



**OUTCOMES OF THE MINISTERIAL WORKSHOP ON FOOD SECURITY
AND POVERTY ERADICATION**

THEME: "TOWARDS A POVERTY FREE AND FOOD SECURE FUTURE"

HELD AT GABORONE, BOTSWANA, 16 MAY 2016

BACKGROUND

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a regional integration block, comprising 15 Member States. It has an estimated population of 293 million people (SADC 2013) with an estimated annual growth rate of 2.6 percent and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$686 billion (2013). It is estimated that nearly 40 percent of the region's population live below the US\$1 per day poverty line. This situation is exacerbated by the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS.

Nearly 61 percent of the population derive their livelihoods directly and indirectly from agriculture and consequently, the performance of agriculture has a significant bearing on economic growth poverty reduction and food security in the Region. However, agriculture growth estimated at 2.6 percent has been insufficient to meet the regional demand for food and support the regional economic growth. This growth falls far below the Regional Indicative Strategy Development Plan (RISDP) and the AUC/NEPAD CAADP growth rate of 6 percent per annum. In the last five years, an estimated population of 25 million people has been food insecure annually.

In response to this situation, His Excellency, Lt. General Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama, President of Botswana and Chairperson of SADC convened a Workshop on Food Security and Poverty Eradication to exchange ideas on how to address the challenges in these areas and agree on practical solutions towards addressing them.

The Workshop was attended by Ministers and Senior Officials representing SADC Member States, private organisations, farmer organisations, United Nation's Agencies and other International Cooperating Partners.

ISSUES AND OUTCOMES

The Workshop identified the following critical issues and interventions:

a) Slow pace of domestication and implementation of regional integration instruments (Protocols, policies and strategies) at Member State level.

The region has developed a number of strategic instruments, including the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration and Action Plans on Agriculture and Food Security, the Regional Agricultural Policy, the Declaration on Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development and the Regional Poverty Reduction Framework to address food security and poverty. However, the main challenge remains the slow pace of domestication and implementation of these regional instruments at the national level.

The Workshop recommended that the SADC Chairperson should champion a binding monitoring and evaluation mechanism for continental and regional commitments. To this effect the SADC Secretariat should be empowered and capacitated to monitor and report to Summit.

b) Insufficient progress in the implementation of the Regional Poverty Observatory and Regional Poverty Reduction Framework

The Workshop noted the slow progress and challenges faced in the implementation of the provisions regarding the Regional Poverty Observatory and the Regional Poverty Reduction Framework and inability to link adequately, with the other strategic areas of the SADC to reduce poverty and improve food security in the region.

The Workshop recommended the strengthening of the Regional Poverty Observatory and ensuring continuous monitoring and assessment of the poverty situation and report annually to Summit.

c) Insufficient and unsustainable financing and investment in agriculture

The level of financing and investment into agriculture by the public and private sectors is not adequate. This has constrained growth in agricultural GDP resulting in food insecurity and poverty.

The workshop underscored the need for substantive resources (financial and human) to be mobilized in order to effectively address poverty and food insecurity. The importance of collaborative efforts among public sector, private sector and social sector was also emphasized in order to leverage additional investment and financial resources. Considering the importance of agriculture in addressing poverty, the workshop appealed to Member States to build a case for increased budgetary allocations and investment for agriculture with clear returns on investment.

d) Low agricultural production, productivity and competitiveness

Agricultural production particularly in crops, livestock, and fisheries is very low in the Region. This is mainly due to poor availability and access to agricultural inputs, markets and finance, limited use of improved technologies and high dependency on rain-fed agriculture, among others.

The workshop identified access, ownership and use of land and agricultural inputs, particularly for women and youth, as critical to increasing production, productivity, competitiveness and reduce poverty.

To this end, the workshop recommended that the Region should:

- Prioritize measures to institute substantial agrarian reforms in Member States;
- Enhance agricultural research, development, innovation and dissemination;
- Strengthen agricultural beneficiation and value chains;
- Improve regulatory frameworks for agricultural trade; and
- Enhance implementation of strategies to control the spread of trans-boundary plant and animal pests and diseases.

e) Low mechanization in agriculture

The use of the hand hoe for tillage remains widespread in the smallholder agriculture sector and this is limiting production and productivity.

The workshop therefore recommended the promotion of investment into the local manufacturing of farm machinery and implements in order to increase access to mechanisation.

f) Inadequate infrastructure development to support agriculture

The inadequacy of infrastructure including access roads, energy, ICT, and markets has hampered the growth of the sector, access to marketing of agricultural products and access to food in times of need especially in the rural areas. These challenges result in high transaction costs and therefore un-competiveness in the agricultural sector.

The workshop recommended increased investment in critical infrastructure for agriculture such as market access roads, storage and cold chain facilities, energy (especially alternative energy sources), ICT, water harvesting and irrigation schemes.

g) Inadequate pro-poor development strategies targeting the vulnerable groups

Although most Member States have pro-poor development strategies, implementation remains limited.

The workshop recommended strengthening of the design and implementation of social protection programmes targeted at the poor and vulnerable population in areas such as quality education, skills development, employment, health, safety nets and risk management. Further, social programmes that have potential to transform agriculture to business levels should be identified and promoted. However, in implementing these, there is need to minimize dependency syndrome and market distortions.

h) Unsustainable use and under-utilisation of natural resources

Natural resources have a potential to contribute to socio-economic development of Member States. However this potential is not fully exploited.

The workshop recommended the promotion of sustainable utilization of natural resources as a viable land use option for poverty reduction and food security. Special focus should be placed on exploiting the use of indigenous species of flora and fauna for nutritional, medicinal and industrial purposes.

i) Insufficient promotion of smallholder agriculture as a business enterprise

Most Member States depend on marketing of primary agricultural products whose market prices are usually very low and vulnerable to international price fluctuations. As

a result, producers in particular rural subsistence farmers, who are not well integrated into the market do not get fair value for their produce, and hence remain poor and vulnerable.

The workshop recommended promotion of farming as a business enterprise. This will require identification of farmers who have the potential to operate farming as a business. Aggregation of farmers should be promoted to realise the economies of scale in production and marketing. Farmers should be supported to establish small and medium enterprises for agro-processing and value addition. Deliberate efforts should be made to create an enabling environment for the women and youth to participate in agri-business.

j) Poor access to markets

Market linkages for the smallholder farmers are under-developed. Inadequate infrastructure such as roads results in high transaction costs and therefore un-competiveness in the agricultural sector.

The workshop recommended that national governments should invest in public goods and services including feeder roads, ICT connectivity, provision of energy, and market infrastructure in rural and productive areas. In addition, smallholder farmers' production should be linked to markets to open opportunities for finance and investment. Promotion of value addition and beneficiation should be given priority in order to increase farmers' incomes.

k) Insufficient Disaster Preparedness

The region is prone to a number of disasters but Member States do not have capacity to adequately respond to these.

The workshop recommended the strengthening of regional and national information systems including early warning and monitoring systems, and acceleration of the establishment of the regional disaster preparedness fund. In addition, Member States should scale-up risk insurance and management initiatives to safeguard vulnerable households against loss of assets and income during disasters.

l) Climate Change

The recurrent food crises in the region are largely a result of growing poverty, high vulnerability and low resilience to climate change. This is compounded by an increasingly uncertain and complex economic environment that has led to the erosion of household assets and reduced crop production.

The Workshop recommended the adoption of climate smart technologies such as drought tolerant varieties, conservation agriculture, water harvesting and efficient use of water and the use of renewable energy for agriculture. Diversification of livelihood support systems should be promoted in order to enhance resilience.

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