

## Forum for Food Security



## in Southern Africa

1 December 2002 – 31 August 2003

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The current food crisis in Southern Africa is a symptom of the increasing vulnerability of the mainly rural population: the climatic variability of the last two agricultural seasons has been less severe than that which precipitated the last widespread food crisis in the region in 1991/92. This vulnerability stems from more than a decade of failures in rural growth, affected by poor integration into input, output, finance and labour markets; the impact of HIV/AIDS; deteriorating institutional accountability; and the limited availability of relevant agricultural technology options. In addition, donor support to agriculture and rural development has declined. The immediate crisis may abate in 2003, but the underlying inability to cope with shocks will remain until the vulnerability of the population is addressed.

A Special Meeting at the Overseas Development Institute, London in July 2002 (see [http://www.odi.org.uk/southern\\_africa/index.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/southern_africa/index.html)) demonstrated that there is much relevant high quality research-based evidence and economic analysis on the rural economy in Southern Africa, but it is not being synthesised and fed into public policy processes for rural growth and poverty alleviation.

Key issues include:

- **Human vulnerability:** how has the vulnerability context for poor people in the region changed over the last decade; what are the implications of this for supporting poverty alleviation and food security;
- **Market integration:** what are the prospects and key needs for facilitating participation in input, output, finance and labour markets in the region;
- **Social protection:** what combination of macro and micro safety net interventions are needed to ensure secure access to food for the very poorest;
- **Policy processes:** what are the options for delivering assistance in situations of limited institutional capacity.

This project will support strategic thinking on food security issues in Southern Africa by facilitating a forum of specialists and key policy stakeholders from the international and regional research community, donors, NGO, civil society and private sector with identified specialist knowledge of the issues and the region (see Box overleaf). The project will produce Policy Papers and host a combination of moderated electronic discussions and workshops on the key policy options. The purpose of the Forum is to support initiatives by governments and donors to improve food security in the region. The work will focus in five countries — Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe — representative of a range of food security contexts across the region.

*This project is funded by the UK Department for International Development and implemented by a consortium of institutions in the UK and Southern Africa. For further information, contact Elizabeth Cromwell ([e.cromwell@odi.org.uk](mailto:e.cromwell@odi.org.uk)) or Steve Wiggins ([s.wiggins@odi.org.uk](mailto:s.wiggins@odi.org.uk)), Research Fellows, Overseas Development Institute, London.*



## Forum on Food Security: planned outputs

### Regional overview paper

This will cover the key structural and policy features of the region with a bearing on entry points for food security strategies. Particular focus on variation across the region in policies, institutions and processes, including decentralisation (and role of local government), land tenure, external debt, international trade relations, and how this variation affects food security options; and, regional variation in livelihoods and vulnerability; trade in food, including potential for regional grain reserves and commodity exchanges; experiences of regional co-operation in planning for and responding to food emergencies; and regional organisations and their capabilities.

### Country issues papers

The purpose of these five papers is to root the subsequent Forum discussions firmly around the current priority food security concerns in the selected countries. The papers will be authored locally by an individual or group able to set out objectively the key food security concerns, and the detailed arguments and questions behind them, that have been identified by government, donors and civil society in the country concerned. Country papers will be grouped around four organising themes: vulnerability context; market-based development options; social protection needs; and policy processes. They will include a description of current government and donor policies, strategies and plans relevant to food security.

### Theme papers

The food security policy implications of the issues raised under each theme in the country papers will be explored in detail by internationally recognised experts using high quality economic, institutional and political analysis applied to the evidence base in the region, informed where relevant by evidence from other parts of the South. The detailed focus of the four theme papers depends on the content of the country issues papers but is likely to include:

- **Vulnerability context:** implications of how vulnerability has changed over the last decade for development policy interventions, with particular attention to the impact of HIV/AIDS; best bet options for assessments, mapping and triggers.
- **Option for market-based development of the food economy:** demand, supply, variability of food supplies and prices. Underlying economic integration requirements; size and features of potential target population in the region; specific issues such as the impact of emergency responses on regional grain markets.
- **Social protection:** size and features of the population unable to respond to market-based recovery options in the short term and possibly requiring longer-term social protection interventions to build assets and respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- **Policy processes:** governance, accountability and institutional capacity issues in the formulation and delivery of key food security policy decisions. Implications for best donor practice.

### Final Policy Papers & Dissemination

The results of the e-conferences and workshops will be summarised and presented in the following documents:

- **Country food security policy papers** These will be stand-alone documents for each focus country, identifying a set of potential policy options for improving food security in the immediate recovery period and over the longer-term.
- **Regional food security options synthesis paper** Setting out the policy options relevant to each organising theme, and referring to the likely scope for addressing the issues under each theme in the immediate recovery period and longer-term.