South Africa and FAO enjoyed a close partnership since the country joined the Organization in 1993. South Africa has a dual agricultural economy, comprising a well-developed commercial sector and a predominantly subsistence-oriented sector in rural areas. Assistance has consequently spanned a large range of areas, from support to agricultural development, food security and nutrition to rural economic development and natural resources management. Strengthening capacities for improving productivity and livelihoods is a constant feature of cooperation efforts.

**Food and agricultural policy support**

**Supporting policy development**

FAO is working with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to develop a Plant Production Policy and Conservation Agriculture Policy.

The Plant Production Policy will contribute to achieving sustainable food and nutrition security through the formulation and implementation of investment plans and policy adjustments. The Conservation Agriculture Policy is designed to provide clear direction and priorities to shape national resource allocation, planning, natural resource management and human empowerment.

**Supporting policy implementation**

As part of the country’s drive to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, FAO is providing technical assistance for the formulation of an implementation plan for the country’s Food and Nutrition Security Policy, which has been submitted for Government approval. FAO has helped experts from the Regional Office for Africa and Brazil share international best practices, while four consultative workshops on the implementation plan have been held.

**Matching FAO’s expertise to South Africa’s development and cooperation priorities**

Strategic direction for FAO assistance to South Africa is provided by the 2014-2015 FAO Country Programming framework (CPF). This initial one-year CPF is to be followed by a new framework covering priorities for the period 2015-2019. Jointly developed with the Government and other partners, the current CPF outlines three short-term priority areas of cooperation:

- **Improving food and nutrition security and food safety**, with a focus on inclusive governance, coordination and support mechanisms for improved food and nutrition security.
- **Sustainable management and use of natural resources and forestry**, including strengthening of related management and institutional frameworks and improving resilience to climate change.
- **Institutional capacity building**, with a dual focus on enhancing institutional and organizational capacity and strengthening South Africa’s role in South-South Cooperation.


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Global knowledge transfer
As part of the country’s efforts to develop a national South-South Cooperation strategy for tackling food insecurity, FAO has worked closely with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the National Agricultural Marketing Council as well as Provincial Departments of Agriculture in support of Lesotho. Led by the World Food Programme (WFP) in partnership with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), the initiative is aimed at providing food assistance to Lesotho’s most vulnerable groups.

FAO has played a coordination role, linking WFP with smallholder producers and assisting in the identification of smallholder farmers who are eligible for supplying WFP with commodities. FAO has also facilitated the registration process. As a result, over 40 percent of the maize and beans purchased by the project were procured from the smallholder sector.

Supporting agricultural development
Agricultural development has always been a major area of cooperation between South Africa and FAO. Technical assistance has been provided in support of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) round table process in the country. Involving a wide range of stakeholders, consultation workshops have been held in the South Africa’s nine provinces, leading to the identification of priority investment areas. After its signature, the CAADP Compact and Investment Plan for South Africa will serve as a solid framework under which private investment can be leveraged in line with the sector’s priorities.

Organizing the XIV World Forestry Congress
For the first time ever, South Africa is hosting the XIV World Forestry Congress, the most important and inclusive gathering of the global forest community. FAO is in charge of the formulation of the technical programme, while also providing logistical support to the host government. Given the theme of the congress, Forests and People: Investing in a Sustainable Future, the occasion is considered a good opportunity to discuss the UN post-2015 agenda. The event is also expected to enhance the profile of the sector, generate legacy projects and bring in revenue for the tourism industry.

Agribusiness support to Limpopo
Through an FAO project targeting South Africa’s Limpopo Province, a cadre of youth and women is being prepared to operate agribusiness and agro-entrepreneurial activities effectively. The intervention will lead to the creation of a network of private enterprises engaged in the production of agro-inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers, and farming technologies. It should also result in structured markets for farmers in the rural areas of Limpopo.

Building capacity in agriculture and food security
Based on a cooperation agreement signed in 2007, the South African Government and FAO recently implemented a comprehensive capacity-building project in support of the agriculture sector. The project has two major objectives: i) Enabling government officials to implement development assistance cooperation projects effectively. This entails the establishment of an in-country training programme linked to the Institute for Development Assistance Management; and ii) Promoting the development of emerging farmers through preparatory assessment and piloting of six projects located in South Africa’s KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga Provinces.

There is an emphasis on aquaculture development, with activities aimed at strengthening government officials’ capacity to improve Aquatic Animal Health services. Activities in this area have led to the drafting of a Regional Biosecurity Strategy. Lessons learned from the project’s pilot models have also been documented for the benefit of smallholder farmers.