

Report of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture and Land Affairs on NEPAD Conference Championing Agricultural Successes for Africa's Future, A Parliamentarians Dialogue.

The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture and Land Affairs having participated in the above-mentioned conference, report to Parliament as follows:

1. Introduction and Background:

The NEPAD Conference, Championing Agricultural Successes for Africa's Future, A Parliamentarians Dialogue, took place at the Erinvale Spa Somerset West from 15th until 18th May 2006.

The conference was organised by AU/NEPAD, and its partners, the PAN African Parliament, Capacity Building International Germany (InWent), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation (CTA).

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee for Agriculture and Land Affairs, delegated by the Speaker of the National Assembly Hon. Ms. Baleka Mbete opened the conference, which provided a unique opportunity for Members to interact, learn and shape the destiny of Africa's agricultural future.

South Africa was the host country for this event, which hosted Parliamentarians from all corners of Africa.

Broad based economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa will require significant increases in agricultural growth. Given that 80% of Africa's poor work in agriculture and that urban poor spend a majority of their income on food, only agricultural growth can simultaneously increase real incomes of Africa's rural and urban poor.

Yet over the past four decades, agricultural growth has failed to keep pace with Africa's demographic bulge. Africa remains the only developing region where per capita food production has fallen over the last four decades. Declining funding by African governments and donors has contributed to this decline by eroding the quality of Africa's key agricultural support institutions in research, extension, education and farmer organisations.

To counter these dangerous trends, African heads of Government and State, in their Maputo Declaration of May 2003 have pledged to make agriculture top priority and to increase funding for agriculture to 10% of total budget outlays up to approximately 6%. African Parliamentarians heading agriculture and budget committees will play a decisive role in translating those commitments into reality.

2. Objectives of the conference:

The conference brought together African Parliamentarians with farmer groups, private sector representatives, researchers and donors. The overall objectives were as follows:

1. To raise awareness of parliamentarians on the importance of agriculture for poverty reduction and economic growth
2. To briefly review the agricultural constraints and share significant success factors in stimulating agricultural growth and food security.
3. To identify early actions and medium term interventions
4. Review evidence on agriculture's role as a motor of aggregate economic growth and poverty reduction
5. Examine significant successes in African agriculture and factors decisive in enabling that superior performance
6. Identify and discuss forward looking issues affecting agricultural growth
7. Solicit participant input on feasible means of monitoring Maputo Declaration commitment by African heads of state to increase budgetary allocations for agriculture to 10% of total government spending
8. Identify follow up necessary support for parliamentarians to pursue a successful agricultural agenda.

3. Delegation of the committee:

The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture and Land Affairs made a decision in its committee meeting held during 2005 that resolved that being the host country it is necessitated that the full committee attend the conference. The attendance of Members of the committee was as follows:

Ms D.G. Nhelengethwa (ANC) (Chairperson); Ms B. Thomson (ANC); Mr S. Abram (ANC); Mr T.D.H. Ramphele (ANC); Mr D.M. Dlali (ANC); Adv. S.P. Holomisa (ANC); Ms L. Ngwenya; Mr C.H.F. Greyling (ANC); Ms C. Nkuna (ANC); Ms H.M. Blose (ANC); Mr Nel (DA); Dr A.I. Nel (DA); Mr E.J. Lucas (IFP); Ms Bici (UDM); Ms C. Zikalala (IFP); Mr Ditshetelo (UCDP) and Dr Pheko (AZAPO).

The delegation of the committee was accompanied by the following support staff: Ms M. Koff (Committee Secretary); Ms N. Mafani (Secretary to Chairperson); Ms Z. Jara (Committee Assistant) and Ms T. Pepeteka (Committee Researcher).

4. International representation:

Parliamentarians from the following countries were represented at the conference: Egypt; Ghana; Nigeria; Burundi; Cameroon; Gabon; Ethiopia; Kenya; Mali; Mozambique; Senegal; Rwanda and Malawi. Other organisations who were present were: International Food Policy Research, the World Bank, African Union Commission; New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); The Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Co-operation (CTA); Centre'de Coopération International en Recherche' Agronomique pour le De'veloppment (CIRAD); InWent (Internatioale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

5. Conference Programme:

Conference format:

The conference programme was divided into two main areas i.e. plenary sessions and working group discussions.

Plenary:

The Plenary sessions enabled the conference participants to start deliberations with a common understanding of the context the agricultural sector, its challenges and what the best practice models for agricultural growth are.

Working group discussions:

To facilitate diversity and inter-parliamentary discussion, participants in the conference were divided into working groups. Within these working groups participants were posed questions to debate and to provide recommendations. The outcomes of which were then further debated upon within plenary.

6. Presentations:

The Conference programme constituted of plenary sessions, which included the following presentations which are available on request.

- The Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP)
- Agricultural Growth and Poverty Reduction in Africa
- Past Performance and Future Prospects for Agricultural Development and Food Security in Africa in support of CAADP.
- The future of Future of Small farms
- The Cassava Transformation, Africa's Best Kept Secret in Support of CAADP (Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme).
- Seeds of Success: The Maize Revolution in East and Southern Africa
- Agriculture Technology for Africa's Future: Options, Capacity and Required Investments in the Context of FAAP.
- Globalisation, Concentration and Supermarkets: Implications for African Smallholders
- Governance on African Agriculture: Parliamentarian Interactions with Farmers and Agribusiness
- Country Agricultural Policy: Uganda's Plan to modernise Africa.
- Monitoring Maputo Commitment for Increasing Funding for African Agriculture in the context of CAADP (Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme).

7. Recommendations of the Conference:

Section 1: The Importance of Sustained Agricultural Growth

Sustained Agricultural growth is necessary of Africa is to stimulate economic growth and to reduce poverty. Over 70% of Africa's poor work in agriculture; a majority of them are women. Meanwhile, Africa's poor spend half their income on food staples. Thus, agriculture has the greatest potential to simultaneously increase production and productivity while enhancing incomes for the majority of Africa's poor, and at the same time raise real incomes of the urban poor by reducing the cost of food staples. Members further recognised that agricultural prosperity stimulates demand for non-farm goods and services, generating large spill-over growth in other sectors of the economy and driving large GDP growth multipliers. Further, agricultural growth improves national food security and drives rural prosperity and wealth creation which in turn help in stemming the rural – urban migration.

Section 2: Prospects for Success:

The conference recognised that African farmers and agricultural policy makers have achieved a series of substantial successes in agricultural development, although these have proven inadequate in number and scale to counter Africa's rapid demographic growth. Many of these successes have endured for decades, without being scaled up. The development of Tropical Manioc Selection (TMS) varieties of cassava have launched to decades of breeding breakthroughs in most regions of Africa. The development and diffusion of modern, high-yielding varieties of maize from the 1960's onwards, have transformed this imported cereal from a minor crop into the continent's major source of calories today. By crossing African and Asian varieties of rice, African rice breeders have developed a hardy, high yielding upland "NERICA" variety of rice which is spreading rapidly in West and Central Africa. Further, members noted that in recent decades African farmers have successfully contested highly competitive export markets for high value agricultural products—including cotton, coffee, livestock and horticultural products—for Europe, the Middle and Far East.

Reviews of past successes suggest a regular confluence of three key ingredients. First, is new more productive technology that lowers costs and makes farming more competitive and profitable. Second is a focus on growing markets. Third is high-level political, which has consistently proven essential for creating favourable policy environments and ensuring adequate budget allocations to agricultural support institutions and related infrastructure.

Looking forward, medium term projections suggest that the largest immediate opportunity for agricultural growth lie with the anticipated explosive growth in Africa's internal and sub-regional markets for food staples. Flexible responsiveness to high-value and niche export markets can supplement this with opportunities for external growth. Both domestic and export markets can supplement this with opportunities for value addition up-and downstream input supply and processing industries. Africa's abundant resource base can underwrite these gains provided African governments can maintain sustained policy follow ups to maintain favourable

policy environments and provide necessary public goods- such roads, power legal institutions and research- that the private sector will not supply.

Section 3: The Role of Public Policies and Investments

The conference further recognized that a modern African agriculture must view farmers as entrepreneurs seeking profit through access to credit and productivity-enhancing technologies in order to compete in growing domestic and export markets. Indeed, Africa's farmers have proven inventive and resourceful as well as highly responsive to new opportunities. Input suppliers, together with agribusiness processing and distribution networks form vital links between farmer and final output markets. Public policy must provide a favorable environment for sustained agricultural production and agribusiness. Access to land and security of tenure, a solid legal framework, stable macroeconomic policy and well-functioning support institutions provide a necessary foundation for agricultural prosperity. However, members expressed concern about the scourge of HIV/AIDS and other debilitating diseases. Harmonized access to continental, regional and sub-regional markets enhances prospects for sustained agricultural growth, particularly in rapidly growing markets for food staples. Fair trade conditions and prices are a necessary part of this favorable incentive system. Likewise, significant public investment will be required in rural roads, electricity, and other infrastructure as well as in agricultural research and extension of new, more productive technologies. Returns to public investment in agricultural research and development prove consistently high, both in Africa and elsewhere. Yet Africa, on average, has continued to under invest in its key productive sector. While Green Revolution Asian countries invested 15% of their budgets in agriculture, on average, African governments today allocate only 6%.

Similarly, the conference acknowledged that public investments necessary to sustain rapid agricultural growth will require a significant boost in African government budgetary allocations for agriculture. Recognizing this imperative, African Heads of State and Government agreed, at the African Union Summit in July 2003, to make agriculture a top priority and to raise budget allocations for agriculture to a minimum of 10% of their individual countries' total public spending, by 2008.

Section 4. What is required to achieve the CAADP goals?

The conference recommends that achievement of the CAADP (Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Programme) goals will require concerted action at multiple levels:

A. AU/NEPAD level

- Communicate the Maputo Declaration to all stakeholders, including governments, relevant ministries, parliaments, civil society and private sector.
- The NEPAD Secretariat and AU Commission should enhance the monitoring of these agreements, including the Maputo Declaration for all member states.
- Provide a website with real-time information on spending targets and achievement.
- Harmonize definitions of agriculture and total spending. Support the NEPAD initiative on agricultural expenditure tracking within government institutions and the necessary budget translations.
- Host regular, sub-regional seminars, to include government, parliament as well as representatives from the farmer organizations.

B. National level

- Immediately internalize, formalize and institutionalize the Maputo Declaration (MD) in national budgeting process. Prepare Cabinet memos, provide high-level briefings within government, legislative branches as well as stakeholder groups. Integrate the MD into national medium-term planning and budgeting systems.
- Improve the quality of agricultural investment allocations.
- Enhance internal capacities to utilize budget allocation effectively and efficiently.
- Develop transparent and efficient accounting systems that will accurately track actual expenditures on a timely basis.
- Initiate national peer review mechanisms whereby government, legislature and civil society can monitor progress towards this goal.
- Engage and enhance the capacity of farmer organizations, civil society and other beneficiary groups on follow up and expenditure monitoring.
- Document and showcase past agricultural successes.
- Make agricultural education and image attractive.

C. Parliamentarians

- Designate the agriculture and associated committees of parliament to monitor progress towards the CAADP goals.
- Annually verify the implementation of the CAADP programme, including progress towards the Maputo Declaration by reviewing annual budget allocations and actual expenditure.
- Engage in sub-regional dialogues.
- Alert constituencies, including the youth, men, women and political parties, to the importance of agriculture and increased investment in agriculture.
- Require briefing by the executive to parliament on all initiatives related to agriculture.
- Monitor government progress in achieving the Maputo Declaration.
- Introduce private member resolutions advocating achievement of the MD.
- Parliamentarians should take a leading role in fighting HIV/AIDS.
- Encourage exchanges of experience and mutual learning with other parliamentarians and technical experts.

D. Development partners:

- Encourage development partners to prioritize agriculture again and provide matching grants to support African governments that display commitment to CAADP.
- Support capacity building efforts among African governments, parliaments and parliamentary groups.
- Support regional and sub-regional parliamentary fora on agriculture.
- Provide technical backstopping on technical issues affecting agricultural technology, development and trade.
- Provide links to industrialized country parliaments and policy makers so African parliamentarians can communicate the interdependence of African and developed country farm policies.

7. Conclusion:

The NEPAD Conference provided a platform to facilitate inter-governmental partnership and collaboration in terms of agricultural development. This unique opportunity provided a forum for discussion, and created an environment for collective learning and co-ordinated action in terms of agricultural development as a means to poverty alleviation.