FAMINE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE SEARCH FOR AN EXIT

by

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Being Malawian, I am a son of Southern Africa and feel driven to contribute in my personal capacity[1] to the ongoing debate about the sub-region's apparently inexorable slide into frequent famines. This is not an academic paper but a heartfelt plea for Southern Africa to shoulder its own responsibility and to act before it is too late. A number of the sub-region's countries won political independence when I was young – I sensed the optimism of everyone and much then was of our countries becoming a breadbasket of global significance. Some decades later, I find myself confused and frustrated to see instead images of malnourished children and a begging basket – surely this cannot be my Southern Africa?

What went wrong? Are we condemned to living with hunger from now on? What should we do? These are questions to which I have no magical answers; I contribute through this paper to hopefully raising collective guilt to the point where it will lead to action. Living abroad as I do, I am aware that the international community can play a role in this but I am convinced that the main responsibility lies with the Southern African countries themselves. I say this because it is a shared Southern African tradition that the head of household provides for her/his own family; something has gone seriously wrong when governments, as proxy heads of household, feel able to violate this fundamental responsibility with ease and routinely beg for food from abroad. We should not accept this.

A BEGGAR'S FATE?

Soft words, gentle diplomatic niceties and avoidance of "bare knuckles" expressions are the hallmark of documents prepared for international meetings, even when they deal with the brutal realities of war, poverty and hunger. It therefore came as a surprise to read some very direct language used in a paper co-prepared by the African Union (AU), the NEPAD Secretariat and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for the July 2003 Conference of Ministers of Agriculture of the AU held in Maputo. Its introductory paragraph had this to say for all Africa:

> *"Despite the fact that the majority of Africa's people feed themselves and that some countries in Africa export agricultural produce, the image conveyed most dramatically to the world is of Africa with a begging bowl. Africa faces repeated high-profile famines and has come to be perceived as a continent dependent on charity; an object of pity. In agriculture as in other sectors, Africa's production*

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and market share in international commerce are both small; the region therefore lacks the ability to influence world prices or the patterns of trade or to significantly influence its own destiny. The poor performance of the African economy and its insignificance as a supplier of what the world is willing to buy are largely responsible for the region's marginal status."[2]

Much frustration lies behind this directness, and with good reason: Africa receives nearly a third of the world's food aid cereals; although it accounts for about 13 percent of the world population, Africa produces only 7 percent of its maize and 3 percent of its rice; and, for world agricultural exports, Africa's share more than halved from 8 percent in 1971-1980 to only 3.4 percent in 1991-2000.[3] There is little public or private investment going into the agro-sector; instead, rural banks, farm enterprises, and agro-processing enterprises in many countries (with only one or two countries as notable exceptions) are folding up – the farm sector is de-industrialising.

Furthermore, Africa, which has in the past been either a leader or among the leaders for a number of traded agricultural commodities, has in almost all cases allowed itself to be eclipsed, examples being in groundnuts, palm oil, coffee, tea, and certain varieties of tobacco. In the case of coffee, Vietnam, a middle scale Asian country that had its economy almost destroyed by war less than three decades ago has due to vision, focus and commitment become the world's second leading exporter. African producers are having a hard time competing with it. For rice, which has become a staple food in parts of the continent, the chances are that at any one meal in West Africa, the rice served is from Thailand or Vietnam. Increasingly, the chicken eaten in Africa comes from Brazil, Europe, or Thailand; cassava for industrial use is predominantly from Thailand. Palm oil, the genetic stock and technology of which originated in West Africa, is now largely produced by Indonesia and Malaysia, with Africa a net importer. One could go on.

Unfortunately, the distressing all-Africa picture painted above applies with few exceptions to Southern Africa. Against the backdrop of Africa's lacklustre economic performance, the Southern Africa famine is a signal of systemic problems – the region has for long been achieving only minimal surpluses and by now, even small climatic disturbances trigger major food crises. Tabulated information at the end of this paper reveals some interesting facts: (a) since 1990, total SADC cereals output has grown only 3 percent, while population has shot up 34 percent; (b) the cereal production per capita has declined by over 30 percent from 140kg to only 108 kg; (c) much land that is potentially cultivable remains unused, the average ratio of used land in SADC being only 11 percent, of which only some 17% is irrigated; (d) there is little evidence of serious farming: average cultivated land per capita is only around 0.22 hectares – hardly enough to feed the farmer at current levels of yield. It should be noted that these regional

2 Responding to Agricultural and Food Insecurity Challenges – Mobilising Africa to Implement NEPAD Programmes. Document AU/MIN/AGRI/2: Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda - Preparatory Meeting of Experts: Conference of Ministers of Agriculture of the African Union. Maputo, Mozambique. 1 July 2003

3 Africa's performance is even worse for total world merchandise trade, for which it had only 1.2 percent during the 1990s, the share having fallen from 3.1 percent in the 1950s.

numbers are made artificially high by the performance of agriculture in only three or so countries; if these star peformers are excluded, the averages for the rest become dismal. With such numbers, it is no surprise that famines are becoming entrenched.

With hungry mouths increasing far faster than food production, Southern African countries are obliged, despite their poverty and heavy debt burden, to divert scarce foreign exchange into imports of food. In this way they are left with no resources for long-term capital investment into prosperity for their peoples. Southern Africa's food imports have almost doubled over the last fifteen years. SADC estimates that cereal demand will reach about 58.4 million tonnes in 2015, more than double the current requirement of 28.4 million tonnes and much higher than the SADC annual cereals production that has stagnated since 1990 at about 23 million tonnes. Since they are short of money, the countries frequently supplement commercial imports, with appeals for food aid – SADC alone now accounts for 8 percent of world food aid – more than twice its share of world population. With a view to being courteous, one can call food aid by any other name but there is no way to mask the reality that it amounts to begging. When begging involves such a basic need and if requirements for it are significant, Southern Africa needs to ask whether it does not risk compromising its political freedom.

So worrying is the situation that it led to the convening by President Mkapa of Tanzania of an extraordinary SADC Summit in Dar-es-Salaam on 10 April 2004. At that meeting, the leaders faced the stark reality that their countries, which at the time of their political independence were largely able to feed their people had failed to build on what they inherited and instead their peoples were staring hunger in the face. Southern Africa is now regularly mentioned with alarm alongside the horn of Africa and images of its starving children are paraded on the world's television screens. According to a SADC paper prepared for the Dar-es-Salaam Summit,[4] the 2002/2003 food crisis affected close to 15.2 million people in the sub-region. That emergency had the hallmarks of a systemic rather than transient problem – millions not only faced starvation but the dislocation of core underpinnings of their economy with the poor forced to dispose of their meagre assets and so undermining the basis for recovery and future growth.

What has brought countries that used to not only feed themselves but also to export agricultural produce to this sad end? How come countries that were able to feed refugee and internally displaced populations from Southern Africa's wars of liberation now have to beg largely from outside? Should Southern Africa continue to blame droughts and floods as the cause of its persistent and increasingly frequent famines? Or should it look hard at its own failures of vision, commitment, policy and strategy? Can the governments and their international and private sector partners claim with a clear conscience that they have done their best? Should Southern Africa accept its new beggar's reality as a God-given fate and live with it? No single document can answer

4 Enhancing Agriculture and Food Security for Poverty Reduction in the SADC Region: Key Issues. Paper for SADC Extraordinary Summit. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, SADC Secretariat. 10 April 2004 (draft).

all these questions in depth: this one attempts to draw attention to selected issues to which Southern Africa might wish to prioritise in seeking a rapid exit from the current sorry state of affairs.

SELECTED CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

In Africa, it is common to blame the continent's woes on colonialism and on the unsustainably-fast 3 percent annual growth of population, which dwarfs the annual agricultural increment rate of 2 percent or less for many sub-Saharan African countries. Africa also blames poor rains and floods; inequitable access to land (sometimes linked to colonial inequities); and the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is decimating the farming population as well as educated manpower essential for research, extension and agricultural sector management. There is no doubt that in specific circumstances, all the above factors can be significant. Taken on a collective Southern African scale, however, it is a cause of concern that no one appears to have noted the following:

- that nowadays a flood in only one country or drought in only 3-4 countries out of nearly 15 plunges the whole sub-region into famine to the extent of seeking food aid from Europe and North America. This is confirmation that the margins of food self-sufficiency have been eroded too thin for safety;

- that despite having over 60 percent of the people actively farming on the land, Southern Africa is unable to feed even the farmers themselves, let alone their urbanised compatriots. By contrast, in Europe and North America, farmers comprise fewer than 10 percent (in some cases under 5 percent) of the people yet they can not only feed their entire populations but produce surpluses that dominate international agricultural trade and food aid charity to Africa and elsewhere;

- that while recognising how severe the HIV/AIDS plague has become, it has not yet reduced the rural population to the equivalent of leaving only 5 – 10 percent of the people in farming – a rural ratio that in developed countries is enough to produce farm surpluses. Thus, without in any way downplaying its gravity, the AIDS epidemic is only a contributory factor in the food insecurity equation: Southern Africa was already starving or was on the margins of famine even before the explosive spread of AIDS.

Clearly, what Southern Africa faces is a productivity issue and the search for solutions must include focus on how to make the Southern African farmer produce enough not only for auto-subsistence but also to feed the cities and to trade. Two anecdotal statistics are illustrative: (a) at present African fertiliser use averages only about 9kg/hectare (ha) compared to over 200kg/ha for Asia and over 120kg/ha for the OECD developed countries - similar contrasts can be made for unit inputs of energy, pest-control measures, scientific/technological know-how; (b) average African rice yields are only 40 percent of those in Asia and 14 percent of those in Oceania. In addition, the tabulated information shows that Southern Africa still uses a small fraction of available agricultural land, except in two countries that have dense populations.

SELECTED QUESTIONS

There are two fundamentals to note: Fact 1: the most food secure people in the world live in Australasia, Europe, Japan, and North America and most do not farm; they work elsewhere in their economies and earn enough there to achieve food security by buying their food, leaving only a few farmers to supply all their food needs and beyond. Fact 2: although there is enough food in the world for everyone, Southern Africans are on average too poor to purchase all their needs and therefore they are obliged to beg for food aid. With these fundamentals in mind, an absolute priority is for Southern Africa to achieve rapid economic growth for higher incomes, but since this will take some decades, Southern Africa must in the interim also focus on rapidly raising agricultural productivity if it is to feed itself. Answering the following questions may assist in showing that in order to succeed, Southern Africa will need to face its own responsibilities:

- Why does it make more sense for developed countries that have as few as 5 – 10 percent of their people in farming to allocate huge budgets for supporting agriculture[5] when Africa (with over 60-70 percent of people in farming) does not? Why do developed countries over-invest in farming to the point of producing farm surpluses that are costly to store? Could it be that they recognise the special status of food and its strategic importance which means that it should not be left entirely to chance and private sector solutions?[6]

- Why does it make sense for Africa to frequently claim that highly subsidised agriculture in the developed countries is responsible for making it fail in its export efforts when other developing Asian and Latin American countries face the same competition from subsidised products and yet have made progress, sometimes at Africa's expense? What did these other countries do and where was Africa when they did them? What can Africa do to catch up?

- Why have the countries of Southern Africa embraced the doctrines of Structural Adjustment[7] in such an abrupt and fundamentalist way that they have almost

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5 At one time, about half the European Commission budget went to the Common Agricultural Policy, a major thrust of which was to subsidise farm production. The Commission also paid the costs of storing huge farm surpluses and both it and some individual countries also supported farm exports.

6 Ongoing work in FAO indicates that according to IMF official data, the share of agriculture in total expenditure for Africa averaged a little above 5% in 2001, and for SADC countries the average was 4% for that same year. However, the unofficial data from Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers for 2003 for countries where data are available reveal that both for all Africa and for SADC countries, there was some increase in this share, with the averages being 5.5% and 5.2% respectively.

7 The intentions were good and the expectations even better: as a result of adjustment, economic resources would be allocated to the opportunities of greatest return; the inefficiencies inherent in government and parastatal production were going to be relegated to history; lean and efficient private production offering the same goods in far greater quantities and at competitive costs – the private sectorr lead would replace state economic meddling; production was going to mushroom; a liberalised environment would attract capital – including international investment; efficiency

completely dislocated government research/extension, rural investment, and farmer production-inputs and market support? How can they justify doing this to their farmers – among the poorest in the world - when in industrial countries, rich farmers (including corporate farm giants) benefit from heavy public support and subsidies?

- Given how little they invest in rural infrastructure and other conditions for reducing the costs of doing business, why do the governments consider it reasonable to expect the private sector to move into rural areas and take their place in servicing rural farmers with inputs, credit delivery, marketing, extension and technological services?

- How do governments expect the poorest farmers in the world to pay prices for essential inputs, such as fertilisers, that are many times the world level when economic structural adjustment has taken away assurance of markets and floor prices and when small private traders buy only from roadsides at often low and highly volatile which cannot guarantee a reasonable income to the farmers?

- Some three decades after political liberation, how is it possible that no country in the sub-region has reached global prominence in the production of any one commodity or of manufactures based upon it (as Vietnam and Thailand have done for rice; Thailand for cut flowers, industrial cassava, and chicken; Vietnam for coffee; Malaysia and Indonesia for Palm Oil etc)? Why in fact, have some formerly prominent producer countries in the sub-region lost global prominence?

All the above considered, the reality is that Southern African agriculture is stagnant except in one or two countries where strong government policy support enabled an elite large-scale farming sub-sector to become well-established in earlier decades. After the withdrawal of public involvement in rural areas, agriculture no longer attracts significant investment in many countries and agro-industries are progressively closing down. What should be done and who should do it?

WHAT TO DO?

Southern Africa's famines cannot be wished away and, on current trends, they can only grow worse. Clearly some urgent intervention in agriculture and agro-industry is needed, while pursuit of overall growth of the economies also continues.

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would reduce production costs so that they would not be too divergent (if at all) from prevailing world prices – Africa would thus become competitive and prosperity would automatically follow.

Increasing the engagement of governments in agriculture

Investment

Increasing public investment: There is a growing perception that at the root of the food security crisis is under-investment in agriculture and severe dislocation/poor focus of what little there is. The African Union's 2003 Summit in Maputo resolved that public budget allocations to agriculture should reach 10 percent within 5 years. While one may question the universal applicability of such a target, it is important to respect the signal which is that Africa is not investing enough public resources into the sector.

What makes more sense?

During the era of Structural Adjustment, many governments severely and abruptly disengaged from supporting agriculture. No country has worked out the comparative economics to show whether the cost to governments of supporting farmers is in fact worse the costs now being faced of paying for food imports under the duress of famine. Nor has any government worked out the true economic and political cost of relying on charitable food supplies.

In carrying out such comparative analyses, however, Southern Africa will need to be realistic: it cannot turn back the clock and have wholesale reinstatement of heavy pre-reform government involvement. In revisiting how best to support farmers, governments now have to ensure greater compatibility with modern economic orthodoxy and with obligations imposed by international treaties, particularly in the area of trade.

Targeting investment: Public investment is needed in order to reduce costs of doing business in rural areas so as to attract private capital. The question is, what to prioritise? Targeting agriculture itself in isolation (seasonal investment in quality seeds and inputs, farm credit, farm structures) would not be sufficient. Governments must invest equally and sometimes more into factors that make doing business in rural areas profitable, e.g.: roads, agricultural input and market depots, water works to allow irrigation, pest/disease control facilities, and affordable power. Furthermore, they must renew institutional investments in their own capacities to manage and service development activities - vision, planning and policy; research and extension; farmer training. They should promote organisation for advocacy and mutual support among farm and agro-industry producers. It goes without saying that to guarantee long-term success, governments must also increase core social investment in education and health for a technologically-enabled and productive rural population.

Ensuring synergy among investments: The efficiency of Southern African investments made with great sacrifice is in question. Far too often, the countries borrow expensive money for roads and railways or power lines; these are often designed for engineering excellence and may pass through remote or mountainous areas with no farm or other economic potential. The same countries then borrow for agriculture schemes located a long way from where they have installed the infrastructure. Both investments suffer.

On the one hand, there is little economic activity near the infrastructure to help the nation will pay back for the power line, road or rail – such infrastructure goes hundreds of miles little used to serve rural industry, agriculture (e.g. to pump irrigation water) or other commercial activity. On the other hand, for lack of nearby quality infrastructure, the remotely-located farm schemes face high costs in accessing power propcess their produce and in getting inputs or shipping out farm produce – they cannot be internationally competitive.

At sub-regional level, the problem is the same: SADC, for example, has done a commendable job of promoting transport corridors and an inter-connected electrical grid. But no concentrated development activity (including large-scale agriculture) is being aggressively promoted to capitalise on the networks and corridors? The cost-competitveness advantages for farms and agro-industrioes located along key transport corridors and feeder systems to them as well as deliberate efforts to develop agro-processing drawing upon low-cost powerlines could potentially transform the prospects for the regional farm economy.

Creating an enabling policy environment

Investment without a sense of direction and clear priorities is not just wasteful but can be harmful. Without in any way falling into the temptations of central planning, governments have central responsibility for promoting a vision and establishing the necessary incentives for its achievement. They need this to guide both public and private investments. Some areas for policy adjustment to create investor-friendly incentives are in the fiscal and macro-policy areas: exchange rates, depreciation regimes, rights to repatriate profits, preferential access to credit or foreign exchange, taxation, minimum wage and worker rights regimes etc.

Public support – subsidise?

The agricultural success stories in post-independence Africa were largely in the area of cash crops (commercial private sector) or in mobilisation of individually small but collectively large surpluses from smallholder farmers. No cases can be pointed out where such surpluses occurred without direct or indirect support from governments, such as: establishment of marketing organisations; creation of depots for both inputs and produce; stable and controlled prices for inputs and compensation to minimise locational disadvantage suffered by remote farmers; affirmative action on farm credit and produce prices; extension and research; farm schools; affordable pest control and veterinary services, etc.

Is it subsidy or defensible public intervention to establish a more level playing field?

Governments and the international community become emotional when "subsidised inputs" are mentioned, hence the need for care. What Africa needs may not be subsidies (i.e. support that reduces costs of production below reasonable levels in a world comparison context) but targeted support to ensure that for key inputs not easily available from within the country, its farmers do not face abnormally high prices but something closer to prevailing world levels. Consider the case of a smallholder farmer in a landlocked Southern African country – s/he faces "delivered at farm gate" input prices that are far higher than world prices, due to the following cost-augmenting factors:

- **Small markets**: African markets for products, e.g. fertiliser, are small. The small total volumes, when separated into many varieties and grades, and when spread into purchases from a lot of different suppliers around the world, mean that the continent faces near-retail rather than bulk wholesale prices;

- **Small shipments, unfrequented shipping lanes**: Having bought the supplies in small dispersed lots, Africa then has to ship them again in small lots, largely on shipping lanes that are not heavily frequented and therefore carrying higher transport tariffs. To reach East/Central Africa, the low-cost shipping lane comes closest at Durban, after which transhipment is onto more costly smaller boats or land transport;

- **Inland shipping on poor infrastructure**: Having reached the African coast, the supplies face long journeys into this highly landlocked continent and accumulate further costs on poor quality railways and poorer quality roads;

- **Dispersed and small consumers**: Within each country, the rural population is dispersed – each farmer buys at most a few bags. To deliver such small batches adds the final high cost element. By arrival at farm gate, the relationship with "international prevailing prices" has been lost.

For the above reasons, an African smallholder paying the full price is not facing a level playing field relative to the average "global farmer". Thus, if her/his government covers not necessarily all but the extremes of the difference between the farm gate prices and world prices, it is only trying to level out the adverse tilt in the playing field. In the absence of such intervention by governments, it is difficult to see how small farmers can raise their average fertiliser use above 9kg/ha - how then can they begin to compete with OECD farmers that use over 120kg/ha. or Asian farmers that approach 200kg/ha fertiliser use?

Modern economic orthodoxy condemns subsidies outright as distortionary and anti-competition. In the case of developed countries, political pressure has made withdrawal of subsidies difficult and, in some cases, they are increasing instead, even where the evidence is that their beneficiaries are not always small farmers but giant corporations. In Africa, foreign aid conditionality has forced many governments to withdraw public support for agriculture and downsise or halt core "public goods"functions such as research, extension and veterinary services etc. The paper cited earlier for the African Union meeting of Ministers of Agriculture[8] had this to say:

> *"There is an unanswerable paradox when Africa is compared to the European Union (EU): (a) African countries, with over 60 percent of their people dependent on agriculture allocate as little as 1 percent or less of their national budgets to agriculture; and (b) the European Union, with 5 percent or fewer of its citizens dependent on the land, allocates half of its budget to the Common Agricultural Policy under which it provides heavy subsidies and other support for agriculture."*

If the price of receiving aid for education, health, public works etc is such that governments must deny food security to their poorest, should the question not be asked if the aid is worth it? If by denying the poor affordable access to yield-enhancing technologies and inputs and to stable markets countries must then spend scarce money annually to import food or must beg for food, does it still make sense to retain the polices after decades of worsening food security? Is human progress not based on learning from mistakes and if so, how can countries not see what has failed and try something else? i.e. should policy choices be so dogmatically held that they cannot be adjusted in the light of lessons of experience? Several considerations may be highlighted for Southern African countries:

- <u>whether it is reasonable to use the term "subsidy" loosely</u> for price support to imported inputs such as fertilisers where prices are extremely high relative to international prices due to Africa's landlocked status, poor transport infrastructure, dispersed location of farmers etc (see Box).

- <u>whether there is in fact a choice for the farmer</u>: for farmers earning an annual average of between US$100 – 200, the price of only one bag of fertiliser, say US$20 is already too heavy relative to total income. A period of price support that can lead to doubled average rural incomes after a few years would make it possible at that time to ask farmers to face the full price. If this is not done, the farmers cannot accumulate surpluses and so will always depend on aid.

- <u>regarding the question of whether as poor countries they can afford subsidies:</u> The answer could be whether they can afford <u>not</u> to subsidise agriculture: the real issue is whether it makes more sense to spend scarce foreign exchange on supporting farm production or instead on food imports or to rely in perpetuity on food aid, a source of supply that is based on goodwill and which could well be delayed or could come under conditions not always in keeping with national aspirations.

8 Responding to Agricultural and Food Insecurity Challenges – Mobilising Africa to Implement NEPAD Programmes. Document AU/MIN/AGRI/2: Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda - Preparatory Meeting of Experts: Conference of Ministers of Agriculture of the African Union. Maputo, Mozambique. 1 July 2003

On the international plane, two elements can be highlighted:

- Africa is a marginal player in international agricultural trade: All of Africa accounts for only about 3 percent of world agricultural trade; Southern Africa is even more marginal. Thus, even if all its production were subsidised heavily, the distortion of world trade patterns or threat to the commercial interests of the major farm trading countries would be negligible. Fairness suggests that room could be found for public support to the sub-region's poor farmers without shaking the foundations of the global farm trading system.

- Non-food roles of agriculture are also important: All the justifications used or implied by developed countries for their own farm support (keeping the rural areas economically alive, national security, non-food services of agriculture, etc) apply equally or more so in Southern Africa.

Vision and focus

The success stories in international agriculture all reflect possession of a clear vision and commitment to its implementation. They also reflect focus on doing a few key things well. In the introduction, mention was made of several products for which Africa had lost leadership or at least significant supplier roles, mainly to developing Asian countries. The questions are: how did Africa lose even opportunities that were already in the hand? Why is it satisfied with playing bit parts on the international stage rather than becoming dominant? Where is the ambition? How could Africa see others start from behind, catch up, surpass it and then be content to lament the unfairness of the world?

Yet instead of learning to focus from the success of others, Southern African countries (with advice from a proliferation of partners) are increasingly dispersing agricultural efforts over an amazing array of products: vanilla, soya, sunflower, small ruminants, organic vegetables, cut flowers, rice, etc – but with none receiving enough attention to be done on a commercially competitive basis. Some countries are even planting more coffee when there is an international glut and prices have fallen nearly 50 percent within a few years. While diversifying spreads risks, the sub-region may well be overdoing it and may in fact be multiply risk by becoming so insignificant in everything it produces.

The sub-region has so far failed to focus even on ensuring adequate production of cereals - the shortage of which is a key element of famines. Three decades after political independence, to have countries unable to produce cereals able to compete on cost with imports that travel half way around the world does not say much for agricultural development efforts to date.

Given the critical need to focus, it is encouraging to see the efforts of SADC to highlight a few priorities. In its Regional Indicative Strategy Development Plan (RISDP), SADC calls for focus on: (a) sustainable agricultural financing and investment, (b) enhancing food production, productivity and the overall availability, (c) enhancing access to safe food (agro-industrial development for higher incomes, improved markets and trade), (d) enhancing disaster preparedness and (e) mitigating impacts of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security. SADC also refers to the need for enhancing the institutional framework.

It will be important for countries to collectively and individually define more precisely what are to be the "priorities of priorities" under these themes, to agree on ways to avoid destructive competition among themselves, to identify areas where they wish to collectively achieve significance in the world, even if the actual investment is done nationally. To direct private sector efforts in the direction governments choose, they will have to establish the types of policy incentives that have worked in Asia and Latin America.

SOUTHERN AFRICA's OWN EFFORTS MUST BE CENTRAL

Southern Africa needs to see the famine crisis as an issue of strategic importance capable, if left unchecked, to compromise the reality of freedom for the region and its peoples. It will need to act with speed tempered with care. Southern Africa cannot afford further inaction or to adopt a "business as usual stance: the price it would eventually pay would be too high. As mentioned earlier, sometimes Africa has sought to escape the unpleasant reality of its share of responsibility for persistent poverty and famines by blaming others: they colonised and exploited Africa and left it an economic husk; they have closed their markets; they subsidise their producers so making Africa uncompetitive; they offer too little aid etc. The fact of the matter is that these adverse conditions also apply to other developing regions – Asia and Latin America. Yet these others have gained ground, even if not all that would have been possible in a fairer world.

Southern Africa can also not afford to leave its fate in the hands of others on the assumption that they will always be driven by charity to help if things get desperate. In the African Union context, there is growing recognition that Africa is not owed a living by parties outside, whether rich countries or otherwise. As discussed at the 2003 African Union Ministerial meeting:

> *". . . . the time appears ripe for Africa to realise that the international community and donors do not owe its people a living. The numbers speak for themselves: OECD countries spend about US$360 billion a year (nearly US1 billion a day) on subsidising their own farmers, apart from also subsidising exports; by contrast, in 1999, agricultural aid to all developing countries in Africa was only US$2.6 billion for a whole year. At the same time, the allocations to aid are declining: according to the World Bank, total Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows are down*

25 percent in the last 4 years[9]*. In developing Africa, agricultural aid fell from US$4 billion in 1990 to only US$2.6billion in 1999, a fall of 35 percent. Furthermore, the reduced aid that is available tends increasingly to be diverted to emergency relief rather than long-term development."*[10]

Clearly, in matters of the famines, Southern Africa must take to heart the guiding principle of self-reliance which led to the launching of NEPAD. In the preceding review, it has been clear that ***the key need at present is to use of all means possible to assist farmers become more productive, particularly for staples of strategic importance for Southern Africa***. Given that the sub-region is not rich enough to import commercially, at the minimum, the ambition should be to be able to feed the poor from within the region except for those commodities where the price advantage of importing is so great that it is economically senseless to produce locally. What will lead to success in achieving this and related objectives in future? Clearly, heavier and more sustained public investment is necessary in the key areas mentioned earlier. But beyond that, the following can be re-stated as essentials:

- *Vision and focus*: development of a clear vision and priorities at national and, collectively, at sub-regional level and the necessary discipline to see it through. The vision should include identified areas where the sub-region wishes to become a global-scale player in international agriculture;

- *Commitment*: Africa's own practical commitment to its vision and priorities, including in public budget terms, so making implementation not contingent upon support of external parties;

- *Public re-engagement*: Governments' re-engagement with support for agriculture, given the poor ability to date of the private sector to take up the functions expected of it in supporting agriculture after structural adjustment.[11] On the basis of close dialogue with the private sector, selectively intervening to create better conditions for attracting private capital into agriculture and agro-industry;

- *Policy stability*: ensuring stability of policies and approaches to intervention rather than frequent changes;

- *Synergising sector investments*: reviewing major infrastructure (power, water, and transport among them) at national and sub-regional level and actively seeking

9 World Bank Press release 2002/2/12.

10 Responding to Agricultural and Food Insecurity Challenges – Mobilising Africa to Implement NEPAD Programmes. Document AU/MIN/AGRI/2: Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda - Preparatory Meeting of Experts: Conference of Ministers of Agriculture of the African Union. Maputo, Mozambique. 1 July 2003

11 Provision of strong governmental support to farmers including technical services, investment in infrastructure and other facilities, market services and support to access to key yield-enhancing inputs. Given the changed policy climate and international dogma in matters of state roles in development, Southern Africa will need to find innovative ways to re-engage without seeking a return to the pre-Structural Adjustment interventionist days.

opportunities for food production investments to capitalise on such facilities to promote a globally competitive agricultural and agro-industry sector better able than now to reach international markets at competitive cost.

The sub-region has rich enough natural resources, core elements of industry and of technological capacity, and examples of success within itself to be able to make rapid progress. Perhaps the most important ingredient for success will be the determination to save itself and to regain true self-reliance on the critical business of food.

SADC cereals production in relation to population

Year	Cereal production ('000 tonnes)							Population	
	Maize	Wheat	Rice	Sorghum /Millet	Total '000t	Total Index	Cereals / Capita (kg)	('000)	Index
1990	17348	2516	603	1595	22062	***100***	140	157522	***100***
1991	15474	2154	491	1642	19761	*90*	122	162154	*103*
1992	6783	2365	311	1247	10707	*48*	64	167004	*106*
1993	17137	1778	523	2079	21517	*97*	125	171911	*109*
1994	20074	2231	562	1838	24705	*98*	140	176675	*112*
1995	11097	2490	603	2049	16239	*74*	90	181146	*115*
1996	20345	3170	529	2776	26820	*122*	145	185258	*118*
1997	17054	2763	533	2032	22382	*101*	118	189065	*120*
1998	15835	2201	922	1905	20863	*95*	108	192662	*122*
1999	17052	2032	633	1586	21303	*97*	109	196206	*125*
2000	20501	2729	730	2124	26084	*118*	130	199807	*127*
2001	15880	3053	745	1909	21587	*98*	104	203501	*129*
2002	16323	2629	595	1999	21546	*98*	104	207251	*132*
2003	18418	1888	767	1680	22753	*103*	108	211023	*134*

Sources: SADC - FANR Directorate; FAOSTAT

Land Use in SADC Region – year 2002

Country	Population ('000)	Total Land Area ('000 ha)	Agricultural land ('000 ha)				
			Total Potential*	Actually cultivated**			
				Area	% of potential	Area/capita (ha)	Irrigated Area
Angola	13184	124670	57300	3000	5.2	0.23	750
Botswana	1770	56673	25980	370	1.4	0.21	10
DRC	51201	226705	22800	6700	29.4	0.13	110
Lesotho	1800	3035	2334	330	14.1	0.18	10
Malawi	11871	9408	4290	2300	53.6	0.19	280
Mauritius	1210	203	113	100	88.5	0.08	0
Mozambique	18537	78049	48435	4200	8.7	0.23	1070
Namibia	1961	82329	38820	816	2.1	0.42	70
Seychelles	80	45	7	1	14.3	0.01	0
South Africa	44759	122104	99640	14753	14.8	0.33	1498
Swaziland	1069	1720	1390	178	12.8	0.17	700
Tanzania	36276	88359	40100	4000	10.0	0.11	1600
Zambia	10698	74339	35289	5260	14.9	0.49	460
Zimbabwe	12835	386850	20550	3220	15.7	0.25	1170
SADC	**207251**	**906324**	**397048**	**45228**	**11.4**	**0.22**	**7728**

* = "agricultural area" in FAOSTAT; ** = "arable land" in FAOSTAT. Source: FAOSTAT