

Market Reforms, Research Policies And SADCC Food Security



Edited by

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University of Zimbabwe UZ/MSU Food Security Research in Southern Africa Project

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Mandivamba Rukuni
J.B. Wyckoff

Blueprint For Developing Professional Human Resources For The Agricultural Sector In SADCC

Professor W.J. Kamba¹

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the **SIXTH ANNUAL FOOD SECURITY RESEARCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA CONFERENCE**. I particularly want to recognise the presence of our colleagues from other countries in the SADCC region, many of whom will be reporting their food security research findings. Once again, this conference is jointly sponsored by the SADCC Food Security Technical and Administrative Unit and the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension of the University of Zimbabwe. Its purpose is to assemble researchers, SADCC representatives, interested donors and representatives of international agencies to hear the latest results from ongoing food security research, to identify emerging problems and to plan research agendas. The information generated by these activities provides policy makers with "grist for the mill" in formulating national and regional food security policy.

The ability to attain national and household food security rests with the agricultural sector which employs 70-80 percent of the total labour force of the SADCC region and contributes some 35 percent of the region's Gross National Product. Agriculture also generates 30 percent of the region's foreign exchange. To guarantee food security for the region's rapidly growing population requires that agriculture continue to increase its output by increasing its productivity or expanding the land area under cultivation. This latter option is becoming unavailable in several countries within SADCC as all arable land is already being farmed.

This leaves the agricultural sector facing five major challenges in the next two decades.

¹Vice Chancellor, University of Zimbabwe.

- 1) To increase production and productivity of both small and large farmers to provide more food and export crops together with increased livestock products;
- 2) To develop and transfer appropriate and affordable productivity increasing technology;
- 3) To develop improved transport, processing and marketing infrastructure to better service local and export markets;
- 4) To arrest and reverse environmental degradation to ensure sustainable agricultural systems; and,
- 5) To adopt economic policies that will generate the resources required to enable the agricultural sector to meet the above challenges.

The limited supply of trained and experienced professionals in agricultural disciplines within SADCC critically limits the capacity of the agricultural sector to meet these challenges. The current capacity of the training institutions in the SADCC region will be unable to meet the needs for professionals with specialised BSc. or MSc. and Ph.D degrees. Further, virtually all of the Faculties of Agriculture in the region face problems such as:

- inadequately trained and qualified staff;
- poor terms and conditions of service for staff;
- poor and inadequate teaching and research facilities;
- inappropriate curricula and teaching materials; and,
- poor capacity to conduct long term, strategic research.

These conditions lead to difficulties throughout the SADCC region in recruiting, motivating and retaining staff within the University systems. This has led to efforts by faculties to develop regional cooperation in agricultural training and to encourage the exchange of students among countries. Rationalisation of admission requirements, accreditation, foreign student quotas and medium of instruction as well as development of centres of specialisation, have all been undertaken.

PROPOSED SADCC REGIONAL STRATEGY

A regional strategy has been proposed to strengthen the faculties and the teaching and research programmes in agriculture within SADCC. The strategy is long term, requiring at least 20 years of sustained support. The objectives of the strategy include:

- to develop full-fledged BSc. Agriculture programmes in all SADCC countries by the year 2000;
- to increase inter-university and inter-country exchange of students at the BSc., MSc. and Ph.D levels;
- to establish and/or strengthen specialised BSc. programmes across the region at identified regional centres of specialisation;
- to ensure that most MSc. and Ph.D training is undertaken in the region by the year 2010;
- to strengthen teaching and research capacities of faculties in the region;
- to facilitate across border utilisation of staff;
- to provide short-term, on-the-job training courses for academic, research, technical and support staff;
- to increase the relevance of university research to national and regional problems; and,
- to increase across-border cooperation in production, procurement and servicing of teaching and research equipment and facilities.

PROPOSED ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

This entire programme is proposed to be established under the auspices of the Southern Africa Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural Research (SACCAR), and is to be known as the Regional Programme for Strengthening Agricultural Faculties (REPSAF). Individual projects will fall under the administration, coordination and implementation of REPSAF, facilitating multi-donor funding of one or more projects simultaneously. Once the REPSAF offices are established during 1991-1992 in Swaziland, the country that carries the mandate for manpower development within SADCC, activities will be undertaken to carry out the above mentioned strategy.

Obviously, a human resource training effort of this magnitude can *not* be accomplished without financial as well as other resources. While each separate project element will be justified separately, an indicative figure of some US \$150 million is required for the 1991-2000 period. However, the expected output is impressive.

CONCLUSION

Few regions of the world have started so recently or have so far to go in developing their professional human resource base in agriculture as the SADCC

region. The task is urgent because of its importance in attaining food security and overall economic development in the region. It is not a task that can be accomplished overnight, but rather, one that requires a long term commitment. Such a continuing commitment must be made by the faculties/Universities themselves, individual governments and the donor community.

Such a commitment is not without precedent.

- 1) India decided in the 1950's to change her agricultural education and research system. Their first State Agricultural University was established in 1960 -- by 1972, 17 SAU's had been established and 27 by 1986. Today, they are producing 3 500 postgraduate (MSc. and Ph.D) students and 10 000 with BSc. degrees in agriculture and related sciences. The food and agricultural situation in India in the 1950s and '60s was similar to that prevailing in Sub-Saharan Africa at the present time. Yet today, India can boast of strategic grain reserves of 100 million tonnes and other impressive agricultural production statistics.
- 2) In Latin America, Brazil decided in 1963 to strengthen her agricultural universities by establishing new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Today, Brazil is one of the world's largest exporters of agricultural products. It is also interesting to note that almost 60 percent of Brazilian agricultural graduates go to work in the private sector.
- 3) The success of the agriculture sector in the United States of America, the world's largest exporter of agricultural products, has been unanimously attributed to the establishment of the Land Grant University system in the second half of the last century to train agricultural professionals. This system currently produces 17 000 BSc. graduates per year and 5 500 postgraduates (MSc. and Ph.D) in agriculture and allied sciences.

These three are all countries with land areas about the size of that of the SADCC region. However, their current populations are much higher. Thus, while it may not be possible for individual countries in the region to develop the types of agricultural training systems described above, the SADCC region as a whole *can*. The development of such a system should certainly provide the highly trained agricultural specialists necessary for generating the food supplies needed to feed SADCC's growing human population well into the future.

I, too, welcome you to Zimbabwe and our beautiful capital city of Harare. I trust that this Sixth Annual International Conference on Food Security Research will be successful in transferring the knowledge gained from food security research conducted in the region to appropriate policy makers throughout the developing world. You have my best wishes in this effort.



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