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CREATING A CONDUSIVE POLICY ENVIRONMENT FOR A FOOD SECURE SADC Johannesburg Policy Dialogue Engages with SADC Realities on Food Security

Preamble

The severe humanitarian crisis here demands truth and honesty from all those embroiled in the causes and consequences for our SADC community of 260 million people in the region. The triple threats of poverty, HIV & AIDS and Food Insecurity challenge governments, donors and non-public humanitarian and development agencies to respond adequately to avert prevailing hunger, disease and death across the SADC region.

Our collective efforts in agricultural and rural development have fallen short of the response and community needs, notwithstanding the effects of the droughts that frequently affect agricultural products in the region. At the heart of those failures, is our continual inability to implement appropriate policies, enable functional institutions and marshal resources in ways that optimize services, nutrition, and care for vulnerable communities.

Regional institutes and national governments are urged to take greater responsibilities for enhancing food security in SADC through the provision of a conducive policy environment. Donors, relief and development agencies have also to engage with the limitations of their often well intentioned efforts to avert hunger.

This week, a widely representative group of over 100 regional African professionals and their development partners deliberated on the key issues, challenges and responses needed to overcome food insecurity and community vulnerability across the SADC region. Their conclusions reflect a refreshing candour on the causes of the chronic problems, the understanding needed to formulate appropriate policy responses and the actions needed to achieve sustainable impacts in institutional efforts to strengthen resilience and increase food production among rural communities of smallholder farmers in the SADC region.

The Johannesburg 2005 Regional Multi-Stakeholder Public Policy Dialogue organized by FANRPAN, from 4-7 October 2005, on the theme of "Creating a Conducive Policy Environment for a Food Secure SADC" resolved to:

Markets and Trade

- Take initiatives to facilitate more open and readily transactable trade and market development for food products and inputs in the region.
- Strengthen knowledge management on regional trade, marketing and institutional development.
- Continue to provide evidence based information on the pros and cons of GMOs in an effort to promote harmonization of biotechnology and biosafety policies
- Facilitate stakeholder dialogue at national level to facilitate formulation of policies for contract farming.

Impact of HIV and AIDS on Household Agriculture and Food Security

- Use the current FANRPAN coordinated studies as a bench mark for a regional longitudinal study on the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security.
- Develop a household vulnerability index (HVI) as a tool for quantifying the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security as a basis for effective targeting of interventions for different levels of household vulnerability.
- Advocate for increased government involvement in the design of new and innovative HIV and AIDS related agricultural programmes and interventions.

Institutional Capacity

- Strengthen agricultural policy analysis and advocacy at regional and national levels.
- Lead initiatives and programmes to develop and empower farming organizations across the region.
- Develop and strengthen a platform for policy engagements with policy makers, analysts and private sector at national and regional levels.

The implementation of these resolutions demand that FANRPAN capacity be strengthened in terms of competency, capability and capacity.