

LAND NETWORK, WEST AFRICA

Annual Ministerial Review: Multistakeholder Dialogues

Roundtable 1: Ending the cycle of food crises: cultivating a home-grown Green
Revolution in Africa

Statement

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An overview

Some of the world's poorest persons and communities are found in sub-Saharan Africa where 7 of every 10 persons live on less than \$1 a day. The poorest of the poor are often found in rural areas engaged in rudimentary primary production activities. They have very limited access to social infrastructure considered fundamental to meet human basic needs for a decent and meaningful life. Infant and maternal mortality is high and on the increase. Life expectancy is low.

The extreme poverty experienced by this group has shut the doors of education against them and their children; has driven rural populations, especially the youth, to the cities who (due to poverty) are often driven to prostitution that could trap them in the HIV/AIDS nest and other diseases and conditions that are precipitated by poverty.

Land policies by many African governments are increasingly eroding the rights of the rural farmer to land, forcing poor farmers to become tenants to land merchants and speculators. Amongst the worst affected are pastoralists, hunter-gatherers, fisherfolks and small-scale rural and peri-urban food producers. This situation, if not urgently reversed, potent security threat to Africa's socio-economic stability as well as impede the realization of an African Green Revolution. Most African countries are endowed with a variety of natural and human resources with which they can fight and win the war against hunger and poverty. What remains, therefore, is the strong political will of African leaders and peoples to ensure that public resources are fully deployed in support of productive activities. With the support of the international community, civil society, the academia and other CBOs can be empowered and mobilized to improve the livelihoods of resource-limited producers.

An African Green Revolution means providing the incentives to invest in productivity – land tenure is the critical factor. The poor are no strangers to elites displacing them, to force evictions, reported to be on the rise, so they do not manage the land with a long term or sustainable practices. Why would they if they can not be sure that their investments and labour will be to their long term benefit.

- Smallholder agriculture is not sufficiently supported. subsidized. Public funds are spent by governments including in more developed economies to stimulate employment.
- Small holders need access to the factor markets of production and the benefits of improving their incomes up the value chain. Where some subsidized inputs are promised often it is the larger commercial farmers who have strong lobbies and close political ties, therefore need to level the playing field by helping small holders to develop their own institutions, they are not available to producers to undertake their time-bound operations. The farmer is, therefore, compelled to buy at cut-throat price. Because of his poor economic power, the farmer is unable to use the optimum required input. The effect on productivity is not far fetched.
- The African farmer is vulnerable to the vagaries of weather and is ill-prepared (and, therefore, caught off guard) when disasters come knocking. There are limited facilities and expertise for early warning devices.
- Post-harvest technologies, especially for preserving perishable foods are still being developed, the post-harvest losses are staggering
- Even where the scientific investments can lead to improved productivity, unless the poor have secure property rights the benefits are often expropriated by the powerful once the often poor quality of land has been restored meaning that the poor not only loose from the technical improvements but they loose on the value of the labour equity that has gone into improving productivity.

Nature of the problem

- Soil fertility problem due to over use of poor lands and erosion/overgrazing
- Resource use conflict between pastoralists and farmers resulting in national and regional security problems
- Lack of or inappropriate land policies (super-imposition of statutory land laws on customary systems)
- Land speculation by political and economic elites
- Low capacity of African civil society groups, farmer organizations, agricultural research and extension personnel in advocacy and community mobilization. Hence need to train the trainer to enable scientists and communities express their potentials
- High cost of inputs, low producer price
- Poor quality/adulteration of inputs (especially agro-chemical, fertilizers, etc)
- Poor access to agricultural finance support
- Need for policy and institutional reforms

- Need to hold regular dialogue between civil society, researchers, extension staff and development partners to review land situation in order to be pro-active in advancing effective action plans and needed action research
- Need for the international community and development partners to mobilize bilateral, multilateral and regional resources to unleash productive potentials of IP and vulnerable groups and the advancement of viable and equitable land policies
- The International Land Coalition and other relevant development partners will be expected to provide important convening roles. Land policies are conflictual and touch upon fundamental inequalities in many African Countries. The ILC has been called upon to act as a neutral covenantor of government ministries, the international donor and technical agencies and civil society, including farmers and social movements to seek negotiated solutions to help the poor gain and maintain the resource rights.
- Scale up investment in agricultural research, training and extension for effective and efficient crop and livestock production
- Creation and/or protection of new or existing pastoral grazing niches to minimize conflicts and promote symbiosis between the two groups.
- Strengthen partnership between regional governments, the private sector and the international community
- Monitor effect of agro-chemical use on land and water bodies
- Encourage and promote youth groups and empower them to remain in gainful agricultural production in the rural area. This will reduce the influx of young persons into the cities
- Encourage the use of IK for land management and livestock production
- Promotion of gender equity in agricultural production and extension outreach so that women can express their potentials in agric produce processing and marketing.
- Encourage adoption of ecologically compatible and socio-culturally accepted dual purpose crops and livestock species.
- Marketing frontiers should be expanded to fully cater for
- Agricultural production SHOULD be generously subsidized by African governments
- Guaranteed producer minimum price to keep producer motivated

- Investment in infrastructure and human capital is a MUST to launch Africa into the Green Revolution arena
- The UN-system and development partners can play vital roles in mobilizing action in encouraging African countries to produce agricultural goods in which they have comparative advantage and so have a fair share of the world trade and globalization