



Food Security Research Project transformation takes root

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 AGRICULTURAL research is one of the key undertakings in the development of the farming sector in any country.

In Zambia, the Food Security Research Project (FSRP) has been one of the many organisations championing research, which has seen the country's agricultural sector taking shape. Established in 1999 and supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), FSRP has for over 10 years now provided insights through its

research activities on how the country's agricultural sector can develop, thus improving food security at both household and national level.

This has been through the provision of baseline information on smallholder production patterns, use of agricultural inputs, marketing systems and other information necessary to monitor the impacts of changes in the agricultural policy environment on selected socio-economic and regional groups in Zambia.

However, the FSRP has now been transformed from being a project to an institute under a new name called Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI).

Though the objectives remain the same, the transformation of the FSRP to IAPRI comes due to the need felt by both the Government and cooperating partners to have a locally registered institution addressing agricultural policy research so as to provide a visible platform for research and policy dialogue on a long-term basis.

Established in October 2011, IAPRI was officially launched on February 9, 2012 as a non-profit company limited by guarantee.

Launching the IAPRI, Agriculture and Livestock Minister Emmanuel Chenda explained that the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute came at an opportune time when the country needed to develop a cost effective, transparent, efficient and sustainable agricultural sector.

He said the government has realised that the agricultural sector urgently needs capitalisation in the field of research and the development of extension and infrastructure.

"We realise that issues related to crop diversification, livestock disease control and input supply, among others are priority in our quest to develop the agricultural sector, and we as a ministry are looking into this and we will consult with the relevant stakeholders, including IAPRI before making pronouncements," said Mr Chenda.

Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) executive director Ndambo Ndambo said the agricultural sector in Zambia faces a lot of challenges to attain competitiveness in domestic and export market because of high costs of doing business.

Mr Ndambo urged IAPRI to work closely and collaborate with other institutions such as the Agriculture Consultant Forum (ACF) in trying to address various challenges faced by small-scale farmers.

He mentioned some of the challenges faced by small-scale farmers as high transportation costs, unfavourable and unsupportive tax regime such as Value Added Tax (VAT) system on inputs, poor feeder road networks, high labour costs and poor access to markets and trade opportunities.

"Farmers' expectations are to see IAPRI grow into a true centre of excellence in policy research while ACF as a credible outreach and entrenched stakeholders' Consultation Platform for the Agriculture sector," said Mr Ndambo.

And American Ambassador to Zambia Mark Storella said agricultural growth is determined by the strength of the country's policies and investment decisions.

Mr Storella said the US government will contribute over US\$12 million over the next five years to

agricultural research and staff at the IAPRI will be monitored closely by researchers and policy analysts from Michigan state university as they undertake research and outreach activities. The transformation of a research project into a permanent institute is certainly a commendable stride in conducting appropriate policy research work that is both responsive and proactive. It is the hope of observers that the initiative lives to its objectives if it is to contribute to the sustainable growth of the agricultural industry.

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