



## Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF)



# NEWSLETTER

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### Tanzania:

# Four regions for bumper rice harvest

Four rice producing regions in Tanzania this year are expected to get a bumper harvest, thanks to a new partnership between farmers and a rural nongovernmental organization.

Farmers under the banner of National Network of Small-Scale Farmers Groups (MVIWATA) have been empowered by Dodoma based Rural Livelihood Development Company (RLDC) in a project titled "Improving Rice Profitability through Increased Productivity and Better Marketing."

According to MVIWATA Executive Director, Mr. Stephen Ruvuga, interventions were made from last year, empowering

the farmers to increase production and better market their produce.

The project run by MWIATA and RLDC directly benefited farmers in Igunga (Tabora Region), Manyoni (Singida) Babati (Manyara) and Mvomero (Morogoro), he said.

So far the productivity per household has increased by the average of about 20 per cent, said Mr Ruvuga. Giving the example of Mvomero District, he said, before the intervention productivity per acre was between 25 and 30 bags per acre. After the intervention, the harvest increased by 20 to 35 per percent. That is, 35 to 42 bags per acre.

Mr Ruvuga said the overall objective of the project was

to increase rice productivity and establish markets, hence increase income to the paddy producers.

The project has four components, said. Firstly, awareness and access of farmers to improved seeds. Secondly, provision of improved agronomic skills and enhancement of farmers' organization. Thirdly, innovative marketing and business linkages with private sector market actors and lastly networking for synergies and cooperation with other facilitators.

A baseline survey had identified numerous shortcomings that needed to be addressed. They include poor rice agronomic skills, inadequate knowledge of farmers' groups and

their significance. Other weakness noted were poor leadership skills, inadequate access to improved rice seeds, inadequate entrepreneurship skills, low rice price and non availability of market information and unreliable market.

As answers to the challenges, Ruvuga said, they introduced promoter training at Mkindo Farmers Training Centre, organized farmer's study tour to advanced farmers groups, rice stakeholder meetings, training on marketing and entrepreneurship to rice farmers.

During the intervention period about 25 new rice farmers groups were formed and in total 78 such groups were trained on agronomy and better marketing techniques.

Over 500 farmers were trained directly and 21 farmer field schools were established and reached around 3,000 beneficiaries in the four districts, he said.

The project was implemented in 21 villages. In Igunga the beneficiary villages were Itumba, Mwanzugi and Choma Chankola. In Manyoni District, villagers in Kintinku ward were trained. In Babati District the beneficiaries were in Magugu ward while in Mvomero they were in Dakawa and Hambeti wards.

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## Going agroecology, Zimbabwe villagers ditch chemical fertilizers, imported skills

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In Topora village, Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe, farmers have successfully started practicing agroecology, a fist in the country.

The crops they produce are completely organic, produced with local knowledge and traditional skills. This means they are not using chemical fertilizers or even imported production skills. This has become a source of pride and honour for the village.

The village shares a demonstration vegetable garden of agroecology where farmers learn and practice agro ecology collectively, called the Topora Demo field. It is an area of about a hectare, where farmers from different

villages around Masvingo District meet at least twice a week to practice and exchange their agroecology knowledge.

Oliat Mauramba is one of those farmers. He goes to Topora every Tuesday and Friday to meet his "comrades" for the practices as well as to share what he learned from the workshops he used to attend outside the village.

"I am one of the farmers who used to attend training workshops in Harare and other places. I have the responsibility to report back and share all the information with them," said Mauramba who is one of the participants of the African Encounter on Agroecology, organized by La Via Campesina, in Masvingo.

So far, the Topora Demo Field has helped train farmers from at least 15 villages on agroecology since 2003. Organic farming is now used

by about by about eight thousand farmers who are members of the Zimbabwe Small Holder Organic Farmer's Forum, ZIMSOFF, a national organization, committed to the promotion of agroecology in the country and a member of ESAFF.

"We grow our own seeds for the village and we multiply them," explained Kumbirai Dekete, an older farmer who demonstrated how he works the land to a group of farmers from other African countries.

In fact, more than 200 farmers have been supplied with native seeds from the Topora demo field since it was established.

In Topora, farmers grow diverse crops ecologically, like tomatoes, vegetables, spinach, rapeseeds, sugar beans, herbs, tsunga and more. Part of the production is donated to the local hospital in Topora. "We provide healthy

organic food for the people who are ill in the hospital," said Mauramba.

According to Elisabeth Mpofu, the president of ZIMSOFF, and Vice Chair of Eastern and Southern Africa small scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF), the demo fields are very useful because farmers easily adopt the knowledge and practice. "Currently in our country we have many of them. The greatest advantage is that the local market for organically grown products is steadily growing while we are in the process of also getting access to the certified organic markets for exportation," she says.

While exports can help supplement farmers' incomes, the greatest advantage of agroecological, according to the Via Campesina, is to provide abundant and healthy food for local people, what is called "Food Sovereignty." (Story from LVC Communication Team in Africa)







# EAC sees ESAFF as a model regional body

An official of East African Community (EAC) has commended ESAFF saying the body is well positioned to make impact as a serious actor in the civil society sector thanks to its branching out from grassroot to national and regional level.

Eastern and Southern Africa small scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF), a grassroots regional farmer network had a breakfast talks with a representative of the East Africa Community (EAC) in Tanzania recently, in its effort to engage the regional economic communities in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region,

The meeting that brought together ESAFF farmer leaders from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi and Zimbabwe was graced by Ms. Perpetue Miganda who is the Principal Officer of the EAC responsible for Gender, Community Development and Civil Society Organisations.

Ms. Miganda said that the EAC was a people

driven regional community organisation. She said efforts were being made to see how the private sector and civil society organisations could be represented and be enabled to participate fully in the community activities.

"We expect soon to have a special session in which we will discuss how to strengthen participation of non state actors in EAC and we will be glad to get ideas from ESAFF too," she said.

The EAC official was happy to note ESAFF was formed, led and owned by small scale farmers themselves. "With that you stand a good chance to effectively participate in the EAC business," she said

Asked why the EAC Food

Security Action Plan 2010-2015 has not committed to or mentioned the Maputo Declaration of 2003 in which African States committed to increase agriculture budget to 10% of the national budget and ensure 6% annual growth, Ms. Miganda assured that EAC was committed to ensuring food security. This is despite not explicitly mentioning the Maputo Declaration.

"Heads of State of the EAC met at the end of 2010 and launched a road map on food security and this show how the region is committed to that endeavour." She added that, when you speak of food security in East Africa you can't leave aside small scale farmers who are

the majority of the food producers in the region. The EAC Food Security Action Plan 2010-2015 is available at [http://www.esaff.org/images/east\\_africa\\_food\\_security\\_action\\_plan\\_2010-2015.pdf](http://www.esaff.org/images/east_africa_food_security_action_plan_2010-2015.pdf)

Speaking at his first meeting as the new chairperson of ESAFF, Moses Shaha who is also a farmer from Kilifi, Mombasa in Kenya says ESAFF would like to work and engage with the EAC as a true representation of small scale farmers. "This will make the voice of the small scale farmers in the community to be heard," he said.

"ESAFF is structured from the grassroots where farmer groups come together to form a district forum and district forums forms provincial and national forums..." he added. Moses also doubles as a group leader and a national leader of Kenya Small Scale Farmers Forum – KESSFF".

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## ESAFF general summit scores success, new office bearers in place

After every three years Eastern and Southern Africa small scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) is supposed to hold a general summit (TGS). The most recent one – actually the first one, since the body was established was held on 13th to 15th April 2011 in Morogoro,

The event brought 37 members together from all 12 countries forming ESAFF. The main agenda was to fulfill constitutional requirement and hold elections of office bearers. Also the summit decided to amend the constitution to make the body more forward looking and approved its new strategic plan. It was also an opportunity to appoint its banker and auditor for the next three years.

The Summit amended some of the articles of the constitution to give all delegates present the right to take part in electing the ESAFF office bearers.

They are chairperson, vice chair, general secretary and treasurer. Secret ballot was used to elect the new officials.

Those elected are Chairperson (Moses Shaha-Kenya), Vice Chair (Elizabeth Mpofu- Zimbabwe), General Secretary (Hakim Baliraine - Uganda) and Treasurer (Goodwell Chiteya - Malawi).

The constitution also was amended to state that the chairperson of each member country de facto smallholder farmers body becomes board members of the ESAFF regional board. The financial year was also altered to commence on 1st July and end in 31 June 2011.

The summit appointed EXIM BANK Morogoro Branch as its banker and Trio & Co. Certified Public Accountant of Dar es salaam as auditor of the Forum for the coming three years.

The vision and mission of the organisation were

also modified to suit the current situation. Changes came when members were crafting the new strategic plan. The new vision states: "A strong effective forum of empowered Small Scale Farmers with united voices in the policy processes for ecological agriculture and poverty free ESA region."

The new mission reads: "Empowering small scale farmers in Eastern and

Southern Africa to influence development policies and promote ecological agriculture through capacity strengthening, research and networking"

The summit also crafted and approved the ESAFF strategic plan that will run from 2011-2014. The plan has four key result areas (strategic focus); Food security and sovereignty; Trade and markets; Cross cutting issues; Gender, youth and HIV/AIDS and Institutional and organizational strengthening.

The next summit will be held in April 2014 in South Africa



## Small scale farmers feed Africa, need to up support systems urgent

Small scale farmers play a pivotal role in the African continent when we come to feeding the nations. It has emerged that, only South Africa, in Southern African states really depends on large scale farmers for food, export earnings and other agri-based raw materials. The rest, it is the smallholder farmers who call the shots. If only proper systems would be put in place to support such farmers, Africa would become self food sufficient and exporter. This emerged in a regional dialogue in Pretoria, organized recently by IDASA and SAT.

When will African states make good the Maputo Declaration of 2003 on Agriculture? This was a question that

baffled speakers at a recent regional dialogue, as they all agreed that supporting small-scale farmers by putting in place necessary system, would go a long way to ensure food sufficiency in the continent. This support can be possible if Maputo Declaration is honoured.

Speakers at the meeting concurred that small scale farmers provide almost 70% of livelihoods and employments to people in the southern African region. This call for government policies, which provides resources for supporting smallholder agri-sector, they said.

Officials from SADC, Ministry of Agriculture in South Africa, researchers, farmers and activities from Eastern and Southern Africa, attended the conference.

For everyone at the meeting, it was a disappointment that in the last two decades, the level of investments by the states is still low despite the

declaration, which called on African states to increase the budget allocated to agriculture to at least 10% of the national budgets. It also charges states to ensure the sector grows by 6% annually.

"It is a big shame that our governments are not giving adequate resources and political priority to agriculture...since 2003 to the deadline in 2008/9 and up to now (2011) no country in the southern Africa region have allocated more than 10% of its budget to agriculture except Malawi," said Elizabeth Mpofu, a small scale farmer in Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

Elizabeth is also the Vice Chairperson of ESAFF. Malawi was cited as an example of where small scale farmers have been able to produce enough food for national consumption and export. Elizabeth said that governments in the region should not see large scale farming and GMO (genetically modified organism) as a solution.