

Appendix 12. Regional Policy Dialogue, March 26-27— Recommendations

Achieving long-term food security in the region requires an evaluation of policy interventions and mechanisms for their effectiveness, and a sharing of that information with policymakers on a regular basis to change policies and programs on a constant basis.

The promotion of agriculture production in the smallholder sector will require increased investment for developing irrigation systems that are sustainable and that effectively manage water resources. Improving access to credit for agriculture, particularly for women farmers, is important. The promotion of crop diversification towards high value and drought tolerant crops is important for reducing the dependency of the smallholder sector on cereal crops. Increasing the availability of inputs, particularly fertilizers and high yielding varieties of seeds, by reducing the marketing costs and improving private sector participation in input markets are important for increasing smallholder productivity.

To increase agriculture production, investment in agricultural research is fundamental. Such investment can be organized through a regional/integrated approach to agricultural research. This requires a review of past experiences in terms of organizing regional research programs, collaboration between SADC, NARS, and IARCS to identify the priorities for agricultural research, and capacity development for agricultural and modern biotechnology research. Capacity building is also necessary for developing biosafety research systems that will facilitate technology transfer. Also needed is a regional strategy for biotechnology that revitalizes the existing technologies and selects and borrows technologies from developed countries.

Improving food security information systems such as the early warning systems, market information systems, and providing institutional support for translating information generated by these systems into policies and programs is essential. Such information system will help in the provision of information, the planning and organization of food related interventions, and the prevention of future food crises.

The use of market and trade to solve food security problems should be given the highest importance. This requires organizing the smallholder sector into producer associations,

developing and harmonizing trade protocol, removing non-price trade barriers, reducing transaction costs by improving market infrastructure, and increasing private sector participation by providing training for development of agribusinesses.

In reducing and then gradually eliminating the role of food grain parastatals in food markets, private sector activity will improve locally, regionally, and internationally. Decoupling food security and the existence of parastatals is an urgent need for the region. Encouraging regional commodity exchange and regional trading activities in the food sector will reduce the role of parastatal organizations, which are inefficient and ineffective in achieving food security.

Investing for the improvement of the production base, such as infrastructure, particularly roads, for agriculture development, marketing institutions, and human resources that enable better participation of the smallholder sector in the agricultural economy is important. In doing so, the role of private and public sector participation is important.

The elimination of intraregional tariffs which frequently occur during the time of food crises should be immediately implemented. Countries should focus on food self-reliance strategies rather than on food self-sufficiency strategies.

There is a need for a regional policy for establishing laws and regulations for the general acceptance of modern technologies, such as biotechnology, based on a scientific approval process and a scaling up and out from existing technologies in the region.

In achieving long-term food security there is a need for improving good governance in the region by implementing a zero-tolerance policy for corruption and by strengthening local and community civic organizations to effectively participate in the governance process.

The political commitment of Southern Africa's leaders for regional integration of trade and development strategies by implementing the agreed upon protocols, and developing a commercial code of conduct for SADC trade protocol would be beneficial for achieving long-term food security. To address the food security problems of the region there is a need for developing a regional vision and a strategy process that can be used for monitoring and measuring performance. Conducting additional research for identifying food security policies and programs and sharing the knowledge with policymakers on a routine basis through the system of SADC is essential.