

Strengthening Soil Health and Fertilizer Use Efficiency in Southern Africa

Establishing the SADC Soil Health and Fertilizer Hub



Why a Soil Health and Fertilizer Hub?

Southern Africa faces a critical soil crisis — more than 40% of arable land is degraded. This undermines food systems, ecosystems, and rural livelihoods. Despite the growing demand for productivity and resilience, fertilizer use remains inefficient and fragmented, with limited extension support and poor soil data infrastructure across SADC Member States.

In response, the African Union Commission (AUC) adopted the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan (AFSH-AP 2023–2033) and the Nairobi Declaration (2024). These continental blueprints call for:

- Tripling fertilizer use efficiency and domestic production
- Rehabilitating 30% of degraded land by 2033
- Investing in sustainable input systems and inclusive extension services

Regional Response: The SADC SHF Hub

To operationalize these frameworks, the SADC Secretariat appointed CCARDESA to host the Soil Health and Fertilizer Hub, with the mandate to coordinate soil and fertilizer interventions at scale across 16 Member States. This initiative is supported under the Food Systems Resilience Programme (FSRP) and aligned with the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP).

Vision

A Southern Africa with healthy soils, sustainable fertilizer systems, and resilient agri-food systems, ensuring prosperity and food security for all.

Mission

To catalyze sustainable land use and fertilizer management through coordinated regional action, evidence-driven policies, inclusive innovations, and strengthened stakeholder capacity.

Six Strategic Objectives

SO	Strategic Objective
SO0	Raise awareness and support Member States in domesticating the AFSH-AP
SO1	Coordinate soil health and fertilizer platforms and foster stakeholder collaboration
SO2	Generate and manage data, evidence, and innovations to inform practice and policy
SO3	Build institutional capacity and provide technical backstopping to national actors
SO4	Harmonize and align national and regional policies and regulatory frameworks
SO5	Mobilize public-private investments and regional financing for scalable interventions



Core Functions of the Hub

- Convene national platforms and regional stakeholders for alignment and coordination
- Provide technical assistance to Member States on policy, mapping, standards, and farmer engagement
- Host a regional digital data hub for soil information and fertilizer performance
- Drive gender and youth-responsive capacity development and market access
- Monitor, evaluate, and report on implementation of the SAFSHP and AFSH Action Plan

Guiding Principles

- Inclusiveness – prioritizing smallholder farmers, women, youth, and vulnerable communities
- Subsidiarity – empowering national platforms with context-specific autonomy
- Scientific Excellence – embedding research rigor and digital innovation
- Partnerships for Impact – leveraging complementary expertise and co-investment
- Adaptive Management – iterative learning and real-time adjustments using harmonized M&E

Recommendations for SADC Member States

1. Domesticate the AFSH Action Plan via National Soil and Fertilizer Platforms
2. Invest in digital infrastructure (e.g., soil maps, dashboards, and e-extension)
3. Mainstream Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) in extension packages
4. Adopt harmonized regional standards for fertilizer quality and application
5. Support inclusive innovations by targeting underserved groups and geographies
6. Leverage regional expertise to co-develop policies and build technical capacities

For Development Partners and Donors

- Align support with SADC's SAFSHP and AFSH frameworks
- Fund regional demonstration sites, digital tools, and scaling pathways
- Co-develop financing models with private sector and public institutions

For Private Sector and Industry Actors

- Co-invest in local fertilizer manufacturing and last-mile delivery
- Support training and awareness for efficient and climate-smart fertilizer use
- Partner with governments on input supply chains, finance models, and demonstration plots



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