

Cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture (Minag) and The Department of Agricultural Economics at Michigan State University (MSU)

Cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture (Minag) and Michigan State University (MSU) began in 1990. This cooperation focuses on capacity building in the areas of agricultural market information, applied agricultural policy research, analysis and policy dialogue, national agricultural survey design and analysis, and socio-economic analysis of agricultural technology development. To date, over 30 BS-level Mozambican analysts have received in-service training, 6 have received MS-level training at MSU, and 2 have received PhD-level training at MSU. Several other Mozambican analysts have conducted MS thesis research in collaboration with MSU while obtaining their degrees from other universities. Originally known as the Projecto de Segurança Alimentar, all project activities have been fully integrated within the Economics Directorate (DE) since 1999. In 2004, a new phase of collaboration was launched with both DE and the newly created Instituto de Investigação Agrária de Moçambique (IIAM). Funding for this cooperation is jointly provided by Minag through Proagri, and by USAID.

The national agricultural market information system (SIMA) was developed jointly by Mozambican and MSU analysts in the early 1990s, and is part of the Statistics Department of DE. SIMA was designed to respond to the needs of both the public and private sectors to establish a market economy for agricultural products. Over 500 weekly information bulletins (*Quente Quente*) have been published to date and are regularly used by the private sector nationwide, by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MIC) to develop its regional market outlook bulletin, and Minag's famine early warning unit (Departamento de Avisio Previo) to monitor the availability and costs of food in markets in drought- or flood-affected areas.

In the early years of SIMA's existence, the public sector was concerned to effectively balance food aid imports with national production. As markets developed, concern shifted to expanding market opportunities for smallholders and providing information to enable them to bargain more successfully with traders. An important innovation has been the development of provincial market information systems (SIMAPs) designed to address local as well as national information needs. Under national leadership, SIMA has recently been awarded a grant by The Rockefeller Foundation to develop SIMAPs in the provinces of Zambezia and Tete. Today SIMA is one of the most advanced market information systems in the Southern Africa region and, together with MIC and other partners, organizes an annual market outlook conference for the private sector. A major challenge for SIMA is timely access to funds for operating costs, training of enumerators and being careful to stay in close touch with the information needs of users such as small and large farmers and traders, consumers, and public sector analysts.

In collaboration with analysts in the Department of Policy Analysis of DE, MSU has assisted in conducting a wide range of applied policy research, policy analysis and policy outreach activities. In addition to intensive in-service and MS-level training for policy analysts, almost 60 research papers and over 40 policy briefs have been

published by the Economics Directorate. Topics include analysis of rural household incomes and agricultural economic growth, cash crop sector performance (tobacco, cotton, cashew), the extent and implications of HIV/AIDS, profitability of agricultural technology, constraints and investment needs of the seeds sector, agricultural minimum wage policy, value-added tax and maize marketing. MSU staff have also mentored the policy outreach process: findings from research and policy analysis are regularly presented in user-friendly formats to technical and professional audiences in Mozambique and are widely used by other Mozambican Ministries, the donor community, the university system and NGOs. The development of a revised national agricultural survey method (Trabalho de Inquerito Agrícola) in 2002 and 2003 has greatly expanded the database for effective agricultural policy analysis and agricultural development programme design. Once again, Mozambique has become a leader on the continent through the introduction of field-based data entry and cleaning using laptop computers, for which it was highly commended by FAO. With USAID funding, MSU currently provides a full-time survey specialist to assist with training in all aspects of the TIA method.

The current phase of collaboration includes the establishment of a socio-economics capacity within the new agricultural research institute, the IIAM. Increased productivity of food and cash crops is essential for rapid poverty reduction in rural areas, and economics has an important contribution to make to ensure that improved technology is applicable to the needs and circumstances of Mozambican smallholders. Socio-economists will assist IIAM with research priority setting, the diagnosis of smallholder research needs at the zonal research centers, interdisciplinary evaluation of the profitability and risk of new technologies, and technology early adoption and impact studies. IIAM's first group of nine Mozambican socio-economic analysts will complete in-service training in June 2005, and will be posted to the Nampula and Sussendenga zonal research centers, key thematic programs (crops, livestock) and headquarter units. MSU provides a full-time senior economist to provide in-service training, guide the socio-economics programme development, and assist the leadership of IIAM in launching the new institute's mission.

Key factors underlying the successful collaboration between Minag and MSU to date have been the willingness of Minag collaborators and leadership to accept new approaches and ideas, the willingness of Minag to allow Mozambican young professionals opportunities to learn and grow through in-service as well as advanced degree training, the continuity of funding from USAID, and the in-service and capacity building approach of MSU that combines rigorous academic training with relevant problem-solving and policy outreach experience. Additional information can be found at the following websites:

Overview: <http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/mozambique/index.htm>

SIMA: <http://www.sima.minag.org.mz/>

Research: <http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/mozambique/researchreports.htm>

Policy Briefs: <http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/mozambique/flash/index.htm>

Theses: <http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/mozambique/reprints.htm>