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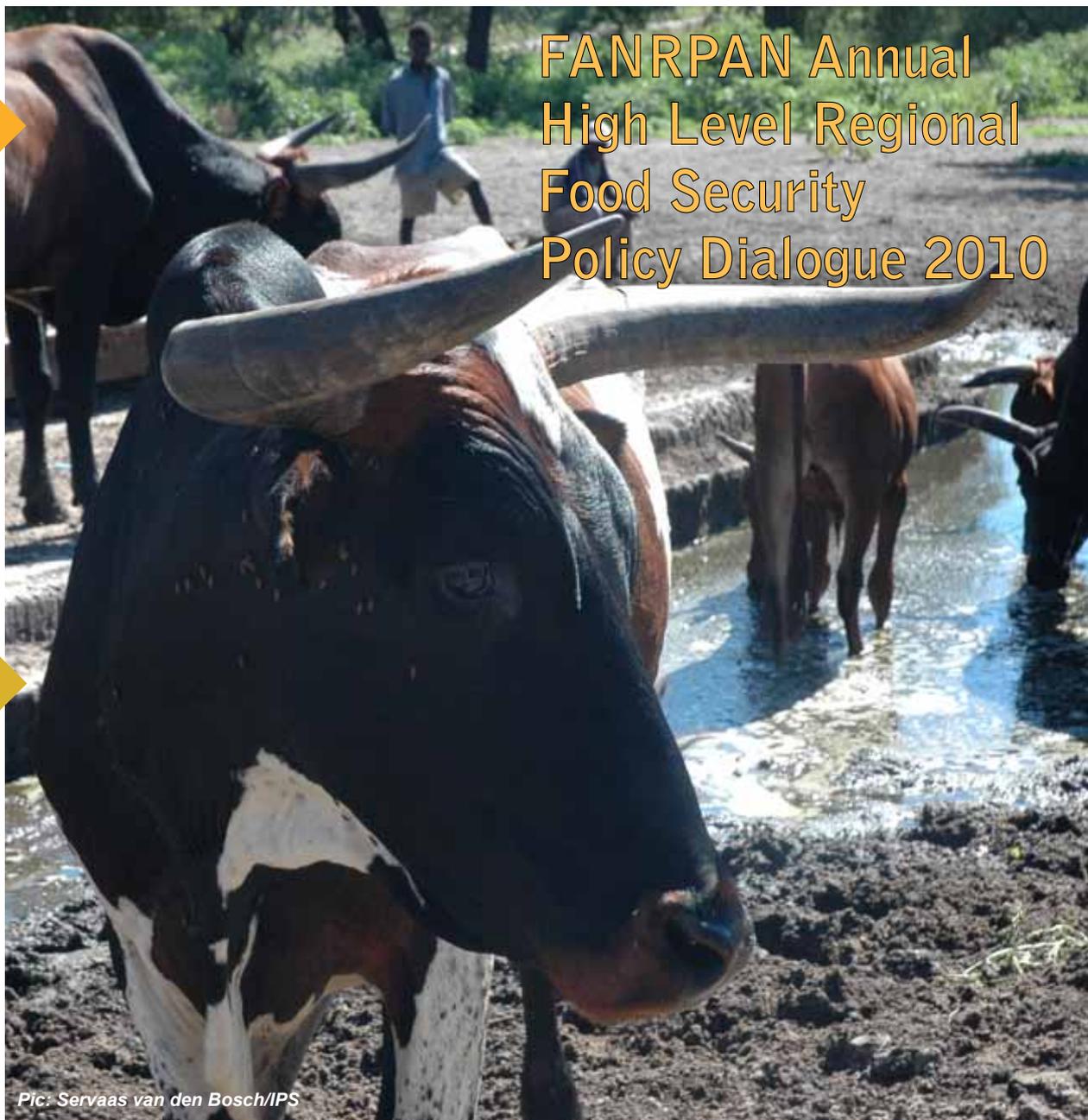
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FANRPAN Annual High Level Regional Food Security Policy Dialogue 2010



Pic: Servaas van den Bosch/IPS

The case for increased investment in African agriculture is compelling.

A quarter of the world's arable land is in Africa, but the continent produces just 20 percent of global agriculture output. Two hundred sixty-five million sub-Saharan Africans suffer from chronic hunger.

Yet when it comes to reducing poverty, growth in the agriculture sector has been shown to be twice as effective as growth

in any other sector of the economy.

The outlines of how to overcome the weaknesses in Africa's agriculture have not only been clearly set out, they have been agreed upon by African Union member states: better land and water management; improved market access for farmers; a focus on food security; and the development and dissemination of agricultural research.

A journey has begun.

TERRAVIVA

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FANRPAN

Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network

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Agriculture a vital force for development



Pic: Zukiswa Zimela/IPS

By Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, the CEO of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN)

Namibia is playing host to the 2010 FANRPAN Regional Food Security Policy Dialogue, where over 200 policymakers, farmers, agricultural product dealers, scientists and non-governmental organisations from across Africa and the world will gather to address African priorities on food security and climate change and its impacts on agricultural development, natural resource management and rural livelihoods.

Food security in Africa is still only an aspiration. With one-quarter of the world's arable land, Africa produces only 10 per cent of its total global output. More than 265 million people are still chronically hungry, yet Africa is estimated to hold 60 per cent of the world's remaining uncultivated farmland.

Stagnant agricultural productivity is a constant battle in Africa, exacerbated by limited access to agricultural inputs, to water, to markets and to knowledge. The impacts of climate change add yet another obstacle for African farmers who are seeking to sustain themselves and their families. Developing countries stand to bear the brunt of climate change, while being the least resilient to extreme or erratic weather patterns, such as floods, droughts, salinity exposure and unpredictable rainfall.

The potential for agriculture to boost rural livelihoods, reduce poverty and underpin other sectors of the economy is well established. Agriculture is the most important source of livelihood throughout Africa, accounting for more than 70 per cent of total employment. And 65 per cent of African farmers are female.

Agriculture must be viewed as a vital force in our global mission to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially since the World Bank has calculated that agricultural growth is at least twice as effective at reducing poverty than growth originating in any other sector.

And Africa's agricultural sector has the potential not only to feed its own people but to become the breadbasket of the world. It is estimated that Africa produces only 10 per cent of the world's crops despite representing roughly 25 per cent of land under cultivation. Africa also has 60 per cent of the world's uncultivated arable with the potential for African yields to grow in value more than three-fold by the year 2030, from \$280 billion today to \$880 billion.

To achieve this, agricultural tools and knowledge must be made accessible to farmers to increase their yields and adapt to new climate scenarios. Africa needs its own agricultural revolution built on technology and innovation, and facilitated by a conducive policy environment aligned with the needs of African farmers.

Home-grown solutions needed

By Aubrey Mchulu

Africa needs home-grown solutions to its problems, agricultural economist Dr Poniah Anandajayasekeram said in Windhoek, Namibia.

Delivering the keynote address to more than 200 delegates at the 2010 Annual High-Level Regional Food Security Policy Dialogue in the Namibian capital, Windhoek, Anandajayasekeram said the African continent should seek help that allows it to help itself deal with challenges such as achieving food security at both household and national levels.

He observed that the public sector holds a key role in building Africa's agriculture.

"Long-term investment is also needed in agriculture and livestock development," said Anandajayasekeram.

The Annual Policy Dialogue, this year held from 30 August to 3 September, is organised by the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), a network bringing together governments, researchers and farmers to produce evidence-based analysis for improving agriculture.

Policymakers, farmers, agricultural product dealers, scientists and non-governmental organizations from all over the continent have gathered in the Namibian capital to address African priorities on climate change and its impact on food security, agricultural development and natural resources management.

Berean Mukwende said he would never miss a gathering that addresses agriculture and its policies in the way the annual Dialogue does.

"This is a policy platform which we wish to influence," said Mukwende.

"Whether we are invited or not, we jump in. Because whatever is being talked about affects us as farmers. The business of farming is changing and things such as new technological methods and climate change cannot be taken lightly, unless we want to go out of business."

Mukwende is the deputy president of the Zimbabwe Farmers Union, the country's oldest and biggest farmers' union. The majority of its members are small-scale farmers.

Zimbabwe is trying to emerge from the near-collapse of the country's agricultural sector, following a controversial land redistribution programme that saw many white-owned farms occupied through land invasions.

Mukwende said many of those who took over farms had no idea what the business of farming entailed.

"They have since left," he said, "leaving behind real black farmers who know and understand agriculture. Today tobacco production has more than doubled. We are doing well."

Touching on a theme running through FANRPAN's work, he said more research is needed to help farmers get early warnings and be able to adapt to the climate change.

The 2010 Policy Dialogue focused on livestock & fisheries policy in the context of a changing climate. The president of Namibia, Hifikepunye Pohamba, was presented with an award for his country's achievements in building a profitable fishery recognised internationally as a model of sustainability.



Delegate listen to a presentation at the FANRPAN Annual Policy Dialogue in Windhoek, Namibia.

Fisheries can play key role in development, nutrition



Pic: Patrick Burnett/IPS

South African fishermen prepare to take to the seas in Cape Town.

By Davison Mudzingwa

Cape Town - Fisheries contribute at least \$10 billion dollars to African economies every year. In countries such as Angola, Egypt and Namibia, fisheries are vital economic drivers.

Fisheries are also important for food security. Research published by the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development in 2007 found that some 200 million Africans rely at least in part on fish for nutrition.

But parallel to the situation for most of Africa's farmers, Africa's fisheries resources generally provide fragile incomes for small-scale fishers.

Mari-Lise du Preez, a forestry and fisheries researcher at the South African Institute for International Affairs spoke to IPS about how fisheries can be a vehicle for community development.

Q: How important are Africa's fisheries?

A: When fish stocks collapsed in other parts of the world, a lot of interest started being paid to countries in Africa, for instance Western and Southern African countries. We also have a big industrial fishing fleet from Europe and Asia seeing this as attractive.

On the other hand, you get countries where small - scale exploitation of fisheries provides a lot of livelihoods. For instance in a country like Angola, more than 90 percent of the fish is caught not for export: it is caught for the local population.

I heard the Angola Minister of Fisheries saying, "Having no meat is no big deal in Angola but when there is a shortage of fish it becomes a political issue." It's not the same everywhere but in a country like that, that's where people get most of their protein from.

In terms of development, if you look at figures as well, worldwide there are less than one mil-

lion people employed by the big fisheries sector, but it is estimated that the artisanal sector employs 50 million people.

Despite the debate over who catches more fish, there are many, many more people employed in the small scale sector - this attests to the contribution of fisheries to economic development. It's difficult to generalise, but for countries on the coast, fisheries play a very big role.

Q: How do fisheries contribute to nutrition in Africa?

A: In South Africa, people from the coast eat fish, and so do those inland, in restaurants there is sushi. In a country like Angola, most people rely of fish for nutrition, so yes, it is important.

Unlike minerals, fish are food. The sector therefore contributes directly to food security in Africa.

Q: There have been reports from different parts of the continent about how small-scale fishers are marginalised whether by industrial fishing fleets off the coast of Senegal or Somalia, or by problems with licences for fishing communities in South Africa. What can be done to protect and expand opportunities for artisanal or small-scale fishing?

A: I know in South Africa they have been speaking about small-scale fisheries policy for a long time. It's an issue that hasn't yet been sorted out and it's a political issue. People can really get upset. However, there are examples to look at like in Angola, there are many small scale fishers.

One example from there is to organise some of these fishers into cooperatives, similar to the ones for agriculture in South Africa. This is one of the ways [to support the sector], because it's a highly informal sector and it's difficult to know what's happening in an informal sector. The difficult thing about fisheries is there is no

"one size fits all" example, because you have societies with different challenges. You have different fishery systems with different challenges, like the abalone fishery in South Africa. You can't compare it with fishing hake, because different species [reproduce themselves] at different rates.

Q: How sustainably are Africa's fisheries managed?

A: We have acknowledged many problems in the world lately, that involve natural systems. There is growing recognition of complexity, meaning that if you touch one part of it, you don't only impact on that part. In that sense, something like a water catchment area, even a forest: they keep water basins healthy; this in turn keeps fish healthy. For instance, a community polluting a water source affects the fish: they can't breed.

Q: How does the quality of water management impact on fishing communities?

A: If you look at the sea for instance. It's interesting to look at the journey we have been on. People first thought, it was inexhaustible. It was basically open access.

When the realisation came that marine resources can be exhausted, then came the laws, such as the exclusive economic zones. The idea was to protect the economic value.

However there is often a big disconnect from the people that make decisions at the central level and the people in the communities. What needs to taken note of is that people in communities make decisions [that affect conservation] each day; what governments need is to engage communities in managing these resources.

What needs to be recognised is the big impact that fisheries and water resources in general have in enhancing lives of small scale fishers.

Namibia's stewardship of marine resources recognised

By Patience Nyangove

In recognition of his country's achievements in managing its valuable fisheries resources, Namibia President Hifikepunye Pohamba is the 2010 recipient of the FANRPAN Food Security Policy Leadership Award.

Namibia's fisheries sector ranks second behind mining in contribution to its export earnings. When the country gained its independence in 1990, few Namibians were involved in the industry. Instead, fisheries resources were being over-exploited by foreign fleets.

Twenty years later, the sector is widely regarded as a model for other countries. Fourteen thousand jobs have been created for locals, some crewing the boats catching pilchards, hake, rock lobster and other species in the Benguela current, the cold ocean stream that runs along the west coast of Southern Africa - lapping the shores of Angola, Namibia and South Africa. Thousands of others working in processing onshore.

The country's colonial past and the subsequent political turmoil in Namibia's neighbours to the north and south led to badly fragmented coastal and marine resource management along this coastline.

Namibia was instrumental in the creation of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem Project, which

has taken up the challenge of sharing the rich resources of this rich marine environment off the coasts of South Africa, Angola and Namibia.

The Windhoek-based Benguela Commission was established four years ago by the three countries in order to boost integrated management, sustainable development and environmental protection for the Benguela Current.

Through the commission, Angola, South Africa and Namibia have managed to address trans-boundary issues by preparing a Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis and implementing a Strategic Action Programme.

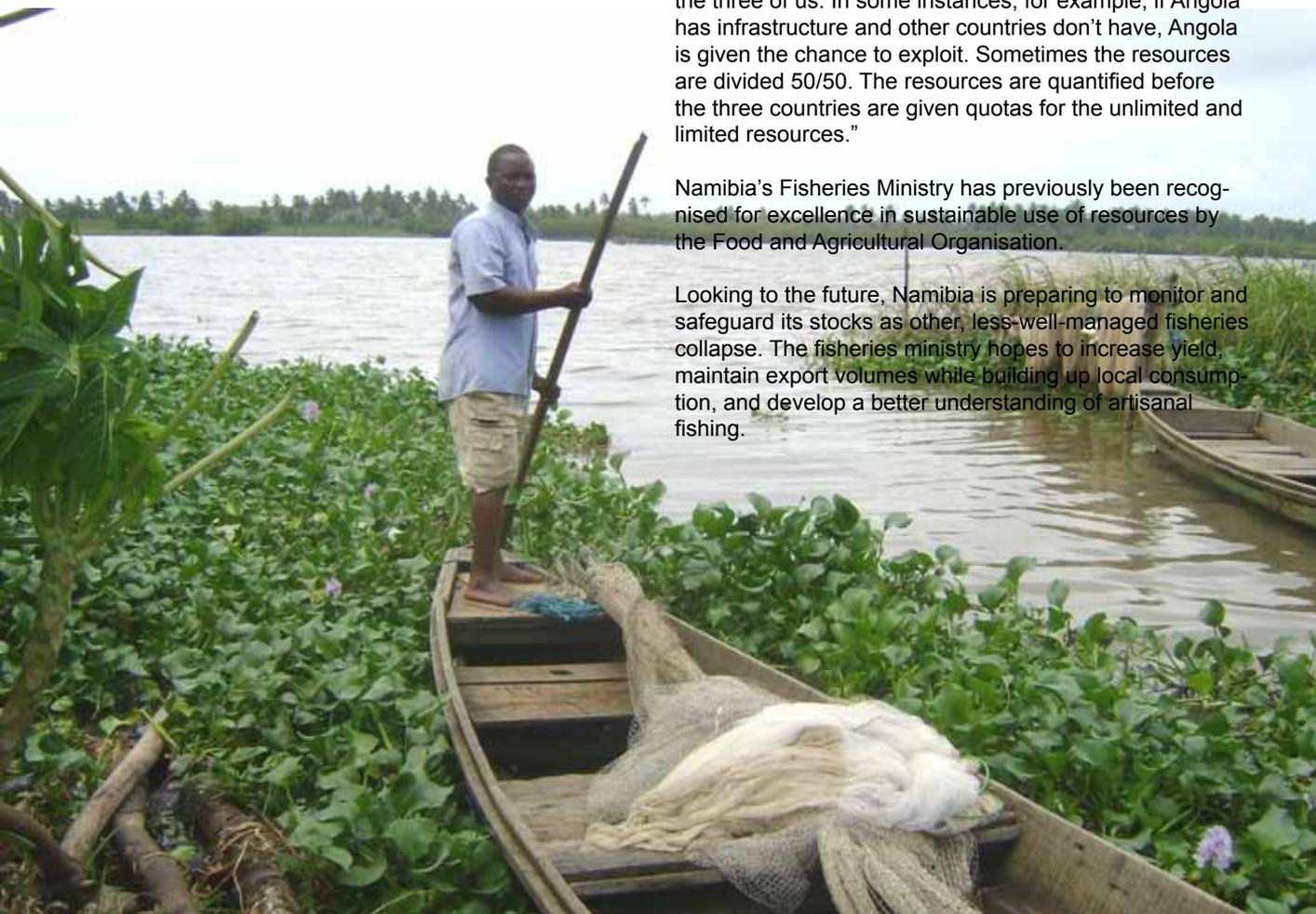
The three governments have agreed to try to improve predictability, harmonise the management of shared stocks, assess non-exploited species and develop a regional mariculture policy.

"Since it was established, the Commission has managed to run the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem well, since it was established," the director for Resource Management at Namibia's Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Dr Moses Maurihungirire told IPS.

Maurihungirire said Namibia was happy with the management of marine resources by the Commission: "The commission shares the marine resources equally between the three of us. In some instances, for example, if Angola has infrastructure and other countries don't have, Angola is given the chance to exploit. Sometimes the resources are divided 50/50. The resources are quantified before the three countries are given quotas for the unlimited and limited resources."

Namibia's Fisheries Ministry has previously been recognised for excellence in sustainable use of resources by the Food and Agricultural Organisation.

Looking to the future, Namibia is preparing to monitor and safeguard its stocks as other, less-well-managed fisheries collapse. The fisheries ministry hopes to increase yield, maintain export volumes while building up local consumption, and develop a better understanding of artisanal fishing.



Growing seed

By Mantoe Phakathi

Windhoek - Farmer Obed Dlamini, like many of his colleagues from Swaziland, finds it difficult to access maize seeds each planting season. Not only are these seeds expensive but they are often not consistently available in the market.

"Farmers in Swaziland operate on guesswork because suppliers often bring in new seeds, some of which do not necessarily work for us," said Dlamini.

Dlamini is optimistic that this situation will improve soon because Swaziland is among four countries in the SADC region where the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Network (FANRPAN) is piloting a project on Harmonised Seed Security Project (HaSSP).

Together with Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Swaziland agreed to work on the project that is going to remove legislative barriers that restrict the movement of seeds within the four countries.

"In Swaziland we don't even breed our own seeds but buy them from Swaziland yet the coming in of seeds is restricted which makes them inaccessible to farmers because when a new hybrid comes in it has to be tested for four years before it's accepted," said Dlamini.

Dlamini, who is also a HaSSP elder responsible for coordinating the project in Swaziland, is attending the 2010 Annual High Level Regional Food Security Policy Dialogue in Windhoek.

According to Dr Bellah Mpfu, a consultant for HaSSP at FANRPAN, restrictions on the movement of seeds in the SADC region because of agriculture legislations contribute to food insecurity.

"HaSSP aims to domesticate and implement the SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System whose

goal is to contribute to improved food security of smallholders in the SADC region through increased availability of and access to improved seed varieties," said Mpfu.

Through HaSSP, the four countries will test different hybrid seeds on their soil and if they work, they are going to share the seeds. After this pilot project, which started this year and ends in 2013, these four countries will share their findings with the rest of SADC. The actual testing and sharing of seeds has not started yet.

"The idea is that if the seeds grow well for two countries, then they can be shared by all countries," said Mpfu.

She said, if a hybrid grows well in South Africa, for instance, there is no need for Swaziland to undergo the same testing procedures running for many years, which is what has made the Kingdom to be seed insecure.

Mpfu said the SADC protocol does not cover genetically-modified seeds, which are only acceptable in South Africa.

"Countries will still do their individual tests to be sure of what they are receiving," she said. "Seeds won't be imposed on countries when all the SADC countries have started to implement the protocol."

Although all the ministers of the four countries have agreed in principle to the project, which runs between 2010 and 2013, only Swaziland has signed a memorandum of understanding with FANRPAN.

"The four countries agreed that they are going to implement the Technical Agreements on Harmonisation of Seed Regulations in the SADC Region but it's also important that they sign the MoU because that sort of

"Until now, legislative barriers have restricted the movement of badly-needed seeds between Southern African countries."



validates their commitment,” said Mpfu.

She said HaSSP seed elders, who are people tasked with the coordination of the project in their respective countries, will try to ensure that their ministers of agriculture sign the MoU.

Dr Sam Muchena, the managing director for African Centre for Fertiliser Development whose expertise is dwarfed maize breeding, said on his return from the FANRPAN Annual High Level Regional Food Security Policy Dialogue, facilitating the signing of the MoU would be among his priorities.

“This is a SADC initiative and our government would not like to be left out,” said Muchena. “That’s why when I get home I’ll arrange to meet with either the secretary of agriculture or the minister to discuss the signing of the MoU.”

Because her government has signed the MoU, Thabile Gooday, a farmer and HaSSP elder from Swaziland, is going to work with the Ministry of Agriculture Research Centre to educate farmers, especially women, on the importance of the project.

“We need to get farmers to be interested and understand clearly what HaSSP is about and how the harmonisation of seed policies within the region is going to benefit them,” said Gooday.

Noting that Swaziland is a small country but with different ecological zones, she said opening up for more seeds to enter the market could benefit farmers based in dry areas where most seeds do not germinate.

The preservation of seeds is also among Gooday’s priorities in Swaziland because, she said, while most farmers are now using hybrid seeds, it is also important that they preserve indigenous seeds.

“Women back home complain about expensive farm inputs – seeds being one of them. If they had knowledge about cross-pollinated varieties they could cut down on costs and be able to produce enough, at least for their families,” said Gooday.

She said some people have used the indigenous seeds for a long time because, either they prefer the taste of the maize from these varieties, or they cannot afford the ever-escalating costs of hybrid seeds.

“But a farmer cannot plant the offspring of hybrid seeds because it doesn’t produce any yield,” said Gooday.

Mpfu concurred with Gooday, adding that HaSSP will support the use of indigenous seed projects where farmers will be encouraged to continue using indigenous seeds that work for them.

“We appreciate the use of indigenous seeds which some farmers still prefer because of dietary and taste preferences,” said Mpfu. “We’re not throwing away anything.”

For now, seed preservation is not exactly a priority among countries, which is why the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC) in Zambia is collecting seeds among member countries to store them.

Thandi Lupupa from SPGRC said, because some countries, are not preserving their seeds and might find that they have run out in the future, they could turn to SPGRC to get them.

“Indigenous seeds are very important because you also need them to breed hybrids,” said Lupupa

“We need to get farmers to be interested and understand clearly what HaSSP is about and how the harmonisation of seed policies within the region is going to benefit them ”

Thabile Gooday: seed elder

Thabile Gooday is a Swazi farmer who is attending the FANRPAN Annual High Level Regional Food Security Policy Dialogue to help strengthen the voice of women farmers.

“I’m going to ensure that whatever I learn at this dialogue reaches women farmers back home,” she said.

An accomplished farmer, Gooday won the Woman Farmer of the Year 2008 Award. From humble beginnings with 300 broilers in a poultry project, over ten years her business has grown to place 10,000 chickens per month.

She also cultivates vegetables, keeps livestock and plans to develop an organic feedlot.

Gooday is also an elder under the FANRPAN’s Harmonised Seed Security Project (HaSSP) in Swaziland where, among other things, she provides policy advice to COMESA and SADC on the domestication of the harmonised seed security protocols.

“As HaSSP elder, I’m also interested in helping to shape the harmonisation of seed in the SADC region for the benefit of farmers in our countries,” said Gooday.

She believes that if women were to be given more opportunities Africa could realise food security in no time.



Pic: Zukiswa Zimela/IPS

Showing small farmers the way

By Liza Burger

Moving product from the farm to the market is probably one of the greatest barriers for small-scale farmers who want to be more than just subsistence farmers.

Research into how to overcome these challenges and the practical implementation of research findings are one of the focus points of Thulasizwe Mkhabela.

Mkhabela was among participants at the annual regional food security policy dialogue of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) in Windhoek, Namibia.

Mkhabela is a senior researcher in agricultural economics at the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) based in Pretoria, as well as the FANRPAN node co-ordinator in the country. The NAMC is currently hosting the FANRPAN node in South Africa.

"I've been able to give advice to many small-scale farmers, but the greatest reward is to personally get involved to link farmers to markets"

His present work at the NAMC entails linking small-scale farmers to viable markets. On a broader base, the NAMC is mandated by the South African government to advise it on agricultural policy.

"We are frequently asked to give our input and evaluate the government's agricultural policies before they are implemented or changed. The NAMC also does work for organised agriculture, like Grain SA and the Milk Producers' Organisation and the private sector."

Putting research into action is a jump many researchers never make. For Mkhabela, however, his work investigating the market potential for produce

from small-scale farmers in South Africa, has been rewarding.

"I've been able to give advice to many small-scale farmers, but the greatest reward is to personally get involved to link farmers to markets," he says.

He proudly explains how he helped a community of about 2,000 rural farmers in Msinga in northern KwaZulu-Natal to sell their vegetables to local markets. "There is also the vision to market the Msinga vegetables, especially tomatoes, to bigger markets and even government agencies."

Mkhabela's personal involvement and hands-on approach has made this project one of his favourites. "I don't have to wait for policy to change, but have a role to play in forming policy. I can now also help on a practical level and really change people's lives."

Mkhabela is the FANRPAN node co-ordinator in South Africa, which is hosted by NAMC.

"I've found that the information FANRPAN has on emerging farmers and developing agricultural markets are very useful to me as a researcher."

Mkhabela is hoping that everyone involved in organised agriculture and the public sector in South Africa will catch on to the idea of an agricultural research network within the African context sooner, rather than later.



Mkhabela's Research links small farmers to local markets.

Pic: Zukiswa Zimela/IPS

New climate for Africa

Continent must meet challenges of change

By Liza Burger

“Agriculture in Africa is changing rapidly” These are the words of Mario Herrero, a researcher working in Nairobi, Kenya for the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI).

Herrero gave the keynote address in Windhoek, Namibia, at the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) discussion session on livestock in a changing climate during the annual regional Dialogue meeting.

Herrero and his colleagues use scenario analysis to try and determine what the next few decades will hold for livestock farmers in Africa.

“The effect of an average rise in temperature of 5°C will have devastating effects for African farmers. Our estimates show that this will translate into a loss in agricultural output of about 20 percent.”

Africa will get less rain

The various models predicting rainfall and agricultural output still vary too much to make an accurate prediction on a continent-wide level, but for one region – Southern Africa – all models predict the same outcome: Climate change will result in 20 percent less precipitation in Southern Africa during the winter months.

“All 18 different general circulation models we used converge on the same conclusion,” says Herrero. “Climate prediction models have improved significantly in the past few years and we are able to determine with greater accuracy what the future may be like.”

Countries must start to prepare for this looming challenge.

“Some countries, like South Africa, are better equipped to adapt efficiently to a changing climate as the infrastructure

is good and the agricultural sector well developed. Other countries may have greater difficulty to adapt to the higher temperatures and less rain and the effect it will have on crop production, the availability of fodder and livestock production.”

Herrero added that climate change will have significant implications for land use, food security, production of animal feed, the distribution and occurrence of diseases, availability of water and biodiversity.

Herrero is not all doom and gloom about the future: “The other speakers from South Africa, Zambia, Botswana and Namibia, told us today how they are confronting various issues in their countries. Although there is no silver bullet to overcome the effects of global warming, all of them are taking the right steps, even in the face of climate change.”

Herrero added that farmers have the ability to survive, even in the most trying times. He said that it was especially in dry areas where he has seen the most ingenuity and adaptability in agriculture.

He stressed that both government involvement as well as investment from the private sector is crucial to both small-holder farmers and commercial farmers to prosper.

“Government involvement is very important. The private industry cannot be held accountable to build roads, for instance, so even if markets are developed for small-holder farmers, the accessibility to those markets should be practically supported.”

Africa's vulnerability and options

In mapping climate vulnerability and poverty in Africa, Herrero said that there are a few options open to farmers facing climate change.

These include the sustainable in-

intensification of agricultural operations, increasing extensive farming, diversification or, in the worst case, exiting from agriculture.

“All of these options require a mixture of management, technology, supporting policies and investment,” says Herrero.

Referring specifically to livestock production, he said that rangeland management, the development and protection of water sources, the use of supplemental feeds, disease control and monitoring and possibly changing the breeds or species used, will be factors to consider in the process of managing the effects of climate change.

He added that government policies, support and regulations should also adapt to accommodate farmers who will be affected by a changing climate.

From cows to camels

Herrero said that change might have to be drastic in some areas due to a change in average temperatures and rainfall.

“Farmers may have to consider changing their agricultural activities from livestock farming to other types of farming like fish farming, planting crops, horticulture, or include other livestock like chickens.”

He mentioned one such example in Kenya where with some assistance from the government, Samburu herdsman reduced the number of cattle in their herds replacing them with camels.

This change from cows to camels has a significant effect on this community. Before the camels came, they frequently lost cattle due to harsh environmental and climatic factors. Now they can rely on the milk of their camel herds for food security and an income. The Samburu children are significantly healthier and the infant mortality rate has been reduced.

CAADP gets a financial boost

By Claire Ngozo

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) has received a major boost as several countries have begun drawing on funds from a \$22 billion pledge made by the G8.

Under CAADP, African governments are committed to increase their national budget expenditure on agriculture to at least 10 percent. The Programme, agreed by heads of state at the 2003 summit of the African Union, expects a six percent growth rate in agriculture every year.

Dr Nalishebo Meebelo, the Country CAADP Process Facilitator at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), told IPS that the overall goal of CAADP is to help African countries achieve food security and higher economic growth through agriculture-led development.

Meebelo said leaders at the G8 Summit held in L'Aquila, Italy in 2009 pledged to raise over \$22 billion under the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme.

The World Bank is administering the funds. The United States, Spain, South Korea and Canada as well as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are the development partners that have contributed towards the finances.

"But there are conditions attached to how countries will be accessing these funds," Meebelo told IPS. She said countries need to have gone through the CAADP process, which includes designing national investment plan which contains detailed and fully-costed programmes and signing a CAADP compact.

The compact is a high level agreement between the government, regional representatives and development partners for a focused implementation of the programme.

"The investment plans should have undergone an independent technical review and the plan should also have been tabled before a high-level CAADP business meeting," Meebelo explained.

The countries that have accessed the funds so far are Togo, Sierra Leone and Rwanda. Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Malawi are all expected to also benefit from the fund after they successfully submit their investment plan by the end of September.

COMESA, in partnership with the African Union Commission and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, is coordinating and facilitating the CAADP.

Mbeki Ndlovu, a Pretoria-based researcher at the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) in South Africa, explained that CAADP has four pillars which guide governments on sustainable land and water management; building trade and marketing infrastructure; increasing food and nutrition security; and promoting research in agriculture, extension and training for adoption and dissemination of new technologies.

FANRPAN, a network of researchers, farmers and governments presently covering 14 Southern African countries, is coordinating the implementation of the programme at the national and regional levels in the sub-region.

He said many countries in Africa are now linking their agricultural programmes to CAADP.

"However, there's need to complement national level priority interventions with priority regional investment programmes."

COMESA, according to Ndlovu, is implementing major programmes in infrastructure, trade and agriculture in line with the continent-wide plan. It has developed a regional compact that is working on harmonising agricultural investment programmes in the region.

"Strategic priorities in this harmonisation include increasing food output and productivity throughout the regional value chain such as on farms, in processing industries and in marketing, developing human and institutional capacities and developing priority regional trade and development corridors," said Ndlovu.

Malawi is one country that has since signed the CAADP Compact, Director of Malawi's Livestock Department, Wilfred Lipita, said the country's agriculture policies are now linked to CAADP's pillars. "We are no longer working in isolation. All our policies are tied to the CAADP pillars," he said.

Lipita hopes that trade and development corridors will be implemented soon. He said Malawi is doing well with its agriculture programmes where it is utilising a nation-wide subsidy programme for agriculture inputs to become a net grain exporter.

"We have inputs that have to be imported from other countries and we have agricultural produce that we have to export. All this can work well if the trade and development corridors are in operation," said Lipita.

He hopes the funds from CAADP will help in the development of the trade and development corridors.



Lake Victoria's alien conqueror under pressure

Pic: Arnaud Bébien/IPS

Too many fishing boats threatens stocks of Nile perch in lake victoria.

By Arnaud Bébien

Coordinated conservation measures to arrest the steep decline of stocks of Nile perch in Lake Victoria are showing encouraging results - for fish, if not for fishing communities around the lake.

At the end of each day, the boats return to Mwanza, a city on the edge of Lake Victoria, in the northeast of Tanzania. The catch is not what it once was: each boat's crew quickly sells the 50 or so fish they have landed.

Paul Johaiven is one of the fishermen. Like many of the others, the 25-year-old got no further than primary school. For want of alternatives, he turned to the lake to earn a living.

The Nile perch was introduced to the lake in the 1950s while Tanzania was still a British colony. It proved a catastrophe for other species in the lake, as this aggressive predator - which can grow as long as 2 metres, and weigh up to 200 kilos - fed on native species, pushing hundreds of native species to the edge of extinction.

But the fish have also brought substantial incomes to thousands in fishing communities around the lake.

Around 200,000 tonnes of perch are exported overseas every year, bringing in nearly 250 million dollars a year to the three countries on the lake: Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

But the fairy tale is over, says Johaiven. "I spend more and more time on the water, and now I have to fish partly at night. Yet I get less and less fish," he told IPS.

Geofrey Rubanza says, "Not long ago, we

caught lots more fish. Now, we have to go further from the shore, and cast our nets a thousand times and still sometimes we come back with nothing. There are too many people fishing on the lake, and therefore less fish."

Statistics published by the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) confirm his observation. Where fishing boats each typically brought in 300 kilos of fish from the lake every day in 2005, in 2008, the average daily catch fell to just 80 kilos in 2008, according to the LVFO.

The average size of the fish caught is also shrinking: from an average of 50 centimetres long before 2007, perch pulled from the lake are typically no longer than 25 cm today.

The number of people fishing the lake jumped from around 56,000 in 2000 to 98,000 in 2006; the number of fishing craft doubled to 30,000 in the same period, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization.

The FAO estimates that stocks of Nile Perch fell by a startling 80 percent between 1998 and 2008.

But several years of enforcement of conservation policies jointly implemented by the three countries sharing the lake are beginning to show positive results.

Authorities in all three countries have cracked down on excessive fishing and inappropriate fishing methods including the use of net mesh sizes that catch juvenile fish, thus jeopardising reproduction of stocks. Fishing without a licence is also being curtailed.

And following a mid-July meeting in Kam-

pala, further measures will be introduced. For example, fishing crews will soon have to pay rent on the section of the beach that they operate from; the intent is to reduce the total numbers of boats going out onto the water.

The very latest figures released by the LVFO indicate positive results, with a growth in the number of fish. The organisation shows stocks rebounding from a low of 340,000 tonnes in 2008 to 400,000 today.

This is still far from the 750,000 tonnes recorded as recently as 2005, but in light of the steep crash in stocks, the reversal is promising, says John Magufuli, the minister of fisheries for Tanzania. "Zero tolerance is applied in Kenya and Tanzania against excessive fishing and inappropriate fishing methods, especially the size of the mesh. I am convinced that in the next six months, stocks will continue to grow."

But as the resource recovers, another problem is on the horizon for the communities whose livelihoods depend on exports of Nile perch: rapidly growing aquaculture of cod in several European countries, which reduces demand for exports of the Lake Victoria fish. The LVFO reports that total exports fell by 40 percent between 1999 and 2009.

Nile perch from East Africa first gained a foothold in European markets due to shortages of cod in the 1990s, but Belgium, the United Kingdom and Norway are all presently enjoying great success in farming cod.

"We too have to become good at aquaculture," say Wilson Mwanja, the Ugandan commissioner for fisheries. "The stocks of Nile perch are shrinking for lack of good management."

Seeking effective farmer support

By Brenda Zulu

Windhoek – Zambian farmers have remained dependent on government for seed and fertiliser despite a seven-year Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP) aimed at supporting the agricultural sector. Researchers are now proposing a review of distribution mechanisms.

However, the Zambian government believes the FSP has had a positive impact on food security in the southern African country.

“With the exception of this year’s harvest, where Zambian farmers had a bumper harvest, the Zambian government involvement of the private sector has been minimal in the FSP,” said Hyde Haantuba, Coordinator of the Agriculture Consultative Forum (ACF) - a Food Agricultural Natural Resource Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) Zambia node.

Haantuba reviewed reforms for the FSP and found that the current system was encouraging corruption as only the same private companies were contracted to supply fertilisers and seed in the past years.

He said the ACF was advocating for a voucher programme to replace the current FSP in Zambia in order to improve its effectiveness and efficiency. Such a change would impact on the timeliness and cost-effectiveness of inputs procurement and distribution, FSP impact on food security and farm incomes and produce better value for money.

The study team proposes a change in the mode of inputs procurement and distribution from the current system to a Voucher Based Inputs Supply System, as this would enable the FSP to em-

power beneficiary farmers with the requisite purchasing power in the form of a discount voucher to purchase inputs of their choice at the nearest outlet - resulting in timely distribution of inputs.

The voucher system would also help minimize the administrative burden and costs, thereby reducing direct government involvement in procurement, importation and in-country distribution. It would also stimulate market competitiveness and in turn encourage the development of a private sector-led agro dealer input supply networks in agricultural areas; and encourage private sector participation in agricultural inputs importation, manufacturing and in-country distribution, amongst other attendant benefits of a well functioning voucher based inputs distribution system.

Haantuba said that system of direct purchase of fertiliser by government for distribution was not good. He has advised the Zambian government to change to the voucher programme that is practiced in other countries such as Malawi.

He said the direct purchase of fertiliser had created a government dependency on fertiliser by farmers and observed that the government was not supposed to be in the business of buying and distribution of fertilisers.

Asked if Zambia would implement the recommendations from the ACF of replacing the FSP with a voucher system, Albert Mulonga, Deputy Minister of Livestock and Fisheries, said that the system was still being reviewed to see if it would be viable.

“The principle of the government is to increase food security at household and national levels. For us the FSP is working as there is improved food security which is our main output in the programme,” said Mulonga.

Mulonga added that the Zambian government has been targeting the poor under the FSP and that it has been transparent in the provision of tenders to the private sector companies that are involved in the supply of fertiliser, seed and also provision of transport in the FSP.

During the first seven years of the FSP’s implementation in Zambia, the programme has improved small scale farmers access to agricultural inputs such as fertiliser and improved seeds. Since inception, FSP has managed to distribute a total of 422,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser valued at 27.6 million U.S. dollars covering a total of 1.5 million hectares of maize grown by small-scale farmers.

Annually, the programme supplied an average of 60,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser covering about 150,000 small-scale farmers countrywide.

Positive results notwithstanding, there have been a number of concerns about the FSP’s performance, especially with regards to its targeting of beneficiaries; impact on household and national food security effect on private sector investment and participation in agricultural inputs supply markets; and the programme’s long-term sustainability, given the ever increasing competition for national resources by various sectors.

Zambian farmer Cecilia Makota said beneficiaries of the FSP were poorly targeted – noting that she saw stone crushers receiving this fertiliser.

“What do you expect a hungry household to do if they receive two to four bags of fertiliser? Most of it has been sold immediately after being received,” said Makota.

She contended that instead of having spurred growth in agricultural production, the FSP had a limited programme impact on food security.

Wilfred Lipita, Director of Health and Livestock Development in Malawi, said the voucher system which has been running in the country for over five years, needed security features similar to those used in international passports because unscrupulous people could also print these coupons.

“To minimise on this, we do not tell people where the vouchers are made and when they are ready they are under very strict control until they reach the beneficiary,” said Lipita.

He said Malawi uses the Voucher Based Inputs Supply System which has helped in identification and traceability of the farmer through their voucher numbers.

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