



# Can Smallholder Farmers Address Hunger in the Region?

*Public Dialogue Report*

**Prepared by:** Southern Africa Trust & IDASA

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# Table of Contents

1. Background and Introductory Remarks .....	3
2. Government's Response to Food Insecurity and Promoting Smallholder Farmers for Household Food Security in South Africa.....	5
3. The State of Regional Food Security in Southern Africa and Participation of Smallholder Farmer's in Agriculture Policy Development .....	6
4. Re-Tooling Of African Smallholder Farmers for Modernised Agriculture.....	7
5. Food Security and Governance Challenges in Southern Africa.....	8
6. Recommendations .....	10
Annexure.....	11
Annex 1: Programme .....	11
Annex 2: List of Participants.....	12

# 1. Background and Introductory Remarks

Agriculture provides an indispensable part of the livelihoods of the poorest households in southern Africa. The sector is a primary source of income for the rural population and contributes to foreign exchange earnings for southern African economies. Over 70 percent of the arable land is under smallholder agriculture in Sub Saharan Africa. A large percentage of the poor depend on the income derived from agriculture produce to support their household basic needs. The population of southern Africa is growing; therefore the number of people going hungry everyday is gradually increasing. Food Agriculture Organisation estimates the number of undernourished people in 2010 is 925 million with highest number recorded in sub-Saharan Africa at 30 percent. There is urgent need for government and other development partners such as the private sector to work together to address the insufficient food situation in southern Africa.

The Southern Africa Trust and the Institute for Democracy in Africa hosted a public dialogue on the role of smallholder farmers to address hunger in southern Africa. The public dialogue was facilitated by Chris Maroleng, Africa Editor eNews Africa and Presenter of Africa 360°. The dialogue provided a platform for stakeholders to engage on the important subject of food security and the role of smallholder farmers in southern Africa. At least 70 participants attended the dialogue including government representatives, diplomats, civil society and farmer's unions/forums from Zimbabwe, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana and Malawi. The dialogue discussed the opportunities and challenges facing smallholder farmers to increase agriculture production to meet the food needs at household level. The dialogue also discussed the participation of smallholder farmers in agriculture policy making processes and assessed the pace of implementation of agriculture policies in southern Africa.



In his opening remarks, *Themba Mhlongo, Head of programmes for the Southern Africa Trust* welcomed participants and indicated that the dialogue was organised by the Trust and IDASA with invaluable support of the Flemish Government. He expressed the hope that the dialogue will provide an important forum for strategic discussion on the role of smallholder farmers in addressing household food security. The dialogue was organised back to back with the regional thematic convening on agriculture supported by the Gates Foundation on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2011.

*David Maenaut, Head of delegation of the Flemish Government* in South Africa provided an overview of the contribution of the Flemish Government to support poverty eradication initiatives in southern Africa. He informed the participants that the Flemish Government has been working in southern Africa for the last 15 years in particular Zambia, Malawi and South Africa. In South Africa, the Flemish Government is supporting a programme in Limpopo to make agriculture sustainable and to ensure that farmers have access to markets for agriculture

products to create rural employment. In Kwa- Zulu Natal, the Flemish Government is also supporting a programme on food and nutrition to help poor household to access more food through home grown production.

## 2. Government's Response to Food Insecurity and Promoting Smallholder Farmers for Household Food Security in South Africa

*Jemina Moeng, Director of Smallholder Development from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)* gave a presentation on South African Government response on food security and the promotion of smallholder farmers for household food security in South Africa. DAFF, she pointed out, is committed to the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger and the 2003 Maputo Africa Union Declaration on Agriculture and food security in Africa. DAFF has also adopted a zero hunger strategy and a smallholder development strategic plan as a short term intervention through increasing food production and trade. She pointed out that the smallholder farmers face a number of challenges which include inadequate access to credit, poor infrastructure, no access to markets and poor quality of products. Accordingly, subsistence and smallholder farmers will be organized into producer groups at local, regional and provincial level to network with established commodity organisations. Focus will also be placed on investment in agriculture research for the development of technologies that are well suited for smallholder farmers to ensure that smallholder and subsistence farmer's graduate to commercial level of agriculture production. Emphasis will also be placed on the promotion of value addition of agriculture products by smallholder farmers in their place of location.



During the discussions participants recognized the positive development of the agriculture sector. They welcomed the reduction of the massive subsidies for commercial farmers which facilitated the redistribution of resources to support smallholder farmers. They, however, pointed out that the smallholder and subsistence farmers need to be continuously sensitized on the importance of agriculture inputs to increase production, provide food for poor households and consequently improve their livelihood. This will avoid misunderstanding between government and smallholder farmers on the issue of the type of support needed at the household level to improve their living conditions. At times, smallholder and subsistence farmers would prefer to have shelter rather than agricultural inputs. Therefore, coordination of interventions and appropriate consultations were of critical importance.



### 3. The State of Regional Food Security in Southern Africa and Participation of Smallholder Farmer's in Agriculture Policy Development

In his presentation *Bentry Chaura*, from *Southern African Development Community (SADC)* indicated that about 70% of the region's population depend on agriculture for food, income and employment. The performance of this sector has a strong influence on food security, economic growth and social stability of the region. The current state of food security in southern Africa for the 2010/11 marketing year ending March 2011 was generally satisfactory as a result of good cereal harvest in 2010. Country analysis indicated that Malawi (1.12 million tonnes), South Africa (1.63 million tonnes), Tanzania (0.21 million tonnes) and Zambia (1.17 million tonnes) had surpluses while the rest had deficits ranging from 0.73 million tonnes in Swaziland to 0.97 million tonnes in Angola. Access to food at household level, especially for the vulnerable people such as the sick, orphans, elderly and labour constrained continue to remain a problem in all the SADC Member States. This situation is usually exacerbated by natural disasters such as drought, floods and tropical cyclones which frequently affect the region or parts of it leading to poor harvests and hunger. Bentry indicated that compared to the past few years however, the region is making progress in reducing household food insecurity and SADC has made efforts to involve smallholder farmers in the development of regional agricultural policy framework.



Participants reiterated that a broad section of smallholder farmers and other civil society formations have not had the opportunity to engage in the development of the proposed SADC agricultural policy. The need to formalise the participation of smallholder farmers in regional and national agriculture policy making platforms was long overdue. SADC was called upon to be more inclusive in its approach to agriculture policies. Participants also encouraged national government

to harmonise agriculture policy at national and regional level to ensure that the needed impact reaches the intended beneficiaries particularly smallholder farmers.

## 4. Re-Tooling Of African Smallholder Farmers for Modernised Agriculture

In his presentation *Ian Mashingaidze from the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN)* indicated that it is important for farmers to be given the right tools for modernised agriculture to enhance their production. Ian, in his presentation, made reference to the challenges of smallholder farmers that include low productivity, lack of access to inputs and access to product markets. Smallholder farmers are vulnerable because of dependency on rain-fed agriculture. He reported that FANRPAN undertook a livelihood assessment in 2009 (Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Swaziland) with support from southern Africa Trust, and in partnership with World vision and USAID. A household vulnerability index was used in assessing the livelihood of rural household. It was clear from the assessment that there is need to improve agriculture skills for farmers to increase agriculture production. There is also a need to establish village knowledge centres to provide skills training and information sharing on product markets, crop information through developed information communication technologies. Smallholder farmers need to have access to credit in the form of microfinance and access to land to enhance agricultural productivity.



Participants reaffirmed that smallholder farmers are the most important producers of food in Africa. Accordingly, farmers need to be consulted to clearly identify their needs to facilitate accurate policy intervention. The voices of farmers need to be increasingly heard in policy making platforms. Participants also addressed the issues of poor representation of smallholder farmers in policy making processes. There is need for strengthening of farmer associations and promotion of organisational development among smallholder farmers. Agriculture sector has also become a dumping ground for retired skills, and in this regard less effort is directed towards active agricultural production. Agriculture activity is seen as a part time hobby rather than an important economic activity along other sectors such as manufacturing.

## 5. Food Security and Governance Challenges in Southern Africa

The efficacy of governance structures will determine the movement of policy commitment made by governments in agriculture to policy implementation. *Annie Barbara Chikwanha of IDASA* presented to the dialogue on smallholder governance regime as instruments, institutions, structures, processes and practices that are key for the sustenance of smallholder agriculture and for the achievement of food security. An effective smallholder governance regime has to emerge from effective consultation and collaboration with smallholder farmers. There is need for instruments, institutions and the requisite infrastructure to link farmers and markets at regional and national level. Coherent regional smallholder groups to provide inputs to regional policy making processes are essential as well as the development of smallholder agricultural initiatives with a regional scope. The regional institutions, however, appear disconnected from the local level where smallholder farmers operate, raising questions about the effectiveness of institutions that link the smallholder production conditions to the regional policy making environment.



In understanding the role of governance to enhance agricultural production, the dialogue also focused on a case study of a social –economic programme in Northern Kwa-Zulu Natal. *Johan Bodenstein from Indi-Flora* presented an overview of the impact of this socio-economic programme of KwaZulu-Natal Education Trust in the Kwa Mhlabuyalingana and Big Five Municipal districts. He reported that there are 7 community gardens established to produce food to supply 31 schools according to the menu provided by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. There are 11,856 children in the 31 schools of which 1 is a pre-primary school, 1 a junior primary, 28 are primary and one is a high school.

The gardens are facing a number of challenges; water availability is a limiting factor. Four of the gardens in the Big 5 Municipal area are in the process of receiving irrigation systems. Some of the gardens are poorly located as they are not close to where the people live. This makes it difficult for service providers to access routes from the gardens to reach the market they are meant to serve. These gardens need to be relocated and the old ones rehabilitated as it is in a conservation area. The gardens lack infrastructure such as adequate fencing and irrigation (which is being installed but not yet operational in four gardens). Furthermore, storage facilities for tools, fertilizer, pesticides, and harvested crops awaiting collection by suppliers will make a huge difference. Johan recommended that to increase agricultural production more gardens be provided with





irrigation as a matter of urgency. The gardens should have storage facilities and garden communities must be trained. There is need to appoint an officer to oversee, plan and manage each garden operation. A combination of infrastructure improvements as well as ongoing and in-service training/mentorship is required to increase production. Practical vision development with very clear action plans are required for each garden with a skilled person in each garden to train, educate, demonstrate, co-ordinate and control the activities.

*Russell Wildeman from Institute for Democracy in Africa* raised critical points in the discussion session that the voices of civil society and farmers in the allocation of resources for agriculture are not sufficient. There is need to enhance efforts of mobilising smallholder farmers to ensure their engagement in policymaking processes. *Elizabeth Mpofo from the Eastern and Southern small scale farmer's forum* stated that it has taken so long for smallholder farmers to be rescued. Smallholder farmers are more concerned with what to eat. The Maputo Declaration of 2003 has not been comprehensively implemented. Smallholder farmers are still ignorant of existing agriculture policies. There must be a bottom-up approach with regards to involvement of smallholder farmers in policymaking processes. Smallholder farmers need to be educated on the potential effects of climate change.



*Thoko Didiza from Archie Mafeje Institute for Applied Research into Social Policy, the Family and Poverty (AMIFAM)* contributed to the dialogue by emphasizing the need to continue the creation of such spaces for dialogue for smallholder farmers to engage with government on agriculture issues. Thoko indicated that illiteracy should not be a stumbling block for engagement of

smallholder farmers on critical agriculture policy issues. She indicated that farmers can involve themselves in other non agriculture rural income generating activities. Society needs to cultivate interest of young people in agriculture as a career choice. Participants emphasized that political will by governments is important for increased investment in agriculture. Malawi was cited as an example of a government that has demonstrated its commitment by allocating 10% of its budget to the agriculture sector. Women are to be prioritised with regards to access to credit because they constitute the largest numbers in the agriculture sector.

## 6. Recommendations

The dialogue made the following recommendations:

- Governments and regional institutions must facilitate structured and enhanced engagement with smallholder farmers in national and regional agriculture policy making platforms and processes;
- Governments and regional institutions must promote and support value addition of agricultural produce by smallholders in order to increase their incomes which will reduce poverty;
- Governments must expedite the implementation of the 2003 Maputo declaration on Agriculture especially increasing budgetary allocation to agriculture;
- Development partners, civil society and governments must support smallholder farmer organisations with a view to increase their voice in policy making platforms and processes;
- Development partners must support multi-stakeholder dialogue between government, smallholder farmers and civil society on the role of smallholder farmers in increasing household level food security;
- Development partners and governments must prioritize support to “women” smallholder farmers as they are in majority in rural agriculture smallholder production;
- Southern Africa Trust to organize a policy dialogue for smallholder farmers to engage policy makers. This dialogue must specifically target smallholder farmers and policy makers.

# Annexure

## Annex 1: Programme

Programme Director

Chris Maroleng, Africa Editor: HOD eNews Africa and Presenter of Africa 360

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09:00 Registration

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09:30 Welcome Remarks

Thembinkosi Mhlongo, Southern Africa Trust

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09:45 **Panel Discussion:**

- Government's response to food insecurity and promoting smallholder farmers for household food security in South Africa  
Jemina Moeng, Director - Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, South Africa
- The state of regional food security in southern Africa and smallholder farmers' incorporation and engagement in the SADC regional agricultural policy  
Bentry Chaura, SADC Secretariat
- Re-tooling African smallholder farmers for modernised agriculture  
Lindiwe Sibanda – FANRPAN

**Panelists:** *Bentry Chaura, SADC Secretariat; Jemina Moeng, Director - Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, South Africa; Tendai Murisa, Trust Africa; Moses Shaha, Eastern & Southern Africa Farmers' Forum (ESAFF); and Lindiwe Sibanda – FANRPAN*

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11:00 Tea Break

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11:25 **Panel Discussion:** Food security and governance in southern Africa.

- Smallholder agriculture, food security and governance in southern Africa  
Russell Wildeman, Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA)
- Case study - The Socio-economic Programme in Northern Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Johan Bodenstein, INDI FLORA

**Panelists:** *Fred Kalibwani, Food Security Consultant; Elizabeth Mpopu, ESAFF; Russell Wildeman, IDASA; Ishmael Sunga, SACAU; Johan Bodenstein, INDI FLORA*

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12:45 Closing Remarks

Russell Wildeman, IDASA

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13:00 Lunch

## Annex 2: List of Participants

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