

# USING NAMIBIA'S NATURAL RESOURCES SUSTAINABLY –WORK GLOBALLY TO CHANGE LOCALLY

Text by Dr Lara Beer, photos by Christian Stiebahl

***The value chains of climate-smart agriculture, sustainable forest management and integrated management of freshwater fisheries were at the centre of discussions of a national conference on 2 October 2019, hosted by the Hanns Seidel Foundation Namibia in partnership with the Namibian Parliament and the Namibia Nature Foundation, as well as various national and international stakeholders. The Minister of Environment and Tourism, Pohamba Shifeta, addressed the more than 200 participants at the Safari Court and Conference Centre, highlighting ecosystem services as key to Namibia's economy and human well-being.***

On 2 October 2019, the Hanns Seidel Foundation Namibia (HSF), in partnership with the Parliament of the Republic of Namibia and the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) as well as various national and international stakeholders hosted a one-day conference along the value chain of three renewable source-based sectors, namely agriculture, forestry and freshwater fishery. More than 200 participants took part in the event at the Safari Court and Conference Centre. Various speeches by high-level representatives of government, presentations by national and international experts as well as lively and partly emotional panel discussions contributed to outlining the current state of the afore-mentioned sectors, as well as to identifying potential pathways for a bioeconomy-based value chain for Namibia.



*Welcoming Remarks by Hon. Prof Dr Katjavivi*

scene by elucidating the objectives and outputs expected with a plastic illustration, referring to the three pillars of sustainability (economy, social, environment). Vividly he demonstrated the need for balancing the three pillars for the establishment of a sustainable bioeconomy in Namibia. This was followed by an impulse talk by Prof Dr Gilbert Nduru from Karatina University on Kenya's efforts to stimulate its rural bioeconomy. Nduru pointed out that solutions-based research in communities, focus on biological diversity strategies, policy and resources processes in the face of a sustainable value chain, as well as effective monitoring and evaluation are key considerations for a successful exploitation of bioeconomy's potential. According to the professor, bioeconomy is an important driver of a future green

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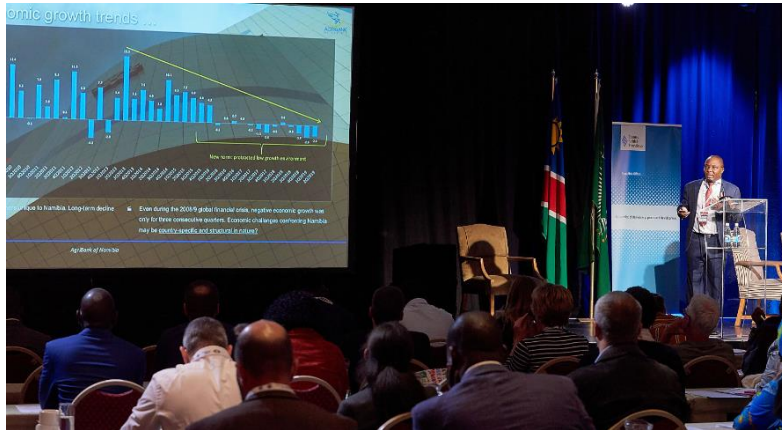
After the welcoming remarks by the Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Prof Dr Peter Katjavivi, the HSF Resident Representative, Dr Clemens von Doderer, set the



*Illustration of the three pillars of sustainability*

and circular economic growth that takes societal concerns as well as those of the environment into consideration. It can further create new jobs and improve livelihood opportunities, as well as enhance public health, food security and nutrition.

**Session I: “The Current State of Agriculture and Climate-Smart Ways Towards Food Security”**



*Setting-the scene by Sakaria Nghikembua, Agribanks’ CEO*

The appearance of perennial droughts which seem to become the norm in Namibia, as well as the severe recession of Namibia’s economy were highlighted by Agribanks’ CEO Sakaria Nghikembua in his setting-the scene presentation. Focusing on the current state of agriculture, he pointed out that agriculture’s contribution

to GDP is in long-term decline and that sector’s contribution to employment concomitantly decreases despite an increase in funding for the agriculture sector.

After the setting-the scene, Session I was formally commenced by the session keynote speech, delivered by Hon. Minister Alpheus !Naruseb who assigned Mildred Kambinda, Director of the Directorate of Agricultural Production, Extension and Engineering Services at the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF).

Dr Miguel Fernández Carrillo, Agricultural Engineer and Management Technician on Plant Health at the Ministry of Water, Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Environment in the Region of Murcia, Spain, then broadened the perspective of the discussion by his overseas’ country example on climate-smart agriculture from Spain. He outlined the climate-smart and innovative approaches towards sustainable food production of the Murcia Region. Furthermore, the overseas’ country expert illustrated current challenges agriculture is facing in Spain (e.g. global climate change, soil protection, diversification of the rural economy, enhancing of bioeconomy), and explained how they are responding to these challenges by utilising some examples.

The agriculture session (I) concluded with a panel discussion, moderated by Agribanks’ CEO Sakaria Nghikembua.

The panel included the two previous speakers as well as three further experts, namely Roelie Venter, Executive Director of the Na-



*Participants of the panel discussion in session I*

mbia Agricultural Union, Prof Dr Oliver Ruppel, Professor for Law at the University of Stellenbosch, and Joseph Hailwa in his capacity as Acting Deputy Executive Director of the Ministry

of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF). Initial questions which were prepared by the moderator concerned governmental plans to guide Namibia out of the drought crisis and to transform into a climate-smart agriculture. Governmental plans for drought mitigation are among others engagement in irrigation schemes, desalination programmes and improvement of water infrastructure (e.g. expansion of canal systems, supply of borehole water). The Government representative pointed out that - even the economy is not so well recently - irrigation systems for agricultural production are of great importance.

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*"IRRIGATION SYSTEMS ARE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE"*

*"NEED OF RANGELAND RE-STORAGE"*

*"OPPORTUNITY TO USE CELL PHONES FOR INFORMATION GATHERING IS CRUCIAL"*

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Concerning the transition to climate-smart agriculture, the Farmer Unions' representative highlighted the need of rangeland restoration. The current ratio of grass and bush has to be changed and rangeland has to be more intensified. He further stated that water needs to be utilised particularly for food production.

Additional questions from the audience concerned the use of smart technology and the actions regarding the improvement of the soil water holding capacity. It was highlighted that the opportunity to use cell phones for information gathering is crucial, particularly for land users in communal areas. Decision-makers should have the opportunity to get information from around the world. Therefore, a gapless network coverage is important for Namibia. Concerning the soil water holding capacity, government representatives referred to their training programmes, awareness-raising campaigns as well as their technical demonstrations which are conducted around the country. In conclusion, the panel discussants agreed on the need for an integrated approach to improve the current situation on the ground. Ministries affected should sit together and should work globally to make a change locally.

### Session II: ***"The Sustainability of Forests and Its Ecosystem Services"***

The conference's second session was opened by Dr Vera de Cauwer from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). Her setting-the scene presentation gave a brief insight on the current situation of Namibia's Forestry and necessary improvements. She criticised a lack of research and assessments on the forests. Furthermore, she mentioned data



*Session Keynote Speech by Hon. Minister Pohamba Shifeta*

on growth rates and certification as important tools for ensuring a sustainable use of timber resources.

After the setting-the scene, Hon. Pohamba Shifeta, the Minister for Environment and Tourism (MET), opened session II officially by delivering the session keynote speech. Referring to Article 95 (I) of the Namibian Constitution as more important ever now, he underpinned the need to fight against deforestation, while ensuring the devolution of rights accompanied by livelihood improvement opportunities through ecosystem services

and the sustainable use of forest resources. “Ecosystem services are of particular importance to the most deprived sections of our society, especially our communities residing in rural areas. (...) It is particularly important that we desist from exploiting any of our natural resources for short term gains which ignores the future and thereby sacrifices the future generations.” Craig Norris from NCT Forestry Co-Operative Limited and representative of PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) delivered a presentation on forest certifications. He considered the question if forest certification could be a tool to ensure sustainable management of timber resources in South Africa. Norris expounded the long-term management of forest assets and the elimination of illegal activities. Both would be provided through forest certification, as well as better prices and international investments.

The next impulse talk was given by Henrik Janer from the Finnish company Risutec. The overseas’ country example illustrated how Finland handles different issues in silvicultural practice and showed practical solution approaches regarding climate change. Similar to the first session, the second one was concluded by a panel discussion, moderated by Dr Absalom Kahumba from the University of Namibia (UNAM). The panel consisted of Dr Vera de Cauwer, Craig Norris and Henrik Janer as well as of three further experts, namely Martha Naanda, Programme Specialist / Head at UNDP, Dr Chris Brown, CEO of the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE), and Joseph Hailwa, Director of the Directorate of Forestry, MAWF.



*Panel discussion in session II*

Questions which were raised during the very animated and emotional panel discussion concerned opportunities for adding value to the value chain of forest material, amount of timber resources left and control mechanisms against illegal deforestation. During the discussion, it became clear that forest material should only be exported after value had been added to

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*“MAWF OPEN FOR RECOMMENDATIONS TO BECOME BETTER IN CONTROLLING DEFORESTATION”*

*“NEED OF VALUE ADDING TO TIMBER RESOURCES”*

*TREES HAVE MORE THAN AN ECONOMIC VALUE”*

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leave the value in the country. “But this process will take time”, stated Dr de Cauwer. In the meantime, communities need more encouragement and the establishment of a timber processing industry has to be secured. In addition, the panellists highlighted that trees offer much more than only an economic value. Services such as carbon storage, biodiversity, improved water holding capacity, flood protection or fodder provided by the forest ecosystems should also be taken into account. The panellists further agreed that for ensuring a more sustainable management of forest resources, a coherent and complete national forest

management of forest resources, a coherent and complete national forest



inventory is needed. Currently no reliable data on forest areas and timber resources is available. In terms of control mechanisms, the government representative stated that the current permit system used is the best available, but that they are trying to improve constantly and, that they are open for recommendations.

The audience could witness a lively and engaged discussion. Overall, it became clear that there is a lack of communication and more stakeholder platforms are needed to jointly and actively address the numerous challenges Namibia's forest sector is facing. A possible starting point could be a change in the job description of forestry management, one of the panellists said.

### Session III: **"Integrated Management of Freshwater Fisheries"**

Dr Clinton Hay from UNAM and representative of the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) gave in his setting-the scene an overview of the role of fishery regarding global hunger and malnutrition and offered information about fishery in Namibia, especially focusing on the Zambezi/Chobe Rivers. He also eluded to the issues of value of inland fish, impact of climate change and fish protection.

The keynote speech for this session was delivered by Hon. Sylvia Makgone, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR), on behalf of Hon. Benard Esau, the MFMR Minister. Dr Louise Lange from the Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) in the United Kingdom (UK) then broadened the discussion on freshwater fisheries by her overseas' country example from the UK She illustrated potential threats to freshwater biodiversity and talked about the impact of non-native species from a globally



*Panel discussion of session III*

as well as Namibian point of view and she explained CEFAS work on invasive species management.

The third session was also concluded by a panel discussion, moderated by Kirsty Watermeyer. The panel included Dr Hay and Dr Lange who were joined by three further ex-

perts, namely Renier Burger, representative of MFMR, Sekgowa Motsumi, Okavango Basin Programme Director of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) from Botswana, and Evans Mutanuka, Chief Fisheries Officer at the Zambian Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. The latter was asked to report on the functionality of freshwater fishery in Zambia. Zambia makes use of aquacultures to satisfy their demand for fish but, Mutanuka also stated that aquacultures are only an interim fix and not a real solution with long-term character. Furthermore, the Zambian expert highlighted that freshwater fishery is a transboundary issue; there is a need of transboundary interventions in which all adjoining states, communities etc. have to work together to meet the existing challenges and problems. Eluding to the Botswana example and how they are managing their freshwater fishery resources, Mr Motsumi made clear that the complexity of

the whole system needs to be considered and holistic solutions are needed to properly manage freshwater fisheries. Dr Hay pointed out the relevance of community support. The responsibility on freshwater fishery has to be given to the communities, but they need support from government. Further, the moderator raised the question on risks and options of fish production in aquaculture in Namibia.

MFMR representative Burger explained that due to climatic limitations (minus degrees in Namibian winters), species mix and low economic attractiveness (e.g. lower income per square meter than chicken production) aquaculture is not of real interest for Namibia.

But, if the fish production is combined with crop growing in aquaponic systems, Burger

sees potential for Namibia; aquaculture is not the solution, aquaponic could be. Overall, it became clear that fish resources have to be secured for the communities who depend on that



*Closing Remarks by Hon. Nangula*

fish. The need for an integrated, community-based approach became apparent. Freshwater fisheries management is a joint responsibility and needs therefore intergovernmental dialogues.

The Conference was officially closed with the closing remarks by Hon. Ruusa Joyce Nangula, Member of National Council and Member of Namibia Conservation Parliamentary Caucus (NACOPAC), and the vote of thanks by Hon. Sophia Swartz, Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Management of Natural Resources. Afterwards, all

participants were invited to an informal cocktail reception.

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*“FRESHWATER FISHERY IS A TRANSBOUNDARY ISSUE”*

*HOLISTIC SOLUTIONS ARE NEEDED”*

*“AQUACULTURE IS NOT THE SOLUTION, AQUAPONICS COULD BE”*

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