



## **STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SADC**

**H.E. MR. ELIAS M. MAGOSI, ON WORLD FOOD DAY 2026**

**Theme: *“Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow.”***

**16 October 2026**

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) joins the global community in commemorating World Food Day 2026 under the theme, *“Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow.”* For Southern Africa, this theme resonates strongly as climate shocks, food insecurity, malnutrition, and market disruptions continue to threaten livelihoods and sustainable development across the Region.

Innovation is essential to transforming knowledge, technology, and regional cooperation into practical solutions that strengthen food and nutrition security. For SADC, this means harnessing science, data, and innovation to improve climate-resilient agricultural production; strengthen animal and plant health systems; enhance institutions, policies, and markets; and empower farmers, women, young people, and local communities to drive sustainable change.

The scale of the challenge remains significant. The latest regional Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) overview estimates that 38.8 million people across eight SADC Member States experienced acute food insecurity at Crisis level or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2025 and June 2026. In addition, more than 21 million children across the Region are affected by stunting. These figures underscore the urgent need to increase food production while ensuring that all people have access to sufficient, safe, diverse, and nutritious food.

The SADC regional climate outlook for the 2026/27 rainfall season further highlights the need for action. Below-normal rainfall and above-average temperatures are forecast across much of central and southern SADC, while wetter conditions are expected in parts of the northern Region. With El Niño likely to increase the risk of reduced rainfall, Member States must make greater use of seasonal forecasts, alongside national and shorter-range weather information, to guide timely and locally appropriate interventions. Converting climate information into action through improved water management, climate-resilient agriculture, agricultural information systems, and contingency planning will be critical to protecting food production, livestock, livelihoods, and vulnerable communities.

SADC is advancing these efforts through the Regional Agricultural Policy, which integrates climate information and early warning systems with agricultural production, animal and plant health, nutrition, markets, and trade. Through the Support Towards the Operationalization of

the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (STOSAR II) Project, implemented in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and funded by the European Union, SADC is supporting the following priorities:

- **Evidence-based decision-making:** Strengthening regional agricultural and food security information systems to anticipate risks and guide preparedness, investment, and response.
- **Improved nutrition:** Enhancing food and nutrition data systems while promoting indigenous and underutilised foods to support healthy diets and greater dietary diversity.
- **Protection of crops, livestock, and livelihoods:** Strengthening surveillance, early detection, and coordinated control of transboundary animal diseases and plant pests.
- **Accessible solutions for farmers:** Expanding digital advisory services, farmer field schools, and cooperatives to equip farmers, particularly women and youth, with practical knowledge and technologies.
- **Safer and more efficient regional trade:** Advancing digital certification systems and harmonised standards to facilitate the safe movement of agricultural products and reduce trade barriers.
- **Sustainable and scalable investment:** Applying evidence-based tools to support inclusive, climate-smart, low-emission, and commercially viable agricultural value chains.

Together, these priorities demonstrate how regional cooperation and innovation can deliver tangible improvements in food security, nutrition, and resilience across Southern Africa.

As we commemorate World Food Day 2026, I call upon SADC Member States, farmers, research and academic institutions, the private sector, development partners, women, and young people to transform knowledge, technology, and investment into practical solutions that strengthen agrifood systems, protect livelihoods, and expand access to nutritious food for all.

The choices we make today will determine how well Southern Africa nourishes its people tomorrow. Let us therefore invest in innovation, strengthen collaboration, and build resilient agrifood systems that leave no one behind.

**Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow.**