



COMMUNIQUE

1ST CLUSTER MEETING OF THE SADC MINISTERS OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

14TH NOVEMBER 2008
GABORONE, BOTSWANA

1. The meeting of the Ministers responsible for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources was held in Gaborone, Botswana, on 14 November 2008 under the Chairpersonship of Honourable Lulama Xingwana, the Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs of the Republic of South Africa who is also Chairperson of SADC Ministers responsible for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources cluster. This was preceded by a preparatory meeting of Senior Officials from 11-13 November 2008.
2. The meeting was attended by Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Natural Resources from the following countries: the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Botswana, the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Republic of Namibia, the Republic of South Africa, and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Republic of Mozambique was represented by its High Commissioner to Botswana and Zimbabwe by its Ambassador to Botswana. The Republic of Malawi, the Kingdom of Swaziland and the Republic of Zambia were represented by Senior Officials. The meeting was also attended by the Deputy Executive Secretary.
3. The purpose of this meeting was to consider the regional food security situation, the rainfall forecast for the coming season and to discuss ways and means for the region to ensure adequate preparations for the growing season in the midst of global food crisis. The meeting also reviewed progress made in the implementation of the Dar es Salaam Declaration and Plan of Action on Agriculture and Food Security, which is a long-term strategy to ensure food security.

4. Ministers noted that the 2008/2009 seasonal rainfall forecast indicates a high probability of normal to below-normal rains across large parts of the region during both the start of the season (October 2008 to December 2008) and the main crop growing period (January 2009 to March 2009). The below normal rains could result in erratic start of the season, delayed onset of planting rains, and a high frequency of extended dry spells during the main season. Ministers therefore agreed that contingency measures be put in place to assist areas that may be affected.
5. Ministers noted that the regional food situation in terms of cereals is satisfactory mostly due to surplus production in Malawi, South Africa, and Zambia. Ministers also noted that although the rest of the Member States experience food deficit of varying magnitude, the overall situation remains stable due to imports and cross substitution of cereals with other non cereal food crops except in Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.
6. Ministers also noted that the region is a net importer of most livestock products including beef, milk, eggs, pork, mutton and poultry, and stressed the need to increase production.
7. Ministers noted with concern the present rising food and input prices, which are adversely affecting the food and nutrition security of the majority of the people in the region. Ministers underscored the importance for the region to adopt measures that improve food supplies, minimize the negative impacts of increased food prices and exploit possible gains that could be derived from increased food prices.
8. With regard to the implementation of the Dar es Salaam Declaration and Plan of Action, Ministers noted that some progress has been made as reflected by the improved food security situation in a number of countries. However, a number of challenges continue to impede implementation. These include inadequate budgetary allocation, limited capacity at both national and regional levels, and over dependence on rainfed agriculture.
9. Ministers noted the progress made by Member States and the SADC Secretariat towards the consultation process for the establishment of the Regional Food Reserve Facility. The Ministers stressed the need to finalise the ongoing consultations in order to move the process forward.

- 10 Ministers acknowledged the value addition of well-coordinated agricultural research to facilitate generation and dissemination of technologies for improving efficiency in agricultural production. In this regard, Ministers re-affirmed their commitment to the establishment of a Sub-Regional Agricultural Research Organization (SRO). The SRO will foster linkages with continental initiatives supported through the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa and NEPAD. Ministers, however, stressed the need to prepare a business plan for its sustainability.
- 11 Ministers committed themselves to the formulation of a regional agriculture policy that will facilitate deeper regional integration in the areas of food, agriculture and natural resources and also facilitate convergence and harmonization of national agricultural policies.
- 12 Ministers thanked the Government and people of Botswana for hosting the meeting and for the warm hospitality extended to all the delegates.

14th November 2008
Gaborone, Botswana