



INTERNATIONAL FOOD
POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty



INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA

New Challenges and Opportunities

Concept Note for an International Conference

Although many countries have made significant progress in the last decade, poverty and malnutrition continue to be major problems in Sub-Saharan Africa. Agricultural production increased to 12.3 percent of gross domestic product in 2009.¹ Yet, 72.9 percent of the population live on less than US\$2 per day, 27.5 percent consume inadequate calories, and 23.6 percent of children under five are underweight.²

Increasing agricultural productivity can increase food availability and access as well as rural incomes. Rural areas are home to 75 percent of Africa's population, most of whom count agriculture as their major source of income. Fortunately, Africa has experienced continuous agricultural growth during the last few years. However, much of the growth has emanated from area expansion rather than increases in land productivity. In most countries, future sustainable agricultural growth will require a greater emphasis on productivity growth, as suitable area for new cultivation declines, particularly given growing concerns about deforestation and climate change.

As measured by the 2010 Global Hunger Index (GHI), Sub-Saharan Africa's GHI reduction was only 14 percent (compared to its 1990 level). GHI fell by about 26 percent in South Asia, 33 percent in the Near East and North Africa, and more than 40 percent in Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. It is likely that many African countries will not meet Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1—halving poverty and hunger by 2015. High food prices in 2007–08—which exacerbated the problems of hunger and poverty—resurfaced in the middle of 2010. In many of the world's poorest countries, food accounts for over half of household expenditures, and increased food prices seriously reduce both access to food and ability to purchase other necessities. Experts estimate that rising food prices have driven about 44 million people into poverty in developing countries since June 2010, as food costs continue to rise to near 2008 levels. In the short run, various measures to increase availability and access to food, including promotion of private trade, government market interventions, and safety nets, may be needed. In the medium term, however, sustainable food security in most countries will require increases in domestic food production as well.

The large gap between potential and current crop yields makes increased food production attainable. Africa's low agricultural productivity has many causes, including scarce and scant knowledge of improved practices, low use of improved seed, low fertilizer use, inadequate irrigation, conflict, absence of strong institutions, ineffective policies, lack of incentives, and prevalence of diseases. Climate change could substantially reduce yields from rainfed agriculture in some countries. With scarcity of land, water, energy, and other natural resources, meeting the demands for food and fiber will require increases in productivity.

The Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) and its accompanying Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP) provide a vision for improving agricultural productivity through enabling and accelerating innovation. However, many of the African Union's member countries still lag behind CAADP's agreed-upon requirement that each country spend at least 10 percent of its budget on agriculture in order to achieve about a 6 percent growth in the sector. Inadequate investment in agriculture, coupled with institutional capacity weaknesses and ineffective farmer support systems, has hampered any attempts to increase Africa's agricultural productivity.

Given the several frameworks enacted under the auspices of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and vast knowledge about Africa's agricultural development problems, it is time to find solutions that will transform the agricultural sector, enabling it to contribute effectively to food and nutrition security and create wealth for the people. When farmers increase their productivity, food and nutrition security improve, and with remunerative markets, producer incomes can rise. Many success stories in the continent can provide lessons for those countries still struggling. Experiences from other continents can also be adapted for Africa.

¹ Agricultural share of GDP is from the World Bank World Development Indicators database, <http://www.google.com/publicdata/overview?ds=d5bncppjof8f9>.

² The amount of dollars per day, measured in 2005, is provided using purchasing power parity dollars (obtained from the World Development Indicators online database). Prevalence of undernourishment in the population data are for 2004–06; data for prevalence of underweight in children under five years are for 2003–08 (obtained from the Global Hunger Index 2010 report, <http://www.ifpri.org/publication/2010-global-hunger-index>).

The danger always exists that when one thinks of agriculture, one will only think of farming. But it must not be forgotten that this is just a single part of a comprehensive and far-reaching food and agriculture system. This system comprises all the steps taken to get an agricultural product to the consumer: research, technology generation, and diffusion; input production and delivery; farm-level production; commodity processing, conditioning, and handling (including storage); and product transport, marketing, and trade.

Increasing agricultural productivity in Africa thus calls for broader policy and strategic frameworks that encompass agro-industrial and agribusiness services along with farming. The agricultural system's transformation will have the most impact when innovators have the explicit perspective that the green revolution and agro-industrial and agribusiness development must go hand-in-hand. This perspective will result in innovations that reduce poverty through broad-based economic growth, which includes enhanced food security, employment creation, and added value and wealth across the economy's farming and nonfarming sectors.

Motivated by its mission to find solutions that reduce poverty and eliminate hunger and malnutrition from the world, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), in conjunction with the African Union Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, proposes an international conference under the theme "Increasing Agricultural Productivity and Enhancing Food Security in Africa: New Challenges and Opportunities."

Date: November 1–3, 2011.

Location: Africa Hall, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The subthemes for the conference are the following:

- (1) Science, technology, and innovation in agriculture
- (2) Rural service provision and access to factors and inputs for production
- (3) Food reserves, markets, trade, and regional integration
- (4) Investments, institutions, and policies for supporting agriculture
- (5) Agriculture, nutrition, and health linkages
- (6) Agriculture and climate change mitigation and adaptation
- (7) Capacity development for agriculture through education and training
- (8) Role of agriculture and the rural nonfarm sector in economic growth and national poverty reduction
- (9) Regional value-chains development as a pathway for increased agricultural productivity

Format: The conference will comprise plenary and parallel presentations and discussions of papers and moderated panel discussions of specific issues.

Expected Outcomes: There will be a conference synopsis report and policy briefs on key issues raised and policy solutions suggested by presenters and discussants. Full papers will be developed as chapters of an edited book on "Strategies to Increase Agricultural Productivity in Africa for Enhancing Food and Nutrition Security and Rural Incomes."

Participants: Representatives of regional, national, and international organizations, and individuals, including farmers, farmer and trader organization representatives, researchers, policymakers, academics, and members of the private sector.

For additional information:

Email: Dr. Kwadwo Asenso-Okyere

k.asenso-okyere@cgiar.org

P. O. Box: 5689, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

+251-11-6-172325 • +251-11-6-172500

www.ifpri.org