

Strengthening the Capacity of Farmer Organisations in the SADC Region

**By Ajay M Vashee (President)
The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural
Unions (SACAU)**

SACAU'S OBJECTIVES (as stated in its constitution)

- To foster mutual cooperation and understanding between farmers' organizations, agricultural leaders and the farming community in SADC with a view to strengthening the voice of agriculture and promoting the well-being of farmers and the viability of agriculture in the region
- To establish a forum for the discussion of matters of common concern and in the process to promote common understanding of and approach to such matters
- To disseminate views and information to agricultural organizations, governments and other bodies in SADC as well as international
- To foster goodwill and understanding between member organizations and their leaders

OBJECTIVES (cont'd)

- To arrange joint meetings between SACAU and the Ministers of relevant ministries and or private agencies in the region to discuss matters of common interest and promote an understanding and common approach to such matters.
- To promote the maintenance, and establishment where necessary, of strong agricultural unions within SADC as a prerequisite to strengthening of the position and well-being of farmers in the region
- To promote cooperation in the agricultural and related fields between farmers' organizations, farmers and governments within SADC in order to promote agriculture in SADC vis-à-vis the rest of the world
- To associate with IFAP and any association or such body having objectives or interests similar or complimentary to those of its own

MEMBERSHIP

- Bona fide national farmers organizations in SADC members countries. Such organizations should represent farmers on a voluntary basis, are autonomous and legitimate farmer controlled organizations and are independent of political parties.
- More than one member may qualify in a country
- Annual membership fees is currently US\$1000 per member
- Current members: FEKRITAMA (Madagascar); FUM (Malawi); NAU and NNFU (Namibia); Agri-SA and NAFU (South Africa); ZNFU (Zambia); CFU and ZFU (Zimbabwe)
- Target: at membership in at least 10 countries in the region by 2006
- Exploring possibilities for opening membership to regional commodity associations

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- 5 Board members elected by the Annual Congress
- The president, two vice Presidents and two board members
- One of vice presidents is responsible for institutional capacity development of member organizations
- Term of office: 1 year
- President shall not hold office for more than five consecutive terms
- Decision taken by a majority vote

ADMINISTRATION

- Secretariat established in 2003 in response to an expanded membership
- A lean secretariat headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Agricultural trade specialist
- Admin Secretary/PA
- Future Staffing requirements: Capacity Building Advisor and Policy/Information Advisor
- Accounting and Admin services provided by Agri-SA
- Offices in Centurion, Pretoria

FUNDING

- Annual membership fees
- Conference fees
- Donations – SCC-ROSA current main source
- Grants (French government, Agricord, USAID)
- Any other acceptable source

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Trade desk
- Profiling of farmer organisations
- Profiling of regional commodity associations
- Trade capacity building of farmer leaders
- Preparing to spearhead implementation of activities under Pillar 2 of the CAADP framework
- The inaugural chair and secretariat of the SADC Business Forum (SBF)
- Draft MOU with the SADC secretariat

Networks/Alliances

- SBF (SADC Business Forum)
- SADC
- NEPAD
- COMESA
- FARA (Forum for agricultural research in Africa)
- FANRPAN
- IFPRI
- IFAP
- FAO

STRATEGIC MISSION FOR 2006-2010

SACAU seeks to strengthen its position as the leading regional farmer organization, focusing on three key areas:

- Facilitation of capacity building support to farmer organizations in the region
- Providing a platform for the collective voice of farmers on matters of common concern
- Provision of policy related and other key agricultural information to farmer organization

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR SACAU

- Core strategic agenda for SACAU:
 - Capacity development of farmer organisation
 - Market Access and Trade
 - Information systems and management
 - Development of strategic linkages/alliances
 - Representation and advocacy
 - Regional infrastructure development
 - Sustainable agriculture
 - Policy/Programme development, Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation, Follow-up

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING OF FO'S

- SACAU- Capacity building of FO's a key tenet of its mission and strategy
- NEPAD- capacity building of FO's is one its cross-cutting priorities
- SADC- the establishment and strengthening of networks and dialogue is a priority area
- COMESA- weak and disjointed FO's at national and regional levels, as well as lack of coordination and focus of activities of FO's identified as key challenges

TWO KEY ISSUES FACING FO'S IN THE REGION

- Weak capacity among national FO's to represent and service the needs of their members (i.e farmers)
- Inadequate/limited influence by farmers agric related matters at regional and international levels

UNDERLYING CAUSES

Reasons include:

- Limited financial resources
- Weak representation/governance and administration structures
- Limited access to information for informed decision making
- Limited technical and management know-how, skills and experience to develop and implement programs
- Proliferation of FO's/Competition
- Limited capacity of SACAU to address regional and international issues

PRIORITY AREAS FOR SUPPORT

- Governance and administration
- Strategic planning and management
- Development of policy positions on key issues
- Policy dialogue, advocacy, lobbying, negotiating
- Membership and other data-bases
- Trade/market and other information (e.g climate)
- Communication (internal & external)
- Project development and management
- Leadership development
- Technical and management skills
- Cooperation amongst FO's in one country
- Financial sustainability of FO's
- Sustainable farming, HIV/AIDS Malaria, Gender

CONCLUSIONS

- The priorities above determine the focus of capacity building support programs
- Several tiers of capacity building {local, national, regional (including SACAU)}
- Differences in capabilities of FO's (the very weak and the very strong)
- Issues are both technical and organisational in nature
- Multi-faceted nature of issues/challenges require comprehensive approaches to CB