different from country to country and the design of the project should have catered for these differences. The design of the HaSSP intervention ensured that sustainability was built into the harmonisation process.

Outputs
With regard to delivered outputs, the MTR found that all the countries have been slow in undertaking their harmonisation of legislations and regulations to the SADC Seed Regulatory System. The MTR also highlighted that some of the domestication aspects of the project will not be completed when the project ends in some countries.

Outcomes and impact. In terms of outcomes and impact, the MTR noted that draft seed legislative and regulatory amendments had not yet been prepared therefore the actual amendments were not done.

In looking at the effectiveness of the project as well as overall lessons learnt, the MTR reported among others that the formulation of programmes benefits greatly from building on outputs generated by preceding activities. This builds on existing knowledge, shortens the learning curve and reduces duplication. This can assist in enhancing chances for more buy-in and ownership of the harmonisation process at government policy level to speed up legislative reforms.

Members of staff of the implementing institutions have been trained in the area of Plant Variety Protection, Seed Quality Assurance, Seed Analysis Methods and Techniques, and in monitoring and evaluation. The training has been in technical areas relating to seed certification, seed variety release, and quarantine and phytosanitary measures. The MTR highlighted though, that the project has facilitated an appreciation of the benefits of domestication of the SADC Seed Regulatory System, the identification of gaps in the current seed policies for compliance as well as activities and resources required to achieve compliance.
Utility and sustainability
In the areas of utility and sustainability the MTR observed that funding for the harmonisation process after the HaSSP pilot is essential.

The MTR Findings, Dissemination and Validation Workshop

The purpose of the workshop was to allow HaSSP stakeholders to get a better understanding of what came out of the mid-term review exercise conducted in all four pilot countries. HaSSP focal country teams - Malawi, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe - got an opportunity to interact with their respective consultants on the findings of the review exercise in order to validate and create ownership of the reports.

Country teams presented their reports:
The Malawi team could not complete the full MTR process as a result of the passing of their President therefore their report was referred to as a status report. The report noted some obstacles in the implementation process including delays in tasks and deliverables as a result of the lack of a country specific logframe, long procurement procedures, delays in remitting funds to implementing partners and limited capacity within the implementing partners.

Swaziland reported that their country is experiencing economic difficulties and as a result the HaSSP process is not afforded the priority status it deserves. Other shortcomings experienced by Swaziland include human resources and capacity problems. The team also noted that the alignment of national legislation and regulations is behind schedule. The team committed to take the process forward.

Zimbabwe noted that there are some delays due to the failure to have the HaSSP Implementation MoU signed by their government, but committed to have the MoU signed soon and assured the workshop that they could make up for lost time.

Zambia gave a comprehensive report and expressed its appreciation for the HaSSP methodology of working through established organisations with the national mandates for harmonisation of seed regulations.
Recommendations from the Regional MTR Workshop:

- In the alignment of seed variety release policies, it was reported that all four countries have instituted the necessary technical requirements for national variety release in conformity to the SADC Seed System. The main outstanding issue is for national seed acts to be aligned to the SADC Seed System to enable SADC Variety Release.

- Policy training must be a priority to improve legal understanding and capabilities;

- SADC Seed Centre must develop and publish the list of VCU descriptors and other relevant information for specified crops so that National Seeds Authorities can curate the appropriate information in variety lists.

- On the alignment of seed certification policies and strengthening of seed certification facilities, it was recommended that:

  - Legal officers from the relevant ministries be engaged from outset. This entails working with the highest ranking government officials to get all stakeholders involved throughout the process in order to improve communication, collective goal-setting and taking ownership of the project.

- The alignment of phytosanitary policies experienced challenges such as lack of suitably trained staff in some countries, lack of resources, a lengthy review process and the fear of the unknown. It was recommended that:

  - Regulatory process assessments should be conducted to engage with all stakeholders throughout the process, to introduce an online permit-issuing system.

- The Community Seed Production Enterprise discussion highlighted that there was a need to match production and demand in some countries. It was recommended that:

  - More attention must be given to the marketing function at this level.
HaSSP Seed Elders

HaSSP deals with sensitive issues such as national policy and legislation. It becomes difficult to expedite the process between Heads of State or Ministers signing the regional MoUs/protocols and the national alignment. To assist the process of alignment, FANRPAN formed a committee of Seed Elders in all four pilot countries. Committee members are former senior government/non-state officials who have first-hand knowledge and experience in how policies are made in their respective countries.

The mandate of the committee is to assist project implementing partners to understand processes of the respective governments, advise where necessary and act as neutral partners between government and implementing partners. Project implementers in all four countries acknowledged the contribution made by the Seed Elders and attributed some of their project successes to the Elders’ interventions.

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HaSSP Seed Elders with FANRPAN CEO, Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda and Mr Francois Droz, SDC Southern Africa Regional Director

About FANRPAN

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is a multi-stakeholder, multi-national policy network that supports the development and implementation of better food, agriculture and national resources (FANR) policies in Africa. Its members include universities, research institutes, the business sector, farmer groups and other civil society organisations that have a stake in FANR policies. FANRPAN’s membership is organised into national nodes in sixteen countries, with a national secretariat hosted by an existing national institution that has a mandate for agricultural policy research and advocacy. FANRPAN also has a mandate to work Africa wide.

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