

BRIEFING NOTE ON THE AFRICAN UNION –EUROPEAN UNION AGRICULTURE MINISTERS’ CONFERENCES 2016 & 2017

- 1. AU-EU Investing in a Food Secure Future, Noordwijk, The Netherlands, 4 to 6 July, 2016*
- 2. Making Sustainable Agriculture a future for youth in Africa, Rome, Italy (FAO Headquarters) 2 July 2017*

INTRODUCTION

2016 and 2017 have been defining years for strengthening the partnership between Europe and Africa. The 5th Africa-EU Summit in November 2017 is a key opportunity to give a new impetus to this partnership. Profound economic and societal transformational changes are taking place in Africa. The demographic growth is extraordinary and Africa’s population is expected to double by 2050, from 1.2 billion people to 2.4 billion of predominantly young people. African will thus need to create 18 million new jobs each year up to 2035, to absorb new labour market entrants, compared to the 3 million jobs per year currently created in the formal economy. Challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition threats to environment and scarcity and pollution of nature could very well be exacerbated by this population growth. Nevertheless, over the past two decades, Africa demonstrated impressive economic progress and positive transformations, providing new and unique opportunities, such as growing and increasingly integrated markets, a dynamic SMEs sector, but sustainable use of limited natural resources and fertile soil still remains sub-optimal.

The EU is also at the crossroads: discussing its own future direction but also the future of its relations with the Countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific after the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020. The EU is Africa's closest neighbour, first foreign investor, first trading partner – offering free access to the EU market via Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) and the Everything but Arms initiative, and generous access under Free Trade Agreements –first partner in development and principal source of remittances. At the same time, the African governments are progressively negotiating the Continental Free Trade Area aimed at boosting intra-Africa trade. Moreover, Africa's demographic trends and the increasing mobility and migration add a new dimension to the need of a common agenda to promote sustainable economic development in Africa, in order to create the jobs that the continent needs.

It is in the above context that the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) held two Global Conference in July 2016 and July 2017 to discuss how to invest in a Food Secure Future as well as Making a Agriculture a Sustainable Future for the Youth in Africa.

PARTICIPATION

Ministers of Agriculture from the AU and the EU participated in these high level inaugural conference hosted by the Dutch government and the second one organised in the margins of the FAO bi-annual Conference. The events brought to policy makers at various levels and notably ministers in the African Union and in the European Union, agri-businesses and farmers' organisations from EU and African countries, international organisations, development agencies and NGOs.

THEMATIC AREAS ADDRESSED AND BROAD AREAS OF AGREEMENT

The conference was a meeting of partners, and also an opportunity to:

- Recognise the African countries commitment to mutual accountability, on the progresses made in the Malabo implementation.
- Reaffirm the European support for the implementation of the Malabo Declaration, within the framework Africa's Agenda 2063, and particularly the recently launched AU Business Plan for Implementation of the CAADP-Malabo Declaration 2017-2021.
- Last but not least, to strengthen the relations between the AU and the EU members of FAO.

1. Responsible investments and market access

- Rural and agricultural transformation requires substantial private sector responsible investments. The farming and agri-food business communities have a key role to play in this transformation, while governments and public sector must promote a stable, responsible and inclusive business environment.
- AU-EU policy cooperation is vital. Some countries still need accompanying tools in providing and improving the right framework for sustainable responsible investments.
- The European Union is preparing to launch the European External Investment Plan EIP and it is developed as a holistic framework to promote the enabling conditions for investments in Africa and the EU Neighbourhood aimed at strengthening socio-economically important sectors. It is further intended to leverage private investment and agricultural sector, and especially the subject of sustainable agriculture, is of primary importance in the targets of the EIP.
- Similarly, the African Union Country Agribusiness Partnership Framework (CAP-F), as well as the AU continental Agribusiness Strategy are useful mechanisms for mobilising private sector investments, promoting jobs and wealth creation in Africa, particularly for youth and women.
- It is clear that inclusiveness and dialogue are vital to this process and directly engaging with agricultural businesses in both the EU and Africa. Exploring possible options for strengthening the Africa-EU dialogue via an Agricultural Business Forum, as a way to increase cooperation between Africa-EU agricultural businesses was recommended.
- Exchange programmes between AU-EU young farmers involving young farmers' organisations was also recommended.
- There is a strong consensus that the Committee on World Food Security principles for Responsible Agriculture Investments in Agriculture and Food systems (CFS-RAI) need to be implemented by all. The conference agreed on the need to establish guiding principles for investment policymaking in order to promote the enabling conditions for responsible investments in Africa and to make such responsible investments thrive in the agri-food sector; a process which will require further engagement on both EU and AU sides.

- The Conferences agreed that building capacity to access markets is a must, as well as making the most of trading opportunities, especially in relation with the European Partnership Agreements. In this respect, the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) capacity building efforts of the AU Commission, particularly the food safety initiative, were acknowledged and encouraged. This is an avenue that needs further exploring in the context of the AU-EU partnership, as a key element for market access, and contributing to the AU Malabo declaration on boosting intra-Africa trade in agricultural goods and services.
- EU is also willing to support an AU Continental Strategy to develop Geographical Indications, as this would bring more added value to producers, as well as create better market opportunities for African products.

2. Research, innovation and digitization in agriculture

- The need to expand the number of countries involved in the Research and Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) and enhance involvement of the private sector was agreed.
- The development of research capacity of agricultural research centres and universities across the African continent needs long-term support, as well as national innovation systems with clear impact pathways and multi-actor approaches.
- There is a new impetus for jointly strengthening agricultural innovation at farm level to answer climate change, economic growth, jobs and nutrition challenges, involving the next generations of scientists in both regions. To this end, the collaborative research and innovation activities between the EU and Africa, including through professional development and mobility opportunities such as the EU's Marie-Sklodowska-Curie Actions and ERASMUS + and other types of Horizon 2020 projects were proposed for further advancement.
- ICT, digital technologies and services in agriculture are crucial for increasing productivity and income in farms, as well as along the food chain. The conferences noted that more needs to be done to support the connectivity of smallholders to internet, uptake of advisory and extension e-Agriculture solutions. Long-term support is needed for young African and EU farmers and digital entrepreneurs to develop and apply digital solutions in farming.

3. Water Use and Management in Agriculture within a Climate Resilient Environment

- To meet the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, the water, energy, food security, ecosystems and climate change nexus need to be effectively addressed.
- In this regard, the conferences considered supporting feasibility assessments and investments on planning sustainable water use in agriculture, including water reuse and green renewable energy efficient irrigation techniques.
- Agree to contribute to the development of the water pillar of an Africa-EU Charter on the sustainable development of natural resources over the next years.
- Sustainable agriculture depends on sustainable water management. This means making sure that water is used in quantities that do not exceed recharge. This also means using

inputs - nutrients and pesticides - only in the quantities needed, without putting at risk natural balances.

- The conferences were excellent opportunity to identify further policy work needed on water and agriculture as an important pillar of broader AU-EU cooperation, through integrated water resource management (IWRM) for a sustainable agriculture.
- Potential pilot initiatives in Africa on sustainable water use in agriculture and key drivers needed to enable their implementation were discussed, as well as the role of private sector, governments, and stakeholders in the preparation, implementation and scaling-up of these initiatives.
- Further use of Earth observation technology, data and services for the management of water resources needs to be considered, building in particular on Copernicus data and information and on the African-wide Earth Observation services currently being developed in the framework of the GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) and Africa initiative.

4. Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) and Reducing Food Losses and Waste

- The conferences provided an opportunity to share and learn from each other on what is working and why, in the efforts to building resilience to risks and scale up CSA in various agro-ecological landscapes. It was an opportunity to explore innovative and successful practices, approaches and support policies on Climate smart agriculture.
- Pests, both known and emerging ones (Fall Army Worm, for example), need to be addressed via African frameworks and programmes for effective plant protection.
- Speakers supported the integration of climate-relevant measures, including agro ecological practices, in agricultural policies, programmes and investments, in line with the Paris agreement's Nationally Determined Contributions.
- The conferences also explored and made further steps on building consensus on the needed partnerships to implement AU Malabo declaration on reducing post-harvest losses.
- A Food Loss and Waste Finance Coalition will be created, a partnership of entities increasing investment in reduction programs, companies, and technologies around the world. The Coalition will also explore creation of a Food Loss and Waste Fund.

CONCLUSION

The conference showed a significant political momentum for AU-EU policy cooperation on agriculture and rural development tackling concrete challenges and opportunities in different areas. It is generally agreed that policy cooperation needs to be stepped up as a dialogue of equals addressing common challenges, successfully complementing the development assistance. The outcomes of will be presented for consideration of the 5th Africa-EU summit in November 2017 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, provide important input to related processes at various UN fora, feed into relevant processes in Rome, New York and Nairobi, and will guide the next steps in the technical collaboration between the European Commission and the African Union Commission.

The African Union Commission and the European Commission stated their intention to continue their close collaboration in the field of agriculture. And in the next foreseeable future agreed to facilitate the continued dialogue called for by the Conference, by bringing a biennial and where feasible and needed, annual Ministerial AU-EU 'Roundtable' focused on implementation of a strong and lasting partnership of AU and EU around these themes of cooperation including at the G7 and G20 level.