Agriterra concludes SACAU’s organisation assessment in Malawi and Namibia

The Agriterra assessment mission team that comprised of Mr Niek Thijssen, Business Advisor, and M. Klaas Johan Osinga the Senior Policy Advisor for Dutch Farmers’ Organization (LTO) visited four SACAU members namely; Farmers’ Union of Malawi (FUM) and National Smallholder Farmers’ Association of Malawi (NASFAM) in Malawi and Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU) and Namibia National Farmers’ Union (NNFU) in Namibia. The team was accompanied by Mr Benito Eliasi of SACAU. The mission was part of the overall assessment of SACAU’s readiness to implement the Annual General Meeting (AGM) resolution of separating SACAU’s core functions of lobby and advocacy from its other functions such as development work. A similar exercise was recently conducted in Zimbabwe.

All four organisations visited were positive about the separation and identified a number of values their organisations will attain through the re-organised SACAU. However, it was clear that the four organisations had different demands and levels of expertise to supply towards the agric-agency. This mainly depended on the level of maturity and specialisation of the organisations. Consequently, the SACAU business plan for the agric-agency must accommodate those differences in order to make the agency work for all SACAU member organisations. There will also be a need for a communication strategy to ensure that members understand the principles of the agri-agency and that they are sufficiently informed of their roles in making the agency success.

The team also recommended that decision makers of SACAU members (Presidents, CEOs) should be regularly updated of the progress through special meetings and/or training dedicated to the operations of agri-agency. One of the important recommendations of the team is that the new agency must generate enough “traffic” to become a central hub for farmers organisations, their donors and other possible clients in southern Africa.

The assessment team from left to right Mr Klaas J Osinga, Mr Niek Thijssen, Mr Benito Eliasi and Mr Ventuadja Kazapuwa of NNFU.
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This requires stakeholder mapping, market research, lobby, communication & training and high quality of experts. In addition, the Agriterra model of agri-agency should only serve as an example and the SACAU agri-agency will not be an exact copy because the context is different. One of the CEOs that was contacted alluded to the fact that “the agri-agency must get off on an excellent start, SACAU cannot afford to “mess up” at the commencement of this noble task”. These sentiments were encored by the assessment team members who stated that the business plan must include elements about the quality of experts. In addition, the Agriterra model of research, lobby, communication & training and high quality of experts is scheduled for the first week of December, as well as an internal organisational self-assessment exercise for the Board and all secretariat staff.

The festive season is around the corner- we can’t wait for the holiday shutdown!
National Farmers’ Organisations Meet to Plan for 2017 Support to Farmers’ Organisations in Africa Program (SFOAP) activities

The significant role played by livestock farming in rural poverty reduction cannot be overemphasised, particularly the opportunity which exists for demand-led development interventions that have the potential to benefit the people whose livelihoods directly or indirectly depend on livestock globally, but more especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This opportunity, however, demands a sustained increase in healthy livestock production as an essential tool for poverty alleviation and enhancing food security in the region and more importantly, to enable livestock trade to take place. Furthermore, livestock value chain stakeholders need to be aware of the trends prevailing in the trade of livestock and livestock products to inform their decision making.

It is in this light that SACAU commissioned a discussion paper to enhance the Southern African Livestock Value Chain Forum’s (SALVCF) understanding of the state of livestock and livestock product trade through expanding on the numerous contentious issues characterising the livestock sector in the region. The findings were presented in a dissemination meeting from 2-3 November 2016 in Johannesburg.

The paper, titled “An Analysis of the Trade of Livestock and Livestock Products: Issues, Prospects and the Status of Trade-Related Livestock Infrastructure” shed light on the current trading environment on the African continent, covering members of the Tripartite free trade area (TFTA); consisting of three regional economic communities – the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA); the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Livestock trade accounts for only 1% of global trade within the COMESA-EAC-SADC region and the region is a net importer of livestock products with dairy and poultry products amongst the main imports. Intra-regional trade remains low and declining, currently estimated at 17% of total trade. Constraints to production and trade are prevalent at each stage of the value chain and these were identified in the paper, as they relate to the growing complexities facing producers, adding to these; the standardisation and food safety requirements make it increasingly difficult for poor livestock producers to participate in livestock markets.

The paper paid special attention to the state of trade-related livestock infrastructure which is necessary to enable cross-border regional and global trade.

Livestock stakeholders grill livestock issues in the region

In a fast-changing sector, many other factors limit smallholder participation including low market prices, inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, difficulties in accessing assets and a general lack of knowledge.

The paper paid special attention to the state of trade-related livestock infrastructure which is necessary to enable cross-border regional and global trade. The extent to which hard and soft infrastructure is impeding trade in the region and how improved infrastructure would support trade, relative to what the current situation is was examined.

Transport, for instance, poses one of the biggest challenges to accessing markets in Africa; with USD 172 billion lost in transport inefficiencies. These include inappropriate transport, limited access to remote areas due to poor road infrastructure and bridges, high toll fees, etc. Land-locked countries are particularly worse off, with transport costs representing on average 45% of the value of imports and 35% of exports.

The paper’s analysis on issues relating to the trade of livestock and livestock products along the value chain emphasised the importance of trade-related infrastructure, as an enabler for producers to access global value chains in the livestock sector and in so doing, gain an understanding of markets, their relationships, the participation of different actors, and consequently the competitiveness of smallholder farmers.

The meeting concluded that achieving competitiveness within each value chain will require a great deal of innovation, entrepreneurship and learning by actors throughout the value chain. Attention should be focused not just on increasing productivity and improving animal health services, but also on increasing advocacy efforts through improved farmers’ organisations, and building the capacity of local institutions to deal with the standards and regulations of regional and international markets.
Agriculture has potential to fight climate change

Farmers are already on the frontline of climate impacts which have caused floods, droughts and extreme weather conditions. SACAU joined its partners to discuss African agriculture at the COP22 meeting in Morocco.

The conference, which was held from 7th – 18th November 2016, looked at adaptation, mitigation, transparency, and technology transfer needed to combat the increasing levels of greenhouse gas emissions globally.

SACAU CEO, Mr Ishmael Sunga was one of several African speakers at a Side Event at COP 22 on 16th November 2016 which SACAU co-hosted with the Government of Zimbabwe.

The event focused on how east and southern Africa are equipping farmers to deal with the impacts of climate change. The purpose of this side event was to take stock of successful climate smart adaptation and mitigation practices by farmers and to also identify public policies and stakeholder actions that have successfully addressed constraints to adopting climate smart agriculture (CSA), for scaling up for large impact.

“Climate change poses a serious and long term threat, it should be viewed in the context of the transformation agenda,” said Mr Sunga. He further pointed out that the burden of climate change cannot be put on farmers only, and that the climate risk needs to be spread across the value chain. “We need to reward farmers’ actions in environmental management”, he added. The agricultural sector is faced with various challenges that are limiting its productivity to feed the world. Speakers from Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe also shared their experiences in the application of CSA in their countries. Zambia reported that labour constraints were a barrier to CSA adoption and that land tenure systems were hampering investments in CSA technologies in Zambia. The lack of information was also identified as one of the greatest barriers to the adoption of CSA.

Efforts to address the climate challenges could include the strengthening of farmers’ organisations, building private sector and research and development relationships, and investing in climate management infrastructure. The involvement of multi-stakeholder partnerships which include the private sector should also be considered as a solution to enhance agricultural productivity. Furthermore, these partnerships can transform the sector and provide long term solutions which will address climate change.

Promoting the adoption of weather based insurance by farmers

Weather index insurance was said to be one of the most appropriate insurance products for smallholder farmers. This came up at a workshop hosted by SACAU and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) in September 2016 which discussed the scaling-up of climate-smart agricultural solutions for cereals and livestock farmers in southern Africa. That being the case, it was said that there has not been a commercial model which has been profitable. Delegates heard that insurance is a complex product and that very few people want to buy it.

Insurance was shown to be a success when it was bundled with other products such as information, presenting a big opportunity to pursue. Other success factors were identified as partnerships and farmer education. Since different components are needed when doing insurance, partnerships with the private sector are key, and investment models become very important. For instance, a consortium instead of an individual insurance company may ensure viability. A fragmented approach to weather-based index insurance was said to be undesirable. The acceptance by farmers will spread the word and increase uptake of insurance by other farmers, thus making the farmer’s education and understanding the difference between yield guarantee and index is also important.

One of the key outcomes from the discussions was the realisation of the need to fully understand insurance by all stakeholders. This understanding should be on aspects such as the distribution model, how payment should be done when a trigger has occurred, verification of those who need to be paid out, and the party bearing the risk between insurers and reinsurers. The discussion revealed that a lot still needs to be done to ensure that farmers benefit from insurance products.

Stakeholders share experiences on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) and Conservation Agriculture (CA) in Lilongwe, Malawi

A number of stakeholders who are promoting Climate Smart (CSA) and Conservation Agriculture (CA) in the Southern African region met in Lilongwe, Malawi at a conference organised by the Norwegian Embassy in Malawi from 29th to 30th November 2016. The conference was aimed at sharing regional experiences in CA and CSA in the region. Participants were drawn from Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa and Norway. Representatives from NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) were also in attendance.

SACAU is a partner with NORAD in the implementation of CA initiatives in Mozambique and Zimbabwe attended the conference. Participants were also accorded an opportunity to visit some farmer in Salima (Malawi) explaining some of the achievement made in CA.
of the CA projects in Malawi. Among other things, the following topics were discussed; connecting research in CA to practice, private sector engagement in the CA, lessons from the market, national agriculture commodity markets and trade, business opportunities in CA innovations, achievements and challenges in CA adoption in the region, importance of organised agriculture and Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and their implications in international climate financing.

The linkage between CSA and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that provide global road map to eradicating extreme poverty and ensure a sustainable development for all was also discussed. It was clear that agriculture has crucial role in eradicating poverty in the region as it contributes to a number of the SDGs. For instance, agriculture plays a key role in attaining SDG 2 which deals with food security and at the same time it’s key in dealing with climate and land degradation issues that are referred to in SDG 13 and SDG 15 that focus on sustainable use of ecosystems. Participants were in agreement that if implemented, the principles of CSA and CA are just the right ingredients to attaining sustainable agriculture and achieving the majority of sustainable development goals, hence reducing poverty as envisaged in the SDGs.

Young farmers are taking an active role in CA in Malawi showing their tree nursery.

Merry Christmas and Happy New year from the SACAU Board and Secretariat.