

COMESA and NEPAD have launched the flagship Sustainable Land Management Project (SLMP) with a call on Member States to embrace climate resilient agricultural practices that will help reduce poverty in the region by 2015.

Speaking during the launch of the project which was held at the African Institute for Capacity Development (AICAD) in Nairobi, Kenya on 15 October 2012, Deputy CAADP Coordinator at the COMESA Secretariat, Dr Nalishebo Meebelo, said COMESA is pleased to partner with NEPAD's Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) in various initiatives.

"We are very optimistic that with such partnerships the region will improve food security, address climate change, and ultimately improve the lives and livelihoods of millions of people who today live in poverty." "We also need to be mindful that addressing land degradation would contribute significantly to attaining the Millennium Development Goals of poverty reduction and environmental sustainability," she said. Dr Meebelo further said land degradation and its associated problems continue to be a major challenge facing the region.

"It undermines the structure and function of ecological systems, and put at risk the livelihoods, economic wellbeing, and nutritional status of more than 1 billion people in developing countries," Dr Meebelo said. "Many of us have seen firsthand the manifestations of this phenomenon in our day to day activities and there is an urgent need to take action to deal decisively with the range of individual, institutional and systemic capacity constraints that we face."

She said issues of sustainable land and water management are at the core of CAADP implementation. "Founded on the recognition of the importance of sustainable land management and water strategies in the efforts of improving agricultural productivity, COMESA did not hesitate to partner with NPCA to implement the Project that we are about to launch today," she concluded.

Speaking at the same function, Terrafrica Project Coordinator at NEPAD, Mr Ousmane Djibo said the project will deliver in the three main activities of: regional coalition building, knowledge sharing, and finally the provision of support to country investment planning. "This project will help aggregate the key, sustainable land and water management and monitoring and evaluation indicators at the regional level and enable us share best practices," Mr Djibo said.

“As NEPAD we are very pleased with COMESA for fast tracking the project through the CAADP and we are happy to see the launch take place today.” The project offers institutional support to NEPAD and other Sub-Saharan RECs in the area of sustainable land management.