

# Enhancing Networking in Soil and Water Management

Side Event at the African Crop Science Society Conference

29<sup>th</sup> September, 2009, Southern Sun Hotel, Cape Town, South Africa

CONVENORS:

Sokoine University of Agriculture; University of Zambia, University of Malawi, RUFORUM, TSBF-AFNET  
and SADC

Supported by SADC ICART<sup>1</sup> through the Networking Window

## MEETING REPORT

### Background to the Side Event

According to the Forum for Agricultural Resource Husbandry (FARA, 2006) unless current trends of land degradation are dramatically reversed, Africa will fail to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets by 2015 despite the abundant land and water resources that the region is endowed with. This is likely to aggravate the situation of the majority of farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) incarcerated in a vicious cycle of poverty, food insecurity and natural resource degradation. The overarching framework guiding agricultural development in Africa is the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). Both CAADP Pillar 1 (Water and Land Resource Management) and Pillar 4 (Agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption) and the Southern Africa Development Community's Implementation and Coordination of Agricultural Research and Training (ICART) programme, place emphasis on natural resource management, especially strengthening soil-water management to increase agricultural productivity and incomes. Furthermore, efforts at responding to these challenges are further undermined by new emerging challenges, particularly climate change. Although many technologies have been developed in the past by both national and international agricultural research and training institutions, they have

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<sup>1</sup> ICART is a five-year regional project, funded under the 9th European Development Funds (9th EDF), implemented by the SADC Secretariat, within the Agricultural Research and Development Unit of the FANR Directorate. The project runs from January 2006 to December 2010 and is valued at Euro 15 million.

remained largely inaccessible to especially farmers and policy makers or where it has been accessible, adoption remains low as witnessed in the limited use of good agricultural practices (GAP) related to soil and water management. In particular, research outputs from universities remain largely unknown, contributing to limited visibility of universities in the research and development process.

### **Networking in the Soils**

A number of networks/ communities of practice already exist for improving sharing of lessons in the soil and water networking arena. Among them are the African network for soil biology and fertility (AFNET), a network of the Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility Institute with objective to strengthen and sustain stakeholder capacity to generate, share and apply soil fertility management knowledge and skills to contribute to the welfare of farming communities; the Soil Science Society of East Africa (SSSEA) and; the Soil Fertility Consortium for Southern Africa (SOFECISA). The strengthening (depending if a suitable platform is already available) of a functional SWC platform will enhance the dissemination of SWC knowledge generated in the region, particularly from universities, up to the farmers' level. The side event at the 9th ACSS conference in Cape Town, South Africa built consensus on the way forward for networking in soil and water management for SADC member countries. Special consideration was given to link to and or strengthen the existing SADC SWC networks, and link to the University of Zambia, which has been identified as the Lead centre for CAADP Pillar 1. The existing soil and water conservation networks (SWCN) were also identified in the different partner countries.

### **Objectives of the Side Event:**

The overall objective of the side event was to increase lesson learning in the Southern African Development Community countries on soil and water networking activities to improve access to soil-water information and technologies responsive to development goals.

Specific objectives were to:

1. Share experiences and lessons on networking in soil and water management in Sub-Saharan Africa;
2. Explore networking approaches for improved networking in soil and water management in SSA;
3. Agree on networking platforms for improving soil and water management in Southern Africa.

### **Approach:**

The Side event was convened by Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), University of Zambia (UNZA), University of Malawi, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), AFNET and SADC-ICART. Funded by the SADC ICART Programme, a one

day meeting was held in the form of a side event at the Ninth African Crop Science Society in Constantia Hall of the Southern Sun Hotel, Cape Town South Africa. At the meeting, Prof. John Msaky, coordinator of the project delivered welcome remarks and the objectives of the meeting. Other opening remarks were received from Dr. Jane Alumira on behalf of SADC-ICART project and Dr. Moses Osiru on behalf of RUFORUM. The meeting also received Remarks from the University of Zambia (UNZA) who are the current Coordination Unit of African Union –New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) CAADP Pillar 1 on Land and Water Management. Adequate time was allowed for participant to discuss all the presentation. Immediately after this, presentations were received from AFNET by Prof. Daniel Mugendi, the Deputy Vice Chancellor from Kenyatta University in Kenya; SOFECSA by the Regional Coordinator, Dr. Paul Mapfumo and on behalf of the Soil Science Society for Eastern Africa (SSSEA) delivered by Prof. J. Msaky, the Head of Crop Science Department at Sokoine University of Agriculture. The meeting Programme is included in the Appendix section. The meeting then proceeded into a guided discussion to explore relevant issues and way forward.

### **Summary of discussion issues**

1. There is a need to link all the existing networks on soil and water networking in the region to ensure that potential of any existing networks are fully tapped;
2. There is also need to ensure the sustainability of any agreed institutional arrangement for soil and water networking. Care should be taken not to create a network for sake of network creation. Lessons from the past would guide against this wayforward;
3. There is need to benefit from experiences of other sub regions on the Continent, the Sahel region in particular in terms of soil and water management technologies and practices. Any networking arrangement should avail a mechanism of lesson learning from existing experiences with water management, particular with regards to unpredictable rainfall and scarce water;
4. There was agreement that there is a lot of information on the desks of researchers and other soil and water management practitioners, including extension, that needs to be move out into good agricultural practices and more needs to be done by university and NARI researchers;
5. Incentives such as the RUFORUM field attachment programmes that is focused on M.Sc. students and attaching them to community based organizations to share the outcome of their research products could assist in dissemination information and knowledge and the SADC ICART networking window are clear opportunities that should be harnessed. However, it was agreed that there was need for long term strategies for enhancing knowledge transfer;
6. Need to improve coordination for better networking;

7. RUFORUM is willing to work with all stakeholders to improve innovation that contributes towards poverty eradication.
8. Need to ensure that all networks in the region are captured- other networks in the region including the soil science society for southern Africa (SSSSA) who will be having a combined conference with the weed science society and crop production society in South Africa in January of 2010. Participants also mentioned that there were networks in West Africa as well as Africa wide networks;
9. SSSEA could be considered as a vehicle for southern African scientist, if their scope was increased to cover the southern Africa region. Further discussion on this is still required;
10. Another network that was mentioned as critical was the Southern African Regional Irrigation Association. Efforts should be made by the networking coordination mechanism to be articulated to tap into this network;
11. The SADC land and water management and information network also has a critical role to play in improving information sharing on soil and water management in the region.

#### **Way forward and next steps:**

The meeting agreed on the following:

1. Need for further consultations, bringing together other partners, such as the national agricultural research institutions and NGOs in an informal network to deliberate on issues of soil and water networking in the region. It will be important that a principle of inclusiveness is used and particular that important actors in soil and water be present such as University of Zambia as coordination unity for CAADP Pillar 1; SUA as a training hub for soil and water and SOFECSA, AFNET, SADC etc.;
2. Need for more discussion to explore all the networks on soil and water on the continent. These networks should as much as possible be present at future discussion;
3. Conveyed gratitude to SADC ICART project for funding over 20 scientists to attend the meeting and supporting other meeting costs;
4. In the interim, universities can find alternative ways of ensuring information on their research work is disseminated to stakeholder. For example, Deans of faculty should consider future electronic dissemination of thesis and student research as a way of improving information flow;
5. Need to bring on board the Soil Science Society for South Africa; and,
6. Finally, it was agreed that another meeting be organized, coordinated by SADC to inventorise all the existing initiatives and enable further discussions on this issue.

### Meeting Programme

TIME	ACTIVITY	REMARKS
<b>CHAIRPERSON: Prof. G.Y.K. Kanyama-Phiri</b>		
<b>16:00-16:10</b>	Welcome Remarks and Objectives	Prof. John Msaky
<b>16:10-16:15</b>	Remarks from SADC-ICART	Dr. Jane Alumira
<b>16:15-16:25</b>	Remarks from UNZA, Coordination Unit of AU-NEPAD CAADP Pillar 1 (Land and Water Management)	Dr. Judith Lungu
<b>16:25-16:35</b>	Remarks from RUFORUM	Dr. Moses Osiru
<b>16:35-17:05</b>	Statements from Networks (10 minutes per Network)  AFNET - Prof. Daniel Mugendi  SOFECSA- Dr. Paul Mapfumo  SSSEA- Prof. J. Msaky	Network representatives
<b>17:05-17:10</b>	Key issues arising	Dr. Paul Woomer; Dr. Mick Mwala; Dr. Oagile Dikinya; Dr. Nyambilila Amuri
<b>17:10-17:40</b>	Discussions	Mr. Philip Nyamagafata (Moderator)
<b>17:40-18:00</b>	Summary and Way forward	Prof. Msaky, SUA

## List of Participants

Anne Nyambura Karuma  
University of Nairobi  
Department of LARMAT  
P.O. Box 29053-00625, Nairobi, Kenya  
Email: [annkaruma@gmail.com](mailto:annkaruma@gmail.com)

Stephen Machado  
Oregon State University  
Email: [Stephen.machodo@oregonstate.edu](mailto:Stephen.machodo@oregonstate.edu)

Zachary Gitonga  
International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology  
Plant Health Division  
[gitongamzachary@yahoo.com](mailto:gitongamzachary@yahoo.com) / [zgitonga@icipe.org](mailto:zgitonga@icipe.org)

Sue Walker  
University of the Free State,  
Bloemfontein, South Africa  
[Walker.sci@ufs.ac.za](mailto:Walker.sci@ufs.ac.za)

Diana Earnshaw  
University of Swaziland, Faculty of Agriculture  
[earnshaw@agric.uniswa.sz](mailto:earnshaw@agric.uniswa.sz); [Diana@uniswacc.uniswa.sz](mailto:Diana@uniswacc.uniswa.sz)

Luka Atwok  
Makerere University  
P.O. Box 7062, Kampala  
[Atwok11@yahoo.com](mailto:Atwok11@yahoo.com)

Professor Vincent W. Saka  
University of Malawi  
Bunda College of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi  
[vwsaka@yahoo.com](mailto:vwsaka@yahoo.com)

Prof. Patrick Rubaihayo  
Makerere University,  
Faculty of Agriculture P. O. Box 7062,  
Kampala – Uganda,  
Email: [prubaihayo@gmail.com](mailto:prubaihayo@gmail.com)

Prof George Y. Kanyama Phiri  
Bunda College, University of Malawi  
P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi  
Tel: 265 999 933 085  
E-mail: [gykphiri@bunda.unima.mw](mailto:gykphiri@bunda.unima.mw)/[gykphiri@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gykphiri@yahoo.co.uk)

Prof John Joseph Msaky  
Associate Professor and Head of Soil Science Department  
Sokoine University of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 3008  
Chuo Kikuu, Morogoro  
Tanzania  
Tel: 255 23 260 3999  
Fax: 255 23 260 3259  
E-mail: [msaky@suanet.ac.tz](mailto:msaky@suanet.ac.tz)/[msakykiwera@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:msakykiwera@yahoo.co.uk)

Dr. Jane Alumira  
SADC-Secretariat  
Private Bag 0095, Gaborone,  
Botswana  
[jalumira@sadc.int](mailto:jalumira@sadc.int)

Dr. Judith C.N. Lungu  
University of Zambia, School of Agriculture  
P.O. box 32379, Lusaka, Zambia  
[jlungu@unza.zm](mailto:jlungu@unza.zm) / [dean-agric.unza.zm](mailto:dean-agric.unza.zm)

Mr. M.M. Maboko  
Agricultural Research Council  
Roodeplaat, Private Bag x293  
Pretoria 0001  
[mmaboko@arc.agric.za](mailto:mmaboko@arc.agric.za)

Mr. S.B. Oikgwathle  
Limpopo Department of Agriculture  
Private Bag X4087  
Limpopo, Polokwane, 0700  
[Dikwatlhes@agric.limpopo.za](mailto:Dikwatlhes@agric.limpopo.za)

Mrs. Patience Opata  
Department of Agricultural Economics  
University of Nigeria  
Nsukka, Enugu State

Nigeria

Fulgence Niyongabo  
Makerere University  
P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda  
Email: [fulgeni@yahoo.fr](mailto:fulgeni@yahoo.fr)

J.O. Adeosun Ph.D  
Agronomy Department  
Ahmadu Bellow University  
Zaria, Nigeria

Prof. Kachaka Sudi Kaiko  
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences  
University of Kinshasha (DRC)  
Tel: +243 998219596  
Email: [kachaka\\_sudi@yahoo.com](mailto:kachaka_sudi@yahoo.com)

K. Munyinda Dr.  
University of Zambia, P.O. Box 32379  
Lusaka, Zambia  
Tel: 097 8270898  
Email: [kmunyinda@unza.zm](mailto:kmunyinda@unza.zm)

Mick S. Mwala Ph.D  
University of Zambia  
P.O. Box 32379, Lusaka Zambia,  
Tel: 260 977670635/260 211 295655  
Email: [mmwala@unza.zm](mailto:mmwala@unza.zm)/[mmwala@yahoo.com](mailto:mmwala@yahoo.com)

Dr. Nyambilila Amuri  
P.O. Box Box 3008, Morogoro Tanzania  
[amurinyambilila@yahoo.com](mailto:amurinyambilila@yahoo.com); [namuri@suanet.ac.tz](mailto:namuri@suanet.ac.tz)

Dr. Oagile Dikinya  
Senior Lecturer  
University of Botswana  
P/Bag 0022, Gaborone  
Botswana  
Tel: 267 355 2512  
E-mail: [dikinyao@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:dikinyao@mopipi.ub.bw)/[ogdikinya@hotmail.com](mailto:ogdikinya@hotmail.com)

Ms. R.A. Nungo  
KARI- Kakamega, P.O. Box 169, Kakamega

Kenya:

Email: [azikoyo@yahoo.com](mailto:azikoyo@yahoo.com)

Prof. J. Robert Okalebo (Soil Scientist)

Moi University

Department of Soil Science, P.O. Box 1125, Eldoret

Kenya

Email: [rokalebo@yahoo.com](mailto:rokalebo@yahoo.com)

Tel: 254 0727-819023

Dr. Daniel Motlhanka

Botswana College of Agriculture

Medicinal Plants Research, Basic Sciences

Private Bag 0027, Gaborone Botswana

[dmothlan@bca.bw/](mailto:dmothlan@bca.bw) [motlhankadan@yahoo.com](mailto:motlhankadan@yahoo.com)

Dr. Menas Wuta

University of Zimbabwe, Department of Soil Science & Agricultural Engineering

P.O. Box MP 167, Harare, Zimbabwe

Email: [mwuta@agric.uz.ac.zw](mailto:mwuta@agric.uz.ac.zw)

Mr. Lado Maurice Mogga

PhD Student

Department of Crop Science

Makerere University

P. O. Box 7062

Kampala - Uganda

[mauricemogga@yahoo.com](mailto:mauricemogga@yahoo.com)

Inamahoro Michelle

M.Sc. Student

Department of Crop Science

Makerere University

P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda

Email: [inamicheline@yahoo.com](mailto:inamicheline@yahoo.com)

Tel: +256779336302

Mr. M.C. Mbuti

Dohne Research Station, Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture

South Africa

[mzingisi@ananzi.co.za](mailto:mzingisi@ananzi.co.za)

Anthony Egeru

Institute of Environment and Natural Resources

Makerere University, 7062, Kampala-Uganda  
Email: [egeru81@yahoo.com](mailto:egeru81@yahoo.com) , [egeru81@educ.mak.ac.ug](mailto:egeru81@educ.mak.ac.ug)  
Tel: +256 782616879

Nampijja Josephine  
Institute of Environment and Natural Resources  
Makerere University, 7062, Kampala-Uganda  
Email: [josenapijja@yahoo.com](mailto:josenapijja@yahoo.com), [jnampijja09@gmail.com](mailto:jnampijja09@gmail.com).  
Tel: +256 772193851

Moses F.A. Maliro  
Bunda College of Agriculture  
University of Malawi  
P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi  
Email: [mmaliro@hotmail.com](mailto:mmaliro@hotmail.com) ; [mmaliro@bunda.unima.mw](mailto:mmaliro@bunda.unima.mw)

Godfrey Z. Khumalo  
University of Swaziland  
Luyengo Campus  
P.O. Luyengo, Swaziland  
Email: [gkhumalo@agric.uniswa.sz](mailto:gkhumalo@agric.uniswa.sz)  
Tel: +2685274021; Cell: +2686433914

John Annandale  
Department of Plant Production and Soil Science  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa

Paul Mapfumo  
Soil Fertility Consortium for Southern Africa (SOFECSA)  
CIMMYT, Southern Africa  
P.O. Box MP 163, Mt Pleasant  
Harare, Zimbabwe  
Email: [p.mapfumo@cgiar.org](mailto:p.mapfumo@cgiar.org)  
Tel: +263 11 803971; 263 4 301807

Dr. Moses Osiru  
Programme Manager, Networking, Advocacy and Grants  
Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)  
151 Garden Hill, Makerere University,  
P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda  
Tel: +256 414 535939; Mobile: +256 75 9988723  
Fax: +256 414 534153  
Email: [m.osiru@ruforum.org](mailto:m.osiru@ruforum.org); [m\\_osiru@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:m_osiru@yahoo.co.uk)

Web: [www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org)