

**ASSURING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN AFRICA BY 2020:
Prioritizing Action, Strengthening Actors, and Facilitating Partnerships**
April 1–3, 2004, Kampala, Uganda

SUMMARY NOTE

Plenary Panel: **Why Has Africa Not Yet Achieved Food and Nutrition Security?**

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Food and Nutrition of a nation are products of the activities by Farmers. These activities be they food or nonfood crops, livestock, or fisheries, are influenced by the overall environment that exists in a country. The level of production influences the quality of life. However availability of food and or nutritious commodities do not have to be locally grown because they may be imported thus the ability to purchase is dependent on other income generation such as Industry or Trade.

African countries by and large have limited capacity to import goods because of shortage of foreign currency and overall dependence on agriculture. Agriculture becomes the major activity to supply food, livestock, and fish for local use and non-food crops for export.

There are influences that affect activities of farmers. Do the people have the drive to go beyond subsistence? Do they taking farming as a business because farming is a business and surplus production will enhance good health. How much time in the day can they allocate to productive activities? How much interference by forces outside their control? The demands by politicians and Councilors to attend meetings and be seen to give support.

Women are the majority of active farmers and yet have to tend to household chores including bearing children, fetching water, firewood, cook food, etc. There are only 24 hours in a day. They are often not the landowners.

Land — the quality and size of the land — plays a major role. There is general decline in soil fertility.

The FAO estimates 24 kilograms of key soil nutrients are lost per hectare per year in Africa. A study by the U.N. Environment Programme — The Global Assessment of the Status of Human Induced Soil Degradation, estimates 26 percent of dryland Africa suffers from various degrees of soil degradation. The accompanying deterioration of structure soil, reduced moisture retention capacity and soil nutrient depletion (nitrogen and phosphorous in particular). Resulting in stagnation or decline in crop production in many African countries.

Because of the small land sizes, the land use intensity with limited input of fertilizer and manure leads to nutrient depletion and reduced productivity.

Soils in Africa have low nutrient reserves compared to Asia. Fertilizer productivity expressed in maize yield response is estimated at 36 percent lower than in Asia and 92 percent lower than in developed countries.

Tillage methods are a possible reserve of soil deterioration; the usual shallow till with a hoe is not enough.

Irrigation — only 4.6 percent irrigated in Africa compared to 38.4 percent in Asia.

Research and Extension are declining — low budget support and politicization of the services.

There is need for holistic development and creation of a conducive environment. If the environment is not attractive, the young and able bodied migrate to the urban areas even though there are no jobs. The myth that every African is a farmer must be killed. Vibrant industry and trade are vital elements of successful agriculture. They support and absorb products for processing and marketing. Provide appropriate tools, equipment and machinery. Provide finance from banks and not wait for Government and donor handouts. We paternalistic to our people. Nations are not renowned for the poverty of their people but their richness. We know their problems and can solve them. What is their role? After all they need not only food but also clothes, leisure and entertainment — an environment that generates growth and provision of schools, quality education to facilitate adoption of results of research and ability to accept extension provision.

Governments while they tax the farmers do not allocate adequate funds even for Research and Extension. Modern biotechnology is not taken advantage of, let alone roads, communications and power. There is lip service to formation of organized farmer organizations and commodity associations. Too much time is spent on wars and money squandered on guns.

Large tracts of land is for grazing and yet very little research and extension on the best use — management of grazing areas to produce quality marketable livestock.

Conclusion

Let the governed influence the government. Land should have economic value and be marketable to enable activities to be business ventures. Create strong linkages with business and create associations that have value. Have a common vision. Generate a culture by farmers to produce for export, away from the farm. Listen to the farmers and give them valuable support in the means of production.

Adapt Biotechnology and enable Africa to leap frog to new advances.

Countries should grow their economies and create wealth. There can be no improved agricultural activity in a stagnating economy.

Eliminate violence and create an environment of peace and tolerance.

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