

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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Three innovative projects designed to help countries in Southern Africa protect against the risk of agricultural disasters have won this past week a [Challenge Fund](#) led by the [Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery](#) (GFDRR); the [Platform for Agricultural Risk Management](#); the [Centre for Disaster Protection](#); and the [World Bank's](#) Agriculture Observatory, Disaster Risk Financing and Insurance Program and its London Hub.

The increasing severity and frequency of extreme weather events, and growing threats from plant and livestock pests/diseases, threaten to undermine regional food security in Southern Africa, as well as poverty reduction efforts and the achievement of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

The three winning ideas propose agriculture and food security risk financing tools to help inform and support public sector policy and program decision-making in the region, with the aim of better allocating public resources to reduce economic losses, poverty and food insecurity.

The first prize of the Challenge went to the consortium led by the [International Water Management Institute \(IWMI\)](#). The consortium is proposing to work in Malawi and Lesotho, harnessing artificial intelligence and risk modelling innovations to inform better agriculture investment decisions related to climate risk. The proposed tool will focus on drought and floods and use alternative data sources for measuring the exposure and vulnerability of crops to these events, and to forecast their occurrence. The tool will be designed for national Governments, but it is expected to be also useful for agriculture insurance companies.

The second place was won by the consortium led by [Global Parametrics](#). The consortium is proposing to combine soil moisture analysis using remote sensing data with food price models to get an accurate reading on the potential impact on food insecurity in the region. This would allow Governments to undertake better planning of financial resources as often crop failures are not assessed in combination with movements in prices. This tool would also allow Governments to seek reinsurance in international markets and several countries in the Southern Africa Region were proposed as an initial test.

The third place went to the consortium led by [International Center for Tropical Agriculture \(CIAT\)](#). Their proposal involved developing a tool using earth observation technologies – remote sensing, geospatial products and field-based assessments - to provide accurate flood and drought early warnings, analyze the region's climate vulnerability, forecast in season crop yield and potential agricultural losses associated with disasters, and inform the deployment of forecast-based financial instruments. The proposal is to work with Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi.

The Challenge received 55 proposals which were judged by a Grand Jury from experts from Governments of the region and international specialists. Institutions that submitted proposals included private companies, NGOs, international organizations and Universities. The institutions were from countries across America, Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The proposals received were considered highly innovative, especially by representatives of Governments of Southern Africa. Clement Kalonga, the representative of the Southern Africa Development Community, handed over the prizes to the three winning consortiums and highlighted the fact that: “public sector institutions and organizations such as the ones that won the challenge need to have more opportunities to interact and innovate, jointly generating solutions.”

Daniel Clarke, Director of the Centre for Disaster Protection, also presented the awards to the winners of the competition and said: “We are delighted to support the Challenge Fund which

allows the international community and the public sector in Southern Africa to work with a range of organisations - including private companies, NGOs, and technical institutes. This provides the opportunity for governments and their partners to better understand, manage, and mitigate the risk of disasters – and respond faster when they do occur.”

Other innovation challenges will be launched in the coming months by the same partners to target specific limitations and technological opportunities that exist for expanding the models and tools for financing agriculture and food security risks in Southern Africa.