CAADP

Introducing the

Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)

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Agriculture and CAADP:
a new vision for Africa

If we're going to make poverty history in Africa, we have to tackle hunger by improving food security and rural incomes. Hunger undermines health and people's ability to study and work. It leaches away enterprise, intelligence and energy. Hunger and malnourishment devastate children, stunting their potential as adults and making it more likely that their own offspring will have to endure the same lifelong cycle of deprivation and poverty.

Improving food security, nutrition, and incomes in Africa's largely agrarian economies are the interlinked goals of the made-in-Africa solution known as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Established as part of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), CAADP was endorsed by the African Union Assembly in July 2003.

What is NEPAD?

As mandated by the Organization of African Unity, the governments of Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa took the lead in initiating the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) - a strategic framework for pan-African socio-economic development.

NEPAD is a radically new intervention, made in Africa and spearheaded by African leaders, to address the main challenges facing the continent. These include escalating poverty, under-development, and the continent's continued marginalisation on the international scene. Because Africa is largely agrarian, CAADP is considered one of NEPAD's most important sub-activities.

Through CAADP, African governments are committed to raising agricultural productivity by at least six per cent per year. This is the minimum required if Africa is to achieve agriculture-led socio-economic growth. To achieve this, these governments have agreed to increase public investment in agriculture by a minimum of 10 per cent of their national budgets - substantially more than the four to five per cent average they commit today.

Thus far only a few countries currently meet or surpass the 10 per cent goal: Mali, Madagascar, Namibia, Niger, Chad and Ethiopia. However a number of governments, including Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, and Rwanda, have either already boosted their agricultural budgets significantly, or are going to do so soon.

Investing more, more wisely

Since the structural adjustment era of the 1980s and 1990s, development partners as well as governments have invested relatively little in agriculture. And, the OECD reports that the share of total overseas development assistance to African agriculture has declined from 26 per cent in the late 1980s to under five per cent in 2005.

While development partners are also asked to increase investment in agriculture, equally important is aligning their investment choices with those enunciated by Africa's governments through the CAADP process. To date, those most closely aligned with CAADP include the European Commission, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and certain World Bank programmes

Africa on the upswing

It's not all bad news. Africa's agrarian economies have been on the upswing for the past decade, with gross domestic products growing by six per cent on average per year, and the agricultural sector by four to five per cent each year. Similarly, the level of per capita food production in Africa has increased steadily.

Average poverty levels in Africa, which rose annually in the 1980s and 1990s, have actually dropped by about six percentage points over the past decade. And, the share of undernourished people in sub-Saharan Africa has declined from 36 per cent in the mid-1990s to 32 per cent more recently.

But current improvements just aren't enough

While these under-reported achievements are highly encouraging, they are also a result of the low starting point of African economies devastated by decades of negative growth and rising poverty. They also reflect the impact of recent surges in external demand for basic agricultural commodities. But this demand may not endure, and is something over which Africa has no control. And, importantly, it also has to be realized that even if these growth levels were sustained, they would not put Africa on the path to achieving the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of halving poverty and the number of malnourished people by 2015.

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Building Africa means building agriculture

The vast body of research on economic growth and poverty reduction has shown that the most effective way to sustainably reduce poverty is to raise the productivity of, and returns from, resources on which poor people depend for their livelihoods. In almost all African countries, these resources are agricultural land and labour and off-farm rural labour. The relationship between the prevalence of poverty and the rate of agricultural growth among African countries is well documented. The fact that countries with higher agricultural growth exhibit lower poverty rates is not just a result of higher incomes in the agricultural sector. Evidence suggests that a US$1 increase in farm incomes results in an increase of US$1.50 - US$2.50 in rural incomes.

Achieving the MDGs

CAADP aims to exploit and expand upon recent growth to help more African countries to achieve, or at least draw nearer to, the MDGs through sustainable development and improved food security. All the good news about improvements in Africa's economies and food production indicates that the changes required to significantly reduce poverty and eliminate malnutrition are actually within the reach of many African countries. NEPAD will therefore be encouraging continent-wide, regional and national governments to undertake the policy and investment measures necessary to speed up and broaden the growth process.

Recently, nine countries achieved or exceeded the CAADP goal of six per cent annual growth: Angola, Burkina Faso, Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Senegal. Other countries are close: Rwanda, Benin, Ghana, and Uganda. Sustaining this growth and encouraging its spread to the rest of Africa is CAADP's goal.

CAADP: Africa-owned, Africa-led

If current positive growth trends continue or accelerate, most African countries should be able to achieve the poverty-related MDGs within 10 years, just a few years past the aim of 2015. It is not a given, however, that these growth rates can continue without smarter policies, co-ordination and targeted investment by the various African and international actors working to improve living standards for the continent's people.

CAADP is about doing more with the money and effort already being expended in Africa by national governments and donors to address food security and to encourage economic growth. It is about networking, setting priorities, and harmonizing goals, spending, and activities between the various stakeholders committed to raising living standards in Africa. These range from organizations representing large and small-scale farmers, to African agricultural extension officers, ministry officials, donors, large agribusiness companies and NGOs.

We need to shift gear if the six per cent agricultural growth targets are to be reached and maintained. This is where the fruits of agricultural research - new practices, technologies, policies and processes aligned to food security and new market opportunities - can make a major contribution. Linking CAADP to donor initiatives such as DFID's Research Into Use programme provides it with the skills it needs to promote and adopt agricultural innovations on a wide scale.

The four pillars on which CAADP rests

In 2003, under CAADP's aegis, African governments, regional bodies, donors, agriculturists and other stakeholders established four continent-wide priorities (or what we sometimes call 'pillars') for investment and action in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and livestock management:

- extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems - for example by increasing access to irrigation;
- increasing market access through improved rural infrastructure and other trade-related interventions;
- increasing food supply and reducing hunger across the region by increasing smallholder productivity and improving responses to food emergencies;
- improving agricultural research and systems to disseminate appropriate new technologies, and increasing the support given to help farmers to adopt them.

Setting continent-wide goals has merit, particularly in that it encourages donors to focus on those issues which Africa's leaders have identified as being most important to efforts to improve human welfare. However, in practical terms, CAADP has greatest impact at the regional and national levels.

CAADP's regional and national impacts

With the four continent-wide pillars as its foundation, in 2004-05 CAADP began to focus its efforts at the level of Africa's three regional economic communities (RECs), which have now come to 'own' CAADP. These are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Each held

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regional workshops to establish their own priorities based on the continent-wide pillars.

From there, the CAADP efforts drill down to the level of national roundtables charged with the following:

- aligning state policies with regional priorities and the four pillars;
- exploiting synergies and discussing economic bottlenecks between neighbouring countries, and deciding appropriate action on those matters;
- identifying gaps in the donor funding needed to achieve agreed priorities;
- initiating work to monitor and evaluate CAADP's progress at the national, regional and continental levels.

These national roundtables, which are still underway, will lead to national pacts between donors and individual governments that will help different countries to achieve the four pillars.

Improving communication

Another key goal of CAADP is better communication and co-ordination between the broad array of stakeholders that are - in theory - united by the common goal of ensuring economic development but whose efforts are often not joined up. This means, for example, linking up agricultural researchers and extensionists with top officials in the agriculture ministry on the one hand, and smallholder farmers on the other. It means working micro-credit into the mix and getting the national transport department and development partners doing what they can to improve roads and thus access to markets and agricultural inputs. It means improving nutrition through schoolyard gardens, in connection with the global Micronutrient Initiative, and working with environmentalists to balance concerns about biodiversity and water conservation with the need to manage crop pests and to irrigate.

In essence, CAADP is about bringing together diverse key players, at the continental, regional and national levels, to improve co-ordination, to share knowledge, successes and failures, to encourage one another, and to promote joint and separate efforts to achieve the four CAADP priorities.

CAADP is not about launching a lot of new projects, although there will be some of those. It is more about communicating solutions from one part of the continent to the others, and addressing issues within and between countries that inhibit improvements in agricultural output, food security and incomes. These include, for example, tariff and other barriers to intra-African agricultural trade and the financial hurdles faced by farmers needing fertilizer and seed to improve productivity.

Fertile ground for improvement

Improving access to and the affordability of farm inputs, particularly fertilizer and seeds, is a key CAADP goal. The reason why can be quickly illustrated by considering the plight of farmers in countries like Zambia.

In Zambia, poverty and rural isolation, coupled with price rises and the withdrawal of government subsidies, mean that farmers can no longer afford to buy and transport the fertilizers that they used to use to grow higher-value crops like maize. In recent years, therefore, huge numbers of Zambian farmers have reverted to growing subsistence crops like cassava and millet, as these are well suited to Africa's poor soils.

But these crops don't provide a varied enough diet to ensure good levels of nutrition. And because they don't earn the farmers adequate incomes, there's no money to buy fruits and vegetables for better nutrition. As a result, the proportion of physically and mentally stunted children in Zambia has risen from 36 to 47 per cent since 1990.

How is CAADP better than past efforts?

It is legitimate to ask how CAADP is different from, and how it improves upon, countless past efforts to improve food security and economic growth in Africa. The difference is that CAADP was conceived and is led by Africans rather than being promoted, if not imposed, from outside Africa. No initiative in the past has enjoyed the level of political endorsement and continent-wide focus achieved by CAADP.

To quote the UK-based Institute of Development Studies: "CAADP does not tackle many new issues, but provides the first comprehensive effort to address them as an integrated process. This framework, with common objectives and targets, should enable lessons to be shared and successes to be scaled up more effectively than before." CAADP's co-ordinating role "will help to ensure coherence and co-ordinated action on important regional policies such as trade, food safety standards and the control of trans-boundary pests and diseases".

Contact CAADP

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