NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT: NOVEMBER 2012 – FEBRUARY 2013

SUPPORT SERVICES TO THE SWAZILAND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (SADP): DEMONSTRATIONS ON GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

Project #: GCP/SWA/016/EC
SFSD/626/12

MAY 2013
LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACAT- Africa Cooperative Action Trust
AF- Agro-forestry
CHP- Crop Husbandry Practices
CA- Conservation Agriculture
FAO- Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GAP- Good Agricultural Practices
MOA - Ministry of Agriculture
RDA- Rural Development Area
R&T- Root and Tuber
SADP – Swaziland Agricultural Development Programme
1. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1.1 Project Reference Number: GCP/SWA/016/EC – SADP SFSD/626/12

1.2 Name of Implementing Partner: ACAT- LILIMA SWAZILAND

1.3 Project start date: November, 2012 and ending October, 2013

1.4 Project Budget: **E601,472.00**

1.5 **Targeted beneficiaries** 360 individual farmers and 15 farmer groups

1.6 Project Location: Central/Ludzeludze RDA, Northern RDA, Mayiwane RDA, Tikhuba RDA, Sithobela RDA, Dumako RDA, Mahamba/Zombodze RDA, Hluti RDA, Southern RDA and Mahlangatsha RDA.

1.7 **Contact person:** Mr Enock M Dlamini, National Director.

   **Tel:** (+268) 24044738/ (+268) 24044170.

   **Fax:** (+268) 24042446

   **Email:** emdlamini@acat.org.sz
2. ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

2.1. Introduction
ACAT is implementing this project in 10 RDAs located in the four regions of Swaziland. The main objective of this project is to help rural smallholder farmers who are faced with low yields to improve their yields by using the GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) principles. ACAT covers the 10 RDAs using her network of Extension Officers who are distributed across the country to promote and provide extension services to the rural farming households.

The GAPs project is based on four strong “pillars”, namely: 1. economically and efficiently produce sufficient (food security), safe (food safety) and nutritious food (food quality), 2. Sustain and enhance natural resources, 3. Maintain viable farming enterprise and contribute to sustainable livelihoods, 4. Meet cultural and social demand of society. In trying to achieve this the activities that are being implemented are; (i) mobilisation of 360 farmers and 15 farmer groups to practise GAP in their fields within the 10 RDAs, (ii) training of CA individual lead farmers and 200 CA demonstrations established, each being 0.25ha, (iii) lead farmers introduced to AF farming and 160 AF demonstration plots, 0.25ha each established, (iv) a total of 15 composite demonstration sites with a total of 60 plots (15AF; 15CA; 15CHP; 15 R&T) each 0.25ha establishment. The project is being implemented by FAO, ACAT and MoA as teamwork, which is something that has benefited the project immensely from the synergies the team members who were coming from diverse technical background presents.

2.2. Progress made on planned activities and results
Progress made by the project this far is presented against the initially planned activities under each Output/result.

**Output 1: A target of 360 farmers and 15 farmer groups are mobilized and ready to practise GAP in their fields within the 10 RDAs**

1.1. Meeting with local leaders to introduce the project
Community meetings were conducted in all the ten RDAs in which ACAT is operating under the SADP. These meetings were attended by community leaders representing the chiefdoms around each of the RDAs. In these meetings the project was introduced and fully explained to the community leaders so that they could give support during the implementation of the project. In all the RDAs, the meetings were facilitated by ACAT Extension officers and or government extension officers within the respective RDAs. Some of the meetings were conducted in the different chiefdoms around the RDA as it was requested by some of the chiefdoms especially in Dumako, and at Inkhundla in the case of Southern RDA.

1.2. Conduct community mass meetings to introduce the project
Community meetings were conducted in all the RDAs, and or chiefdoms and at Inkhundla for other RDAs such as Dumako and Southern RDA (respectively), summing up to 14 meetings with a total number of 647 people (423 females and 224 males) attending the meetings. Participants in these
meetings included community leaders, lead farmers, keen farmers and other community development partners working within the area. The purpose of the meetings was to reintroduce the project to the community leaders and farmers. This meeting also had its program combined with teachings on GAP and selection of lead farmers. In all the RDAs, most of the lead farmers that had been chosen in the previous year were reselected.

1.3. Identify societies to participate in the various components of the project

There were 15 groups that were selected to participate in the project. These groups were among those currently working with ACAT on other community development activities which include savings and credit, farming initiatives and many other developmental activities. The selected groups were located within the 10 RDAs working with ACAT in this project. In addition to the 15 groups were also 3 schools that were included as participants (planted) in the project. The groups were: Zamani (Maseyisini), Litsembe (Mashobeni), Hlumani (Mahamba) Hosea (Hluthi), Buhle baMaja (Dumako) Siphamandla (Southern RDA), Mfumaneki (Mahlangatja), Ngcoseni(Mahlangatja), Bavukile Farmers Coop (Central RDA), Kucatfuta( Central RDA), Mpembekati primary schl (Central RDA), Etsembeni Secondary(Central RDA) Kudwvaleni (Northern RDA) Ntfonjeni primary (Northern RDA), Vukani (Mayiwane) Sibonelo (Sithobela) Mphilonhle (Sithobela) Siyembili (Tikhuba) with a total membership of 362 members. Out of these 18 groups, 13 of them were able to plant using the principles promoted by this project. Details on the society participation in this project are in output 4 of this report.

Output 2: Trained CA individual lead farmers who have established 200 CA demonstrations (0.25 ha of land).

2.1 Arrange training for selected keen CA focal farmers.

Trainings of all keen lead farmers on conservation agriculture were conducted in all the targeted RDAs with a total attendance of 354 farmers attended these trainings, 139 males and 215 females. In these trainings farmers were enlightened on the importance and agronomic practices required in conservational agriculture. The training was conducted in the different RDAs, and the facilitators for the training were coming from ACAT, Ministry of Agriculture including officers from the Research station.
2.2 **Conduct training and demonstration for focal farmers.**

Trainings on the principles of conservation Agriculture were rendered in all the ten RDAs. The trainings were done in collaboration with FAO and the ministry of Agriculture at the RDAs and demonstrations were done as part of the trainings. Other demonstrations were conducted in the various communities and groups amounting to a total of 45 demonstrations. ACAT extension staff (who as well had trainings on these topics) provided hands on technical guidance/follow ups to the lead farmers on the CA practices they had trainings on.

2.3 **Establishment and monitoring CA demonstrations, one in each of the farmer cooperative societies**

A total of 188 individuals out of the 200 selected received farm inputs from the project and also planted their demonstrations plots, where land preparation was done using either of the following: pot holing, Magoya ripper or a jab planter. Twelve farmers were dropped from the list because of shortage of farming inputs. However, all the 188 farmers received guidance as they were carrying out the GAP activities. There were also at least 40 other keen CA farmers (not selected beneficiaries) who adopted the concept and used it when planting their fields, however it is assumed that there are far more farmers who have adopted the concept that have not been captured. Though the 40 farmers were not selected for the project, but because of their keen interest on GAP, ACAT officers assisted them with on-farm training and guidance as they engaged on the GAP activities.

While implementing the project a general observation is that farmers are shunning away from using the springbok herbicides because they believe it can harm their crops. This is an indication that the farmers are not confident on how to safely apply this herbicide which means that follow up trainings and demonstrations are a necessity in this regard.

In the fields it is evident that the conservation agriculture methodology of farming seems to perform better and has more other benefits compared to the conventional method. Farmers from the Highveld have appreciated the CA method in that it has solved the problem of soil erosions and that of leaching which are problems they have always experienced. From this, we expect that even when comparing the yield after harvesting, it will prove to be better. The legumes (which were planted earlier than their recommended time as a secondary crop to maize) are now either ready for harvesting or already harvested. Two farmers sampled (one at Northern RDA and other at Sithobela RDA who have finished harvesting cowpeas filled a 25litre bucket each (about12.5kg). Converting this into kilograms per hectar could give a false impression because it was planted as a secondary crop, having its spacing guided by that of maize lines. It has however been observed that groundnuts have been affected by rust disease across the country.

Output 3: Lead farmers introduced to AF farming and 160 AF demonstration plots (0.25ha) each are established.

3.1 **Arrange training for society selected and keen AF lead farmers**

Societies and keen lead farmer trainings were also done in all the RDAs on the same dates as the CA trainings. There were 354 farmers trained on agro-forestry; 139 males and 215 females. The trainings
were done in collaboration with FAO and the ministry of Agriculture at the RDAs and demonstrations were done as part of the trainings.

3.2 Conduct training and demonstration for 160 AF farmers.

After the farmers received trainings on the principles and practices of AF, they were then taken through demonstration processes which were also done in the RDA fields. This was a practical session where the farmers were actually applying what they had just learnt (measurements and planting methods) under a close guidance of the trainers and field staff. ACAT extension staff also provided hands on technical guidance/follow ups to the lead farmers on the GAPs they had trainings on.

3.3 Establish and monitor AF demonstrations, one in each farmer society

After the training, lead farmers were given inputs and 149 out of 160 were able to plant their fields. The 11 who were not able to plant did not receive farm inputs. There were at least 10 other keen AF farmers (not selected beneficiaries) who adopted the concept in planting their fields. With our network of Extension Officers distributed across the 10 targeted RDAs, also working closely with Government Extension Officers, they managed to regularly visit all selected Lead farmers in order to provide ad hoc training and backstopping support. Generally, it has been observed that crops in the CA fields performed much better than those grown in simple conventional method of farming. It was also observed that the maize plants next to the sun-hemp lines were much better compared to the rest. The AF farmers so much believe that this system of planting has come to improve their yield. This is such that most of them suggested that they do not cut down the entire secondary crop but keep some for seed that they can use in the following season and can also distribute to others. One farmer at Dumako is actually selling some sun-hemp seeds she kept from last season and she is planning to harvest more this season. Many farmers have commended agro-forestry (specifically sun hemp) after getting information that sun-hemp and legumes are a remedy for witch-weed which had been troubling them in their fields.

The farmers were also given different kinds of tree seeds to plant on the fallows. However, farmers raised concerns that it is their first time coming across such seeds and before they could plant them they would like to have more information on these plants (their benefit to them). Trainings specifically to address the concerns from farmers are still to be conducted in all the RDAs. The Forestry department in the ministry of Tourism will be requested to facilitate the trainings.

Output 4: A total of 15 composite demonstration sites with a total of 60 plots (15CA, 15AF, 15RT, 15CHP respectively), each 0.25ha established

4.1 Select group focal farmers for each practice (AF, CA, CHP, and RT) to be trained.

Composite demonstration sites were planted all across the 10 RDAs. There were 15 groups that were selected to participate in the project this farming season. In addition to the 15 groups benefiting in the project are also 4 schools that showed interest and 3 were added as beneficiaries in the project. The other school (Ntfonjeni High School) which is under the Northern RDA could not be included due to
budget constraints and partly because they indicated interest late in the season. The teachers and students were however invited to a field day where they saw the benefits of the GAP practices.

Out of the 18 groups (15 societies and 3 schools), 13 of them were able to plant (as shown in table 1 below). Groups that were able to plant 4 plots using the different concepts were 4 and 1 group practised 3 concepts, 3 groups used 2 concepts and 5 groups were able to practise only one of the four concepts. This means out of the 60 plots targeted, 30 were actually planted. The main reason behind not reaching the target was either shortage or very late delivery of inputs and one group (Hluthi RDA) ended up not taking off. The table below shows a summary of the work done in the groups.

### Table 1: Groups selected to practice GAP principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RDA</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>GAP practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Mahamba / Zombodze</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Zamani (Maseyisini)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Hlumani (Gege)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Hluti</strong></td>
<td>4. Hosea</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Dumako RDA</strong></td>
<td>5. Buhle baMaja (Ngudzeni)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Southern RDA</strong></td>
<td>6. Siphamandla (Mtsambama)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Mahlangatsha RDA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Ngcoseni</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Kucatfuta</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Mpembekati primary</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Esetembeni Secondary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Northern RDA</strong></td>
<td>13. Mshingishingi</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Ntfonjeni primary</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Mayiwane RDA</strong></td>
<td>15. Vukani</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Sithobela RDA</strong></td>
<td>16. Sibonelo (Mpompotha)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Mphilonhle (Mamisa)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Tikhuba RDA</strong></td>
<td>18. Siyembili (Mambane)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>390</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2 Conduct trainings and demonstration for each practice to respective focal farmers.

A participatory kind of training/demonstration was done where the farmers would do all the 4 practices in one field. A total of 211 farmers participated in the demonstrations.
4.3 Establish and monitor demonstrations, one in each farmer groups.

Demonstrations were done in each of the sites where the group could meet in their common field or in one farmer’s field for the demonstration. The group of farmers would then be taken through each of the GAP practice (AF, CA, CHP, and RT) each at a time. After the establishment of the plots, follow up visits would be done by the ACAT extension officers and project coordinator jointly with Extension staff from the Ministry of Agriculture and at times with FAO as well officers. The follow up visits were done soon after planting to assess the performance of the crops at different stages which allowed us to provide technical advice to the farmers in a timely manner. It was during these follow up visits that our extension staff were able to identify good demonstrations that are being used as sites for Field days.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of this project was done at different levels as detailed below.

5.1. Monthly staff meetings.

Monthly meetings are being held in all the RDAs by MOA and ACAT field officers for purposes of tracking progress and focusing plans for the program. In these meetings, each team member presents plans and field information to assist the team measure the performance of the project at any given point in time. From such meetings it was possible to discover gaps as well as remedies for some minor operational problems. It is also in these meetings, that even team members were able to share learning experiences amongst themselves.

There are also monthly staff meetings at ACAT at which the staff reports on implementation progress and there is sharing of ideas between the staff stationed in the 10 different RDAs.

5.2. Participate in a weekly Radio programme.

Taking advantage of our weekly Radio programme, we made sure that important issues and technical advice that farmers needed to be reminded of, was also covered in these programmes. In some instances our programme would allow the public to phone the studios on live broadcasts and in those instances we were able to assess the level of understanding of some of our farmers.

6. Major challenges faced during project implementation

6.1 Shortage of inputs

This season we couldn’t receive enough inputs especially legumes, and this led to some farmers who were initially registered to benefit from the project having to be dropped from the list.

6.2 Late inputs delivery

At operational level, we have always been constrained by the late delivery of farming inputs, understandably so, because of the procurement arrangements of the project. This has always negatively affected the timely implementation of project activities as by the time farming inputs were delivered to the Lead farmers, it was either too late for planting or the farmer had re-allocated their fields for other crops.
6.3 Communication
Communication, at times, has also been a challenge in the process of delivering this project. This was because sometimes the information was relayed very late and adequate preparations could not take place because of the short notice. At times this problem emanated from SADP staff when they communicate some critical operational issues only to ACAT extension officers without copying same to the ACAT main office to ensure proper follow ups.

6.4. Climate
For the past years, the raining season has been starting around November however, this time around it started so early around September and it caught most farmers and input distributors off guard. Even though at the beginning of the season there were good rains, the rainfall stopped for a long time between December and January and left most fields damaged. This has immensely affected the yields in some areas.

7. Conclusion
Despite the challenges narrated above, the project seems to be on the right track towards meeting its main objective of helping rural smallholder farmers who are faced with low yields to improve their yields by using the GAP principles. This can be observed in the outcome especially on conservation agriculture. It is anticipated that during the coming farming season more farmers will be using the good agricultural practices method as it is proving to be performing better even in terms of yield.

Prepared by ACAT Lilima Swaziland

© May, 2013