



ACF Stakeholder Survey Report 2006

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Introduction

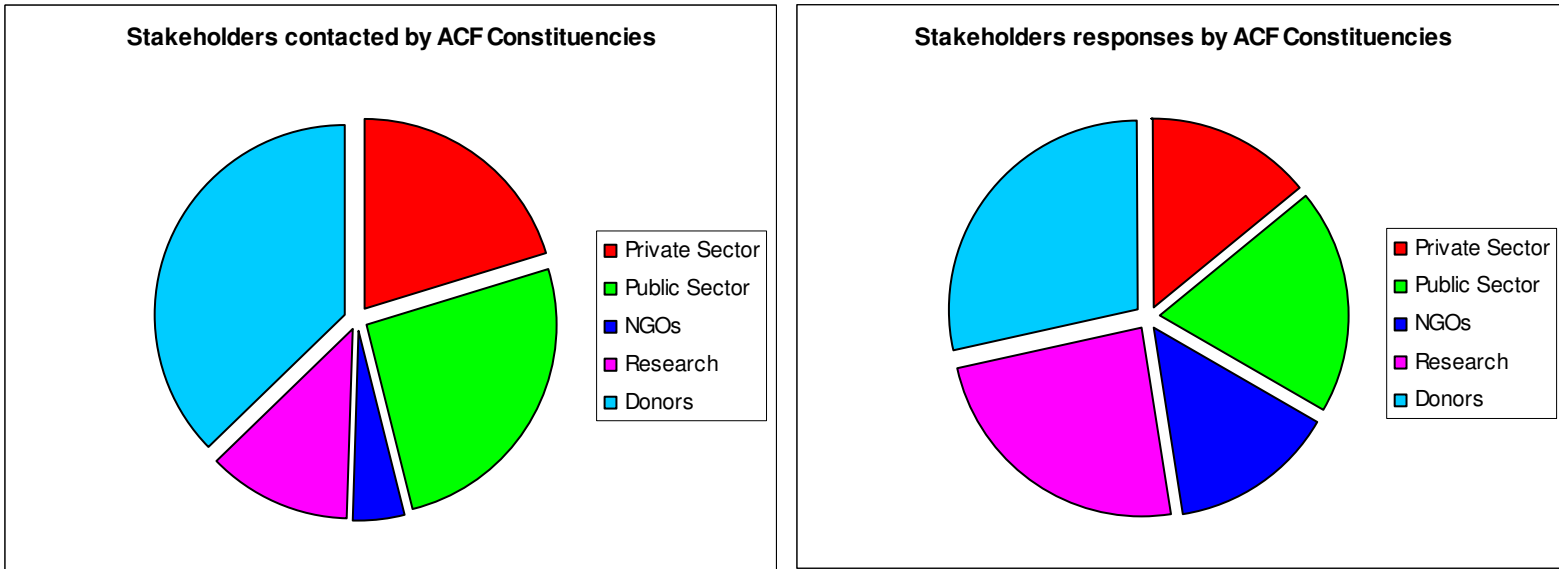
The ACF secretariat conducted a stakeholder survey amongst its members and agricultural stakeholders in September / October 2006. In this report the responses are summarised. Since the establishment of the ACF in 1998 the agricultural sector has changed and so did its challenges. This survey aims at scrutinising the perceptions of individual stakeholders and their institutions about the continued relevance of the ACF in the FNDP implementation process, the ownership that the ACF enjoys amongst its constituency which is related to the sustainability of the Forum. Key output and purpose of the ACF is to render policy advisory services mainly to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives but also other stakeholder institutions. How effective are the ACF policy advisory notes (PAN) and are there any better, more effective options to influence policy formulation and implementation than PANs? We wanted to through this question directly to our clientele in order to receive guidance on this difficult but vitally important issue. In the same vain we endeavoured to gauge the effectiveness of other services that the ACF is delivering, be it through meetings, workshops, monitoring and evaluation efforts and / or new approaches like the hosting of coordination groups and task forces.

Participation

Realising that the internet is fast becoming the preferred tool for communication the ACF decided to use this medium for its stakeholder survey. It was anticipated that the distribution of the survey questionnaire through the internet was more cost effective, more convenient for respondents and faster than the conventional approach. In total we distributed questionnaires to 113 individual and institutional e-mail addresses of which 21 were filled out and returned to the ACF. This is a response rate of 19%.

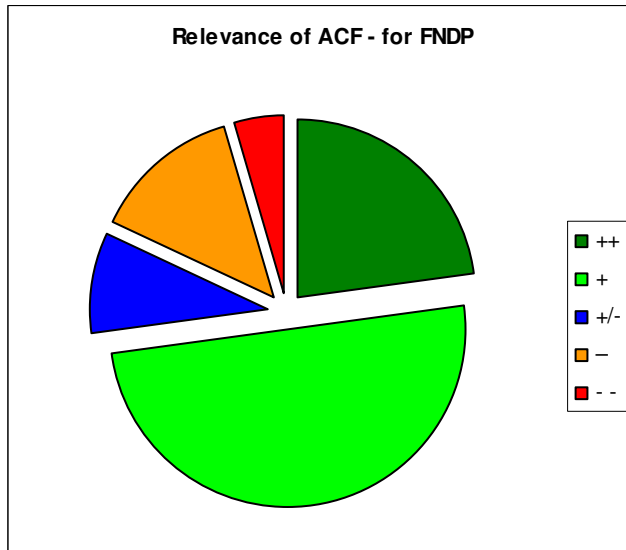
In Figure 1 a) and b) the participants are grouped by their constituency. The ACF divides its members into public and private sector stakeholders, representatives from non-governmental organisations and research institutions and from the donor community. The constituencies were not equally represented in the survey. However, it can not be established if this reflects the fact that donor representatives have better access to internet technology (largest group) and therefore more individual have more e-mail addresses than for instance from the NGO sector (smallest group) or if there is indeed a bias in the ACF contact list database. We will strive to up-date this list. Looking at the responses from stakeholders this apparent bias seems to be removed. NGO representatives showed the highest response rate (60%) segregated by constituency followed by research (36%) and to almost equal share the other stakeholder groups (13-14%). Thus, despite the disappointing total response rate the survey provided us with a balanced view of the perceptions of representatives form the ACF's constituencies.

Figure 1 a & b) Participation of ACF stakeholders in the survey by constituencies



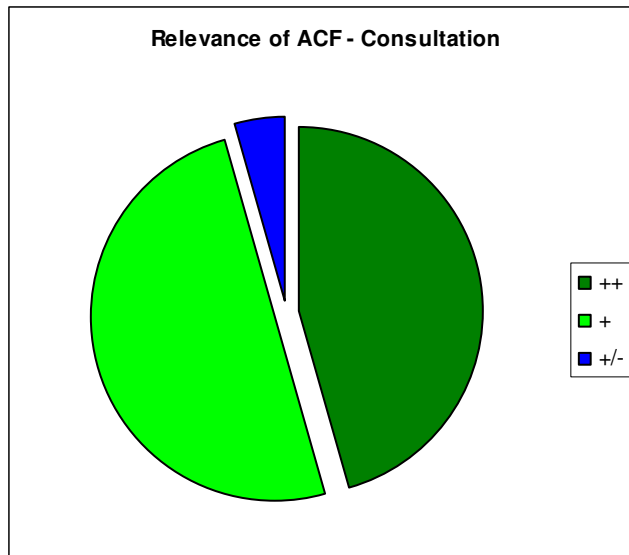
Relevance

Figure 2 The ACF is a relevant institution for the implementation of development programmes under the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP):



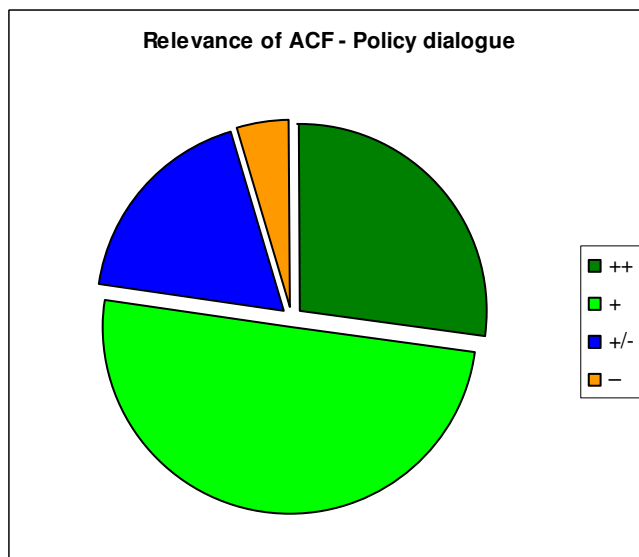
Three quarter of all stakeholders assign the ACF a significant role in the implementation process of the FNDP. The remaining quarter is ambiguous to dismissive about the ACF's involvement. In some of the comments that we received however it transpired that some of those who did not want to grant the ACF a role in FNDP implementation might have misunderstood the intention of the question. They expressed concern about the ACF being solely in charge of the implementation of the FNDP, which of course is not possible.

Figure 3 The ACF provides an indispensable stakeholder consultation platform that addresses the challenges in the Zambian agricultural sector:



The majority of ACF stakeholders is of the opinion that the ACF does provide the right platform to discuss the challenges in the agricultural sector. This is an indication that the ACF is accepted and respected by all constituencies in its role as a platform for dialogue. Thus the ACF maintained its independent and non-partisan approach to conflict resolutions and facilitation of the policy debate.

Figure 4 The ACF engages in policy dialogue and monitoring of FNDP programmes in a constructive and successful manner:

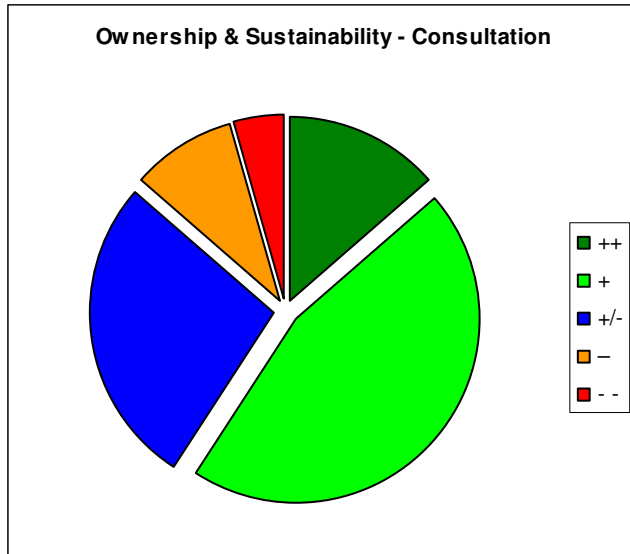


Again the overwhelming majority of stakeholders express confidence in the ACF's engagement in policy dialogue and monitoring of the FNDP. This is a clear mandate for the ACF to follow up the FNDP implementation in the years to come.

About one fifth (19%) of all stakeholder are doubtful about the way the ACF accomplishes this role, probably seeing a potential overlap with the responsibility of the Agricultural Sector Advisory Group. Only few of the stakeholders do not believe the ACF is suited for this task.

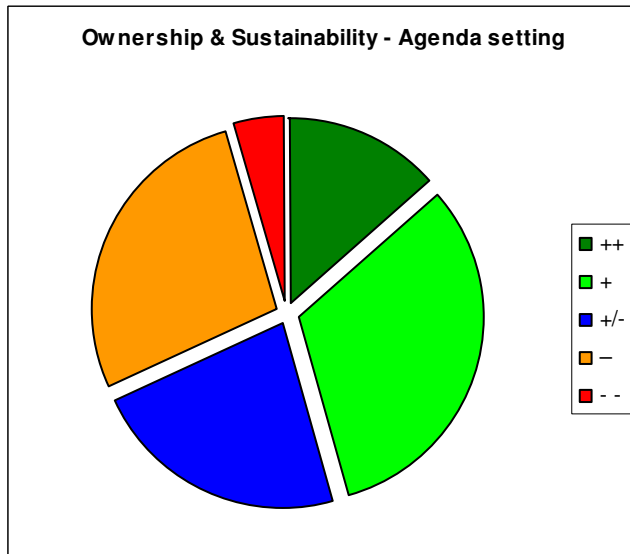
Ownership and Sustainability

Figure 5 My institution relies on the ACF services for effective stakeholder consultation, information exchange and networking:



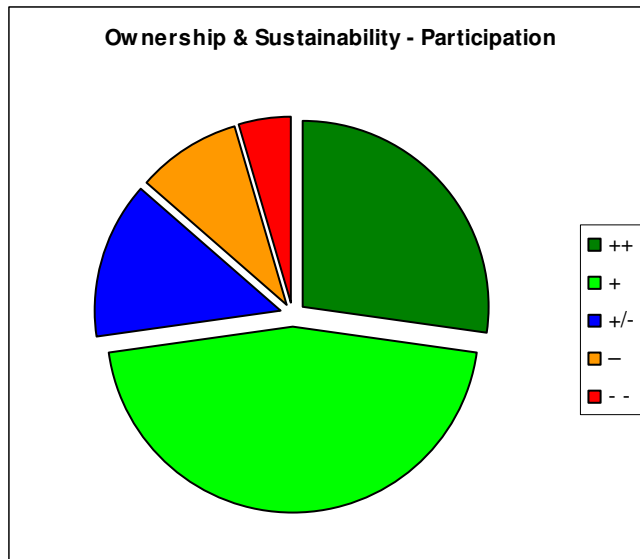
Almost two thirds (62%) of the stakeholders rely on the ACF services to interact with each other. A relatively small number (15%, red and orange group) are not attracted by what ACF has to offer whereas 29% are not entirely happy but also realize that ACF has something to offer to them.

Figure 6 My institution is actively involved in driving the agenda of the forum:



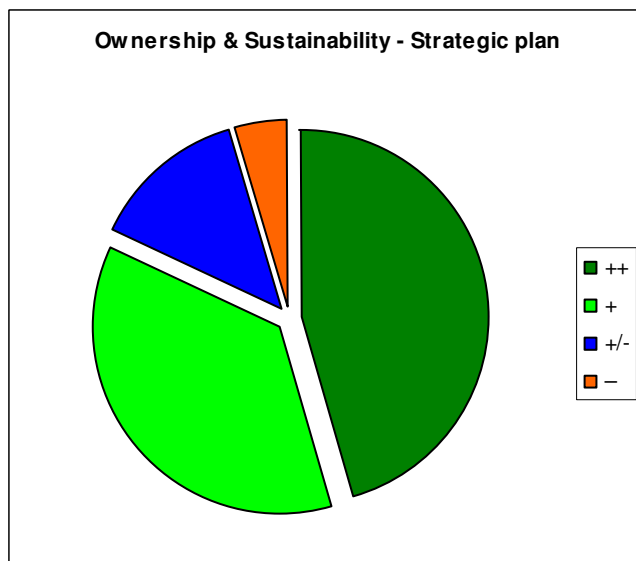
This is a central point in view of the ownership and direction of the Forum. Apparently the majority of stakeholders (53%, red, orange & blue) do not take an active role in driving the Forum's agenda. The Forum is demand driven and thus relies on input from stakeholders. Although the operations of the Forum are guided by its Board, which represents all constituencies in the agricultural sector, it is open for all stakeholders to engage in its activities and drive its agenda.

Figure 7 My institution regularly participates in ACF activities (i.e. meetings, workshops, working groups, etc.):



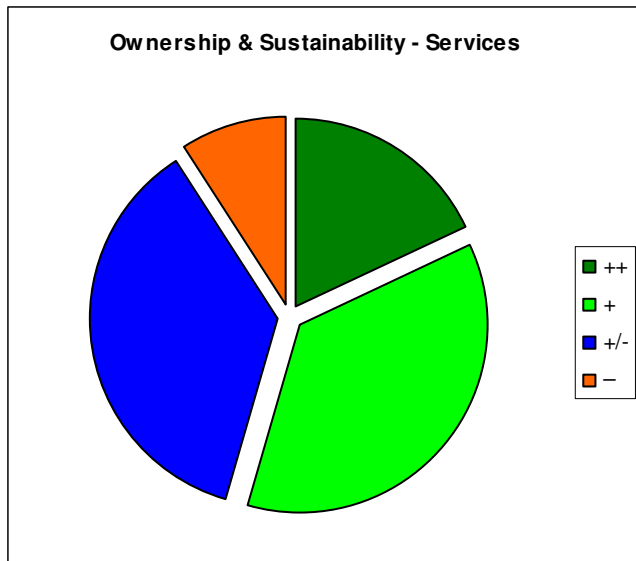
Almost three quarters (72%) of the stakeholders participate in the various ACF activities. 14% claim not to take part in ACF activities. However, at least they did participate in this survey.

Figure 8 My institution is of the opinion that the ACF needs to develop a long-term strategic plan to address the future challenges in the agricultural sector:



Currently the ACF secretariat prepares annual work plans and budgets. But most ACF stakeholders agree that the Forum needs to develop a long-term strategic plan. Such a plan should address the challenges in the agricultural sector and its timeframe should be harmonized with the FNDP as the overall guiding document for agricultural development interventions. Such a strategic plan will be developed in 2007 as part of the preparation of a new phase for the ACF.

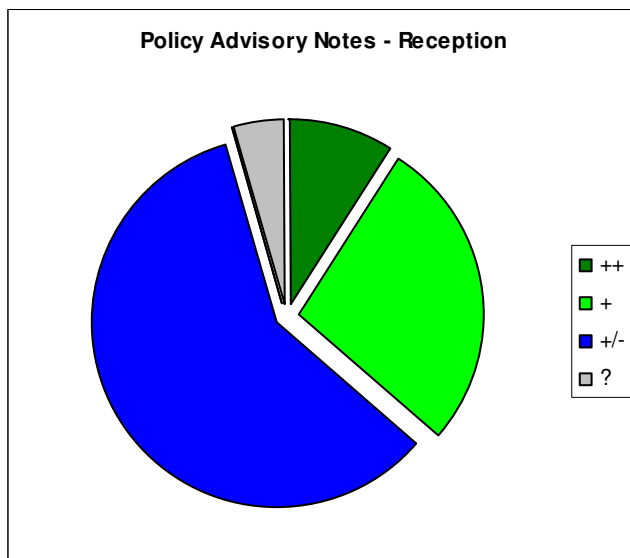
Figure 9 The ACF should finance itself through service provision to members and outsiders on a cost covering basis:



This question touches on the financial sustainability of the Forum. It is interesting to note that none of the stakeholders express a strong opinion against the objective of the ACF to generate income through service provision. Less than 10% (orange) fear that the ACF could compromise its capacity to provide a public good service, namely policy advice, by venturing into income generation. The majority acknowledges this as a prerequisite to its sustainability although some (blue) do still seem to have some doubts.

Policy Advisory Notes

Figure 10 ACF Policy Advisory Notes are usually well received by decision makers and effectively contribute to policy changes:

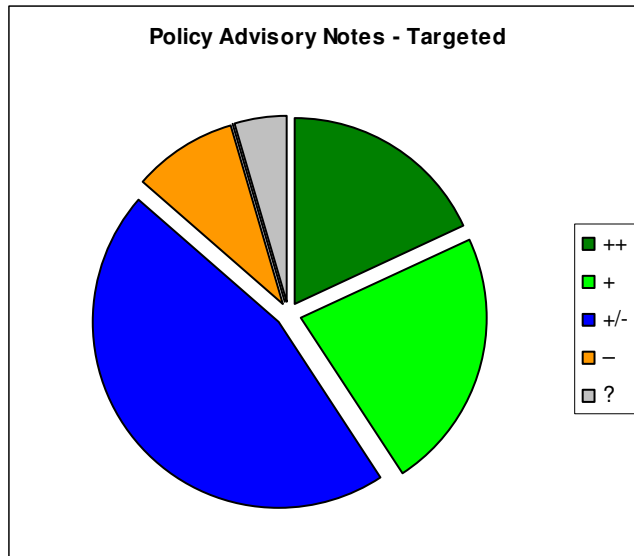


ACF policy advisory notes have been the prime output of the Forum in order to influence policy formulation and implementation. Despite this critical and central role of the PANs there is very little clarity about their effectiveness amongst stakeholders. This can in part be explained by the “missing link symptom” which is inherent to policy advice. The advice (PAN) can only be related to actual policy changes in rare cases. Very often the time gap between advice and its implementation create the impression there was no advice in the first place. However, the concern of the stakeholders is well

founded and the ACF will endeavor to devise new tools and strategies to impact on policy formulation and implementation. Some stakeholders (5%, grey) expressed lack of knowledge an/or access to PANs. In the past PANs were not published in order to remain confidentiality between the Forum and the institutions targeted by the PAN. In

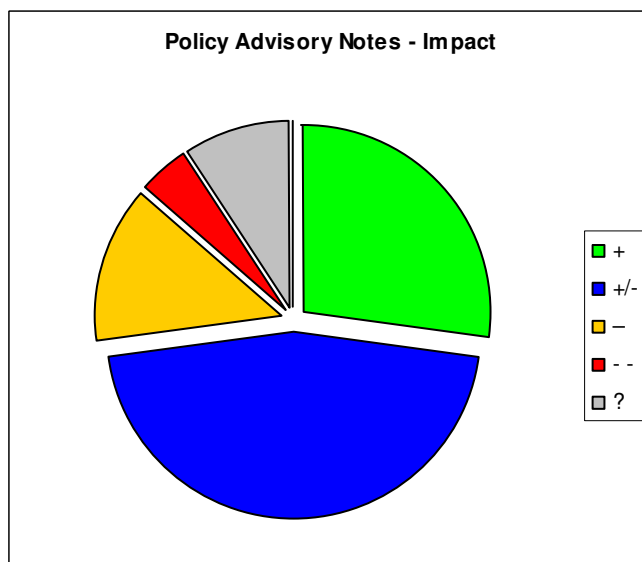
future the ACF will increasingly attempt to bring PANs to the attention of the general public, be it through the forum's website or the print and other public media.

Figure 11 ACF Policy Advisory Notes were well targeted and formulated in the past but lacked public support for their implementation:



The targeting and implementation support is also dominated by uncertainty. Except for a group of apparently well informed insiders (39%, dark green & green) most of the stakeholders are not sure or skeptical about this issue. To change this will remain a key challenge for the ACF in future. Stakeholders advised to target more specifically political decision makers for instance the cabinet and / or parliament and include other ministries. The ACF has already begun to focus its attention more and more in this direction and will increase its efforts to reach out to these groups.

Figure 12 ACF Policy Advisory Notes lacked impact on policy formulation & implementation in the past:



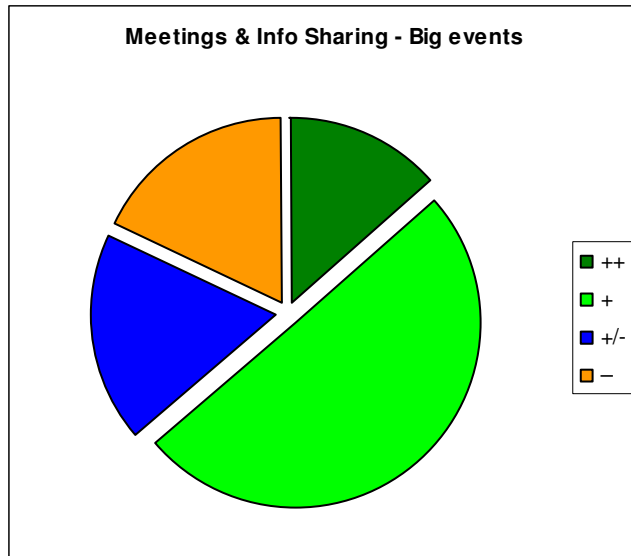
In other words, how effective is the tool Policy Advisory Note in respect to influencing policy decisions? The perceptions are mixed. What is lacking from the picture is strong confidence (dark green) instead a good deal of apprehension (blue) seems to prevail. As part of the survey questionnaire we asked stakeholders to inform us on alternative ways to effectively impact on decision making processes.

The suggestions from stakeholders range from additional dissemination meetings with a broaden audience (to include rural communities) via a shift in targeted

recipients of policy advisory notes to new forms of policy influence like for example through commodity based task forces and coordination groups. The ACF will evaluate all these recommendations and strive to implement them.

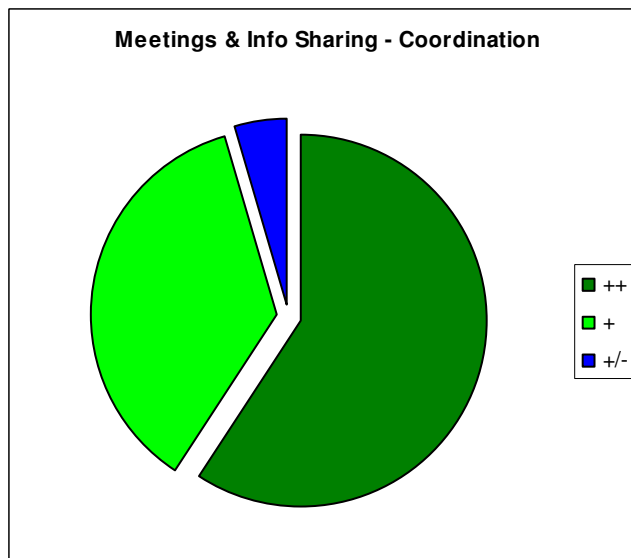
Stakeholder Meetings and Information Sharing

Figure 13 The ACF should spend more resources on big events (like the budget meeting in Feb. 2006) because they are more effective in resolving issues:



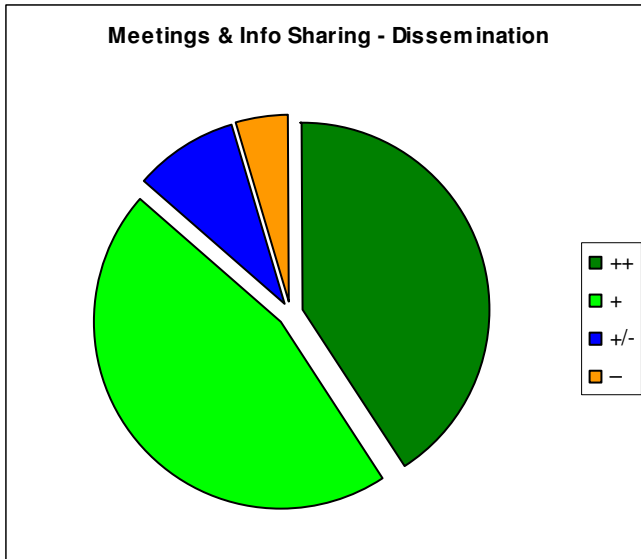
The majority of stakeholders (64%) views bigger events as more effective. This is consistent with the request to seek wider stakeholder involvement and will help to draw more attention to the policy debate in the public media as suggested by some respondents. Although almost a fifth of the respondents (18%, orange) does not warm to the suggestion, there were no strong feelings expressed against it. Therefore the ACF will continue to explore this issue further.

Figure 14 ACF consultation meetings (like SAG meetings, Livestock Coordination Group meetings etc.) are important but their outputs should be publicised to a wider audience:



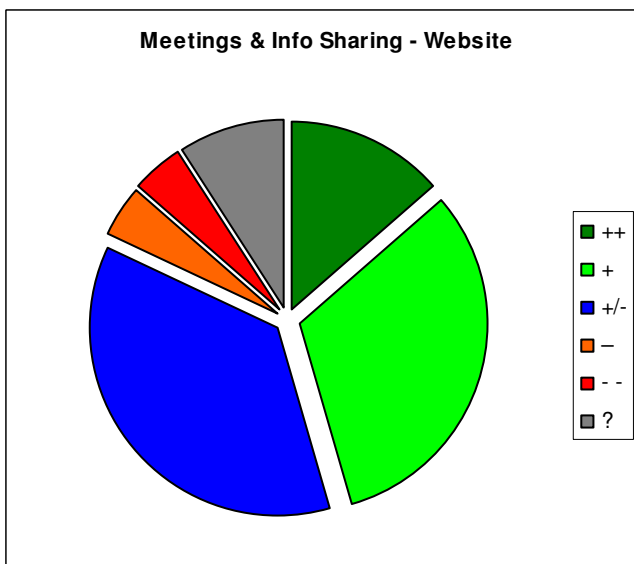
Here the ACF received a strong and unanimous mandate. The minutes of such meetings will be published on the ACF website in future.

Figure 15 ACF dissemination meetings keep stakeholders well informed of critical issues in the sector:



Also the dissemination meeting received general appreciation. The ACF will strive to keep stakeholders informed by well organised and targeted information events.

Figure 16 The ACF website [www.acf.org.zm] is a useful source for information about issues in the sector:

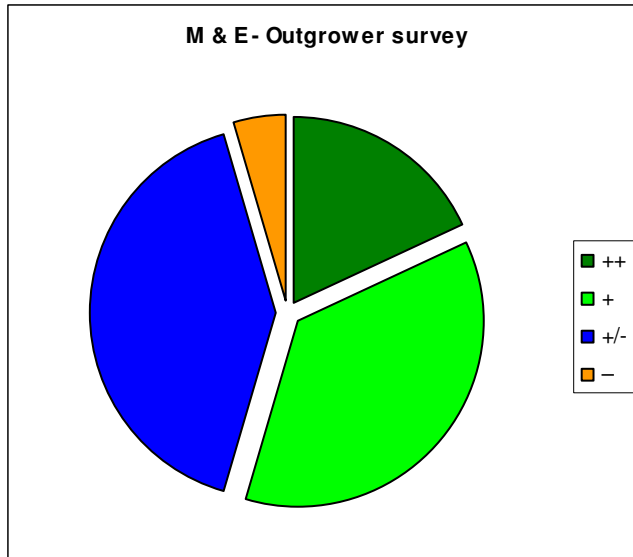


The ACF website has not yet demonstrated its anticipated impact. Some of the respondents were not even aware of its existence or claimed limited opportunity to access electronic media as reason for their ignorance.

The ACF believes its website is an extremely cost effective tool to disseminate information to stakeholders and is confident that this medium will gain more and more popularity amongst stakeholders in the near future. All users are encouraged to contact the ACF for further comments on the website and submit information

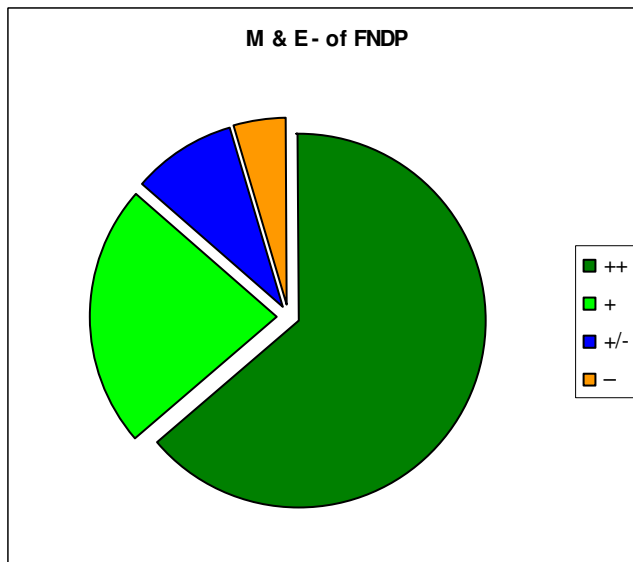
to be disseminated via this media.

Figure 17 The ACF survey on the out-grower schemes helped to bring out issues and contributed to the development in the sub-sector:



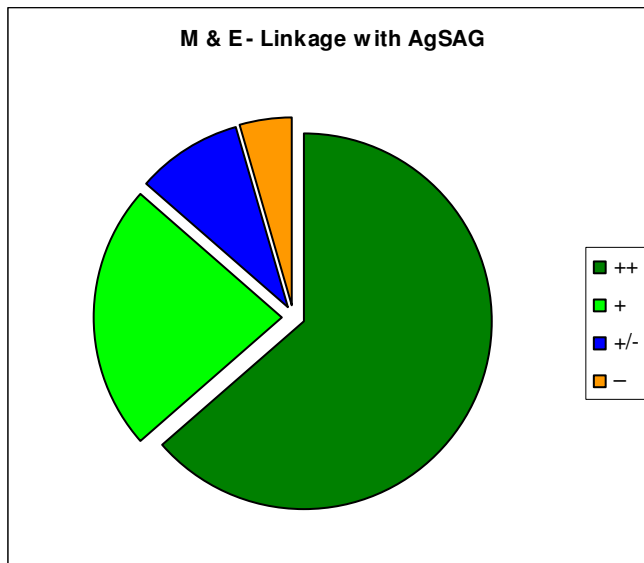
The response to this statement was mostly positive but also mixed with doubts about the effectiveness of the influence it had on the developments in the sector. It probably would have been better to split the statement into two parts in order to bring out this issue better. To flag an issue and to have an impact on decision making are naturally different things. This is a general dilemma advisory service provider suffer from. Nevertheless the ACF accepts the challenge (also see below) and will continue working on issues in the out-grower sector.

Figure 18 The ACF should continue to contribute to monitoring and evaluation of FNDP programmes because it provides an independent and objective perspective:



Here the ACF receives an overwhelming mandate from stakeholders (87%, green and dark green) .

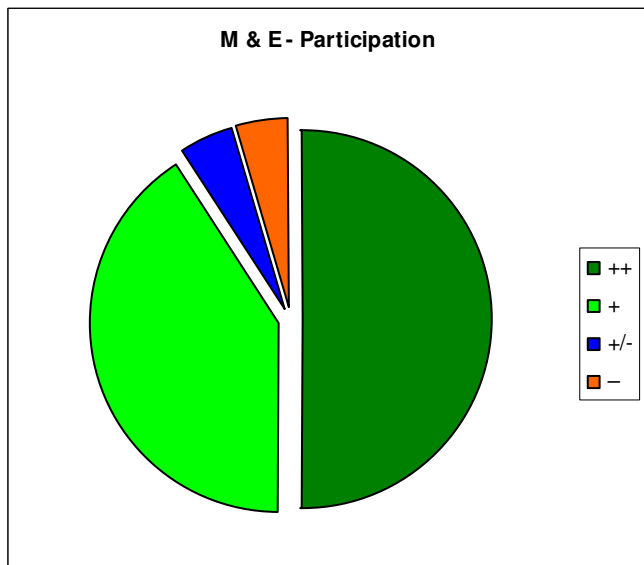
Figure 19 Through the Agricultural Sector Advisory Group the ACF should play a stronger role within the monitoring and evaluation framework for the sector development programmes under the NDP:



This statement received the same response as the one above and in fact they are closely related. Since the overall mandate for FNDP monitoring and evaluation lies with the AgSAG. However, the issue of an independent and objective perspective is key to arrive at meaningful assessments. Most of the FNDP activities will be implemented by or through the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. Therefore it would add credibility if the M&E coordination of the programme would be facilitated by an outside party. The ACF is well positioned and prepared to take up this role.

Additionally it received a clear mandate by its constituencies to do so.

Figure 20 ACF member institutions should contribute more to monitoring and evaluation of the sector performance by participating in the general framework:

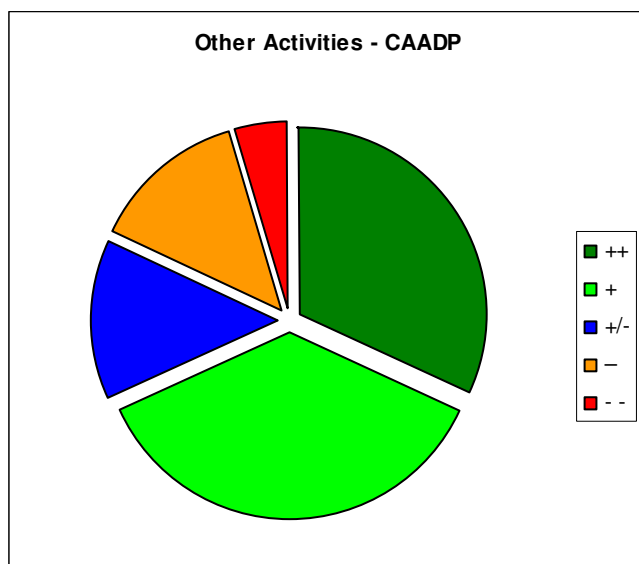


Again most stakeholders (91%) agree that ACF members should take a more active role in sector monitoring. From this section it becomes clear that stakeholders are enthusiastic about participating in sector monitoring and appreciate the contribution it can make for informed decision making. However, some reservations remain on the issue of effectiveness. Past experience, especially from the ASIP programme implementation demonstrate that civil society and private sector players are highly motivated and at the same time highly sensitive to window dressing

consultation and ineffective participation in public programmes. The ACF believes that herein lies the challenge for the FNDP monitoring, to stakeholders inclusive, evidence based effective and last but not least constructive in nature.

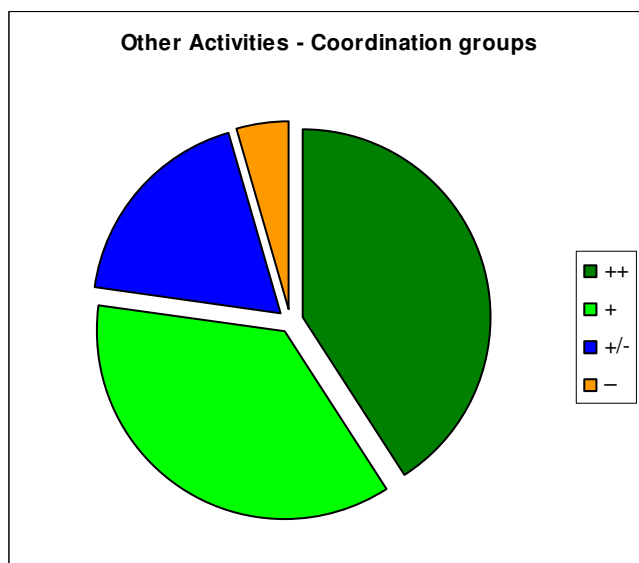
Other Activities of the ACF

Figure 21 The ACF should become more involved in regional initiatives like for example the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programmes (CAADP) implementation under NEPAD:



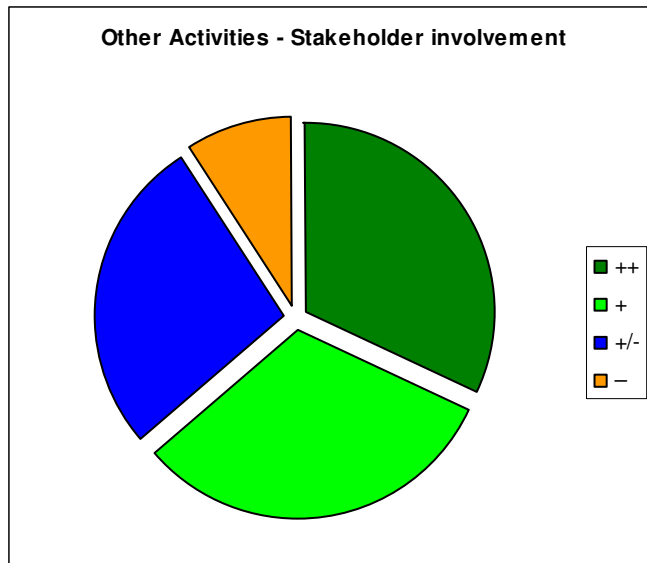
Most ACF stakeholders (68%) do see a role for the ACF in regional initiatives. Even so, almost one fifth (19%) disagrees with that. Possibly these stakeholders did not yet realize the importance and potential of regional cooperation and collaboration for agricultural development. Cross-border issues like trade regulations and animal disease control can only be addressed effectively on the regional level. Furthermore infrastructure development, a key area for a land-locked country like Zambia and irrigation development need to be coordinated with neighbouring countries.

Figure 22 The ACF should engage more in hosting of coordination groups (livestock) and task forces (Cassava):



With the commencement of FNDP implementation active participation and support of all stakeholders in the activities of the programmes becomes vital for their success. The fact that more than three quarters (77%) of the respondents encourage the ACF to increase their efforts to host coordination groups and task forces pays tribute this development. The ACF is currently, together with partner organisations, in the process of establishing such bodies in the aquaculture and paprika sub-sectors.

Figure 23 ACF member institutions should take a more active role in the operations of the Forum and represent the entire Forum at public meetings or initiatives if required:



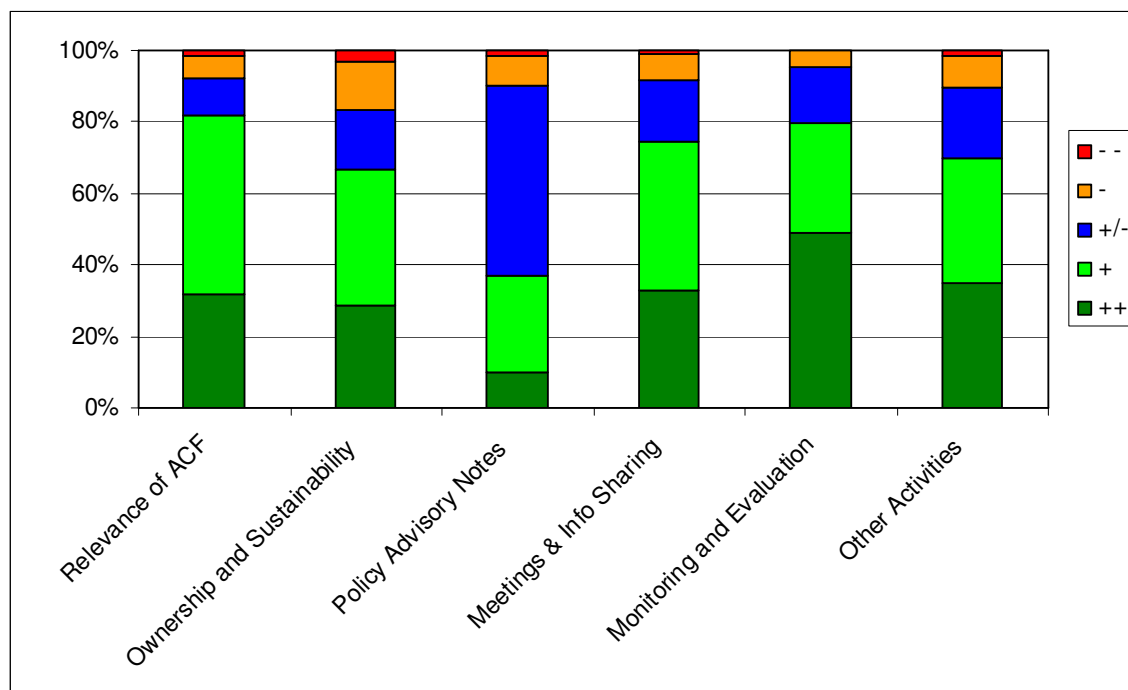
This statement relates also to the ownership of the Forum by its stakeholders. The ACF represents all stakeholders in the agricultural sector. In turn most stakeholders (64%) are prepared to represent the Forum and promote its course. This a very encouraging fact for the Forum. Members are invited to bring issues to the Forum but are likewise encouraged to promote the principals of the ACF amongst a wider audience. This will strengthen the Forum as a whole and thus contribute to achieving its vision and mission

Conclusions

Overall the ACF is very much appreciated by its stakeholders. Except for the Policy Advisory Note area all approval rates lie well above 60% (Figure 24, dark green and green colours). This area signifies the main output of the ACF and hence is the field of greatest concern. The ACF will have to find ways to establish its impact on the decision making process and design mechanisms to communicate its successes more effectively to its stakeholders including the general public. As part of the strategic plan for the next phase this issue will be handled. The other area which raises concern is the ownership and sustainability of the Forum. Most of the stakeholders identify with the ACF and support it but not all agree with each aspect of it. More work needs to be done here to ensure the client orientation and thus sustain the future relevance of the Forum.

Concerning monitoring and evaluation of the agricultural sector stakeholders strongly support an augmented involvement of the ACF. The Forum will engage the AgSAG in an effort to establish a working group for M&E.

Figure 24 Overall approval rates of ACF mandate and activities by its stakeholders:



Recommendations

1. The ACF needs to consolidate the support from and interest by the private sector in FNDP implementation to maintain the relevance of the Forum.
2. The ACF should find mechanisms to involve stakeholders more into its agenda setting.
3. The ACF needs to develop a strategic plan for its next phase.
4. The ACF needs to increase the visibility of its Policy Advisory Services, esp the PAN.
5. The ACF should explore mechanisms to enhance the impact of its advisory services for instance through increased publication in the media.
6. The ACF needs to promote its website in a stronger fashion and strive to develop into an interactive tool for stakeholder information sharing.
7. The ACF should get more involved in the coordination of M&E efforts in the sector.
8. The ACF should ensure the participation of all stakeholders in FNDP M&E in the agricultural sector.
9. The ACF should advance to approach to impact on policy and programme implementation through coordination groups and task forces.
10. The ACF should involve such groupings in sector monitoring and feed information derived from these initiatives into evidence based decision making processes.
11. The ACF needs to maintain and reinforce its linkage to the Agricultural Sector Advisory Group in respect to M&E issues and as a conduit for its Policy Advisory Services.

Annex 1 Comments on Policy Advisory Notes:

- Panel discussions and workshop presentations with brief discussions
- Unfortunately, worthwhile though they were, the secretaries filed them and locked them away. I suggest that there must be an ad hoc committee to present them.
- Normally the people targeted rarely influence policy. ACF should target the AG_SAG, Budget planning sessions and long to medium term planning forums such as FNDP. ACF should also engage and target Cabinet, MPs and Political parties in the PANs. MACO has no major influence on policy. Private sector participation needs to improve.
- Would suggest that any policy notes need to be widely shared, including through the media, rather than relying solely on information sharing with the upper echelons of the MACO
- Unfortunately I cannot answer above questions, since I did not see many advisory notes and don't know how they are received
- The ACF fora are, of themselves, valuable for facilitating information exchange among private sector, farmers and government. I think the ACF successfully helps to inform and alter actions of the **private sector** as well as **government** through their fora and various task forces. The cassava task force offers a good example of how ACF is influencing both by helping to establish legal standards necessary for the expansion of cassava commercialization, contributing to improved communication and coordination of various promotional efforts. By involving the private sector in cassava-based livestock feeding trials, the task force could potentially contribute to a significant breakthrough in commercial cassava trade, weaning Zambia off its maize dependence and reducing protein costs all at the same time. I think the task force model is a good one, although you have to be very selective about picking likely targets of opportunity.
- Allow wider participation in policy formulation. Involve all stake holders including our uneducated mothers located in rural areas. Target and channel your efforts/resources on priority areas :Support and influence projects that may empower people. We need policies that would promote local participation and empowerment. We need to see Dams constructed In rural communities so that people may grow Sugar cane, Bananas e.t.c.
- ACF needs to find ways of engaging other key policy nodes in Zambia particularly the Ministry of Finance, parliament and possibly cabinet
- I have not had an opportunity to see these PAS . So its difficulty to say. May be yes with a lot of consultations

Annex 2 General comments on ACF:

- Other than being proactive at resolving/mitigating immediate pressing problems, ACF should be more focused at planned (medium to long term) agro interventions in all value chains for easier monitoring and evaluation of their impacts.
- The School of Agricultural Sciences has not been fully involved as an institution, rather members of Staff have had input into the affairs of ACF. The Department could be involved as an institution.
- Has the ACF provided members with concrete evidence of the success and failure of policy advisory notes submitted to Government. How effective has it been in this regard?
- To what extent was the ACF been successful in influencing the outcome of the NDP process?
- Is the private sector represented adequately or has agri-business long since abandoned the ACF?
- In advocating and influencing policy decisions what is the role of the ACF in relationship to the role of the ZNFU?
- To what extent has the ACF influenced Donor decision making?
- So far so good please keep it up
- The ACF should co-opt as much as possible available expertise from member institutions to bring about meaningful debates. As SCCI, we would like to see ourselves getting involved into seed issues in terms of taking part into problem analysis.
- Please improve feed back on PAN notes and outcome of meetings coordination groups. Use the website.
- For sustainability and creativity ACF must design diversified methods of financing itself, for un-bribed income stability.
- ACF should not only serve as an oratory stakeholder congregation. ACF must lead the way to prove to the farming sector that they own the Forum in word and in deed.
- The Forum must at least organise on important agricultural activities during the 4 seasons (winter-summer-spring and autumn) to show-case agricultural activities during such periods.
- Perhaps ACF needs to include agricultural issues that concern the poor in addition to the 'private sector' interests. ACF should by all means endeavour to integrate land issues in its work.
- It is not the meetings/consultations per se but the utility of information and policy/project outcomes resulting from consultation that matter. ACF outputs should mobilise resources to help implement its recommendations. It should therefore target donors, GRZ and private sector.
- The questionnaire in some parts requires that one has full knowledge of ACF operations and outcomes, which may not be the case for all ACF members. Hence, some responses indicate undecided as I have no idea about your participation in the preparation of the FNDP and how much you ought to be involved.
- The ACF provides a valuable public service. It's very hard to attribute causality directly, but from my observation I believe that ACF has successfully altered the way both private sector and government behaves. The ACF improves communication as well as the quality of interaction between public and private

players. Ultimately, both take decisions based on their perceptions and own internal pressures. So ACF can't be expected to dictate policy at every turn. But they have very effectively identified key issues, convened key interest groups and improved the level of communication and the quality of the discussions. By providing a neutral, well-respected forum, ACF provides a valuable public service.

- I am unsure how best to finance these services. I doubt that a “pay as you go” model would work well. ACF provides a public good and needs ongoing support. How does the ZNFU, ZAM and others support their secretariats? We need to find a way to continue providing this service to the agricultural community.
- Considering that many agro-related programmes are funded/supported through/by Gov institutions, it is high time ACF's mandate is shared amongst them
- ACF's umbilical cord is with MACO – How much does MACO identify itself with ACF?
- ACF's existence must be based on what it can offer the public – development programmes, ministries, public sector etc. Self-financing (see star) is extremely important. It has to provide elsewhere at the same cost for it to survive.
- Emphasise on ownership
- ACF needs to find ways of engaging other key policy nodes in Zambia, particularly the Ministry of Finance, Parliament, PSD/MCTI, State House and possibly cabinet
- I appreciate the work that ACF is doing but as suggested, it should be proactive to ensure that agricultural issues (crops, livestock and fisheries) are addressed.
- More consultations should be done, e.g. whenever there is a problem eg livestock disease, crop failure fertiliser issue, fish ban etc, consultations with the departments and other stakeholders so as to move together as one.
- The ACF should address capture fisheries issues separate from what it terms as “agricultural” because this term does not cover capture fisheries but aquaculture. It should institute a fisheries task force to look at the participatory management strategy (fisheries co-management) of capture fisheries as a third employer in the country. There is too much focus on crops and livestock and yet fisheries contribute more than 50 % to animal protein consumption among rural and urban population.
- ACF can do better if it incorporated all wings of the sector for example; a fisheries expert is not employed to work within the ACF on permanent basis but could only be remembered when issues are exhausted as last resort. We need a Fisheries and aquaculture desk. Ownership- we strongly feel that Aquaculture and Fisheries Information Center should be one of ACF strong partners and stakeholders in promoting aquaculture development and sustainable fisheries management as states our mission
- “To contribute towards sustainable development of aquaculture and improvement of fisheries resources management through generation and provision of information, capacity building and promotion of participatory fisheries management approach by fish farmers/fishers and other stakeholders in order to contribute to food security, increased income and poverty reduction in the country”