

# SACAU News

SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONFEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL UNIONS



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## SACAU kickstarts the development of a new strategic plan



SACAU's current strategic framework, which is the third since the establishment of the Secretariat in 2003, is in its final year of implementation and due to expire in December 2018. To this end, the organisation has started the process of developing a new strategic plan which will cover 5 years starting from January 2019. As per tradition, the development of the new plan will involve consultations with members,

who are also responsible for its approval.

The development of the plan will be preceded by an independent strategic review which will look at the activities of the organisation and other developments over the last five years or so. Among others, the review is expected to discern key lessons, issues, challenges and strategic insights from the past five years and recommend strategic orientations for

the next strategic plan. The outcomes of the review, together with the knowledge, insights, experience and competencies the organisation has accumulated over the years, as well as relevant significant developments are expected to inform the new strategic direction of the organisation. Both members and external stakeholders will be consulted during this process.

# CEO's Letter



By Ishmael Sunga

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Annual Conference have come and gone by. Indeed, the year is moving very fast, and it is already mid-year. The build up to our very successful AGM and Conference, as well as the actual events themselves, was very hectic. We had wished that after this, the workload would ease thereafter, and our working lives would be less hectic, but this was not to be.

From an operational point of view, the month of June has not been uncharacteristic - it has been all hectic like the past few months. Apart from the day to day operations, we have been busying ourselves with project management matters, including monitoring, internal and external reporting, organising project meetings and carrying out representation

functions. In this respect some of the highlights were field project monitoring visits to Swaziland and Zimbabwe, organising a competency development assessment workshop for young agripreneurs and related consultations, and hosting a knowledge management meeting for a continental programme (SFOAP) of the five regional farmers' organisations under Pan African Farmers' Organisation (PAFO) which is funded by the European Commission and managed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

In strategic terms, three areas of work that were started in June are worth highlighting. The first is the beginning of two related activities, namely a strategic review of the work of the organisation over the past five years, and the development of the

organisation's strategic plan for the next 5 years. The former is assessing the performance of the organisation over the past 5 years, whilst the latter focuses on the future of the organisation for the next 5 years, in strategic terms.

The third area pertains to the assessment of current and future competencies of the young agripreneurs in relation to industry needs/requirements. This involved consultations with the young farmers and the selected agribusinesses. This is expected to feed into the process of developing a more appropriate competency development curriculum for the 21st Century farmer.

We shall be keeping you informed about progress on these, as well as on our various activities.

Enjoy the read!

## The 21st century farmer

The rapidly changing environment within which agriculture takes place, together with the associated complexity, calls for the development of a new generation of farmers. This crop of farmers

should have the necessary aptitude which is critical for the development of appropriate skills, competencies and capabilities. To advance this, SACAU has engaged Commerce Edge South Africa, specialists in

competency development, to design a learning pathway to "professional farmer" for young farmers in southern Africa.

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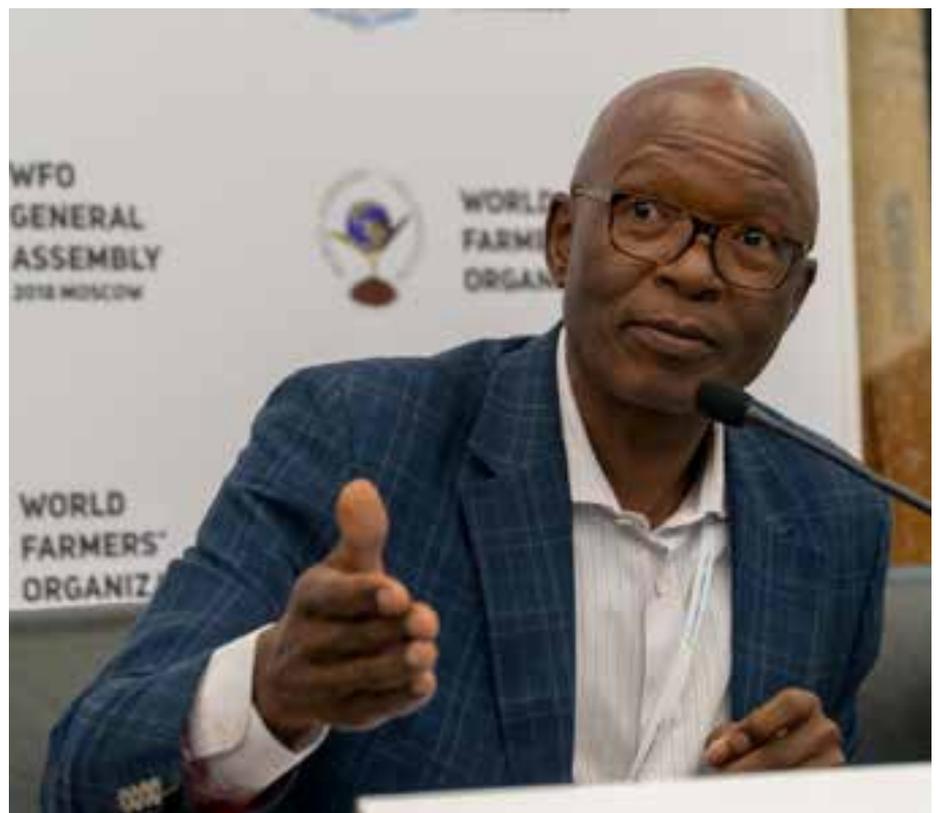
The design and delivery of the curriculum will be piloted with SACAU young agripreneurs' ambassadors. As part of the process, two consultation meetings were held with industry players in South Africa and young farmers from member organisations. These provided insights into current competency gaps and anticipated future competency needs which will inform the focus areas for the curriculum. This work also advances some of the outcomes of SACAU's 2017 annual conference whose theme was "Envisioning future farming skills".



Delegates at the young farmers' consultation meeting

# Using insurance schemes to improve services to members

There is need for farmers' organisations (FOs) to adopt a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of their members to enable them to design appropriate service offerings, and to take advantage of ICTs in the delivery of such offerings. This was the central message from the presentation made by the CEO of SACAU a high-level session on "Using the insurance schemes to harvest data" during the General Assembly (GA) of the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) which was held in Moscow, Russia from 28 to 31 May 2018. He observed that quite often some of the critical needs of smallholder farmers fell outside the agricultural sphere. He highlighted insurance as one such example, noting that funeral cover is one of the common needs of smallholder farmers for which they are prepared to pay. This provides an opportunity for FOs to aggregate demand for this product from its members and negotiate better terms and conditions with service providers. In addition, the provision of such a service to members can be bundled together with other services, related or otherwise, such as crop insurance, whether alerts and



Mr Ishmael Sunga at the WFO General Assembly

agronomic tips, all being provided through a digital platform. He concluded by highlighting that the use of digital platforms as service delivery mechanisms enable FOs to harvest data from

their members, which becomes a potential income stream thereby enhancing their financial sustainability.

# National farmers' organisations applaud SFOAP for investing in human capacities

There is growing evidence that investing in human resources for the young National Farmers' Organisations (NFOs) provides them with stability and credibility. The five NFOs (Agricultural Council of Tanzania (ACT), Coalition Paysanne de Madagascar (CPM), Lesotho National Farmers Union (LENAFU), Namibia National Farmers Union (NNFU) and Seychelles Farmers Association (SeyFA)) participating in the "Support to Farmers' Organisations in Africa Programme" (SFOAP) attested to this during a regional meeting that was discussing the impact of the programme in Pretoria, South Africa. Among others, the programme has supported secretariats of these NFOs to undertake their core functions as general interest FOs, and with staff and office running costs.

All NFOs reported that SFOAP, has contributed significantly to improved

democratisation of their organisations, good corporate governance and their functionality at the level of leadership and secretariat. As a result, this has raised the profiles of these NFOs and increased trust from many stakeholders, including development partners and their respective governments. This upstream impact has provided a fertile ground for effective policy advocacy and strong opportunities for resource mobilisation.

The NFOs have also noted improvements in their technical and financial management capacities, citing that they can now timely produce high quality reports and submit proposals to various development partners.

Participation of women in decision making processes is another area where notable progress has been made. For example, women who have been participating in the regional forums supported through SFOAP

are progressively being recognised and gaining confidence and taking up leadership positions in their organisations. The case in point is the current Vice Chairperson of SACAU Board, Mrs Doreen Hlatshwayo, who is also Vice Chairperson of Swaziland National Agricultural Union (SNAU), and the LENAUFU President, Mrs Mamolise Lawrence. Both have been active in the regional fora for the past four years. In total, there are about 26 women who are in leadership positions in their organisations, including the six NFOs that are participating in SFOAP. The participation of women was reported to have increased compared to the situation in 2015, when SFOAP was starting.

Lastly, it was reported that SACAU has provided an effective platform for knowledge management and cross-learning through various events organised.

# Increasing farmers' resilience to climate change

The management of climate-related risks continues to be high on the agenda of the issues that farmers are grappling with all over the world. This was highlighted during the General Assembly (GA) of the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) which was held in Moscow, Russia from 28 to 31 May 2018, at which SACAU was represented by the CEO. To underscore the importance of this issue, a large part of the GA was dedicated to the management of climate risk.

Several take-away lessons emerged during deliberations in several working group meetings, workshops and plenary discussions, and the following are worth highlighting: the starting point or foundation of addressing climate risk should be the application of good agricultural practices - do the basic

things first before introducing high tech and more complicated solutions; use of high tech seeds without good agricultural practices only adds to costs; farmers should not shoulder the risk alone, thus there is need for risk sharing along the entire value chain, and the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations in order to effectively address the matter.

It also emerged during the GA that increasing attention is being given to weather-based insurance as one of the tools for managing climate change. Similarly, it is noted that insurance alone is not enough- it needs to be accompanied by good agricultural practices. Other important points were the generally low penetration of crop insurance amongst farmers across the world; the need for farmers to consider

the opportunity cost of not insuring and, relatedly, the importance of viewing insurance as some form of investment rather than a cost; the need for a value-chain based approach to the financing of insurance; low levels of insurance literacy amongst the smallholder farmers in particular, as well as the use of insurance as a de-risking mechanism which can also crowd-in finance- insurance makes farmers more bankable and financing more feasible. Finally, everyone in the ecosystem tends to benefit if farmers are insured against climate change.

Finally, SACAU underscored the need to diversify risk across many geographic areas and regions, and commodities/value chains, as a way of addressing the generally high cost of living.

# Agricultural advisory services at a global scale

Is the global community serious about the SDGs? We would hope so, but do we comprehend the challenge ahead? In just over a decade—or to put it bluntly, in many cases only 11 growing seasons—we have to reach 500 million farmers, potentially expanding to 750 million by 2030. These farmers need advisories to help them adapt to climate variability,

improve their farming operations and enhance their livelihood. These could be climate-informed seasonal advisories; in-season advisories; information about new stress-tolerant seeds and practices, climate smart agricultural technologies and practices, and market prices; or early warnings on pests and diseases, etc. The same advisory system could be linked to

suppliers and buyers, and to credit and insurance.

But how to reach half a billion farmers? Development funds and national budgets are not going to do it, especially as we have seen a trend of rolling back extension to a point where there are many challenges. We suggest five key issues that need to be tackled:

## Private sector involvement.

We believe that the private sector will have to be an increasingly important player as a provider of agricultural advisories, with advisories being part and parcel of expanded farmer engagement in markets. This implies commercialised agriculture and much development of value chains.

## Market-oriented and demand-driven advisories.

For too long, extension services have been too top-down. How can advisories be better tailored to specific kinds of farmers and their natural and economic assets? Farmers need to receive the answers to the questions they have; ultimately one would want a Q&A system that works for a farm of less than one hectare. Agricultural extension advisories need to be market-oriented and demand-driven.

## Digitised information.

Reaching half a billion farmers in 10 years using old methods is impossible. In a decade each farmer needs to have access to a mobile phone. We envision a system where a farmer takes a photo of a problem crop, submits it to the Internet, and receives an

instant answer that is relevant to her farm, to the inputs that she can access, and to the market conditions. In a local language. We have to have this vision if we are going to reach half a billion farmers. And we are sure that through big data analytics and decision support algorithms this can be achieved.

## Data ownership.

We would need a lot of good quality data to have truly context-specific and demand-driven advisories. Data ownership issues may be challenging. Some great examples have emerged, and one promising example is the case of Danish farmers owning their own data while sharing their data with other farmers through jointly owned advisory companies. In Southern Africa, the regional farmers' organisation (SACAU) is helping its member organisations to register their farmers on a digital platform, getting them ready for tailored services.

## Bundling.

To reach scale, we need cost effectiveness. One route to this is bundling, where we reach scale across products to bring down the cost of each product. ECONET, for example, is experimenting with bundling advisories, agricultural insurance, burial insurance, farmer organisation membership and cell phone connectivity.

How do we move forward? For

us to have agricultural advisories on a global scale, perhaps the greatest limitation is the policy and institutional environment; and perhaps agricultural policy is less important than policies around connectivity and access to cell phones; creating an enabling environment for the private sector; massive renewable energy and road infrastructure development; and much more R&D on big data analytics and decision support algorithms.

If proper strategic frameworks and enabling environments are in place, there is an opportunity to transforming agricultural extension systems, thus making agriculture more productive and resilient. This can be achieved by moving away from an approach with centrally crafted, generic and blanket messaging—which often has limited impact—to a more inclusive, context-specific, market-oriented and demand-driven digital advisory involving public-private partnerships.

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# Farmers call for integration of climate smart agriculture in school curriculum

With climate change set to continue bringing major disruptions to various sectors, including agriculture, it is high time that the young generation is equipped with more knowledge on adaptation and mitigation measures from an early age. One option, which is linked to the conviction of 'knowledge being a principal motivator of behavioural change and practice', is the integration of climate change in the school curriculum, with considerable focus on imparting knowledge on adaptation and mitigation practices across different economic sectors. This is one contemporary recommendation that was made by members of the Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU) in one of the organisation's District Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) advocacy events held in June 2018.

Early exposure to concepts such as CSA can help improve the community's adaptability to climate change and reverse the latter's impact on poverty and food security. Evidence drawn from Asia where such initiatives have already been undertaken, suggests that such programmes have become an effective means for engaging the young generation as leaders, information providers, agents of change and advocates for a sustainable agricultural sector. Worth noting, however, is the fact that smart curriculum planning and design should be done in a manner that builds credibility and stakeholder buy-in.



SACAU attended the Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU) district meeting on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) which was held in June 2018



Members during the discussion at the Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU) district meeting on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) which was held in June 2018.

# Should digital agriculture be included in the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture?

In the context of climate change, the agricultural sector is confronted with a number of challenges. These relate to the expectation to produce more food to feed a growing world population while overcoming the negative impacts of climate change on the various types of agricultural enterprises. In addition, as a significant contributor to greenhouse gases, the sector is expected to reduce emissions to achieve the goal of limiting warming to 20C. Achieving these targets through conventional farming methods will be difficult as agriculture is no longer a 'simple' process of producing food and fibre consistent with the image of the industry's humble origins. Therefore, a transformation in the agricultural sector is imperative. But is transformation feasible without digital agriculture? This is one of the contemporary issues that were discussed in the side event hosted by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), in collaboration with the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) at the 48th session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) on the 30th of April 2018 in Bonn, Germany. The motivation of this subject was linked to the omission of digital agriculture as a key component in the current edition of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA). Climate change adaptation is knowledge intensive, necessitating the use of different types of technology innovations to make farming more precise, efficient and rewarding. Research evidence has shown that adaptation can be site specific, hence segmenting data



**Dr Majola Mabuza (first from the right) at the side event during SBSTA in April in Bonn, Germany**

and information according to specific geographical areas can increase the relevance and applicability of farming tips, for example, enabling producers to increase productivity through efficient use of inputs, including land. Efficient input use, particularly land, can help resolve the global challenge of deforestation, which is one of the major contributors of emissions. Therefore, data-driven farming practices create site-specific smartness that should inform long-term farm plans and provide farmers with tools to adapt and reduce the sector's carbon footprint. Despite the notion that digital or ICT-based interventions are not in sync with the dominant smallholder sub-sector in Sub-Saharan Africa, recent evidence has proven otherwise as small-scale farmers in the region benefit from various services (e.g. farming tips, weather-based index insurance, credit, funeral insurance cover, etc) that are offered through mobile phones.

The proliferation of digital agriculture also creates the right

incentive for the youth to participate in various levels of the agricultural value chain. With access to better education, increased connectivity, and an appetite for technology and ICT based information, the young generation is better positioned to take advantage of the vast opportunities that Africa's resources and global markets present. Engaging the youth in climate risk management activities, will help create an environmentally conscious generation with considerable power to transform society towards a low-carbon and climate resilient future. The youth will become a new generation of rural-based employers, hence contributing towards reducing climate-induced migration, which currently creates challenges of social cohesion and stability in host cities and/or countries within and beyond the continent.

# Statement by the farmers' constituency at the joint SBI/SBSTA closing plenary SB48

The farmers' constituency addressed delegates at the closing plenary of the joint Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The 48th session of these bodies convened from 30 April to 10 May in Bonn, Germany.

The constituency expressed gratitude for the hard work and the spirit in which the negotiations on the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture have been conducted.

Farmers welcomed the roadmap

which covers many important topics for them and the flexibility to revisit and include new topics as they emerge. "All issues are important – "farming is all about trying to balance and juggle very many things whilst battling with the weather and climate – but considerations about the farmers of the future, women farmers, farming communities and the value of traditional and indigenous knowledge, under the umbrella of food security are essential", the statement said. "We welcome your commitment to observer participation in this new phase of

work. We have much to share; stories and experiences of practical success and failure – because as farmers know, in real life, agriculture is far from an exact science – and of ambition and vision", it further stated.

The statement concluded with an offer of farmers' knowledge and expertise in the future work of these bodies.

## SNAU deliberates on the role of farmers' organisations in socio-economic development

At their 2018 annual policy conference, the Swaziland National Agricultural Union (SNAU) deliberated on the role of farmers' organisations (FOs) in socio-economic development. Farmers, private sector, public sector, academia and policy makers were among those in attendance. SACAU was also represented. The event provided a platform for participants to deliberate on different topics that relate to socio-economic development and the role of FOs.

The conference agreed that Farmer Based Organisations (FBOs) are indeed a useful tool to

improve small-scale farmers' socio-economic conditions. Findings of a study commissioned by SNAU indicate that farmers who belong to FBOs generally earn high incomes relative to their counterparts outside these structures, thus providing a strong case for belonging to FBOs. Age, education level, farm size and the number of years in farming were said to be some of the factors influencing farmers' participation in FBOs.

These findings, point to the need to sensitise farmers on the benefits of collective action. This, together with meaningful service provision

to farmers will increase the participation of farmers in FBOs.

At the conference, SNAU welcomed the move to improve the Farm Input Subsidy Program in which, together with other institutions, will be involved in its implementation where its role is to register farmers. SNAU is already registering farmers onto an electronic platform and has more than 20,000 farmers on this database. Thus, the work under the Subsidy Program will build on this initiative.

### 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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