

Building sustainable agricultural systems for food security

FAO Namibia: Over the past years, the Namibian Agricultural sector has been hampered and plagued by recurring droughts, which spelt food insecurity in the country. Poor rainfalls led to widespread soil erosion and land degradation, arable land loss, crop failure and high livestock mortality rates, which limited income generating opportunities for farmers and the nation at large.

In an effort to enhance farmers' livelihoods and ensure food security in the country, the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) held a dialogue to analyze the situation and conceptualize a way forward that simultaneously promotes sustainable agriculture and prioritizes food security in Namibia.

Through a presentation on 'Sustainable Measures for Food and Natural Resources', Dr. Babagana Ahmadu the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Representative to Namibia unpacked and defined sustainable agricultural development.



Dr. Ahmadu presenting at Hanns Seidel Foundation's dialogue. FAO Namibia

He said that it is, "The management and conservation of the natural resource base, and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner so as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations".

According to Dr. Ahmadu, the past half-century has seen marked growth in food production, allowing for a dramatic decrease in the proportion of the world's people that are hungry, despite a doubling of the total population. However, he noted that this is still not enough, as global food demand in 2050 is projected to increase by at least 60% above the 2006 levels.

"This increase in demand is driven by income growth, population growth which is estimated to reach over 9 billion by 2050, as well as rapid urbanization. This means that global food demand will on average increase with about 1.1% per annum," he said.

Furthermore, the Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry Hon. John Mutorwa, who was also in attendance, highlighted that, "The agriculture sector on a global scale and also in Namibia, is increasingly being affected by the energy, food and economic crises."

"This situation is further compounded by natural disasters, such as the floods, periodic droughts and like in 2017, worms being experienced in many African countries and which are predicted to escalate due to the very real visible threats caused by climate change. The negative impacts of these phenomena are being particularly felt in Africa, where agriculture, in its broadest sense, is inextricably linked to the economy, the environment and most importantly, the people," he added.