

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

SUMMARY NOTE

Parallel Session: **Implementing Action in Key Areas: Strengthening Governance**
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For those colleagues who are unfamiliar with our federation, IFAP is a world farmers' organization. It has in membership 100 national organizations of family farmers from 70 countries, and represents over 500 million farmers. For the farmers that we represent, there is no doubt that "strengthening governance" is an important area for action if nutrition and food security is to be achieved in Africa by 2020.

It seems to us that most discussions on 'good governance' seem to focus on either "public administration" or "corporate responsibility". Such governance issues are obviously critically important for farmers. Farmers cannot make their full contribution to achieving nutrition and food security in a context of government corruption and economic mismanagement, or in a context of unchecked corporate domination of the agri-food chain. However, there is another governance issue that is essential to farmers, and which deserves more attention. This is "local ownership of development programs".

Local ownership of the development process requires cooperation on policymaking among governments, the private sector and civil society organizations like farmers' organizations, within a particular country. It is achieved through institutionalized consultative processes. Such consultative processes help to ensure that development programs reflect national priorities, rather than the priorities of the donors or personal interests. Consultative processes also provide a sound basis for combining the energies of all actors, and hence achieving a sustainable path for development.

Experience shows that in the countries where nutrition and food security has been achieved there are strong farmers' organizations working as a partner with government, mobilizing the energies of thousands of farmers in rural communities.

"Bad governance" is often used as a reason by industrialized countries for not investing adequate resources in agriculture in Africa. Yet Africa cannot generate enough wealth and savings to escape from poverty and hunger by itself. So what good governance guarantees can Africa give to investors and donors?

When African leaders agreed to NEPAD¹ in Genoa in 2001, they committed their governments to consolidate democracy, to follow sound economic management practices, and to promote peace,

¹ NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development).

security and people-centered development. The will to do better seems to be there, but the means that are lacking.

IFAP hopes that this conference will support the concept of ‘people-centered development’ and ‘local ownership’, and make the strengthening of civil society organizations, and involving them as partners in development efforts, a cornerstone of implementing actions for better governance for achieving nutrition and food security in Africa. Unless development efforts are focused on people and their organizations, the poor will remain politically powerless and economically disadvantaged.

Farmers’ organizations in Africa should be strengthened so that they are capable of doing analysis of agricultural policy issues, of drawing up position papers to input into the development of government strategies, capable of relaying farmers’ interests in all debates and programs, and capable of strengthening the position of farmers in the market.

Farmers’ organizations can be valuable partners to governments in reaching down to their grass-root farmer members in the villages to make sure that their needs are taken into account in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs. Farmers’ organizations can also be a force for peace and stability in a world of globalization and increased competition. The pure market system is meant to exclude the weak and inefficient; that is how it functions. Only the best survive. There is, however, a high social cost to this system, especially in Africa where 60 percent of the population is young people, and a huge number of them are unemployed. Group structures, like farmers’ associations and farmer cooperatives, can be a force for social cohesion and empowerment and so contribute to political stability. In regions of conflict, dialogue is often easier among farmers’ organizations than among governments. Within IFAP, we have held very constructive meetings between Turkish and Greek Cypriot farmers in the UN buffer zone in Cyprus, and meetings among farmers in the Middle East. Such civil society cooperation helps to increase understanding of each other’s situation and builds bridges for cooperation. Political leaders should support, not prevent, such contacts.

“Better governance” also applies to donors and international organizations. Donors need to better coordinate their actions on the ground. It is a drain on the scarce resources of African governments to be swamped by numerous reporting procedures and receive numerous visits of numerous development agencies. However, good governance requires more than donor coordination. It requires donor coordination around programs developed by African leaders themselves. It is not helpful when donors come in with their own programs and interfere with the efforts of local people. That is “bad governance”. For example, donors and international institutions have often come to Africa with proposals for “market and trade reform”. In a continent of 600 million people, of which 450 million are subsistence farmers who are not in the market economy, who work with hand tools, who have no money to buy fertilizer and who have no roads, advice on market reform is not the first sort of help they are looking for.

In conclusion, better governance is a necessary condition for achieving nutrition and food security goals in Africa, but this must include setting up effective consultative processes that combine the strengths of governments, private sector and civil society organizations, with clear rights and responsibilities for each partner.

Note: This note has not been edited. The views expressed in this summary note are those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by or representative of IFPRI or of the cosponsoring or supporting organizations.