



SAAI

The Southern African Agri Initiative (SAAI) is an agricultural interest network for farmers by farmers, which is committed to the protection and promotion of the rights, values, ideals and needs of family farmers in the primary produce sector.



saai
CONSTITUTION

A NETWORK OF FAMILY FARMERS BY FARMERS

Family farmers comprise a small section of the world's population who, still today, live in the country and work its soil. The majority of humanity residing in cities can follow other professions because there are enough farmers who ensure that everyone can eat three times a day or can wear clothes. And yet the core of agriculture remained the same over centuries and millennia.

Agriculture is about production from the soil. It is about how the sun and rain, the heat and light units together with nutritional value in the earth are managed by a passionate eye and strong hand to ensure harvests. It is about the protection of livestock against diseases and predators. It is about the protection of trees and other grains against weeds, plagues, excessive temperature fluctuations and climate factors. It is therefore about creating an environment in which your product will thrive. It is about farming profitably and sustainably.

Yet, in the hammer mill of industrialised value chains, where the margins for errors and setbacks shrink daily, there are new challenges with which earlier generations of family farmers did not have to deal: Climate change and global warming, commercial wars, dumping of surpluses, deforestation, erosion and soil fatigue, antimicrobial resistance, government interference in the market and the corporatization of farming.

In the face of all these threats the phenomenon is the same all around the world: Large farmers grow even larger and multinational companies take over primary production roles, while smaller ones are increasingly ousted and pushed to the side. For the first time the future of the family farmer is in jeopardy.

All over the world, the emphasis is being placed on three important arguments as to why the family farmer should be seen as the cornerstone of any rural development strategy:

- Family farmers anchor peri-urban economies.
- It can curb urbanisation and poverty like no other dragon slayer can.
- It preserves discipline, stability and value in rural areas.

Rural community leaders believe that a school, church and cooperative or agricultural business form the tripod on which the town balances. If one of the legs gives in, it becomes a ghost town, because the next larger town becomes the weekly destination. No other sector accommodates more entrepreneurs in a greater variety or creates more employment and prosperity on a broad basis than the family farm! It is the glue that holds the rural country together!

In the midst of these unique challenges and the fourth industrial revolution the Southern African Agri Initiative (Saai) was founded.

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Farmers must overcome a plethora of challenges, including land reform, safety risks, limiting trade measures, climate change and a lack of agricultural development, training, energy, resources, water, rural infrastructure, technology and access to finance. As an interest group it is the duty of SAAI to play an active role in the execution of active strategic solutions for this and other agricultural problems and not to merely rest on the hope of policy influence.

A photograph of a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a blue and white checkered shirt, speaking into a black microphone. He is smiling and looking to his right. The background is a teal banner with the word 'saai' repeated in white. On the left side of the image, there is a large, faint, light grey graphic of a stylized plant or leaf.

– Saai as a vehicle to strive for this goal –

is not a traditional agricultural union, but rather a network based on cooperation and the application of modern technology and pure principles.

In Southern Africa, where Saai is operating, family farmers are not only either big or small, rich or poor, old or young, black or white, established or novice, male or female; these are families owning and managing land-based primary produce enterprises.

UNITE THROUGH COLLABORATION

Cooperation agreements and mutual support with agricultural businesses, trade organisations, research institutions and agricultural organisations which focus on other support bases gives SAAI access to expert affiliates that enable us to put a wide spectrum of issues under the microscope. For this exact reason SAAI considers existing agricultural unions and organisations as partners in the achievement of our goal and strive to unite rather than divide.

SAAI views agricultural businesses and government as important role players in the promotion of the agricultural trade and will continually strive to promote cooperation with these parties, provided that it is in the interest of our farmers. The interests of farmers and the aforementioned is not always the same interest.

FARM THE FUTURE

SAAI endeavours for an agricultural-friendly future and believes that our network must reflect this in essence and in structure. We make use of tailor-made digital technology for recruitment, providing mandates and business-directed actions.

This enables SAAI to directly communicate with our members. Given the risks that farmers must manage daily, it is a priority to keep them abreast of affairs that affect their interests and to equip them to, through collective action, promote their interests.

STRUCTURE

Saai is an open-economy network striving for the flattest possible structure with the shortest possible line of communication between the policy-making and decision-making function, the executive function and the members and network partners. Members are family farmers and friends of family farmers who make a monthly financial contribution to achieve the objectives of Saai. Network partners are bodies, organisations and individuals performing a specialised function in the interest of family farmers and with whom such a network agreement is concluded based on shared values. Saai is managed by a board which must comprise more farmers than specialists at all times. Leading members will be called upon annually to align Saai's positions and activities with the current policy environment and to ensure that Saai continue to promote the interests of family farmers.



UN DECADE FOR FAMILY FARMING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Saai was founded within the ethos and framework of the UN Decade for Family Farming 2019-2029 and views the Southern African agricultural sector as having a shared destiny and being integrated with agricultural developments and food systems on the African continent and in the world. In this regard, Saai subscribes to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and pursues a farmer-centred interpretation of such goals and agriculture-friendly plans of action to achieve them.

Policy influencing is the most important function of Saai, but it is not the only one. Saai goes beyond policy influencing towards concrete measures such as projects, campaigns and actions. All of this, however, is guided by policy that should be interpreted within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals in accordance with the times and circumstances.

Saai's application of the Sustainable Development Goals to the interests of family farming enterprises in South and Southern Africa is as follows:

Poverty:

Saai launches influencing actions and campaigns to fight poverty in the only way that has been proven throughout history to be sustainable: by creating wealth. No sector of the economy of Southern Africa can do this quicker, cheaper and on a broader base than agriculture, provided that governments in the region create a policy environment that promotes sustainable and profitable agriculture. For this reason Saai

focuses on market-driven agriculture and value chains in rural areas, where poverty is most severe. Expropriation without compensation and inadequate security of ownership are some of the main drivers of economic decay, hunger and unemployment, and therefore this is a priority area receiving Saai's attention.

Actions against the absence, inadequacy or collapse of basic services such as education, training, infrastructure, health, employment environments, electricity supply and water as foundation for rural growth are seen by Saai as an equally important focus area to combat poverty. An inadequate economic policy environment in several Southern African countries has resulted in the collapse of agricultural financing, making it difficult for farmers to remain competitive, to expand or to gain access to technology, mechanisation and inputs. Saai is working to develop state-proof alternatives and to make these available to family farmers. Therefore, Saai also is actively involved in private initiatives to provide disaster relief and technical advisory services to farmers outside the framework of political, racially based or other discriminating statutory measures.

Hunger:

Saai is working towards a world free of hunger where everyone will have access to nutritious food, in particular on our home continent of Africa. As long as there are hungry people in their vicinity, family farmers will not enjoy peace or safety. Saai believes that the serious problem of malnutrition in Southern Africa and the rest of Africa can be countered only by broader general access to proteins, and for this reason

Saai is fighting all the way for more livestock production, better genetics and greater effectiveness in dairy, poultry, pig and red meat farming as against plant-based alternatives to which Africa's rural inhabitants have less access.

Efficiency is driving the markets, and this is why Saai believes in productivity, technology and commercialisation, modernisation and mechanisation of agriculture to combat hunger. Digital technology and biotechnology are dictating the terms in competitiveness, so Saai is working to expose family farmers to the latest technology. Saai believes that being technologically advanced is possible only through research and development, innovative quality training and investment. Investment, in turn, depends on security, stability and a market-friendly policy environment. Therefore, Saai is fighting for upholding sound business principles in national and regional policy. This includes security of ownership and a level and fair playing field in international trade.

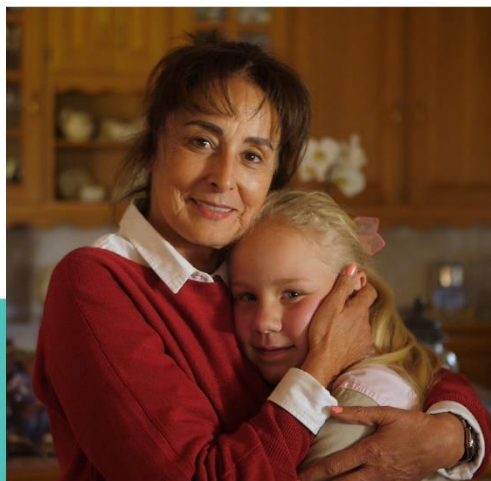
Health:

Great distances from public services and infrastructure mean that family farmers are farther away from health facilities and therefore are more vulnerable. In South Africa's unique circumstances, personal, family and farm safety are included in all efforts to promote physical and mental health in rural areas. The decay of public health, facilities and medical expertise in South Africa is forcing farmers and therefore also Saai to support state-proof private initiatives.

Saai believes that diets and the standards and quality of agricultural produce are fundamental to global health conditions and healthcare, and therefore Saai is promoting traceability of agricultural produce, campaigns to counteract antimicrobial resistance and shortened value chains with fresh and minimum processed food.

Education:

Education is the key to wealth and all efforts to combat poverty and hunger. Saai's point of view is that without a radical improvement in education and training in South Africa there is no future for family farmers. In striving towards and committing to a better education system, Saai actively promotes using the mother tongue in the classroom, particularly for mathematics and science, as well as recruiting competent, qualified and dedicated teachers and lecturers. Saai supports free primary and secondary education, the maintenance of standards and equal opportunities without any discrimination based on race, gender, language, culture, religion or political affiliation. Where education and especially agricultural training in South Africa suffers under ideological, political or unlawful approaches and learners or students are discriminated against, Saai supports the development of private self-reliant institutions that are free of political and unlawful interference and where excellence is the only objective. In this way Saai is contributing towards broadening of skills and expertise among the population and fighting unemployment. Saai is for universal standards and principles in science and is working to promote these through the education system.





Gender equality:

Saai supports gender equality and does not discriminate against any gender with regard to members, leadership, staff, services and activities. Nobody will be favoured or disadvantaged on the basis of gender. Saai is working actively for an agricultural environment where there will be no advantages or disadvantages towards any gender with regard to ownership, management, opportunities and financing. Within the framework of Saai's fundamental commitment to family farmers, the maintenance of healthy families is a priority and a criterion against which points of view and actions are judged.



Water:

Sufficient clean water for primary use, and sustainable use and management of water sources for livestock and plant production will be the foundation of Saai's approach to water matters. Without water no food can be produced, and for this reason Saai will work towards management measures that are fair, just and rightful towards all producers. All forms of water pollution must be opposed, and Saai will, where applicable, promote the accessibility and equitable administration of water for family farmers. Recycling and infrastructure (both creation and maintenance) are seen as a priority for the existence and survival of family farmers. Representation of family farmers' interests in policy-making and executive water management structures at all levels is important. Saai is working towards a regulatory dispensation that is free from political, ideological and corrupt interference.



Energy:

General access to electricity, fuel and other forms of energy is a prerequisite for achieving the policy objectives referred to above and below, and to win the war against poverty and hunger in Africa. However, Southern Africa, and the rural areas in particular, still has a long way to go, and even where energy is available and accessible it is mainly generated from fossil fuels such as oil and coal. Saai is fighting for more reliable general access for rural families and enterprises to affordable electricity and fuel, for renewable sources in this regard, and for opportunities for family farmers to also farm with energy by generating electricity or producing fuel from renewable sources on the farm.



Employment opportunities and economic growth:

Agriculture has more potential than any other sector to create good, sustainable job opportunities in the deep rural areas where it is needed most. For this purpose, however, a policy environment must be created that encourages job creation,



and the economic contribution, productivity and value of every worker must be greater than the risk he/she represents in the regulatory framework. Family farmers are employers and must have the freedom to appoint or dismiss workers if they do not meet the needs of the family enterprise. The conditions for a friendly policy environment for job creation are very similar to those for investment and growth, and in the context of Southern Africa they are based on the free market and property rights. Saai supports equal remuneration for equal work, production-based remuneration, and freedom of choice, association and opportunities, and it rejects any form of racial, gender or age discrimination, any form of forced labour and slavery, child labour, human trafficking and exploitation. Job opportunities and employability are directly dependent on skills and training, and on economic growth, which Saai links to the investment attractiveness of agriculture.

Greater equality in and between countries:

Saai views equality as an input rather than an outcome, and given the outcomes of communist and socialist experiments over the past century, Saai will steer away from redistribution, expropriation or forced transactions to bring about equality. Saai believes that equality can be achieved by offering equal opportunities, particularly in education, training and policy that creates job opportunities according to criteria based on performance and productivity. Saai does not believe that unproductive people, groups and bodies should receive equal remuneration or recognition more than productive ones. Where countries' policies are unfriendly towards job creation, investment or business, unequal outcomes compared to countries that encourage productivity, investment and performance, are justifiable. Poor countries with corrupt governments cannot claim equal outcomes compared to countries where responsibility, accountability and honesty as norms are respected.

Sustainable cities and communities:

Urbanisation is one of the forces that are changing the world comprehensively. Saai believes that the protection and promotion of family farms in rural areas can stop and turn around the phenomenon of urbanisation by presenting a rural alternative to city life for younger families. This includes the maintenance of viable towns where schools, churches and businesses flourish and where family farmers get together particularly with regard to the first steps of collective value adding. The city will always be the most important market place for food and fibre, and because the majority of consumers are living in cities, good interaction and communication with the city are imperative. The droughts, fires and unrest that are experienced regularly in South Africa are one of the greatest threats to the viability of towns and family

farms, and the state should be running a comprehensive disaster relief programme

In the absence of such a programme, Saai will get involved in independent, non-discriminatory and state-proof disaster relief partnerships. In the context of South African reality the same principle also holds true for rural safety, which is one of the major threats to local communities and family farmers, and where Saai is entering into partnerships to support farm watches, neighbourhood watches and other security structures.

Responsible consumption and production:

Consumers are the most important focus in the business of family farmers. They determine what, how and how much will be produced. The likes and dislikes of consumers guide production processes, and consumers increasingly are becoming more informed and demanding. Saai supports ever rising standards, traceability and transparency and remains at the forefront of digital technology enabling family farmers to do so. Both producers and consumers should act responsibly to keep the food system healthy. Saai puts great emphasis on fighting wastage and losses in the food system, and believes that measurability is key to managing this. By responsible production processes Saai also understands the handling of chemical sprays and fertilisers.

Climate:

No occupational group is affected more by climate change than farmers, and smaller and medium-scale family farms have less of a buffer to protect them against this. As far as Saai is concerned, the priority concerning climate action firstly is to reduce greenhouse gasses and especially CO₂, particularly of the energy and transport sectors using fossil fuels. This cannot be compared to the short cycle of methane gas produced by the livestock industry, and Saai's point of view on national and international forums is to protect and promote sustainable livestock production as the solution to climate change, and not as the

problem. Science should have the final say, and emotional attacks on agriculture's climate footprint that are not founded on good science should be opposed. Farmers should be given an opportunity to farm profitably with alternative energy and to sell it to the national grid. Climate solutions are area specific. While all other sectors of the economy are focusing on reducing their carbon footprint, agriculture is the only one that can sequester carbon on a significant scale, and Saai supports all initiatives to do so in a scientific and measurable way.

Sea:

Saai is committed to fighting pollution of the sea, especially because of the run-off of chemicals from agricultural activities into watercourses. Family fishermen are primary producers similar to family farmers, facing similar interests, challenges and threats, and so Saai will seek and maintain network relationships with the organised family fishermen industry. Saai will work for sustainable, scientifically based utilisation of the blue economy.

Life on land:

The protection, conservation and promotion of sustainable utilisation of ecosystems on land, including the fight against desertification, deforestation of natural forests, soil erosion and soil impoverishment, is a priority for Saai because in the longer term it is decisive for the survival of family farmers. This includes the protection and promotion of biodiversity and ecosystems based on both groundwater and fresh water. This forces Saai to be involved in the protection of mountain areas and other sponge areas, natural areas and all living species. Saai therefore is fundamentally opposed to poaching, invasion by exotic species and destruction of ecosystems. Saai accepts that agriculture cannot take place in harmony with nature, because nature does not produce the surpluses required to feed a rapidly growing global population. To produce surpluses, farmers are obliged to counteract the balancing functions of nature, such as by predation and insect and weed control. Every farmer, however, knows where he/she as guardian

of a small piece of earth can bend over backwards to allow nature to flourish and leave it to the next generation in a better condition than he/she received it.

Peace, justice and strong institutions:

The environment in which Saai has been functioning in Southern Africa is a symbolisation of the principle that states and communities flourish in indiscriminating circumstances of peace, non-racialism, self-government and decentralisation of power. The opposite is also true, and in the absence of democracy, law and order, supremacy of the law, separation of powers and respect for the constitution, many countries have experienced the collapse of their agriculture, economy and stability. Saai is fighting for freedom of choice, freedom of speech, freedom of association and to be free from discrimination and neediness. Saai was established in an era where basic freedoms and state functions were undermined by state capture, corruption, poaching and incompetence to such an extent that the continued existence of family farming enterprises was being compromised, and the organisation forms part of a larger attempt through collective civil organising, mobilisation and actions to develop state-proof alternative pillars for a prosperous society. The collapse of law and order, farm attacks and farm murders, expropriation without compensation and state interference in markets and opportunities elsewhere in world history have had devastating consequences, and the fight against these phenomena is central to Saai's mission.

For the freedom, safety and prosperity of family farmers, for the freedom, safety and prosperity of family farmers, national policy should be influenced through persuasion, legal action, international pressure and protest campaigns to such an extent that an environment is created in which the land-based businesses on farms can remain profitable and sustainable. Corruption and maladministration, nepotism and cadre deployment must be eradicated by holding the decision-makers and political leaders as well as their beneficiaries responsible and accountable.

Creating partnerships for implementation:

Owing to Saai's network character as an open-economy agricultural structure, the pursuit of strong partnerships to achieve global and regional development goals is not unusual. Saai accepts that the major threats to family farms are universal in nature and that these threats can adequately be addressed only by collective action across national and continental borders. Consequently, active membership of and involvement in multinational organisations that also serve the interests of family farmers are a priority for Saai.

Saai does not aim at serving the broad society or any social, political or economic interest group, but to promote the interests of family farmers. Consequently, Saai will not be guided by political correctness or social fancies, but by consultation, dialogue and inputs from representative family farmers.

