



**SADC PRIVATE STANDARDS WORKSHOP; ST GEORGE'S HOTEL,
PRETORIA. 5 – 6 NOVEMBER 2008.**

**OPENING REMARKS BY DR O S CHINYAMAKOBVU
SADC SQAM EXPERT**

Ms Nduli, Director General of the Department of Agriculture in RSA

Representatives of our cooperating partners from the Commark and USAID

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

May I first of all on behalf of the SADC Secretariat welcome you all to this workshop on private agro – standards and thank you for responding positively to the call for us to collectively reflect on this important topic? I would just like to give a brief background on how this workshop came about.

You will be aware that the issue of “Private Standards” has been under discussion in various SPS fora including WTO SPS Committee meetings in the last few years. Of concern has been the potential negative impact to producers exporting agro products to those destinations where private standards have to be complied with.

In view of the contentious nature of the issue of these Private Standards, discussions on the subject are taking place in developing countries in other

regions, most recently in Latin America, in order to develop strategies on how to respond to this challenge.

Some time around June/July of this year, the Secretariat was approached by Commark Trust with the suggestion/proposal to review the situation as far as it impacts SADC and possibly formulate a regional strategy to deal with this reality.

At Commark's request, a preliminary meeting between the Trust and Standards and Food Safety experts at the SADC Secretariat was held in Gaborone on 7 August in Gaborone where a proposal to hold a wider stakeholder workshop was agreed to. It was agreed that the workshop, to which representatives from all SADC member states were to be invited to take part, would be held in South Africa as a central and convenient location from 5 – 6 November 2008. A request was then forwarded to the Department of Agriculture in South Africa to host the event and we are most grateful that they responded favourably to that request.

Although the workshop was not originally in our annual plans at the Secretariat, it was decided, noting the importance of agro-exports to farmers in our region, to hold the meeting nonetheless. Commark Trust undertook to support participants coming from the offices dealing with Codex and OIE issues in each member state. The USAID stepped forward with support to participants from the national standards bodies, and of course, the Department of Agriculture here in South Africa is covering all the conference costs. I wish to express my utmost thanks to these three partners for making the event possible.

I am confident that the rich mixture of experts here present will make for stimulating debate and lively discussion. You will note from the programme that we are also expecting each national delegation to give us a short brief, 10 minutes, of the status of private standards in their country tomorrow. Please ensure that you get together before tomorrow and prepare this brief.

What happens next will depend on you: we have noted that SADC positions have not been clearly articulated at the WTO SPS committee meetings for whatever reason and it is our hope that this meeting will help us better understand the whole issue of private standards from the presentations that we will be hearing, and that we will be clearer in terms of how to respond or take advantage of any opportunities the private standards arrangements may present. If we are to take the issue any further in terms of programming at the Secretariat, we would need to have a very clear picture of where the sector wants to go from here.

I trust we will have fruitful discussions in the next couple of days.

I thank you.