



## **BRIEFING NOTE**

### **HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON AFRICAN AGRICULTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY – MEETING THE CHALLENGES, MAKING A SUSTAINABLE GREEN REVOLUTION: 9-10 FEBRUARY 2009, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

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The High-Level Meeting on African Agriculture in the 21st Century took place in Windhoek, Namibia, from 9-10 February 2009. The event, which was a ministerial-level meeting, was part of preparations for the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which is taking place in May 2009.

At CSD 16 and CSD 17, participants are focusing on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and Africa. The objective of the event in Windhoek was therefore to consider how African governments and other stakeholders can meet those challenges and “take forceful policy and practical measures, in cooperation with the international community and development partners, to revitalize African agriculture and the broader rural economies in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.”

The meeting opened with statements from ministers and other high-level officials. Participants then discussed two main themes: how to operationalize a green revolution in Africa, and integrating African agriculture into global markets.

Under the first theme (green revolution), two sub-themes were considered: incorporating sustainable land management and agricultural practices into African agriculture; and increasing agricultural productivity in Africa.

Under the second theme (global market integration), two sub-themes were also considered, namely: moving African agriculture up the value chain; and integrating small farmers into global supply chains.

Finally, a further session was held to build on these discussions. This session focused on “managing Africa’s agricultural transition.”

The meeting ended with the adoption of a ministerial declaration covering some of these key themes. An overview of the discussions and the declaration are summarized below.

#### ***OPENING STATEMENTS***

On Monday morning, 9 February 2009, the meeting began with opening statements from ministers and other high-level officials.

Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Namibia, stated that many initiatives have been tried out to boost African agriculture, and although they have potential, few were successful. She stressed the need for a critical mass of people to bring about a change in attempting to reestablish African agriculture. Nandi-Ndaitwah also noted the need for improved research and capacity building, and the use of traditional knowledge in agricultural processes.

Gerda Verburg, Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Netherlands, lamented that Africa is at the center of the world's food crisis. Remarking that food prices were likely to remain high and volatile in the future, she said this is due to land competition, biofuels, changing consumption patterns, and agricultural neglect. She emphasized that agriculture requires more investment, particularly for capacity building; increased market access for developing countries; actions based on local knowledge; and improved food security.

Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General, UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), highlighted increased job creation, social protection and access to credit markets as necessary for African development. He emphasized the importance of women in farming, especially for increasing production. He stressed the need for extension services, infrastructure development, increased coordination amongst stakeholders, and improved farm-to-market pathways. Noting that an agricultural framework – the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Plan – was provided by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), he called for increased international support for revitalizing African agriculture.

Libertina Amathila, Deputy Prime Minister, Namibia, underscored the effects of climate change and pressures from “the North” on Africa. She highlighted the positive impact agriculture can have on development, but noted that overexploitation of land, soil depletion and overpopulation has hampered progress. To revitalize agriculture on the continent, Amathila called for technologies to relieve the burden of women in agriculture, locally-driven development, community partnerships and the use of traditional knowledge in research and practices.

Akinwumi Adesina, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, underscored the need for a paradigm shift for agricultural initiatives. He highlighted that policies should focus on small-scale farm holders and ensure that vulnerable sectors are reached. Noting that lessons from the Asian Green Revolution may be pertinent, he suggested addressing issues such as crop biodiversity, water management, and the restoration of soil fertility. He also noted the necessity of land reform to ensure that countries benefit from an African green revolution. He stressed the need to support farmers, including the use of subsidies as a means of support. Adesina noted that regionalization of markets and the coordination of financial systems and policies would create local markets that could support agricultural ventures.

Messaouda Mint Baham, Minister of Rural Development, Mauritania, noted the many challenges facing Mauritanian agriculture. She stressed the importance of coordinated policies and strategies to mobilize against these problems and obtain durable solutions, highlighting that they should be implemented immediately.

Zacarias Sambeni, Ministry of Agriculture, Angola, said his government has formulated new policies for the agricultural sector. He indicated that the policies provide short- and medium-term development strategies for the promotion of public, private and foreign investment. He stressed that policy frameworks were in place to support the agricultural sector. He also said that the sustainable management of resources and the restoration of infrastructure was a concern, and measures had been taken to address these challenges.

Bunduku Latha Paul, Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Renewable Development, Gabon, said correct socioeconomic policies and frameworks must be in place to ensure progress in the agricultural sector. Paul highlighted the importance of promoting entrepreneurial enterprises as well as private agriculture. Outlining Gabon's policies, he stated that the overarching objective is to reduce food imports by 25%. He noted the prioritization of crops such as banana and cassava, in addition to local infrastructure development and investment programmes to achieve this goal.

David Mathayo, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives, Tanzania, outlined a number of obstacles to achieving a green revolution, including climate change, poverty, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He said deliberations should include how mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change can be incorporated in the agricultural agenda, and should recognize and utilize farmers' knowledge and experience.

Gideon Musyoka Ndambuki, Ministry of Agriculture, Kenya, reflected on his country's agricultural sector. Noting that 60% of Kenya's export earnings come from agriculture, he said the country is therefore reliant on agriculture for growth and development. Ndambuki said there remained many challenges for Kenya, including the low budget allocation, lack of human resources, and the impact of HIV/AIDS on the sector. He stressed the need to support small-scale farmers and develop irrigation systems.

Youssoufa Yerima Mandjo, Minister for Livestock and Animal Health, Central African Republic, noted that the Maputo Declaration required a 10% budget allocation for agriculture and that these resources should be used to put policies and programmes in place to achieve progress in agriculture.

Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), said his organization believes in a balanced role between markets, government and private investment for increasing the productive capacity of agriculture. He stressed that comprehensive production policies and ownership and autonomy of tasks were also necessary. Panitchpakdi called for greater emphasis on women in agriculture, organic methods, and freer international market access.

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), said the UNCCD is the most ratified treaty within the UN but that the interconnectivity between agriculture, soil degradation and desertification had yet to be recognized. Noting that Africa is the most affected by land use competition, he underscored that the green revolution model for Africa must focus on highly sustainable inputs. He highlighted the need to make small-scale farming more viable, and noted that increased production is a challenge that will need to be addressed. He underscored the need for Africa to create its own pathway for a green revolution and stressed the UNCCD as a mainstream framework for achieving these aims.

Jan McAlpine, Director, UN Forum of Forests, noted a number of statements already calling for intersectoral cooperation, adding that there are well understood connections between land improvements, forests and agriculture. She said UNFF-8 will be touching on these connections.

Simon Nhongo, UN Development Programme, highlighted the need to promote sustainable land management and find solutions to create sustainable pathways. He also emphasized partnerships and technology transfer. He stressed that stakeholders must be prepared to face the risks that are inherent in agriculture, and capacity must be built to mitigate such risks.

Thozì Gwanya, Director General, Department of Land Affairs, South Africa, underscored a desire for action on a number of issues, including research and development, empowerment of marginalized farmers, and promotion of South-South trade.

John Mutorwa, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Namibia, emphasized the Namibian Government's commitment to sustainable food production. He outlined policies that are in place to achieve self-sufficient food supply and security of that supply.

### ***THEME ONE: HOW TO OPERATIONALIZE A GREEN REVOLUTION IN AFRICA***

Introducing the first day's theme for discussion, Norman Uphoff, Cornell University, presented on the incorporation of sustainable land management and agricultural practices into African agriculture. He requested clarity on whether the green revolution is being seen as a means or an end. He suggested that as the conditions facing Africa differ from those faced in Asia, the pathway sought also needs to be different, or no progress will be made.

Outlining an alternative farming method based on agro-ecology, he stressed that higher yields, improved soil conditions and decreased dependence on water and irrigation could be achieved. Uphoff noted that these outcomes were a result of promoting the growth of root systems and improving the soil condition through using readily available organic matter.

Rudy Rabbinge, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), presented on the role of agriculture in sustainable development. He stressed that there is no one solution for a green revolution in Africa, but that the ability to achieve it is present as there is now the political will. He stated that the agricultural sector in Africa differs from others as there is an absence of dominating food crops and many different farming systems. He underscored the importance of women in agriculture and said lack of involvement in policy making is an obstacle to progress. Other issues highlighted by Rabbinge include the lack of knowledge infrastructure; low functioning local and regional markets; lack of a stimulating political and economic environment; land tenure issues; increasing threats of desertification and deforestation; and biofuels. In overcoming these challenges, he said policies and interventions should prioritize those farming systems that are the most promising for future production, identify the technologies needed in the sector, and identify the areas most in need of improved food supply.

Rabbinge called for a "rainbow revolution" in agriculture, as there many opportunities available. He stated that a new paradigm of thinking should be sought that includes sustainability, and said it should focus on stimulating agro-ecological literacy and determining long-term goals. He also emphasized the need for farmers to be central to any policies or interventions that are implemented.

**INCORPORATING SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES INTO AFRICAN AGRICULTURE:** On the sub-theme of incorporating sustainable land management and agricultural practices into African agriculture, participants heard presentations on incorporating soil science into practice in order to modify current thinking and standards for producing

staple crops; exploiting linkages between soil quality, biodiversity and agricultural production; and the main conclusions from the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development.

In the ensuing discussion, participants commented on the use of biodiversity and the intervention of science in the agricultural sector. They also highlighted the two distinct approaches to crop farming that existed, namely the more common, practical approaches, and the agro-ecological approach introduced by previous speakers.

On the agro-ecological approach, participants questioned the dynamic of organisms in the soil and how a correct balance is achieved. Discussions also centered on the practicalities of putting such an approach into action. The use of organic versus chemical inputs in agro-ecology was discussed, with efficient use of water and organic compostable matter being noted as key to the approach.

Participants noted that biodiversity is a benefit of agricultural production, since biodiversity is central to improving both the inputs and outputs of farming, and is also effective in combating climate change. They stressed the need to identify the linkages that exist between biodiversity, soil and water in order to integrate biodiversity effectively into the economy. There was also further discussion on the evaluation of biodiversity systems and how effective evaluations would allow for scaling-up and replicating successes in other regions.

The importance of science for the development of agriculture was emphasized, with participants stressing that both quantity as well as quality was important in production.

**INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN AFRICA:** On the sub-theme of increasing agricultural productivity in Africa, participants heard presentations on development and food security in Africa; increasing Africa's agricultural productivity; developing and promoting the adoption of adapted rice varieties in Africa; and the best methods to support farmers' efforts to improve African agriculture.

Participants stressed that farmers have to be considered first in all negotiations and policy development, as they are vital to any change that takes place in the future.

On methods to increase productivity, participants emphasized that more investment needs to be made, recalling that African leaders have made a commitment to allocate 10% of their annual budgets for agriculture. They also called for more private investment in small-scale farmers and other private enterprises that can assist agricultural development.

They noted that institutions should be prioritized to create an enabling environment, and that economic literacy on all levels should be increased, as this would enable more effective use of resources to upgrade agriculture. More adaptive research and activities were raised as a concern, as well as the need to build capacity in order to develop an effective knowledge chain among stakeholders.

The need to mitigate risks through crop insurance was raised, as well as a desire for policies to decrease trade distortions. South-South collaboration was underscored by some as vital, and several proposed that further work be done to enhance this. Participants highlighted the need for good governance and urged continuing efforts to ensure that this is achieved.

Lastly, participants discussed the need for increased attention to pre- and post-harvest production losses, and expressed a desire to promote those production systems that are the most promising for Africa, including mixed crop-livestock systems.

## ***THEME TWO: INTEGRATING AFRICAN AGRICULTURE INTO GLOBAL MARKETS***

The second day's deliberations centered on the topic of integrating African agriculture into global markets.

Kiichiro Fukasaku, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, presented on linking small farm holders to markets. He noted the continued low productivity in Africa, increase in non-traditional agricultural exports from Africa, and decrease in staple food exports.

He outlined the many problems faced in integration, including the fact that world agricultural trade is no longer being dominated by traditional commodities, that trade has moved up the value chain, and that Africa is not yet at that level. He also drew attention to the difficulty faced by Africa in processing and producing higher value products. Fukasaku stated that opportunities for African exports did exist in China and India, and also noted the increased availability of information and communication technologies for agriculture.

In linking smallholders to markets, he stressed the importance of rediscovering the market through the use of outgrower schemes and the promotion of agribusiness by donors. He also underscored the need to

increase research and development, as well as extension services for a successful green revolution. Finally, he noted the benefits of inter-ministerial coordination.

Linda Nghatsane, Nelspruit Agricultural Development Association, noted that small-scale farmers have a tendency to be resource scarce and that most women involved in farming operate at the subsistence level.

She outlined an approach to small-scale farming that includes the use of simple technology, access to land through land reform, on-the-job training, and strategies to minimize expenses through bulk buying, saving and self-farming approaches.

Bemoaning the effect of HIV/AIDS on farming, Nghatsane said this is having a negative impact on food security. She observed that other challenges include the attitudes of some women farmers towards upscaling production, inadequate extension services, access to markets and credit, low literacy levels, and access to water and lands.

**MOVING AFRICAN AGRICULTURE UP THE VALUE CHAIN:** On the sub-theme of moving African agriculture up the value chain, participants heard presentations on linking smallholder farmers to markets; African agriculture from a trade perspective; value chain development and regional integration for agricultural development; and the experience of the development of NERICA rice.

Participants noted that higher food prices and the continuing food crisis will have a negative impact on Africa, and that the primary method to mitigate the crisis is increased productivity to secure food supply and decrease prices.

On linking small farm holders to available markets, participants noted the need to integrate these farmers into commercial markets, as many are on the margins of the agricultural sector. They also said small-scale farming must be encouraged.

Regional integration was suggested by many participants as necessary to achieve stronger domestic markets. It was suggested that this regionalization process should encompass all stakeholders. Many participants lamented the trade barriers that exist in international markets for many of their agriculture exports and expressed a desire for these to be removed. To strengthen market power in both local and international markets, participants noted that cooperatives or other farming organizations would be useful. Participants called for greater coordination between the public and private sectors, as well as establishing a rapport with the international community.

Participants also noted that in order to move more readily the value chain, the African mindset regarding agriculture needs to be adjusted to move away from agriculture for subsistence towards agriculture for retail and wholesale purposes.

**INTEGRATION OF SMALL FARMERS INTO GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS:** On the sub-theme of integrating small-scale farmers into global supply chains, participants heard presentations on innovative models for smallholder farming in Africa; a case study from Mali for organizing supply chains; the participation of smallholder farmers in the coffee and cotton sectors in global markets; and managing the biofuel boom, local income generation and access to land.

Participants strongly emphasized that women and small-scale farmers must be placed at the forefront of commercial farming. The need to share and disseminate experiences, particularly amongst farmers, was also highlighted. The value of more research, particularly in relation to women farmers, was underscored, as was the need to increase understanding of farmers' constraints.

Diversification of crops and other farming products and byproducts were highlighted by participants as a means to increase income generation. In line with this, some said income generation targets would also be useful for smallholder farmers. Some participants lamented the overreliance of Africa agriculture on global markets and noted that regional cooperation would strengthen local markets.

A number of participants stated that the use of waste and residues from processing, as opposed to crops, would be more appropriate for biofuel production. Some suggested that certification of biofuel production might be necessary to ensure sustainable production within agriculture. Partnerships were also viewed as a method to allowing sustainable biofuel production. Many participants noted that education was necessary, particularly on land rights and tenure.

### ***MANAGING AFRICA'S AGRICULTURAL TRANSITION***

Bruno Losch, World Bank, presented on Africa's rural transition, noting that agriculture will remain a primary employer within Africa. He said that policy should take into account local conditions and aim to develop industrial activities in order to compete effectively on the global market. He noted that as productivity in agriculture increases, the amount of jobs available will also grow, but we will need to encourage youth to take up agricultural practices.

He also observed that in order to move from small-scale to commercial farming practices, policies and strategies should focus on modernizing the sector, establishing norms and specialized markets, and ensuring that the norms, specialized markets and modernization is adaptable to the demands of consumers. He stressed the need to be cognizant of poverty, sustainable resource management, and local situations.

Messaouda Mint Baham, Minister of Rural Development, Mauritania, said it is imperative to develop procedures to improve agriculture in general. She stressed the importance of small-scale farmers, and said production should target specific markets. She underscored the importance of lowering input costs in order to increase profits. She lamented that due to low productivity, many locally-produced goods are more expensive than imported produce. She said it is important to lower costs and increase productivity to reverse this trend.

David Mathayo, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives, Tanzania, said it was imperative to improve rural infrastructure for the transportation of goods to the market. He emphasized the importance of processing cash crops and the need to ensure that value added goods are brought to market. He also underscored implementing and utilizing policies and strategies in this regard.

Gideon Musyoka Ndambuki, Ministry of Agriculture, Kenya, stressed that in the face of rising tariffs it is especially important to find ways to minimize transaction costs. He outlined effective subsidy programmes that have been implemented in Kenya and suggested that these be replicated elsewhere in Africa. He added that good governance is an important aspect that is needed in the agriculture sector.

### ***MINISTERIAL DECLARATION***

The Windhoek High-Level Ministerial Declaration on African Agriculture in the 21st Century was adopted on 10 February, with minor amendments.

In the declaration, the Ministers and government representatives present reaffirm their commitment to sustainable development in Africa, and recognize the critical role that agriculture plays in achieving sustainable growth in Africa.

They support the call for an African green revolution to help boost agricultural productivity, food production and national food security. They note that an African green revolution does not depend only on improved seed and fertilizer but can also be built on a range of complementary investments in rural development, including roads, electricity, health and education.

They further note that the support of the state is necessary, especially in small-scale agriculture. They highlight the critical need for effective institutions to ensure greater price stability and an enabling policy environment that provides incentives for innovation and risk taking by farmers.

They emphasize the need for greater involvement of women farmers, and for credit and other financial mechanisms to be made available for the successful production, marketing and processing of agricultural goods.

They underscore the importance of developing the agricultural sector to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and eradicate poverty in African countries. They recognize the potential of the UNCCD to contribute to addressing food security, particularly in the area of land degradation, and further pledge their commitment to implementing the Ten Year Strategy and Framework. They stress the importance of increased research and development to increase production and improve competitiveness.

The declaration is to be presented by Namibia at CSD 17 on behalf of the African Group.

### ***CLOSE OF THE MEETING***

Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General, UN-DESA, said that many strong statements had been made and that delegates attending CSD 17 will go there with a deeper understanding of what is needed to boost crop yields on a sustainable basis, improve land management, and integrate African agriculture into global markets. He stressed the urgent needed for action, and noted that more resources for infrastructure are needed for an African green revolution to be successful.

John Mutorwa, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Namibia, expressed confidence that the outcomes of this meeting will contribute positively to CSD 17. He noted that the issues discussed are pertinent to operationalizing a sustainable green revolution, addressing the impacts of climate change, providing support for small-scale and women farmers, securing market access and enhancing capacity building in the agriculture sector.

Gerda Verburg, Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Netherlands, stressed the need for a “home grown” sustainable green revolution. She said that leapfrogging is possible, but that stakeholders need to ensure that the African green revolution must be achieved in a sustainable manner. She said

developing a safe and sustainable food chain is important, and that stakeholders must improve existing crop diversity and respect local food preferences.

The meeting was gaveled to a close 5:46pm.