



COMMUNIQUE

CLUSTER MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

21ST MAY 2009

HILTON SANDTON HOTEL

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

SADC Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Food Security met on 21st May 2009 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Ms Tina Joemat-Pettersson, hosted the meeting. A 3-day meeting of Senior Officials preceded the meeting of the Ministers. In attendance at this meeting were Ministers from: The Republic of Angola, The Republic of Botswana, The Kingdom of Lesotho, The Republic of Namibia, The Republic of South Africa, The Kingdom of Swaziland, The Republic of Zambia and The Republic of Zimbabwe.

The Acting High Commissioner to the Republic of South Africa represented the United Republic of Tanzania. The Deputy Executive Secretary of SADC also attended the meeting.

The Ministers met in order to review progress on the regional food security situation, and -on the implementation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration Plan of Action on Agriculture and Food Security. The Ministers reviewed progress in the following key areas:

Food Security situation

Ministers noted that the regional food security situation had improved in 2009 compared to 2008. With regard to crop production, they noted that most Member States expected better harvests this year than in 2008/09 due to favourable rains received in the region. They also noted that although the region is still a net importer of milk and meat there has been a significant increase in the production of animal products in 2008 compared to 2007. Similarly, the region has recorded a steady increase in fish production in recent years.

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Dar-es-salaam Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security. They observed that the implementation of this Declaration in the past 5 years has yielded positive results and has potential to contribute to improving the regional food security situation and nutrition at household level.

Food Availability

Ministers noted progress made in increasing the availability and use of key agricultural inputs such as seed and fertilizer. They observed that in the past one year, negotiations on the development of a memorandum of understanding for implementing the harmonized seed regulatory system, which was approved in 2007 have been completed. The system aims at improving seed trade and availability of high quality seed to farmers in the region. This will complement the efforts of Member States in improving crop production and food security.

Regional Trade

Ministers noted that agricultural products remain the major component of trade in the region. They however recognized that although crop, livestock and fish products are important for trade, the region needs to build capacity for value addition through agro-processing. Ministers then underscored the importance of value addition and intra-regional trade.

In the livestock sector, the Ministers highlighted the importance of controlling transboundary animal disease and the impact it has on trade of livestock and livestock products. In this regard, the Ministers appreciated the high level of collaboration among Member States in tackling transboundary animal diseases in the region. The Livestock Information Management System, which has been developed recently to facilitate sharing of information among Member States, was also commended by Ministers. They also emphasized the need to sustain this system in order to facilitate the monitoring and surveillance of animal diseases in the region.

Disaster Preparedness

Considering the annual variations in food production in the region due to vagaries of weather, Ministers reviewed the work done on the establishment of a Regional Food Reserve Facility which would provide SADC with a mechanism for preventing and preparing for adverse impacts and shocks to food security. Ministers called upon the region to expedite the finalization of the feasibility phase of this initiative.

Climate Change

The threat posed by climate change on agriculture and food security was also noted. In line with this, Ministers recognized that climate change affects the three pillars of food security, namely food availability, food access and food safety and nutrition. Its impact on precipitation, temperature, and increased frequency of drought and floods were considered detrimental to the agricultural sector. To this end, Ministers recognized the important role of research in adaptation to climate change, and the initiatives taken by their counterparts dealing with climate change in considering the development of the strategy for the region as a mechanism for adaptation to the phenomenon.

Approval of key documents for regional collaboration

The Ministers approved two important documents that mark key milestones in achieving food security in the region. Firstly, the Ministers reaffirmed the importance of a well coordinated research and endorsed the establishment of a

Sub-Regional Research Organization (SRO) and recommended it for approval by the SADC Council.

Secondly, the Ministers considered and approved a Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System, which has been approved by SADC Council. The system aims at improving seed trade and availability of high quality seed to farmers in the region. This will complement the efforts of Member States in improving crop production and food security.

Capacity of the FANR Directorate

Ministers noted that in order to make progress towards achieving the milestones and objectives of food security in the region, there is need to increase the human resource capacity of the SADC Secretariat, and in particular the FANR Directorate and also at national level. In this regard, they reviewed the structure of the FANR Directorate and made recommendations to strengthen the Directorate and these will be submitted to the next Council of SADC.

The Meeting expressed appreciation and gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa for the hospitality extended to all the delegates and excellent facilities provided.

21ST May, 2009

Johannesburg, South Africa