

Summary Report

of Smallholder Women's Farmer Conference



on

**the SADC Regional Agriculture Investment & Implementation Plan
Held on 1st February 2017**

Gender Links, Johannesburg, South Africa

Supported by





3rd Regional Women Smallholder Farmers Gender Conference

“Influencing and monitoring the SADC Regional Agriculture Investment Plan with Gender Lenses”

1st February 2017 | GenderLink Cottages, Observatory, Johannesburg



Supported by Southern Africa Trust

I. Introduction

The Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF) convened the third annual Regional Smallholder Women’s Farmer Conference on 1st February 2017 under the theme: **“Influencing and Monitoring the SADC Regional Agricultural Investment Plan with Gender Lenses”**. The conference deliberated on the implementation of the SADC RAP Investment and Implementation Plan for the benefit of women smallholder farmers, the youth and poor men in the region. The conference was attended by about 50 women farmers, youth and men from eight SADC countries namely: South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Tanzania, Seychelles, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Other participants came from as far as Kenya and Uganda. DRC, Madagascar and Rwanda representatives could not make it to the conference due to visa challenges to South Africa.

The resource person was **Mr. Martin Muchero**, the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (SADC RAP) Coordinator from the SADC Secretariat in Gaborone, Botswana. The resource person shared updates on the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) as well as near future activities including the funding mechanism to be established, the SADC Agricultural Development Fund (ADF).

The three consecutive Regional Women Conferences have all been supported by the Southern Africa Trust whose representative at this conference, **Ms. Christabel Phiri**, made valuable remarks about the importance of women in agriculture. The opening speech was done by the ESAFF Vice Chairperson, **Ms. Flora Maswanganyi** – farmer woman from Limpopo in South Africa.

2. Conference relevance and objectives

The 3rd Regional Women smallholder farmers' conference was organized on the backdrop of the fact that women who constitute about 65% of the rural population continue to play an important role in our societies. Women are the ones involved in primary agricultural production for



improved livelihoods, food security and nutrition and sovereignty, income and employment creation. Women also are the custodians of local seeds, plants and soils and are affected most by policies, plans and budgets although they are not always in the decision-making circles.

Over the years SADC and Africa as a whole, have started acknowledging the role being played by women in agricultural activities. This is exemplified by the SADC RAP and its Investment Plan that acknowledges that women are important in agricultural activities especially in the rural areas.

The conference came up to honour women in the SADC region for their important role in the entire agricultural value chain. This conference, like the other two, provided women with a platform to engage in a face to face dialogue among themselves, the SADC Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Directorate of the SADC Secretariat and other CSOs in the region. In broader terms the conference objectives were:

- To enhance awareness of women smallholder farmers on the implementation and monitoring of the SADC RAP, SADC RAP Result Framework (RF) and SADC Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP);
- Provide gender perspectives to the SADC RAP Investment and Implementation Plan as it kicks off this year to 2022; and

- To identify and map roles of women smallholder farmers in influencing the SADC RAP Investment and Implementation plan at regional and national levels.

The conference also enabled smallholder women farmers to increase their knowledge and confidence in regional and national agriculture policies emanating from the Malabo Goals and Commitments to be realized by 2025 by African countries.

3. Main issues, presentations and discussions: Challenges facing women smallholder farmers in Southern Africa and how to overcome them.

The session started with a panel discussion of women smallholder farmers. The session was moderated by Mrs Beatrice Makwenda from the National Smallholder Farmers Organisation in Malawi – NASFAM. Present in the panel were farmer women from Swaziland (Mrs Ncamisile



Sukati), Lesotho (Mrs Magumede Masna), RSA (Mrs Julie Makofane), Zambia (Mrs Mary Sakala), Malawi (Mrs Maggie Phiri), and Zimbabwe (Mrs Elizabeth Mpofu).

3.1 Main challenges presented were:

- a. Cultural practices and legal frameworks that lead to women losing land through discriminatory inheritance laws and local leaders parceling out land to foreign companies in Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland and RSA as well as in other SADC countries;
- b. Marginalization of women in decision making structures and policy making processes at national and regional levels including at household level though they play a major role in household food sovereignty, security and nutrition, including at national and regional levels as highlighted in the play by Zimbabwean women SSFs;
- c. Limited capacities of women SSFs including youths to influence national and regional policy makers;
- d. Limited access to low cost rural financing for agricultural activities targeting women SSFs due to lack of collateral security;
- e. Promotion of hybrids and GMOs that are expensive to buy and store at the expense of indigenous seeds that are cheaper and easier to store and are also resilient and can adapt to harsh climatic conditions;
- f. Lack of access to technology in agricultural activities making it difficult for women farmers to acquire current information on agricultural issues; and
- g. Lack of government support on inputs, extension services, and infrastructural development.

Women farmers from Zimbabwe presented their gender challenge in a role play with a key message of gender imbalances at household, national and even at regional levels and how women play an active role in agricultural activities while their male counterparts are only concerned in making decisions of spending the income for their benefits without any meaningful participation in the fields.



3.2 During plenary discussions, it was evident that the challenges provide opportunities. On the question: what should be done? Women famers proposed the followings:

Possible solution to Challenge # a. Engage local and national leaders including Ministries of Lands and Agriculture on gender equality in ownership and utilization of productive factors of production;

Possible solution to Challenge # b. Women SSFs proposed that there is need to pay greater attention and recognize the role of women in decision-making; support women empowerment initiatives; and promote gender mainstreaming and equality in the region. Women should also be empowered to meaningfully participate and influence policy making in the implementation of the Malabo Declaration, CAADP processes and the SADC RAIP so that such policies can promote women issues in the entire agricultural value chains;

Possible solution to Challenge # c. ESAFF and other CSOs to continue seeking ways of amplifying women SSFs' voices in the policy making processes especially by engaging the SADC FANR in the SADC RAIP. There is also need for capacitating other women SSFs with skills to engage in decision-making at national and regional levels ensuring full engagement with their focal points;

Possible solution to Challenge# d. Women SSFs agreed to do away with the dependency syndrome of by forming cooperatives and clubs. The SADC RAP advised that there would be a deliberate attempt to ensure that the SADC RAIP and the Agricultural Development Fund support women issues and ensure that the SADC RAP IP should be financing women SSFs through its Cluster Development Measure;

Possible solution to Challenge # e. Promotion of agro-ecology and preservation of indigenous seeds including allowing SSFs to sell and exchange these seeds including promoting exchange visits to Agro ecology schools for farmer to farmer learning experiences on agro-ecology. There is need also to venture into value addition by SSFs;

Possible solution to Challenge # f. Promotion of low cost rural technology centres targeting women to boost agricultural productivity; and

Possible solution to Challenge # g. Engage local, national and regional governments to make it a deliberate effort to support women SSFs in agricultural activities especially in the rural areas.

After the deliberations it was noted that women small holder farmers face the same challenges across countries and regions and these include, marginalization in agricultural policy making, lack of access to agricultural financing because they do not have collateral security, disappearance at higher rate of local seeds and poor rural infrastructural and energy sources development. It was also noted that women and youth have challenges to access, own and utilize agriculture land due to customary laws, norms and culture.

4. SADC FANR Presentation by Mr. Martin Muchero (SADC RAP Coordinator)



Mr. Martin Muchero made three presentations focusing on the SADC RAP and its Investment Plans: Opportunities for SSFs. The main focus was on how women SSFs can leverage the opportunities arising from the cordial relationship that has existed between ESAFF and the SADC FANR Directorate since 2013.

4.1 In presentation one, *Opportunities for SSFs in the SADC RAP IP*

He said that the four focus areas or specific objectives of the SADC RAP, which are in line with the CAADP principles are:

- Production, productivity (all commodities including livestock, forestry, fisheries and wildlife);
- Markets and Trade;
- Finances and Agricultural investments and promotion of private sector investments; and
- Cross cutting issues (climate change- vulnerability and resilience, women and youths as well as other marginalized groups).

The RAP provides a clear pathway to linking up with the CAADP principles at regional level and the RAIP is the one that focuses at sectorial investments in each focus area for a specified shorter period of time. The RAIP provides for a prioritised list of programmes, projects and activities to be implemented during a five-year period starting with the 2017 – 2022 period. These activities draw from the four specific objectives of the RAP as described above. In addition, a fifth programme has been introduced into the RAIP (2017 – 2022), the Improved Food and Nutrition Security in the region. This is a sub-set of the fourth specific objective of the RAP.

To accelerate implementation of the RAIP, SADC is developing and will establish the SADC Agricultural Development Fund (ADF) that will co-finance the activities in the following areas:

- Value chains support and development;
- Markets and trade;
- Agricultural infrastructure development;
- Agricultural information management;
- Environment and natural resources management;
- Food and nutrition security; and
- Governance and institutional development.

The ADF will promote agricultural development by providing incentives and investments in agriculture to leverage more funding from both the public and private sectors into agriculture.

4.1.1 Reaction from the participants:

Participants had the following comments:

- ESAFF and other farmer organisations should continue working within the SADC RAP Working Group and there is need for a more elaborative work in each member country;
- Need for institutional and organizational support to farmer organisations to ensure that the policies are sustainable and implementation monitored;
- Need for SSFs to be at the fore front in advancing their issues;
- Need to translate documents into vernacular language so that everyone understands the processes;
- Need for more platforms of engagement;
- To conduct sensitization meetings with other SSFs;
- To engage the SADC RAP focal points at national and regional level;
- Create linkages with other like-minded farmer organizations in the SADC RAP IP and Malabo Processes; and
- Create a platform for women to benefit from the SADC Regional Agricultural Development Fund (ADF).

4.2 In presentation 2 on *The SADC Agricultural Development Fund*, Mr. Muchero highlighted the following:

- SADC Agricultural Development Fund is a financing mechanism intended to provide co-financial support for the implementation of the national agricultural investment plans within the framework the RAP and RAIP;
- The ADF will be a Special Facility under the SADC Regional Development Fund (RDF) in accordance with Article 8 of the Agreement on the Operationalization of the SADC Regional Development Fund;
- The RDF will be supported by SADC Member States through the purchase of shares. At the August 2016 Council meeting of Heads of State and Government, seven countries signed the Agreement to Operationalise the SADC Regional Development Fund (RDF);
- To support the implementation of the ADF, SADC is currently developing ADF Operational Guidelines which will be discussed with stakeholders towards its finalisation. These operational guidelines will state **who** benefits from the ADF, **how** beneficiaries will access the ADF and **what** will the ADF pay for and under what terms and conditions. The ADF Operational Guidelines will also define the management, controls and systems to be put in place at both the regional and at Member States levels to facilitate the implementation of the ADF;
- Beneficiaries of the ADF will include SADC Member States, SADC Subsidiarity Organizations, and regional organizations dealing with programmes and projects in the agricultural sector in the SADC Region; and
- The finalisation of the ADF Guidelines and other instruments for its establishment will require extensive consultative processes at both the regional and national levels. The participation and input from SSFs including the umbrella groups such as ESFF is expected to assist shape the ADF.

4.1.2 Contributions from the participants:

Participants had the following comments and questions:

- There is need for SSFs to form clusters to benefit from the ADF;
- How will the fund be channelled and how will women SSFs benefit in the RAIP and ADF processes?
- It is not possible to incentivize large institutions to support SSFs because this concept has not been fully implemented in the region except in certain areas of DRC and RSA whereby SSFs have been engaged in contract farming but contract farming has been blamed for marginalization of the farmers in profit sharing?
- There is need to build the capacities of SSFs to engage and understand the processes; and
- There is need for more elaborative work in each country to ensure that more SSFs can participate.

4.2 In presentation 3, Mr. Muchero focused on *The ADF Implementation Processes and Involvement of Institutions and Stakeholders.*

He advised that:

- Each Member State will be required to develop a Programme for Funding (PFF). So will each regional institution or organisation such as ESAFF intending to secure financial support from the ADF. The PFF should comprise projects and activities across the agricultural value chains and covering both the public sector and private sector specific activities for funding. The PFF is therefore an amalgamation of programmes and activities to be carried out in a country in line with the national agricultural investment plan but directly benefiting individual projects, beneficiaries and farmers;
- The ADF is expected to co-finance upto 50% of the cost of a programme or project undertaken at the national level or undertaken by regional institutions involved in implementing the RAIP. It is expected that this ADF co-funding will be matched by co-funding from governments (up to 30%) and private sector beneficiaries (up to 20%). These limits have not yet been fixed and are subject to the consultative processes to be undertaken towards finalisation of the ADF and its structures.
- Some of the products that the ADF will finance include the development of specific lending guarantee products, insurance guarantee products and such which will work as collateral for farmers as they seek funding from commercial lending banks;
- The ADF will also support, among many other indented activities, the clustering of farmers into business models, the promotion of agro-dealerships, the promotion of outgrowing schemes etc; and
- The ADF will promote the provision of timely agricultural information including supporting the generation, dissemination and transfer of technologies in the agricultural value chains.

4.2.1 Reaction from the participants:

Participants raised the following issues and questions following the above presentation:

- There is need to ensure clarity on how women SSFs would access the ADF incentives;
- There is need to clarify how institutions would support SSFs thus the need for SSFs to participate since the process has not yet been finalized;
- How can private agro-dealers advance issues pertaining to SSFs?
- How can the current poor financial support due to lack of collateral security be eased so farmers can more readily access affordable financing?
- there is poor market information amongst SSFs, a major challenge. How can this addressed?
- How is value addition promoted for the benefit of SSFs

5 What should be done, Take home assignments

Generally the conference agreed on ensuring strengthened capacities of women SSFs to engage in national and regional agriculture and gender policy making processes. SSFs also agreed to take the issues to their own countries' respectively and engage the SADC RAP and CAADP focal points including Ministries of Agriculture as well as local leaders. Specifically countries agreed to pursue the followings:



i. **Lesotho:** 1) Collaborating with other like-minded organizations to gather support on the implementation of the processes and 2) Set up dialogue sessions or meetings with MPs, Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Agriculture and with the

SADC RAP focal points

ii. **Swaziland:** 1) Mobilization, sensitization and sharing of information with other SSFs on the ground and 2) Engage

focal persons in the Ministry of Agriculture especially the Director and the Permanent Secretary on the SADC RAIP.

- iii. **South Africa:** 1) Set up a meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture to find out when the signing of the SADC Regional Development Fund (RDF) would happen and 2) To meet DTI focal persons, the Africa Desk and the CAADP focal persons on the impending implementation of the RAIP.
- iv. **Malawi:** 1) Feedback and sensitization meetings on the SADC RAIP with other SSFs and 2) Set up dialogue sessions or meetings with MPs, Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Agriculture and with the SADC RAP focal points on the implementation of the RAIP.
- v. **Zambia:** 1) Engage focal persons in the Ministry of Agriculture and 2) Mobilization, sensitization and sharing of information on the SADC RAIP with other SSFs on the ground.
- vi. **Zimbabwe:** 1) Feedback and sensitization meetings on the SADC RAIP with other SSFs and to translate the documents into vernacular language and 2) Set up dialogue

sessions or meetings with the SADC RAP focal points on the impending implementation of the RAIP.

- vii. **Other Eastern Africa countries:** “Tanzania”, Kenya and Uganda agreed also to take what they had learnt to the EAC especially on engaging the Ministries of Agriculture, CAADP and EAC focal persons as well as on mobilization, sensitization and sharing of information with other SSFs on the ground.

6 Conclusion

As a conclusion SSFs were urged to continue to be united and to fight for the same cause adding that there is need to take up these issues to other farmers on the ground and take the actions to be put into practice. The SSFs agreed to meet the Ministries of Agriculture and CAADP as well as SADC RAP focal points to ensure that the RAIP and ADF would be taken to all stakeholders in the agricultural sector in their respective countries.

The importance of the Women’s Conference was highlighted and it was noted that its impact in the region has strengthened women small holder farmers’ confidence in working and engaging policy makers in advancing their issues especially the SADC, SADC focal points and CAADP focal points at regional and national levels. This demonstrates that agriculture policies are no longer business as usual as women farmers have their voices in policy processes, plans and budgets.

This conference also enabled women small holder farmers to understand the processes of benefiting from the SADC RAIP and the SADC ADF. The farmers agreed to have feedback meetings to sensitize other SSFs on the processes in their own countries.

The SSFs expressed their gratitude to the SADC FANR Directorate and the SADC RAP Coordinator for continuing to work with ESAFF and SSFs in the region. The ESAFF leadership was also appreciated for its visionary leadership style and the regional support for its continued support to country members.

7. Way forward

Women farmers agreed to pursue the following as a way forward:

- Call for SADC member States who have not signed the SADC Regional Development Funds to do so;
- Continue participation in the SADC RAIP implementation processes at national and regional levels;
- Create linkages with other like-minded farmer organizations in the SADC RAIP and Malabo processes;
- Create a platform for women to benefit from the SADC Agricultural Development Fund (ADF);

- Reinforce the collaboration with the SADC FANR Directorate to continue working with ESAFF and other farmer organisations and ESAFF to participate in RAP regional working group meetings;
- Create platforms for participation of youths in agricultural activities;
- Create platforms for the participation of farmers in value additions;
- Create an enabling environment for low cost rural financing for small holder agriculture;
- Ensure that agricultural information reaches out to small holder farmers especially issues to do with climate change, infrastructure, markets, information and natural resources governance; and
- Enhance working relationship with the Southern Africa Trust (SAT)