



Press Release

AUC and FAO determined to promote agricultural mechanization

And gearing towards relegating the hoe to the museum

1 July 2016, Addis Ababa - The African Union Commission in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization, yesterday launched a project on Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in Africa.

This project is in line with the AU's Africa Agenda 2063; the 2014 AU Malabo Declaration on Agricultural Growth and Transformation and the FAO's new Strategic Framework of making agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable and also in promoting agricultural and rural development in Africa.

The main objective of the project is to contribute to the intensification of sustainable agricultural mechanization programmes in Africa by engaging stakeholders to take stock of the lessons and experiences derived over the years and most importantly, to discuss the need to support the integration of national and regional policies and strategies.

Officially opening the meeting, H.E Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, AUC Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture represented by Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture acting Director, Dr. Janet Edeme, noted that, "the project will contribute to the development of an African strategy for sustainable agricultural mechanization within the context of the Malabo Declaration. It will enhance the capacity of governments to integrate agricultural mechanization in their policy frameworks. Of significance, it will target women who bear the burden of African agriculture."

Commissioner Tumusiime expressed hope that the project would help catalyze the intensification of sustainable agricultural mechanization in Africa through stocktaking of the lessons of experience and supporting its integration in national and regional policies and strategies.

Mr. Patrick Kormawa, Sub-regional Coordinator and FAO Representative to the AU and UNECA emphasized that, "the dream to have a hunger-free Africa by 2025 would remain a mirage without mechanization." He also added that, "African will not feed its people if agricultural value chains do not modernize, enhancing food security and nutrition and creating opportunities for rural youths in agriculture."

Other speakers during the opening ceremony included; H.E Fatima Haram Acyl, AUC Commissioner for Trade and Industry, represented by Frank Mugenyi. Commissioner Acyl emphasized on the need to take a value chain approach to agricultural mechanization, read her full speech on: www.au.int; Amb. Lazarous Kapambwe, Special Advisor, Bureau of the AUC Chairperson, highlighted the progress being made in relegating the hand held hoe to the museum, in order to empower farmers, especially women, to use advanced tools for farming, read his full speech on www.au.int ; and Dr Adama Coulibaly UNECA Country Director, spoke about the need for agricultural transformation to drive the structural transformation of African economies as well as the importance of technology acquisition and transfer in the mechanization process.

Progress is in sight

Agricultural mechanization plays a key role to Africa's ambition to end hunger in the continent by 2025 as stated in the Malabo Declaration of 2014. The need for agricultural mechanization offers the ability to perform operations at the right time to maximize production potential; provides multi-functional machinery not only for crop production but also for postharvest operations, transport and infrastructure improvement.

Most significantly, this has to be built along the entire agricultural value chain, private sector driven, and environmentally compatible system which forms part of the project.

Despite the renewed interest in mechanization in Africa, a large proportion of agriculture is still done using human power, with huge productivity, health, social and economic losses. Africa, south of the Sahara has the lowest land productivity in the world, and agricultural mechanization has either stagnated or regressed in most countries. Africa's average of 13 tractors/100km² of arable land compares unfavourably both with the global average (200/100km²) and with the average for other developing regions such as South Asia (129/100km²).

Mechanization is, however, witnessing resurgence in Africa, especially in African Union Member States. Several countries are also re-engaging in upgrading the level of agricultural mechanization, realizing the potential to address some of the most fundamental farming challenges in a profound and comprehensive manner.

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