

Need for a new generation of cooperative businesses?

Cooperatives featured prominently during the World Farmers' Organisation Congress which was recently held in Helsinki, Finland. Cooperatives were one of the parallel sessions, and a whole day was devoted to discussions on cooperatives.

The subject was tackled from different angles, involving co-operators, advisors, researchers, professors - you name it. Topics covered included the soft aspects (e.g. loyalty, commitment; trust, dedication), competencies in general, and those related to dealing with internal challenges and external threats, the increasing heterogeneity of membership, the roles of managers vis-à-vis those of the leaders (the Board), and how to deal with traceability in the context of a cooperative arrangement.

The debates and discussions on the subject clearly questioned the extent to which the classical or traditional cooperative model was still relevant in the face of the dynamic modern day economic, social, technological and other realities, including the aspirations of the new generation of farmers. Cooperative businesses are



traditionally very close to their members; and are driven by cooperative social responsibility first.

The stark reality is that, like any other business, cooperative formations need to adapt and change, otherwise they will perish! Among others, they will need to innovate, embrace ICTs, know where their strengths lie, and

to effectively deal with the need to care more about consumers without forgetting their members - if you listen to the market, the farmer leaves, and if you listen to the farmer, the business is compromised! A new generation of cooperatives must follow the times and respond promptly to changes in the environment.



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CEO's Letter



By Ishmael Sunga

In this issue, we have included two pieces on cooperative businesses (not just cooperatives). It seems the topic is getting more prominent in agricultural development discourses. I have long observed that whilst the philosophical underpinnings of cooperatives appear to be universal, the practice is often markedly differentiated. For instance, the way cooperative businesses operate, at least in western Europe and

north America, differs from how it tends to be done in this part of the world. Cooperative businesses have largely been successful in the developed world than in this part of the world.

One of the key reasons for this difference, if you ask me, has been to do with the extent of involvement of the co-operators in the day to day management of the business. In other words, respect for professionalism, or lack of it, in running the cooperative as a business. Aside from this, it seems cooperatives all over the world are not immune from the fundamental changes in global food fibre and fuel systems, some of which are disruptive and appear to question the very core and essence of the existence of cooperatives. The underlying message is that adapt or you will perish! Which points to the need for a new generation of cooperatives!

Helsinki, Finland, was the place, and the World Farmers' Organisations' (WFO) Annual Congress was the occasion. Our very own Dr. Theo de Jager was elected President of the WFO, whilst our very own again Mr.

Alfred Kapichira Banda was elected to its Board.

Although the two SACAU Board members were not elected on a SACAU ticket, as the WFO does not have provision for the affiliation of regional farmers' organisations, congratulations are well in order for southern Africa continues to deliver at the world stage. Please join us in wishing Theo and Alfred success during their tenure.

Finally, we welcomed Dr Majola Mabuza to the Secretariat whilst at the same time we said goodbye to Ms Dorita Swart. Majola, a Swazi national, joins us from the University of the North-West in South Africa. He, apart from academia and research, has experience in the public sector. Dorita's departure became a sad reality when her tour of duty with SACAU eventually came to an end this month.

The Secretariat gave her a good send off, including a braai and presents. We once again thank her for the enormous contribution to the organisation, and wish her the very best in her future endeavours.

The Spanish experience of farmers' cooperatives

Cooperatives, if well-run are an important vehicle to provide meaningful and critical services to farmers. During a recent visit to Spain, SACAU visited three cooperatives in the Island of Majorca. Two of these were primary cooperatives that provide services directly to farmers, and the third was a secondary cooperative involved in the processing and marketing of almonds. In all instances, the value that the cooperatives offer to members was clear.

One of the two primary cooperatives alluded to the importance of cooperatives in the vibrancy of their community. This particular

cooperative, which processes olives and citrus, shared that it lost members a few years ago but stated that they are now re-joining after realising/recognising the value of belonging to such a structure. A notable observation in this cooperative was the degree of professionalism that goes towards its operations and management, and innovation to their products and services. Working with the local university, they are conducting studies to determine and confirm unique features of their citrus which they can use to differentiate the produce from the rest for marketing purposes amongst other issues. They also run a tourist information centre

which facilitates tours of farms in the area and offers cooking lessons using local produce.

The second primary cooperative, whose annual turnover is Euro 2m does not pay dividends to members. Instead, the funds go into an internal fund to finance investments of the cooperative. However, their members get discounts on their purchases in the cooperative store and fuel station which are then paid out at the end of the year.

From this, it is obvious that to be relevant, cooperatives need to constantly look for opportunities to innovate and cultivate their ability to turn challenges into opportunities.

SACAU Members and We Effect partners sharpen their skills in "policy influencing"

Eighteen (18) officials from SACAU member organisations and We Effect partners were trained on how to effectively influence agricultural policies in their respective countries from 20th to 23rd June 2017. The 4-day training took place in Pretoria, South Africa and focused on practical aspects of designing and executing effective advocacy plans. Ten (10) basic steps for effective advocacy and how one could become a good lobbyist were the backbone of the discussion.

"Policy change is driven by specific individuals in an organisation, and as such, effective influencing should aim at persuading such individuals in the organisation for change. These are the people that could drive the desired change", said the trainer Mr Antoon Blokland. People tend to be conservative and they don't change easily. The starting point is to understand values and interests of the change agents and ensure that your propositions do not compromise these values. Stepping into the shoes of the powerful is the way to know their values and interests. He emphasised this as the main task of a lobbyist.

A clear message was that



influencing policy is a long-term process and that a good lobbyist will always aim at having a plan that will address issues bit by bit. Sometimes there is a need for a three to five-year plan with specific milestones along the period. In addition, Mr. Blokland stated that issue-driven influencing is more effective and efficient than organisational-based influence that deploys a one size fits all approach.

Trainees were informed that change agents differ per issue, thus issue-driven strategies take these

differences into account. Thus, influencing should be tailor-made to the context of the issue and the capacities of the organisation.

Participants then applied the theory to address real policy bottlenecks from their respective countries and came up with plans for advocacy on these issues.

The general feedback was positive, and one participant pointed out that "this training has given insights and strengthened my skills to be structured and pro-active policy influencer."

NNFU called to show leadership in the transformation of non-title deed agriculture for wealth creation

Members of the Namibian National Farmers' Union (NNFU) met on 9th of May 2017 to discuss transformation of the non-title deed agriculture (communal farming) in the country. The meeting was held in the district of Opuwo on the eve of NNFU's Annual Congress. The meeting was graced by the Head of the European Union (EU) Delegation in Namibia and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Development who signed a Euro 20 million cheque for the transformation of agriculture in

the northern region of the country. The funding is primarily aimed at transforming the subsistence farming into profitable agriculture by providing farmers with adequate technical and financial support.

The meeting was attended by representatives of farmers from all 9 regions as well as other stakeholders including the Namibian Agronomic Board; Agribusiness Development; Communal Land Development Project representatives; Agro Marketing and Trade Agency; Ministry

of Land Reform; Agricultural Bank of Namibia and Meat Cooperation of Namibia. SACAU was represented by its Capacity Development Advisor, Mr Benito Eliasi, who made a key note address on the "Transformation of the non-title deed agriculture to create wealth and prosperity." Mr Eliasi called on NNFU to ensure that the sector is responding to the current needs and aspirations of government, consumers and stakeholders and most importantly the farmers who are always on the receiving end.

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NNFU called to show leadership

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In his remarks, the Minister advised communal farmers (non-title deed farmers) in the Northern parts of Namibia to be vigilant in the implementation of the Euro 20 million project. He advised NNFU to ensure that farmers are fully involved and dedicated to the principles of the project. He also highlighted the importance of farmers understanding the agreements in the project. The Minister also called on NNFU to assist farmers to understand various government policies and programs. "Farmers should give practical, tangible and visible meaning of the clear policy intentions and policy expectations of the Government of Namibia as articulated in the government policy documents such as Vision 2030; NDPS, Harambe Prosperity Plan and the 2015 Agricultural Policy," he said.

The Head of the EU Delegation emphasised the importance of farmers getting organised and reiterated that the role of the EU is to ensure that the gap between the rich and the poor is bridged, hence the importance of their intervention. She indicated that the responsibility is in the hands of the government and farmers in the country to ensure that the program benefits most people who are poverty stricken in the country. The most important aspect the EU would want to address in the program is marketing of livestock and livestock products in the country and investments in abattoirs in the northern regions of the country, said the head of delegation.

The President of NNFU, Mr Tobias Emvula, appreciated the contributions of all stakeholders and deemed the meeting successful. He pledged the commitment of NNFU to ensure that the resources are well utilised. He also stated that the NNFU stands to benefit and it is incumbent upon NNFU to ensure that they have structures in place for them to respond to the requirements and anticipated results of the project.

SNAU concludes its 2017 Annual Policy Conference and AGM



Delegates at SNAU's annual conference

The Swaziland National Agricultural Union (SNAU) held its Annual Policy Conference and AGM from the 12th to 15th of June 2017 at the Cooperative College of Swaziland, Ezulwini. The theme of the conference was "Opportunities to Improve Climate Change Resilience and Increase Food and Nutrition Security."

The conference was preceded by a one-day training on modern biotechnologies and related policy gaps which was attended by 49 leaders of member farmer organisations of SNAU. Its purpose was to increase knowledge of farmers on modern biotechnologies, their advantages and disadvantages, and further expose them to related policy gaps which affect the growth and development of the sector. As part of the training, delegates visited BT cotton demonstration plots and horticulture and grain storage at Malkerns Research Station.

The annual policy conference brought together 84 delegates from different stakeholders including farmers, policy makers, academia, media, public sector, and private sector. Amongst the delegates were the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture Mr Bongani Masuku who officially opened the conference, and the Minister of Agriculture Mr Moses Vilakati who graced the event on the second

day. In his address, the Minister applauded the union for being consistent in organising annual policy conferences and bringing together all the relevant stakeholders to deliberate on topical matters that require collective approaches in order to improve the performance of the agricultural sector. "The Ministry is aware of the capacity challenges that make it difficult for the union to achieve its objectives, and the Ministry pledges its commitment to support SNAU in addressing these challenges," said Mr. Vilakati.

The conference deliberated on various topics including Conservation Agriculture (CA) and Climate Smart Agriculture (SCA); the role of ICT in climate change; modern biotechnology – focus on GMOs; water harvesting and irrigation development, and sustainable agricultural value chains in the face of climate change. The conference concluded with a presentation and validation of a study report that assessed and analysed the role played by regulatory bodies in the development of the sector, with a particular interest to the development of farmers' enterprises.

The event ended with the AGM where three board members stepped down to effect the start of a staggering process to ensure continuity in the board following adoption of a new constitution.

Meet Ruramiso Mashumba, SACAU's Young Agripreneur Ambassador



Ruramiso Mashumba in one of her maize fields.

Ruramiso Mashumba is a young female farmer from Marondera, Zimbabwe. She started farming in 2012 on a farm she inherited from her parents. At the time, the farm was just a bush with no equipment and the necessary infrastructure. In 2013, she started growing snap peas for export to the European Union and Africa. She has since expanded her operations and now grows a variety of horticulture crops, indigenous organic grains that she mills into flour under the brand Mnandi organic and traditional, brown rice as well as commercial maize. Ruramiso is also involved in forestry – in 2014, she partnered with Sustainable Afforestation Association, a Zimbabwean-based organisation, and planted 100ha of gum trees. She is also venturing into seed production after securing a contract with a renowned company to grow 30ha seed maize and 20ha seed millet.

Her interest in farming started while she was working in the United Kingdom for one of the leading agricultural equipment companies. It was there that she realised the potential of equipment and technology

in transforming agriculture. This led her to commit to change the image of agriculture, and she embarked on farming upon her return to Zimbabwe. Ruramiso has never looked back since she started farming and is continuously looking for ways to improve and grow her farming business. The many opportunities that she knows exist in agriculture keep her interested in remaining a farmer.

Ruramiso holds a BA Degree in Agriculture Business Management from the University of West England (UWE). She is the National Chairperson of The Zimbabwe Farmers Union Young Farmers' Club to which she was elected in 2014. Ruramiso also founded Mnandi Africa, an organisation that helps rural woman to combat poverty and malnutrition by empowering and equipping them with skills and knowledge in agriculture, nutrition, markets and technology; assisting them to access affordable and effective agro technology through an input-sharing program; and collectively purchasing and selling goods and services. Mnandi's vision is to ultimately end hunger and

poverty.

Her work was noticed by AGCO and she was invited to attend their Africa Summit in Berlin in 2015. After sharing her story, she won an award for influence and leading woman toward mechanisation in Africa. In 2016, she was selected to participate in the Mandela Washington Fellowship, which is the flagship program of Barak Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative. Ruramiso was selected to be a panelist at the World Food Prize in Iowa and gave input on the importance of nutrition in Africa. She also became a member of the global farmer network and was nominated for The Zimbabwe Businesswoman award. She has also been featured in a number of publications, including The Zimbabwean Farmer magazine and also on the New Alliance for food and nutrition publication, which is endorsed by the African Union.

On attracting and keeping young people in farming, she believes that there should be efforts to brand agriculture as a success and showcase opportunities in the value chain.

SACAU joins global call in support of agriculture insurance



The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) is joining a global call to make agriculture insurance available as one of the tools to help farmers in general, and smallholders in particular, to adapt to the challenges of climate change.

"We understand how farmers across southern Africa have been affected by the challenges of climate change. Smallholder farmers are particularly hard hit by extreme climate events, such as drought and floods," said SACAU CEO Ishmael Sunga.

"Farmers need to constantly find ways to address these challenges. Targeted insurance supports climate adaptation by providing funds when farmers are hit by extreme climate events, and by allowing farmers to adopt innovations to exploit opportunities when they are available," Mr Sunga added.

SACAU is joining other agricultural and climate change organisations in calling for farmers to have access to insurance products tailored to their "context specific needs that reduce vulnerability, unlock opportunity, spur uptake of climate-smart technologies and practices, and build resilience to a variable and changing climate."

The Global Call to Action follows a meeting which was held in Bonn, Germany, in May this year where these organisations agreed that a collective effort to support farmers adapt to climate change is required.

The organisations noted that there are already successful examples to emulate in northern Kenya and Ethiopia.

Among the organisations involved in the call with SACAU are CGIAR's Research Programme on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), International Research Institute for Climate and Society, Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture and the Global Resilience Partnership.

These organisations have identified key challenges that need co-ordinated efforts in order to support farmers. Areas requiring these efforts include designing insurance solutions that equitably address farmers' context-specific needs and risks; increasing the availability of data to tailor insurance to the needs of farmers and the risks that are important to them; extending insurance across the full agricultural value chain, including non-farm actors; developing the capacity of

existing local distribution channels and potential aggregators; and, creating added value by integrating insurance with climate-smart technologies, credit, value chains and development strategies.

Other areas are ensuring an enabling regulatory environment and creating support for such public-private partnerships and strengthening the evidence base to justify and guide investment, to identify and address market failure.

The organisations have also highlighted that farmers' organisations need to foster two-way communication by promoting understanding of insurance and responsibility to manage risk to farmers, and in turn articulating farmers' needs to insurance providers, governments, and development partners; and, play a proactive role in facilitating data collection and the distribution of insurance (e.g. as aggregators as appropriate). The call to action identified specific intervention areas for the private sector, the international development and climate adaptation community and the agricultural research community.

The call to action is published on the CCAFS website and can be accessed here, <http://tinyurl.com/y82g3y7q>

Announcements HERE IS WHAT'S NEW AT SACAU:

- Ms Dorita Swart, Personal Assistant to Executive Director, resigned with effect from 15th June. SACAU wishes her the very best in her new endeavours!



- Dr Majola Mabuza, a Swazi national, joined SACAU on 01st June as Programme Officer: Policy. Majola holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics, and has worked in the public sector and academia. Prior to joining SACAU, he worked as a Senior Lecturer/Researcher in Agricultural Economics at the North-West University, Mafikeng campus. His major areas of research interest include institutional economics of farmers' organisations, food security, the economics of non-conventional agricultural enterprises, agricultural marketing, and value chain analysis. Majola's research outputs have been presented in regional and international conferences and published in peer-reviewed accredited journals. SACAU welcomes him to the team!



- Congratulations to Dr Theo de Jager who was recently elected President of the World Farmers Organisation!



- Finally, we wish to congratulate Dr Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, who was recently announced as the 2017 World Food Prize Laureate.

Accelerating Africa's Path to Prosperity: AGRF 2017

AFRICAN GREEN REVOLUTION FORUM



Growing Inclusive Economies and Jobs through Agriculture

September 4-8, 2017

Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

After Seizing the Moment at AGRF 2016 and securing political, policy, and financial commitments of more than US \$30 billion, African leaders must move decisively to harness this surge of support for agriculture and ensure it creates jobs and drives economic growth across the continent—particularly for 300 million young Africans coming into the job market over the next 15 years.

No region of the world has developed a diverse, modern economy without first establishing a successful agriculture sector. Producing food on small family farms has always been at the heart of the African experience. Now, we are embracing the agriculture of our future. Agriculture is beginning

to enrich Africa with a series of compelling economic opportunities on and off the farm that can be tapped across the continent to set us free—from high unemployment, poverty, and an over-reliance on oil and other commodities. The family farm can now be the source and hub for a new generation of young entrepreneurs delivering innovations across the food system, from field to table. African agriculture is open for business.

Whether you find your fortunes in rice, cassava, or sorghum in West Africa; date palms, olives or wheat in the North; cow peas, bananas or livestock in East Africa; or maize, sweet potatoes or ground nuts in Southern Africa, it's time for all of us—entrepreneurs, governments, donors, financiers and families—to put Africa on a proven path to prosperity. That requires coming

together at AGRF 2017 to create a new agenda for action, one that delivers on the promises secured in 2016 by pushing the boundaries of what's possible in the fields and markets of African agriculture.

Join continental and international African agricultural sector leaders – representatives of farming institution, farmers, agripreneurs, large food value chain actors, policy makers, development partners and financiers – to participate in this unique platform of platforms where participants are actively engaged in a good practice sharing, benchmarking, networking, technical and financial resource promoting forum that is becoming the one “must attend” conference on the African agriculture calendar.

SACAU is a knowledge partner of the AGRF and chairs the Youth in Agriculture Thematic Working Group (TWG).



Mission

To be the main voice of farmers on regional, continental and global matters, and to promote and ensure strong and effective farmers/producers' organisations in all countries in southern Africa.

Values

SACAU is founded on the following values and principles:
 Consultation • Transparency • Accountability • Honesty and integrity • Objectivity • Impartiality • Professionalism • Non-discriminatory • Independence • Subsidiarity and complementarity • Political neutrality

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Newsletter

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