



**TWENTY-SIXTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA**

**Luanda, Angola, 3-7 May 2010**

**Side Event – Cassava Production and Protection in Africa**

**Date: Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

**09 :00- 11 :00hrs**

**Venue: BELAS Conference Centre, Luanda, Angola**

During the 26th FAO Regional Conference for Africa which will be held in Luanda, Angola from 3-7 May 2010, FAO in collaboration with partners will convene a side event on **Cassava Production and Protection in Africa**. The objectives of these Regional Conferences which are held every two years in all regions is to bring to the fore and at a high level: the special problems of the respective regions and the priority areas of need which should be taken into account in preparing FAO's Programme of Work and Budget as well as in relation to longer-term programme objectives; to examine the adaptation of the policy objectives of the Organization to the needs of the region concerned; and to undertake consultations on the means by which the countries in the region can help solve their own problems through the use of their own resources, and on the volume and nature of the external aid required to implement their food and agricultural development plans.

This year, given the devastating effect of the food and financial crisis which have served to renew emphasis on support to agriculture and the recent surge of interest in international investment in agricultural land in many African countries, the overall theme of the Conference is: *Investment in agriculture to ensure food security in Africa*. Other topics on the Agenda for this year's Conference includes (a) support to the accelerated implementation of CAADP; (b) climate change implications for food security and natural resources management in Africa; (c) high food prices and food security – threats, opportunities and budgetary implications for sustainable agriculture and (d) challenges and opportunities for bio-fuel production in Africa. Cassava has particular relevance for each of these topics.

Most earlier attempts at intensification of agricultural production have allowed output to keep up with global demand but these have also created problems of sustainability such as decrease in soil health including through excessive soil nutrient mining, increase in soil erosion, excessive water use, decline and degradation of biodiversity, the impact on the environment of the overuse and inefficient use of fertilizer and especially pesticides, leading to pest resistance and pest outbreaks.

The FAO Regional and Sub-Regional Vision and Strategy frameworks generally call for *inter alia* supporting and accelerating the ongoing transformation and modernization of agriculture for development, to include its contribution to local and national food security and rural livelihoods, to national and regional economic growth and development, and to the provision and protection of ecosystem services. FAO aims for the sustainable intensification of crop production and has created a framework that calls for intensification based on using an ecosystem approach, which is characterized by four dimensions:

- (i) Increasing crop productivity (both outputs and efficiencies),
- (ii) Enhancing sustainable crop protection,
- (iii) Managing biodiversity and ecosystem services, and
- (iv) Strengthening rural livelihoods.

The ecosystem approach forms a basis for good farming practices to be promoted within crop sector development strategies and whose principles can be adapted and integrated into local production practices to generate the desired production growth and productivity gains with sustainability.

Although cassava production systems tend to be typified by low use of inputs, there is still scope to intensify production by improving efficiency of inputs use, and through better management at all stages in the cassava value chain. As the sector develops, policy makers will increasingly take up the challenges of securing livelihoods based on cassava production and processing

Current yield gaps between countries in similar agro-ecological zones are very high and can partly be decreased by improvements in soil- and water management; other important issues include changes in policy to invest more in agriculture, in research, processing and engineering based on scientific work, and improved pest, disease and nutrient management based on sound ecosystem management. In order to address the broader goals of sustainability in crop production intensification (strengthening rural livelihoods), the social, economic and environmental aspects need to be considered when planning to intensify crop production by creating an enabling environment, educating, and empowering farmers. This applies to cassava production systems as it does for other crops.

### **The Side-Event**

The side event is being organized to focus on issues affecting the intensification of the cassava production systems across Africa. While cassava is widely grown and up to 70 million people depend on it for food security in Sub-Saharan Africa, cassava yields in many countries of the region are among the lowest worldwide. Yet the crop is attractive for food production (fresh or dried) and for further processing for starch and fuel. It is also relatively drought-resistant and so is being taken up in areas where the more traditional crops such as maize cannot be grown reliably due to unreliable rainfall.

Low yields can be due to a range of factors which may include soil fertility, production practices, variety selection or endemic pests and diseases – these are among the factors to be considered more generally in programmes for the sustainable intensification of crop production.

The side event focuses on two major themes – production of cassava, and protection of the crop from pests and disease:

- “production” focuses on recent (and current) cassava value chain-related projects by FAO. In this there will be presentations on work ongoing in southern Africa (through technical cooperation projects in a number of countries) as well as a review by an international expert on closing the gap in african cassava productivity with other regions of the world.
- “protection of cassava” from disease looks in particular at the spread of new forms of diseases such as Cassava Mosaic Disease (particularly the latest East African Variant) and Cassava Brown Streak Disease to new areas. The impact has been devastating for communities in some regions which include high proportions of internally displaced persons and refugees. The event concludes with a presentation and discussion on what countries can do to reduce the impact of disease and other production constraints in the cassava production system.

The event will provide a forum to exchange information about key developments being carried out by hundreds of thousands of farmers across Western, Southern, Eastern and Central Africa, especially through the scaling up of innovations testing by farmers in their local fields and agroecosystems. The event will allow participants to identify the key technical issues as well as to explore policy and programme questions.

A tentative agenda and timetable is given below. Although cassava is the principal focus of the event it is likely that discussion may extend to production constraints of other staple crops in the region

## **Cassava Production and Protection In Africa**

### **PROGRAMME**

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2010**  
**09 :00- 11 :00hrs**

Welcome and other formalities - Invited Dignitaries (FAO facilitator)

Sustainable Production Intensification – FAO Plant Production and Protection Division

#### ***Round Table or Plenary with Invited Speakers***

I: Cassava Production sector development in Africa

- the cassava yield gap – why do countries in other regions grow more cassava per hectare than most african countries? (M. Akoroda)
- lessons from FAO sector development projects in southern africa (Alick Daka)

II: Protection of Cassava from Pests and Diseases

- emergency programmes to mitigate the impact of Cassava disease in vulnerable communities (M.Robson)
- managing cassava disease in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa – the CaCESA framework (M. Robson)

#### ***Facilitated Discussion and conclusions***

- state of knowledge, priorities for further research, policy conclusions, issues in formulation and implementation