



PRESS RELEASE

MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

**EZULWINI, SWAZILAND
22nd JULY 2016**

1. The SADC Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Food Security met on 22nd July 2016 in Ezulwini, Swaziland. The objective of the meeting was to review the Food Security situation and progress in the implementation of Regional programmes including the development of the Regional Agriculture Policy Investment Plan. The meeting was also intended to update Ministers on the Food Security situation in the Region following the drought induced by the El Niño phenomenon.
2. The meeting was attended by 10 SADC Member States and in attendance were Ministers from Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, while the Republic of Mozambique and South Africa were represented by their High Commissioners accredited to the Kingdom of Swaziland. Also in attendance were the Sub Regional Coordinator for Southern Africa of UN Food Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Vice Chairperson of Centre for Coordination of Agriculture Research Development for Southern Africa (CARDESA) Board, and the Director for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) representing the Executive Secretary.
3. The meeting was officially opened by the His Excellency the Right Honourable Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, Dr. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini. In his statement, the Right Honourable Prime Minister highlighted the importance of agriculture as a source of food, income and employment. He indicated that agriculture is central to our culture and economies. He noted the progress made in the sector and commended the Region for finalising the Revised Regional Indicative Development Plan and the Industrialisation Strategy which are pivotal to transforming the economies of the Region and poverty reduction. He implored the Honourable Ministers to deliberate with open minds particularly, that the

meeting was taking place at a time when the region was experiencing the devastating impacts of the El Niño.

4. Also speaking at the opening ceremony were the Honourable Patrick Ralotsia, Minister of Agriculture from the Republic of Botswana and Chairperson of the SADC Committee of Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Food Security; Honourable Moses Vilakati, Minister of Agriculture, Swaziland; Mrs Margaret Nyirenda, Director of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources representing the Executive Secretary of SADC, and the Regional Administrator from the Kingdom of Swaziland.
5. During the meeting, Ministers underscored the importance of agriculture to the socio-economic development of the region and noted the positive progress the region is making in improving agricultural production. Ministers observed that the Region has been severely affected by the drought induced by the El Niño event of 2015/16. The Regional Vulnerability Assessment indicates a 9.3 million tonnes cereal deficit and 40 million people at risk of food insecurity in the Region. The region is currently importing cereals to offset the shortfall.
6. Ministers noted that the food security situation in the Region will continue to deteriorate this season due to poor harvest. As such, food prices are expected to rise as a result of the decline in food production. The situation is aggravated further by the depreciation of regional currencies against the US Dollar. These will further burden the already vulnerable households that have exhausted their coping mechanisms as this will be the second consecutive season with poor harvest.
7. Ministers supported the declaring of a Regional Disaster and the launching of the Humanitarian Appeal. They noted that the Appeal will be launched by His Excellency, Lt. General, Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama, the President of the Republic of Botswana and the SADC Chairperson on 26th July 2016 in Gaborone, Botswana. Ministers noted that the Appeal highlights a funding gap of US\$ 2.4 billion to cover the humanitarian needs for about 40 million people in the region.
8. Ministers approved the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan which will enhance agricultural production, productivity and competitiveness, as well as improve regional and international trade and access to markets. The RAP will also strengthen the response plans for Member States and build resilience to address chronic food insecurity. Ministers recommended to Council the creation of a Ministerial Sub-Committee to oversee the implementation of the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan.

9. Ministers noted the escalation of incidences of transboundary animal and plant pest and diseases. They committed to collaborate in the control and management of these diseases.
10. Ministers reviewed progress on the implementation of the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC) programmes. In this regard, Ministers approved a Generic Programme which seeks to enhance regional capacity to conserve and sustainably utilize the plant genetic resources for Food and Agriculture in the Region.
11. Ministers reviewed progress in the implementation of programs and governance of the Centre for Coordination of Agriculture Research Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA), a subsidiary organisation of SADC, which was established to improve production and productivity of farmers in the Region through generation and dissemination of appropriate research technologies. Ministers approved several amendments to the Charter governing CCARDESA to enhance its operations.
12. Ministers noted progress on the development of the revised Regional Indicative Development Plan which provides strategic direction for the SADC Region's Integration agenda as well the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap and committed to support their implementation.
13. Ministers thanked the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland for their hospitality and successfully hosting the meeting.

Done at Ezulwini, Swaziland, this 22nd day of July 2016