

**REPORT ON THE 6TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE AFRICAN FARM
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (AFMA) IN MAPUTO,
MOZAMBIQUE**

**THEME: REALITIES OF IMPROVING FARM MANAGEMENT AND
COMMERCIALISING THE SUBSISTENCE SECTOR IN AFRICAN
AGRICULTURE**

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Program for AFMa 2002	2
2.1 Message by the President	2
2.2 The Conference Programme	3
2.3 A review of the papers presented	4
2.3.1 <i>Proceedings of the 6th Biennial conference</i>	4
2.4 Delegates at the conference	5
2.5 Organisations that sponsored conference	6
3 AFMA Biennial meeting	6
3.1 Biennial meeting	6
3.2 Theme for AFMA 2004	6
3.3 Giving AFMA a new perspective	7
3.3.1 <i>Planned mini-conference in Swaziland</i>	8
4. Conclusion	8

1. INTRODUCTION

The 6th AFMA Biennial conference was attended in Maputo in Mozambique by Willem Burger, Agricultural Economist of the Southern Cape Agricultural Development Centre, Outeniqua, George and Louw van der Spuy, Department of Agriculture , Western Cape. Each proposed a paper and chaired a session during the conference.

Mr van der Spuy served on the Committee of AFMA since 1996, as vice-President of the Association from 1996 to 1998 and as President from 1998 to 2000. The acting President, Ms Elisabeth Kadama Ruvwa from Kampala in Uganda was not available and therefore Mr van der Spuy was requested by Prof. Firmino Mucavele, vice-President and chairman of the Organising Committee, to present a speech and welcome the delegates at the Conference of Mozambique on her behalf. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development was the guest of honour. He addressed the conference in his opening speech. The conference was held in the International Conference Centre of the Polana Hotel in Maputo. Due to the low attendance of delegates, only plenary sessions were held in the Main Conference Room. The hotel supplied a sound system and the papers were translated from English to Portuguese and vice versa.

2. PROGRAM FOR AFMA 2002

2.1 Message by the President

The Association (AFMA) was stagnating over the past four years due to a lack of continuity in their organisation. Van der Spuy suggested certain aspects in his introductory speech to the Executive Committee about the importance of timely organisation and consultation when organising the next conference. Mr van der Spuy expressed his concern that since his association with AFMA in 1996, the organising efforts of AFMA conferences were done at late stages. The disadvantage is that delegates not only plan to attend other conferences, but organisations who could be addressed to sponsor the conference have limited budgets, financially or in *natura*. Their request to sponsor the conference could therefore be negative if it is not done on time. When South Africa hosted AFMA in 1998 at Stellenbosch the organising committee started

immediately after the 1996 Nairobi conference in Kenya. Delegates from several countries attended the conference and it was financially a great success. Uganda, on the other hand, who hosted AFMA 2000, had cash flow problems and our Financial Committee approved to transfer R20000 into their bank account as an interest free loan to serve as start-up capital. The Committee of the Farm Management Association of Uganda then started organising activities in April, only seven months before the conference in November. The conference was successfully organised with the Department of Agriculture as the chief sponsor, but the delegates who attended were mainly from Uganda. Delegates from foreign African countries were Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa and officials from the FAO in Rome. Although Mozambique was not represented, Prof. Mucavele head of the Department of Economics of the Eduardo Mondlane University of Muputo was available and Mozambique could therefore be proposed to host AFMA in 2002 with Prof. Mucavele as the vice president. The Organising Committee of Uganda was supposed to transfer the R20000 on the Organising Committee of Mozambique start up capital, but this never happened. Prof. Mucavele could not make any contact with the President of AFMA in Uganda Mrs Elizabeth Ruvwa. She never turned up for the conference in Maputo or informed anybody that she could not be present. For better planning in future for conferences AFMA needs a permanent secretariat with an office and personnel as a backup for the country that host the conference. Mr van der Spuy's suggestions were highly appreciated especially by the Minister of Agriculture and the Organising Committee. This aspect was discussed in more detail during the Biennial General meeting held on the 19th of November in the Conference room of the Polana Hotel.

2.2 The Conference Programme

The conference was programmed for three days i.e. from Monday 18 November to Wednesday 20 November. The Academic Committee approved nineteen papers and sixteen papers were proposed.

The conference theme was: *Realities of improving farm management and commercialising the subsistence sector in African agriculture* with the following sub-themes:

1. Production for local and global markets.
2. The interaction and efficiencies of the people and government policy relating to commercialisation.
3. Do subsistence farmers actually want to be commercial farmers and if they do, what are there constraints?
4. How can business or entrepreneurial spirit be developed?
5. What are the realities of subsistence farmers?

2.3 A review of the papers presented

Well prepared papers were presented which led to very interesting discussions during the sessions, although the presenters who simply read from their notes struggled to keep the delegates' attention. Enough time was allowed for questions and discussions.

2.3.1 Proceedings of the 6th Biennial conference

There were 17 papers proposed on the biennial conference in Maputo. The topics were”

- Agricultural production and commercialisation in Mozambique.
- Alternative Farming systems for the Swartland (South Africa). A focus on the production possibilities of feedstuffs for the dairy industry.
- Improving of farm management and agricultural commercialisation in Mozambique.
- The role of economists in agricultural development in Mozambique.
- Theories and approaches of commercialising small scale farmers in South Africa
- Agricultural credit and finance in Mozambique.
- Agricultural commercialisation in Cabo Delgado and Food Security.
- The commercialisation of existing subsistence farmers in the Southern Cape region of South Africa.
- Impact of forest management regimes and agricultural productivity on Woodland, resource use , conservation and shareholders' incomes in Savane.
- Constraints to commercialisation process of semi-subsistence agriculture.

- How the business or Entrepreneurial spirit can be developed using Swaziland Komati Project Enterprises (SKPE) approach as a case study.
- Agricultural policy efficiency relating to commercialisation in Mozambique.
- Improvement of Cassava production and post harvest technologies in Western and Rift Valley (North Rift) provinces of Kenya.
- Constraints to pest management experienced by small scale farmers Manhaca, Southern Mozambique.
- Beans market integration in Mozambique.
- Spatial arbitrage efficiency in Mozambique.
- Agricultural production and comparative advantage for local and global markets.

Three papers were not presented because of delegates who cancelled. The paper with the most relevant subject was the one proposed by Mr Ian Sherry, Executive of Swaziland Komati Project Enterprise Ltd (SKPE) Ltd in Swaziland. Their company's motto is that people can only be successful in their enterprise's objective should they have more self-confidence. According to him the people of Swaziland normally have a low life style due to a very low income level. He mentioned that papers should focus on farm management to incorporate more farmers in the discussions of the conference.

2.4 Delegates at the conference

A disappointingly low number of delegates attended the conference that included students from the local university. The average number of delegates who turned up over the conference period was 30 people. Three delegates from Nigeria attended the conference and this was appreciated as the air fee from Abuja in Nigeria to Maputo is US\$1000 plus five days' accommodation waiting for connecting flights. Delegates from other countries were four from South Africa and four from Swaziland. In total 51 delegates registered.

2.5 Organisations that sponsored the conference

The Conference-organising started by sending letters of invitation on e-mail about three months before the conference date. Main cost items were the conference centre in the Polana Hotel (Conference Centrum) including earphones and speakers. The Hotel is organised to cater for international conferences in the hotel complex and equipped for parallel sessions. The official language of Mozambique is Portuguese and the readings had therefore to be translated to English and vice versa. The registration fee included three full lunches by the hotel with wine and soft drinks served in a marquee tent from Monday to Wednesday. The Department of Agriculture and the Eduardo Mondlane University of Maputo were the main sponsors.

3 AFMA BIENNIAL MEETING

3.1 Biennial meeting

A biennial meeting was held on Tuesday 19 November after the conference proceedings and well attended by the delegates of the different countries. Mr van der Spuy represented the AFMA president Mrs Ruvwa in her absence and asked for a majority vote to appoint Prof. Mucavele as the new President of AFMA for 2004. Mucavele was accepted and the chair was handed over to him for discussions of the next Conference. Nominees were called to host the 2004 conference. The delegation from Nigeria was nominated to host the next conference. Mrs G.O. (Grace) Evbuomwan, Assistant Director of the Research Department of the Central Bank of Nigeria in Lagos, accepted to take over as vice-president and she will be assisted by Mr B.O. (Badejoke) Odufote of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Abuja. Prof. Mucavele suggested that the existing Organising Committee in Maputo will be available to assist her committee and with the arrangements for the coming conference.

3.2 Theme for AFMA 2004

The chairman awaited suggestions for themes for AFMA 2004. Van der Spuy suggested “African Agriculture in the African Century” which may also support Nepad (New Economical Program for African Development), the program for African counties

launched by President Thabo Mbeki from South Africa. This was accepted but with certain sub-themes, as follows:

‘AFRICAN BUSINESS IN THE AFRICAN CENTURY’

Including the following themes:

1. Business skills development
2. Food processing and Agri-Industry
3. Agricultural industries and Agricultural Organisations
4. Appropriate technology

3.3 Giving AFMA a new perspective

The newly elected president mentioned that the Organisation has new prospects i.e., to bring AFMA on a closer standard with IFMA. The Committee plans a Secretariat with an office that will initially be incorporated by the Eduardo Mondlane University but will eventually shift to the Main Quarters of FAO in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Prof Mucavele often attends meetings in Addis Ababa and is therefore available to correspond and assist with the founding of farm management associations in African countries through the secretariat. AFMA will nominate co-opted members on the Board to supply information that is needed.

A second country will also be nominated shortly to host AFMA 2006 and a vice president from that country will be appointed. They will start early with the organisation of the conference four years ahead on the same principal IFMA operates on.

Van der Spuy was requested for closing remarks at the end of the conference. He mentioned some ideas to improve the standard of presentations at the conference and suggested by granting an award for the best paper. It was accepted and the Academic Committee will attend to it with the next conference.

It is important that the information presented at every conference should be made available for future reference. The Academic Committee will therefore mail the proceedings to the delegates shortly after the conference. Prof Mucavele discussed the possibility of opening a web site on Internet. While the vice-rector of the Eduardo Mondlane University, who was invited for the closing address, was listening to these discussions, he mentioned in his speech that he was pleasantly surprised to hear about the positive ideas of the Committee regarding the future planning and insured that the University will subsidise the cost to design an AFMA web site and will maintain its monthly fees.

3.3.1 Planned mini-conference in Swaziland

Five delegates from the Swaziland Komati Project Enterprise Ltd (SKPE) under the management of Mr. Ian Sherry attended the conference including mr Erik Buiten a consultant for this project from Pretoria. They are very positive about the extension of conferences in countries in Africa on this level. They train small farmers to train themselves as successful entrepreneurs. The government of Swaziland invests large amounts of capital in this project to commercialise farmers. The presence of the SKPE officials at the AFMA conference made a large contribution for AFMA and their expected inputs for future meetings could be of great value. They plan to organise a mini-conference in April 2003 in Swaziland. The specific themes have not been decided on.

4. CONCLUSION

At present the interest to attend AFMA conferences is very low due to the deficiencies in the structure of the Association. It seemed from the discussions at the 2002 biennial Meeting and discussions at the closing session, that a well organised Association can support agriculture in Africa and increase efficiency and profitability. This will put AFMA on a higher base to communicate with IFMA. The enthusiastic way in which Prof. Mucavele arranged this conference in Maputo as chairman of the Organising Committee shows that there is a need for improvement in the standard of management in agriculture.

Should a secretariat be established, the transfer of information through a web site could be a very effective way of communicating with African scientists and eventually farmers.