ASSURING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN AFRICA BY 2020:
Prioritizing Action, Strengthening Actors, and Facilitating Partnerships
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SUMMARY NOTE

Plenary Panel: **Improving Implementation: What Can Lessons from Successes and Failures Teach Us?**

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Numerous strategies, policies, and programs intended to assist Africa's development have been conceived and undertaken by international bodies, regional and subregional groups, and national institutions. On average each individual country in Africa was assisted by about 30 aid institutions in implementing those strategies. Still, Africa is far from achieving food and nutrition security for all of its people. This report focuses on the questions of whether those strategies and policies were suited to achieve food and nutrition security, how they were implemented, and why performance has been variable and often inadequate to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. What are the lessons for improving strategy formulation and implementation in the future to effectively and sustainably reduce hunger and malnutrition?

The report is based on a review of African development strategy and policy documents; research and literature on African development; evaluations of multilateral institutions, donors, and recipients; and the team members' own experience and association with the continent's development. This review sees strategy as a continuum that runs from identifying needs, priorities, and constraints, to formulating strategies and policies, to working out action plans, and finally to implementing them. Implementation, thus, is part of strategy.

Implementation presupposes a clearly formulated strategy, a conducive policy and institutional environment, a widely shared consensus about the strategy and its measures, the human capacity needed for implementation, and sufficient financial resources for actors to carry out the strategy. In more detail, strategy evaluation asks whether:

- key issues are clearly identified, properly analyzed, and seen in their political, economic, and sociocultural context;
- objectives are clearly defined, internally consistent, and formulated realistically, and whether possible conflicts between objectives are identified and trade-offs addressed;
- policies and programs to achieve objectives are appropriate, as well as congruent with and supportive of the strategy;
- the capacity to implement the strategies is backed up by sufficient financial means and the necessary human capacity, a proper institutional set-up, and adequate infrastructure;
- the time required for implementation is estimated realistically, taking into account possible needs for institution building, education, and training;
- stakeholders are part of the process, particularly whether different stakeholders are involved in identifying priorities, defining objectives, and implementing programs; and
- past experiences and lessons learned are taken into account.

The two decades after independence in the early 1960s were characterized by high hopes for rapid development, and much was achieved. The region has seen important successes and accumulated valuable experience in managing development. Starting from a low base, African countries have significantly raised life expectancy and expanded literacy and health care, despite a rapidly growing population. There has been enormous growth in the number of trained people, and major investments have been made in Africa's infrastructure: roads, ports, telecommunications, water management, and power. Countries born with arbitrary colonial borders have struggled to establish nation-states and put new governmental structures in place. Overall economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa averaged 3.4 percent per year between 1961 and 1980, a fraction faster than population growth.

By the end of the 1970s, the major social and economic indicators began to decline. The drop in agricultural production resulted in massive food imports, with a total food import bill increasing from US$1.9 billion in 1973 to US$6 billion in 1980 for all non-oil-producing African countries. The drop was even more severe for the low-income economies of Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, investment and savings rates were low, and Africa's foreign debt had skyrocketed, rising from US$5.4 billion in 1970 to US$41.3 billion in 1980. In industry and manufacturing, output declined. Adverse terms of trade, the oil crisis, and the slump of the world economy exacerbated the negative trends in the African economies. Domestic problems threatened the stability of state institutions and the mere existence of the states. There were widespread coups d'état, civil strife, and ethnic violence. Resource use and public administration became increasingly inefficient, with institutional capacity decaying, social conditions deteriorating, and environmental degradation progressing.

Early responses were the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Regional Food Plan for Africa (AFPLAN). The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) promoted structural adjustment programs for African countries in the 1980s and 1990s, followed by the Comprehensive Development Framework. The World Bank and IMF, together with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), took the lead in the poverty reduction strategy paper process that is linked with debt reduction in the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC). The European Union developed a Mediterranean Policy that included the North African states. There were a number of additional initiatives, some with a regional and some with a sector orientation, such as the World Bank's Africa Region Rural Strategy (ARRS), the Special Program for Food Security (SPFS) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labor Organization's Jobs for Africa Program (JFA), the Comité Permanent Inter Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS) program, the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), and others.

The early responses, such as the LPA and AFPLAN with the support of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), started from the premise that, given the limited size and capacity of the private sector, the state had to play the dominant role in development. Thus, governments, generally with full donor support, drew up comprehensive five-year plans, invested in large state-run basic industries and market structures, and enacted pervasive regulations to control prices, restrict trade, and allocate credit and foreign exchange. Publicly funded programs in support of agricultural research and extension, fertilizer supply, export production and marketing, and food distribution were essential components of the approach.

When by 1980 it became apparent that Africa's crisis was deepening, with weak agricultural growth, declining industrial output, poor export performance, climbing internal and external debt, and deteriorating social indicators, institutions, and environment, the World Bank and IMF argued that a fundamental shift in approach was needed to stabilize the economy, increase efficiency of investment, and reinvigorate growth. Their concept, structural adjustment programs (SAPs), implied a move away from state-dominated development to reliance on the private sector, with the state retreating to setting appropriate policies. In SAPs the emphasis is on macroeconomic policies to reduce inflation, to reestablish economic stability, and to control budget deficits, mainly by containing government deficits and public expenditures, privatizing public sector companies and services, dissolving parastatals, eliminating subsidies, and cutting public support for social services. SAPs regularly called for devaluation and trade liberalization to improve the balance of payments and to control a country's foreign indebtedness. Debt rescheduling and stricter debt management were usually part of the program. Food and nutrition security were addressed indirectly through improved economic stability and higher economic growth.

In response to criticism and concerns raised worldwide about SAPs' serious impact on health services, education, infrastructure, rural support institutions, and employment, all affecting the poor in particular, the World Bank and donor community shifted back to a more balanced approach between state and private sector functions in development. They maintained, however, the emphasis on efficiency in resource allocation. The Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) process emphasize the need to integrate cultural, social, political and environmental aspects into development strategies, and all should be directed toward reducing poverty and creating a framework for pro-poor growth. The process is intended to be country-led, based on partnership and participation of all stakeholders at national, regional, and local levels. The poverty emphasis implies that agriculture and rural development play a vitally important role in the CDF/PRSP concept.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) amalgamates African initiative and ownership with neoliberal concepts. NEPAD basically supports liberalization and globalization but emphasizes that the process needs to be fair and the playing field made more level. It calls on African governments to carry out domestic reforms in improving governance, eliminating corruption, allowing democratic structures and processes to build up, encouraging a free press, and enforcing an independent fair and reliable judicial system. Through the NEPAD policy framework the African leaders jointly accepted responsibility for eradicating poverty and placing their countries, both individually and collectively, on the path of sustainable development and growth. At the same time, they committed themselves to principles, values, priorities, and standards of governance that are internationally acceptable. Furthermore, they committed themselves to people-centered participatory development processes. The NEPAD strategy seeks an agriculture-led development that eliminates hunger and reduces poverty and food insecurity.

The SAPs and PRSPs have largely shaped regional approaches and country policies and their implementation in all of Africa. A significant number of countries have carried out successful programs of macroeconomic stabilization and structural reforms. Reforms and retrenchment of the public sector were carried out in numerous countries, although often at the cost of increasing unemployment, rising vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity, and declining public services, even in essential areas such as health, education, and research and extension. International trade has been liberalized in many countries, and parastatal marketing boards no longer enjoy market monopoly. A major issue in most countries remains the weakness of the private sector in taking up the role once performed by government marketing monopolies. A key problem for many African countries is the unevenness of the playing field in international trade, with the European Union, the United States, and Japan protecting their markets against imports from developing countries, including Africa.
Many countries have formulated poverty reduction policies, implying an increased emphasis on agricultural development. More progress is needed in key areas, however, such as reducing social and economic discrimination against women, particularly improving their access to land, credit, and input and output markets and fostering girls' education. Similarly, in areas such as employment creation, natural resource protection, and improved governance, some countries have initiated encouraging measures, but much more progress is needed. The most successful reformers have been countries without war or civil unrest, where the reform process was characterized by strong political leadership combined with a commitment to reforms under wide domestic participation and ownership.

This review makes clear that peace and security are a must for any progress in development. In countries that have been plagued by conflict and war, development has been pushed back by years, if not decades.

Political will and commitment to reforms within a framework of good governance, characterized by democratic structures and processes and the rule of law enforced through a reliable and independent judicial system, are key features of successful reform and development. Experience has also shown that reform processes are fostered by wide involvement and participation of people at all levels and across different organizations and social groups. Particularly in poverty reduction strategy processes, civil society and private sector groups representing the poor need to be made part of the consultation, decisionmaking, and implementation process. It should be emphasized that broad participation in formulating and implementing policies in recipient countries also requires adjustments in the aid modalities on the donor side. Donors' approval procedures, the conditions and processes of releasing funds, and their tendencies to micromanage aid programs discourage participation and counteract efforts to promote broadly based ownership.

Capacity building is a high priority. The still patchy and very recent experience with PRSP implementation demonstrates that capacity building requires more attention and more resources. Capacity and competence are required at all levels: in macroeconomic management, in budgeting processes and in linking them to long-term national strategies, and in financial accountability and monitoring; at the sector level in priority setting and policy formulation; and at the local and micro level in local administration and in project evaluation and management. Capacity building needs to include all levels of education; certainly primary education is important, but secondary and tertiary education have been neglected in many countries.

Agriculture needs to be returned to the top of the development agenda. The priority given to agriculture and water in NEPAD and the Maputo 2003 Declaration of the Heads of States of the African Union are encouraging in this respect. It is essential for the World Bank and bilateral donors to follow the lead of African states and support agricultural development. The World Bank's Africa Region Rural Strategy is showing the way in emphasizing agricultural innovation and productivity growth in agriculture, natural resource conservation, rural infrastructure, institution building, and health and education in rural areas. The emphasis on agriculture is relevant for and consistent with poverty reduction and food and nutrition security improvement. It is also essential to involve farmers in the innovation process through participatory technology development to ensure that innovations are suitable. This requires strengthened institutions and involvement of civil society and farmers' groups at the local level; building farmer organizations and coordinating civil society groups in support of innovative adoption processes remains a challenge for the future. Raising agricultural productivity needs to be closely linked with support programs for rural health, particularly for fighting HIV/AIDS, and with efforts to enhance the empowerment of women and to improve their access to education, land and water, production factors, and markets. Prioritizing agriculture cannot be done without additional resources. Countries must act on the Maputo Declaration's target of allocating 10% of the budget to agriculture.

Governments and donors face a joint challenge to be more coherent in their approaches to the various strategies and requirements promoted by the international community. For example, monitoring poverty reduction within the PRSP process is important, but care needs to be taken not to overburden a country's capacity and institutions. Too often, donors have instituted their own reporting and monitoring requirements that serve their internal institutional needs more than the needs of the recipient country. Donors need to agree on a coordinated and unified monitoring and evaluation system that, in the first place, serves to improve policy implementation in recipient countries.

There is a need to devote adequate attention to micro-level activities. While the project approach dominated the development scene in Africa up to the 1980s, its limitations in a nonconducive policy environment became increasingly obvious. Deficiency in project environments led to a 180-degree shift toward policy lending, leaving the private sector to pick up the micro-level activities. Correcting the policy environment and strengthening the institutional framework was necessary and remains a high priority, but development takes place only if investments, innovations, and actions are carried out on farms, in households, and in villages. This means that the development approach must again recognize the value of the project concept.

Many African countries have made substantial progress toward liberalizing trade, and their call to the United States, European Union, and Japan to level the playing field and reduce protection of their agricultural and other sectors is more than justified. Still, the international pressure to further open up African markets continues. North African countries joined the European-Mediterranean Free Trade Zone; this provides valuable lessons for a model of development among unequal partners. The North African countries' experience after seven years shows that opening up to international trade exposes agricultural producers and processors of poor countries to stiff international competition, pushing many of them to the lower-quality and less-remunerative segments of markets. Other studies come to similar conclusions. They find that the rural sector of the less-developed countries, if exposed rapidly and unprepared to international competition, is likely to decline. Local rural producers under existing technological institutional and infrastructural conditions will be pushed out of their own markets, and, lacking other opportunities, they will likely suffer unemployment and contribute to rural-urban migration, and food and nutrition security will suffer. The lesson is that opening up poor African countries' markets to international trade and advanced countries' competition requires a carefully synchronized policy of raising producers' competitiveness, improving rural infrastructure, and strengthening rural and trade-promoting institutions. Increasing exposure to world market competition and building up local producers' competitiveness need to go hand in hand.

Finally, the design of good policies and their implementation**,** as emphasized repeatedly in this review, is, of course, a matter of clear, relevant, and consistent policy objectives, of financial resource availability, and of human and institutional capacity. Yet there are often risks to a country's political and social stability. The speed of reforms and the implementation of policies and programs need to be adapted to a country's political and social absorptive capacity.

Note: This note is based on the Executive Summary of the 2020 Africa Conference background paper on "Food and Nutrition Security in Africa: From Strategies to Implementation," by Franz Heidhues, Achi Atsain, Gerald Ghersi, Hezron Nyangito, Martine Padilla, and Jean-Charles LeVallée. The views expressed in this summary note are those of the authosr and are not necessarily endorsed by or representative of IFPRI or of the cosponsoring or supporting organizations.