

**ESAFF ZAF****Polokwane****04. – 05.12.2014**

Project Number: A-AFM- 2014-5184

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ESAFF ZAF Interim Coordinator Mr. Louw Macdonald was not available as he was attending a training course in Zambia.

Introduction

The origin of the Small Scale Farmers Networking Forum (SFNF) was in 2003 when forty farmer leaders from Bohlabela, Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhuni and Vhembe Districts of the Limpopo Province attended a visioning workshop on the emergence of a farmers' forum. A ten member task team was formed called Limpopo Small Scale Farmers' Platform to explore the roles of such a forum and explore various kinds of activities to support.

Since 2010 ESAFF ZAF is supported by the Centre for Rural Community Empowerment (CRCE) which was established by the University of Limpopo (UL) in 2000. It is the outreach arm of the School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. CRCE mission is to bring together development actors and the UL academic community for a sustainable livelihoods development process in the Limpopo Province. CRCE has three main strategies:

- Action Research and Training to improve the sustainability of the small scale family farming in the Limpopo Province and to produce a knowledge out of the process.
- Documenting rural development processes and events through visual aids and other printed materials to access all kinds of audience.

- Networking among rural development stakeholders at local, provincial and international levels. Peer exchanges and interaction at all levels allow to better learn and transform a challenging reality.

CRCE has identified four pilot sites in the Limpopo Province where it interacts with local stakeholders to address the complex challenge of local reality. Technical innovations are combined with organizational development. Participatory approaches are widely used.

The CRCE support to ESAFF is part of the networking strategy.

Activities:

- Management natural resources / Infrastructural development funded by a grant of one million Rand from the Department of Environmental Affairs.
- Establishment of a maize cooperative in Mopani District.
- Training of farmers to preserve indigenous seeds (seed banking).

Meeting with ESAFF ZAF Board Members

ESAFF ZAF membership (about 20 groups) is concentrated in the Limpopo Province; the Board would like to extend to other provinces. However there is a lack of funds to campaign for new members and implement activities on the ground. They would like to start e.g. backyard garden activities in order to promote ESAFF and the concept of food sovereignty (Food First!). However due to lack of funds they are not able to implement their plans. The income from membership fees is not much (3500 Rand/year) as farmers have no means to pay affiliation and subscription fees.

The financial support from the Regional is also very little, i.e. it only covers some training activities but not the transport, laptop, etc. The communication with the Regional is not good.

The chairman had overstayed for a long time, and the Committee did not follow the regulations in the constitution. Finally this year a new chairperson was elected. To date ESAFF ZAF has not been known by the Provincial Government but the new chairlady has requested for an opportunity to introduce ESAFF ZAF to the authorities.

The Board members request for training in financial management.

- ➔ The Board members are committed and have understood their roles. They are ready to respect and work according to their regulations. Chair and vice chair have taken initiative to start networking with local government in order to lobby for small scale farmers needs. However structures are still very weak, strong support by Regional especially in terms of finances is required.

Field visit

Group next to the University

The 25 group members (three males) applied to the Chief in 2003 to use 10 ha for growing sweet potatoes. With a donation a borehole and two tanks (5000 l each) were granted. They also dispose of two generators to pump water.

Currently they are cultivating vegetables and have planted citrus trees. They like to cultivate pepper as they have heard that the income is good. The Department of Agriculture supported them with

tree seedlings and seeds of maize and beans. They were trained in processing fruits into juice and jam. Some group members have gone for exchange visit on their own initiative. They are ESAFF members because networking is good.

The chairlady and Board members advised the group to think in Food First and include youth in their activities.

- ➔ ESAFF ZAF should strongly support the group to develop a clear vision and corresponding activities. For example the planting of citrus trees due to various reasons is not a recommendable option to generate income: It takes many years to harvest and sell the first fruits. Then technically fruit production is challenging and the group will not be able to compete with the big citrus farms. Thus ESAFF should encourage food production and discuss with group members why “Food First” is the better option.

Maria's farm

In the context of the land redistribution process a group of about 20 people were granted with land. Today only 4 group members are working on the farm. They cultivate irrigated organic beetroots, carrots, potatoes and other vegetables. All produce is sold through farm gate marketing, though unfortunately the farmers do not get better prices for organic production.

Maria is an ESAFF ZAF founding member and currently serving as Vice Chair. She is a small scale farmer role model with a best practice farm and at the same time good in talking politics. She receives many visitors and fellow farmers and runs a little office on her farm.

- ➔ Due to her authenticity Maria is of great use for ESAFF as a farmer leader. She therefore should be prepared in a more systematic way. This includes regular trainings and capacity building on topics like the seed harmonization, AGRA, G8NA, etc. and her frequent participation in lobby and advocacy events on national and regional level.



Production of organic carrots, beetroots and potatoes



Farmer leader Maria



Direct marketing

