

UNCT Features: Dr. Babagana Ahmadu

After serving for roughly four years in Namibia, Dr. Babagana Ahmadu, the former Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Representative to Namibia, has been transferred to Sudan to commence as the Representative at the Khartoum duty station. Under Dr. Ahmadu, whose tenure commenced in September 2013, FAO Namibia saw various accomplishments. UN Namibia sat down with Dr. Ahmadu to learn more about his time in Namibia and the changes he hopes to see in the country. Check out his interview!

1.) What accomplishments did FAO Namibia achieve during your time as Head of Office?

FAO provided technical assistance from both regular and field programmes drawing on its global experiences and comparative advantage in support of Namibia's Fourth National Development Plan and related sectoral plans. Our support remains guided by the Country Programme Framework for Namibia 2014-2018, which is a need-based planning and management tool that established the manner in which FAO supports Namibia's development priorities. FAO and the Government of Namibia



focused on joint-implementation of a variety of interventions amounting to NAD 5.3 Million and geared towards enhancing and enabling food and nutrition policy and institutional transformations; sustainable agricultural, forestry and fisheries production; producer linkages to markets; and resilience building for agricultural threats and calamities.

Specifically, FAO supported the Namibia Statistics Agency in successfully undertaking the communal agricultural census, an important exercise for the generation of evidence much needed for socio-economic development planning and policy directives. In the drive to the intensification and diversification of agricultural production systems, FAO supported Namibia in the development of a number of national policies and strategies, most notably the Namibia Horticulture Support Programme, the Forest Resource Assessment and Inventory Programme, the Marine Policy and Legislation, the Land Taxation and Valuation model, the Food Safety Policy, the Food and Nutrition Policy, and the strategy on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into development.

FAO attracted and mobilized external resources to support the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry in the roll-out of the Comprehensive Conservation Agriculture Programme through a European Union grant, as well as the Green Scheme Policy through the South-South Cooperation modality with funding from the Peoples Republic of China. Namibia's first food loss assessment to reduce food waste along the value chains was conducted by FAO

with support from the Norwegian Government. Similarly, FAO continue to support the Benguela Current Commission in the USD 23.9 Million with funding resources from the Global Environmental Facility. Aquaculture development was supported under a tripartite agreement within the South-South Cooperation framework between FAO, the Kingdom of Spain and Vietnam. FAO is also providing assistance for the execution of a programme on the application of the ecosystems approach to fisheries management with financial support from the government of Norway. With resources from the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund, FAO has been building capacity of regulatory entities such as the Veterinary Services, Plant Health Division, and the Namibia Standards Institution in selected technical aspects. The United States of America remained a reliable partner in supporting resilience building initiatives among pastoral communities in Northern Namibia.

Other FAO executed actions were targeted on resolving technical issues in fields such as pesticide management, rice cultivar development, food safety, climate change risk management, and the fruit fly management. Direct support to empower rural-based and farmer organizations, marginalized and vulnerable communities, women and youth was done through the FAO Telefood modality in Omaheke, Kunene, //Karas and Otjozondjupa regions. In addition, FAO responded positively to Government requests to mitigate emergency effects of flood, food-and-mouth disease, and drought situations experienced over the past years.

2.) What have you enjoyed about working in Namibia?

Overall, FAO's contribution in providing practical solutions to reducing poverty, ensuring food and nutrition security, and advancing rural development in Namibia has been appreciated by the Government, civil society, and development partners. The existence of a strong and ever increasing political will for poverty alleviation and zero tolerance to hunger - coupled with the trust of FAO as an Inter-Governmental Organization by both public and private sector actors - has provided FAO with a unique opportunity and an increased responsibility to deliver on the technical needs of Namibians. FAO maintained its cordial relations with its stakeholders, which made our working much easier and smoother, particularly the frank and open dialogue with Offices, Ministries and Agencies in FAO mandated areas.

Moreover, it has been enjoyable experience to witness and be part of a society where set developmental targets, mostly those pursuing to unlock the root causes of poverty and hunger, despite changing realities within the development context, are being achieved.

To witness the incredible amount of courage demonstrated by Namibian women and girls, and their contribution to ensuring food availability at all times for their households, has been a wonderful occurrence whenever we conduct our operations in the field as witnessed regularly during the annual 16 October commemoration of World Food Day and the founding of FAO.

3.) What are your words of encouragement for your colleagues, partners and stakeholders?

Despite my departure, FAO remains a credible institution and partner in addressing food and agriculture related matters. A dedicated team of local staff, with backstopping from our global network of expertise, remains in place to support the advancement of Namibia's development agenda. I encourage all partners and the friends of FAO to continue the good work and maintain the cordial relations to make a real change in the lives of the people of Namibia, primarily the urban and rural poor. The UN Country Team has the capacity to steer inter-agency and multi-stakeholder alliances in support of Namibia to meet its commitments towards the Sustainable Development Goals, which must be prioritized within the framework of Delivering as One.

4.) What changes do you hope to see in Namibia in the future?

Given that about two-thirds of the Namibian population directly or indirectly depend on farming, fisheries and forestry for their livelihoods as well as food, the battle to end poverty must be fought from within the most rural areas of society. It is my hope that Namibia will remain focused on addressing the pressing socio economic challenges, including finding practical solutions to constraints in sustainable water resource management, limited capacity for value addition and quality standards within the crop value-chains, and gender inequalities in the agriculture sector. Finally, food security at household and national levels can only be guaranteed with sustained access to productive assets such as economically viable land, coupled with a robust youth empowerment agenda to sustainably address poverty and unemployment, and achieve inclusive and equitable growth.

5.) How can people help to achieve FAO's goals and objectives in their personal lives?

FAO goals and objectives are based on the aspirations of its member countries, with Namibia being no exception. Every citizen has a critical role to play in ending hunger by 2030. In order to adequately meet Namibia's future demand for increases in water, food and energy needs, all people must shift towards more efficient and sustainable consumption and production methods that harmoniously interact with the available ecosystems. FAO believes the Sustainable Development Goals can adequately be achieved through cooperation and partnerships between multiple actors and across broad range of areas, including coordinated efforts by both private and public agents.