



Advancing African Agriculture

**2nd Brussels Development Briefing
17th October 2007**

On 17th October 2007, CTA and other partners convened the second 'Brussels Development Briefing' - part of a series of bimonthly Development Briefings on ACP-EU rural development issues.

More than 100 participants gathered in Brussels to discuss the recently adopted EC communication on "Advancing African Agriculture."

Partners in the Briefings:

- CTA
- European Commission
- EU Presidency
- ACP Group
- Euforic
- Concord
- IPS Europe

Advancing African Agriculture needs sound policies and effective partnerships

Sir John Kaputin, Secretary General of the ACP Secretariat, set the stage, contextualizing the initiative and the role of agriculture in ACP countries.

Recalling the importance of agriculture for ACP countries, Sir Kaputin stressed that 80% of African population is still living in rural areas and bases its income on small scale farming. These communities are confronted with new



challenges, such as climate change and increasing trade competition that affect productivity and heavily impact on their livelihoods. Drawing this picture and pointing out that agriculture clearly is the way out of poverty in most countries, Sir Kaputin called for

"sound policies" to support agricultural development at local, national, and regional level.

The AAA initiative goes in the right direction as it expressly addresses these issues. Nevertheless, a more concrete calendar of action is needed, and a clearer division of labour among actors and between donors is a precondition for success. Sir Kaputin also underlined the

importance of well-defined partnerships involving all the stakeholders to enhance ownership and commitment. In this sense, the participation of the African civil society is essential.

Debating the 'triple A' initiative: Advancing African Agriculture

From the European Commission, the Director of DG Development, Lluís Riera, focused his intervention on three elements: the rationale of the 'triple A'; its key messages; and the mechanisms facilitating partnerships in the implementation process.

The "AAA" initiative is based on the acknowledgement that Africa cannot reach the MDGs without broad-based



agricultural growth. It is therefore essential to overcome the recent neglect of agriculture in development cooperation programs and, in this regard, the recent attention to agriculture paid by the World Bank's Development Report is a

positive sign. In Africa, the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) has also put agriculture again at the forefront of development. Lluís Riera stressed three key messages of the 'triple A' paper. First, it proposes to closely align EU support with African policies and programs, as developed within the CAADP framework. Second, it stressed the need for institutional strengthening of organizations working for agricultural development, including farmer organizations. Third, the great need for enhanced donor coordination, but also the good prospects to improve complementarity and coordination, including within the EU.

As far as implementation is concerned, Mr. Riera underlined two main elements. At the policy level, the initiative aims to become a key instrument to foster dialogue and to enhance coordination and alignment around CAADP. At the level of cooperation, it will guide the implementation of EU-Africa cooperation in the next couple of years.

In terms of financial assistance, both the 10th EDF and the Food Security Thematic Programme, include significant resources for agriculture and rural development. Support areas include agricultural research, food security information sharing, institutional strengthening and support to farmer organizations.

Finally, Mr. Riera recalled that the EU is more than the Commission: the wish is that Member States also devote adequate attention to agriculture in Africa. The 'triple A' represents "just one step, creating a supportive policy environment; what is needed now is further progress on the ground."

Putting policies into practice: institutional challenges and opportunities

James Tefft of FAO stressed that the work done on the AAA communication, the World Bank's Development Report, and the CAADP give us a clear analytic framework to address African agriculture's constraints.

Sub-Saharan Africa has already a comprehensive framework for coherent food security and agriculture policies, thus the problem is not the content of policies, but how to put them into practice. Therefore, institutional issues and innovation are the real challenges.

The key element is how to work in partnership with the different actors and issues. In Mr. Tefft's view, monitoring and "distilling lessons" is the problem. We are not capturing the critical factors for success and we still need to better understand governance impacts both on the villages, and at continental level. Active learning should be widespread at all levels and requires the involvement of all actors.

Providing some examples of institutional challenges, Mr. Tefft underlined the linkages - or lack of - between emergency assistance and development cooperation and pointed out the need to better connect responses to emergencies with longer term development actions.

As an example, he mentioned a Malian experience where a cotton producing organization provides funds for a nurse in a community health centre. This shows that there are many community-driven innovative solutions taking place all over the continent that can provide remarkable lessons. Furthermore, there are important institutional examples at the regional level. An assessment of food security early warning systems shows that some regional organizations perform better than others, in terms of methodological support, comparative analysis across countries and by providing a discussion forum.

To move forward, regional organizations have to clearly identify the needs and priorities of their member states, and put in place appropriate mechanisms to cope with these interests.

An 'ongoing consultation process' needed to advance African agriculture

On behalf of Concord's European Food Security Group, Gerhard Schmalbruch brought the perspectives of European civil society to the second Brussels Briefing. According to Mr. Schmalbruch, the AAA initiative is welcome since it points out important elements in the analysis of African problems and highlights the role of agriculture for poverty alleviation. Nevertheless, there are some specific issues that still need to be addressed with more emphasis.

First, a stronger support for small scale farming, which is an important part of the informal sector, is required. Second, while the AAA focuses on international markets, more attention should be paid to strengthen local and regional markets. Third, the role of women in agriculture needs to be emphasized to better link the 'triple A' initiative with other policies dealing with HIV/Aids and other killer disease.

And as a matter of principle, rural stakeholders' involvement in debating, programming and implementing the different policies remains a key factor for success. Thus, Mr. Schmalbruch called for more systematic and inclusive consultation processes dealing with the 'content of the policy', so that rural stakeholders can have a more active role.

African agriculture: We need detailed thinking in an optimistic picture

African agriculture can certainly advance and, looking at the recent trends, there are several reasons to be optimistic. However, actions and initiatives need to be tailored to different situations, different regions and different social groups. These were the two main messages from ODI's Steve Wiggins who intervened in the first panel of the Briefing.

In his presentation, he argued that statistics data do not show that African agriculture is in crisis: in the last 15 years, 17 of the 30 highest agricultural sectors' growing rates are in Africa. Five African countries have

outperformed China. The data also show there is not a single way forward for the whole continent since each country requires different interventions.

First, African agriculture is faced with different types of problems in different countries: market failures; failure in government policies; lack of appropriate technology; and lack of effective demand for input. Each situation has its specificities, and solutions need to be tailored accordingly. A second difference lies at the regional level. The degree of market access and the availability of resources determine which policies are appropriate in each specific context.

Third, it is important to have different interventions for different groups of farmers. In determining which interventions are appropriate, social groups can be approached with three different type of intervention: "Stepping up" would allow farmers to improve production through intensified farming supported by transport and technology tools; "Stepping out" would allow to strengthen non-farm economic activities; and "Hanging in" could support marginal improvements with low capital technology for food staples and nutrition, in order to give the next generation a better chance than their parents. Therefore, improvements are conceivable, but a detailed examination of each specific situation is required.

Better cooperation and new partnerships to advance African agriculture

IFAD's Director for Eastern and Southern Africa Ides de Willebois told participants that increasing the productivity of small scale farmers remains the main challenge. Despite the fact that most poor people live in rural areas, he pointed out that ODA for agriculture has drastically declined since the 1980s, even if evidence shows that investment in agriculture, especially in Africa, is 2 to 3 times more effective in poverty alleviation when compared to non-agricultural investments.

He agreed with other speakers that agriculture is growing in Africa - despite a series of constraints such as climate change, soil fertility, infrastructure, mechanization and marketing. Nevertheless, this growth is more often related to cultivation of new lands than on production improvements for cultivated land.

To address this productivity challenge, it is essential to work on coordination among donors and aid effectiveness, also involving new partners such as foundations in supporting agricultural development.

The CAADP process

Participants were briefed by Angel Elias Daka of COMESA on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). He described its four pillars, its operations, and the current status of its activities.



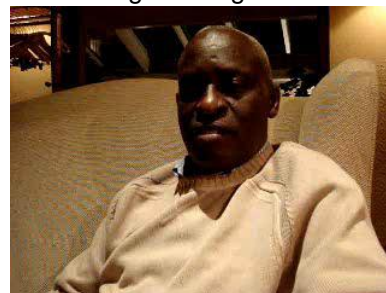
The CAADP is based on the acknowledgement that Africa has a huge amount of land, most of which suffers of soil degradation and is progressively abandoned. Food insecurity is a primary consequence of this situation. For this reason, the CAADP's objective is to halve hunger by achieving an annual agricultural growth rate of 6% by 2015. This will be possible only if investment in agriculture and rural development will increase to around 10% of annual national budgets.

CAADP's first pillar targets sustainable land and water management; the second addresses infrastructure and market access; the third focuses on food supply and hunger reduction; and the fourth pillar seeks to improve agricultural production through technology adoption. In terms of CAADP Country Round Tables, the process begins by identifying a focal person in national ministries of agriculture whose task is to form a steering committee composed of representatives of all sectors and stakeholders.

The CAADP is operational in all COMESA states but Rwanda is the first country that completed the full process and signed a Compact with private sector, civil society and development partners. By 2008, most COMESA countries will be involved or have completed CAADP Country Round Tables processes.

Research a critical area for the 'triple A' initiative

Denis Kyetere of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) pointed out the consistency between the new EC initiative and the strategic priorities of FARA and the sub-regional organizations it works with.



He particularly welcomed the regional and sub-regional approach adopted in the 'triple A' initiative, and the fact that all relevant stakeholders are involved.

He singled out "Research, Knowledge Systems and Dissemination" as a critical area where a new effective partnership should be developed on the ground.

Aligning the CAADP and the 'triple A'

Martin Bwalya of NEPAD stressed the role of agriculture in sustainable development agendas, poverty alleviation targets and in achieving the MDGs.

In his view, what it is new at this stage in Africa is the



political will and commitment to enhance the role of agriculture, with a real shift of mindset for agricultural policy-makers.

These new elements are clearly stressed by the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which is far from being just a tool for resource mobilization: CAADP encompasses partnership, collaboration, institutional reform, and internalization and local ownership at all level.



More generally, NEPAD welcomed the alignment of the 'triple A' initiative with the CAADP process. The EU must remain actively engaged in advancing African agriculture, focusing on increasing productivity,

building institutional capacities, and supporting policy reforms, as well as "grounded" monitoring and evaluation.

Farmers need to be 'centre stage'

Philipp Kiri, President of the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF), welcomed the 'triple A' initiative by the European Commission. In the meanwhile, he recalled that farmers need to be at the centre stage in the implementation process; advancing African agriculture need to be based on effective partnership among the different actors.

While being mainly small scale farming, African agriculture still represents the primary economic activity for most of the population. It is crucial to make it progress, as this would bring "growth, poverty reduction, and other benefits." To make it work however, African agriculture needs to be transformed.

This transformation, he argued, requires that domestic and regional markets are targeted, regional integration accelerated and regional custom unions created.

Focusing on the farmers' role, Mr. Kiri called for better organization: it is not possible to improve African agriculture if farmers themselves do not work together, discuss, and network at national and regional levels. In most countries, some frameworks already exist, but there is much to do to create professional farmer organizations that can meaningfully participate in the CAADP processes.

Culture of learning essential to share innovation

Welcoming the renewed interest in agriculture, Mohamed Béavogui, Director of Western and Central Africa Division of IFAD, focused his presentation around the issue of development effectiveness. His aim was to "see what can be done differently to give meaningful contribution to the process of advancing African agriculture." In spite of the constraints presented by other speakers, the West Africa context presents several opportunities, especially in terms of democratization and decentralization, regional integration, and market liberalization. Even if it is slow, this process is occurring and need to be supported.

Mr. Béavogui pointed out that more opportunities to exchange knowledge, share lessons and learn from each other are required since, he argued, there are many innovative experiences taking place across the African continent. A stronger support to the culture of learning is therefore critical.

More bottom up approach needed

IFPRI's John Okidi offered a critical analysis of the EC communication on Advancing African Agriculture. While recognizing that the initiative goes in the right direction, by financing agricultural development policy, capacity building, and research, he wondered whether farmers are ready to respond to the policy environment, and how the initiative will put money directly in the pockets



of African farmers. Farmers are already faced with many kinds of challenges, not least the lack of resources. "What real improvement there will be at the farm-level?"

He called for a more bottom up approach that takes into account the realities at the farm 'gate' and the increasingly sophisticated market environments in which farmers have to operate.

Advancing African agriculture – audience reactions

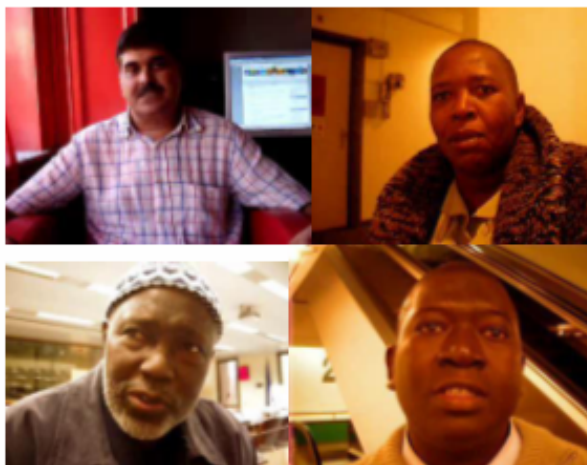
Alongside the panel discussions, the second Brussels Briefing on 'advancing African agriculture' generated a lively debate during which participants exchanged views, challenged speakers and provided a broader perspective on what is needed to advance African agriculture.

Several farmers attended the meeting, both as panelists and participants. In general, they welcomed the EC initiative on advancing African agriculture, even though they stressed different issues as far as implementation process is concerned.

For some of them, the document does not recognize that it is impossible to foster African agriculture without looking at the broader picture and addressing related and potentially conflicting issues, such as the Common Agricultural policy, the EPA negotiations and the WTO negotiations.

This coherence issue is also a key element for European NGOs such as APRODEV.

Ajay Vasheg, South Africa Elizabeth Mpofu, Zimbabwe



Mamadou Cissokho, ROPPA Buba Khan, ActionAid

Reacting to an intervention of Mariano Iossa from ActionAid, Mamadou Cissokho from ROPPA pointed out that farmers should not just react when solicited, but take action and get mobilized. In his opinion, before making propositions and suggestions, the EU and the World Bank should take their own responsibilities for the current situation of African agriculture.

Next briefing

The 5th December Briefing will discuss the **Aid for Trade agenda**.

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