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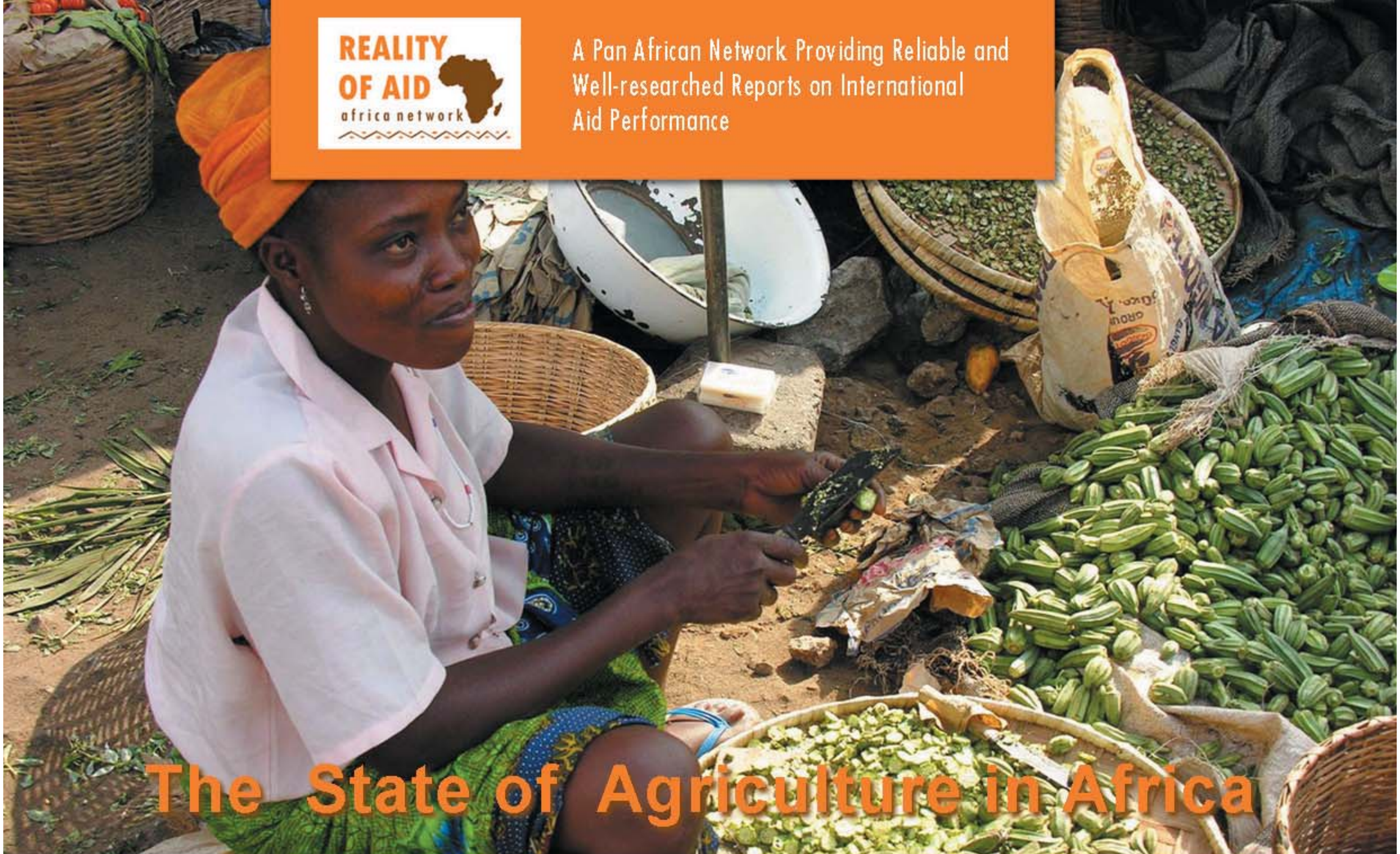

The State of Agriculture in Africa

RealityCheck

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Issue prepared by
Reality of Aid Africa

RealityCheck

contents

about this issue

This edition of reality check provides an insight into the status of agriculture and food security in Africa. It highlights the challenges facing agricultural growth in Africa particularly in respect to ensuring food security, and analyses the existing efforts and opportunities for African governments to address the twin challenges of ensuring agricultural growth and food security. It further assesses the impact of efforts by global funds and private investors in responding to the twin challenges, thus identifying the existing gaps in these approaches.

It concludes by observing that it is imperative to address poverty in Africa to ensure sustainable agricultural growth and reduce hunger. African governments must work concertedly with development partners to address the causes of poverty and hunger, and support vulnerable populations against shocks. Agricultural polices and investments must go hand in hand with addressing issues of household incomes and vulnerabilities, as well as understanding the nature of appropriate technologies necessary to sustain the majority small scale producers of agriculture.

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The Reality of Aid Africa Network

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ACRONYMS

AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
G8	Group of 8 Industrialised Countries.
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance.

INTRODUCTION

Africa's economies are driven by agriculture which contributes an average of 30 - 40% to most African economies, accounting for 17% of the continent's total GDP and at least 40% of the continent's foreign exchange earnings. The contribution to foreign earnings is nearly 80% for some countries such as Malawi (ACP:2010). The continent accounts for 89% of the rural population in agriculture-based countries, and until recently, the growth in agriculture in Sub-Sahara Africa has exceeded growth in non-agricultural sectors. Although urbanization is rapidly increasing across the continent, agriculture still provides livelihoods for about 60% of the continent's active labour force and 70% of the people of Sub-Sahara Africa depend on agriculture for their livelihoods and food security. (CAADP:2005)

Hunger is a constant phenomenon in Africa. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) reports that the total number of hungry people in the world was 925 million in 2010, with 239 million of these in Sub Sahara Africa (FAO; 2010).This number has increased since 1995-1997, although the figure is down from 2009 when those reported hungry were just over a billion, standing at 1 million compared to 920 million in 2008. FAO further reports that the world produces enough food to feed everyone. However, persistent hunger and food insecurity remains a key development policy concern, particularly in Africa.

This paper provides a reality check of the status of agriculture and food security in Africa. It highlights the challenges facing agricultural growth in Africa particularly in respect to ensuring food security and analyses the existing efforts and opportunities for African governments to address the twin challenges of ensuring agricultural growth and food security. It further assesses the impact of efforts by global funds and private investors in responding to the twin challenges, thus identifying the existing gaps in these approaches. The paper concludes with a set of recommendations and proposals.

CHALLENGES FACING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA

Some 70% of Sub Sahara Africa depends on agriculture for their food and livelihood, primarily raising staple food crops and a few livestock on small farms. Yet, many farmers produce barely enough food to feed their families and are unable to generate an income to buy the inputs that can enhance crop yield. Globally, food production has lagged and the number of undernourished people increased from 173 million in 1990-92 to 200 million in 1997-99. Of that total, 194 million were in Sub-Sahara Africa (IFPRI;2010). This growth in hunger is witnessed despite high levels of food imports.

Humanitarian aid agencies report that in 2010 the Sahel region covering Chad, Guinea, Senegal, Mali, Niger and Mauritania faced a large scale famine requiring massive humanitarian food aid. Over 10 million people faced hunger due to widespread drought and famine. Of these, half of the population of Niger currently faces starvation and food insecurity, while 2 million are affected in Chad (The Guardian; 2010). The situation has been likened to that of Ethiopia in 1984 where a devastating famine wiped out a million people. In January 2009, the government of Kenya declared food crisis a national disaster, launching an international appeal for food aid.

East African countries are getting ready for a looming famine in 2011. Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, the region's largest countries are dealing with the twin challenges of maximizing production and distribution of food. A recent regional summit held in Arusha on 1-2 December, 2010 saw a united front against hunger bringing together government and private sector actors that deal with agriculture and climate change. This happened against the background of a bumper harvest reported in several East African countries. In 2009, food production in Tanzania increased to 11.5 million metric tons, an additional 600 000 tons from 10.9 million in 2008 (www.Africanagriculture.com: 2010). This was in line with other Southern African countries which predicted that food security had improved in 2009 compared to 2008, due to favorable weather. However, this is unlikely to improve longer term food security in the region due to weak infrastructure, failed rainy seasons, low productivity, and high prices of food commodities.

A multiple set of factors hinder agricultural productivity in Africa and heighten food insecurity. These include the recent financial neglect of the agricultural sector by the international development community; inadequate government public financing for agriculture; poverty, conflict, environmental and climatic conditions and weak markets.

At the height of the food crisis in 2008 the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held a meeting which agreed short-term priorities, including immediate actions by donors and governments to allow farmers to meet food production demands. The meeting also identified medium and long-term measures to tackle the food crisis, including the re-examination of the amount of Official Development Assistance, ODA, dedicated to agriculture. The Global Food Crisis of 2008 was blamed on multiple effects including lack of investment in agriculture over the past years. The key messages emerging from the heightened dialogue on the status of global food security was that neglect by governments and international agencies, of agriculture relevant to poor people, had led to the growing hunger and food crisis of 2008. (FAO; 2010). Donor aid levels had declined overtime, with donor priorities shifting globally from primary agriculture towards other sectors. It was further noted that agriculture was starved of investments, with many countries in Africa providing an average 4% public funding for agricultural development (World Bank: 2008). Furthermore, the existing agricultural budgets were high on recurrent expenditure, starving the sector of development financing. Donors, governments and investors alike thus agreed on the urgent need to work concertedly to revamp agricultural productivity as one of the major ways of forestalling high food prices and hunger.

Alongside the neglect by the global community of agricultural investment is the fact that privatization and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) adopted in a number of African countries in the 80s and 90s led to the hasty withdrawal of the state from direct production. What remained were poor government agricultural policies which provide only weak economic incentives to rural producers. In most African countries today, farmers lack access to credit, face high prices for agricultural farm inputs and weak institutional linkages. The World Development Report 2008, calls for greater investment in agriculture in developing countries noting that public investment in agriculture in Sub Sahara Africa currently stands at half that in other regions and less than half the CAADP target of 10%. The report observes that in Southern Africa, a region heavily dependent on agriculture for overall growth, public spending for farming was only 4% of total government spending. Even then, the sector is still heavily taxed, as in most other African countries. Lack of state public financing for agricultural production has rendered agricultural production costs high in Africa. In most countries, import price is below the domestic cost of production of food.

Agriculture experts argue that the issue of food security in Africa is broader than production. Poverty is the major cause of hunger in Africa (FAO; 2010). Some 50.9% out of the total of 763 million people in Sub Sahara Africa live below $1.25 a day. That is equivalent to 388 million people (World Bank; 2010). Aid agencies responding to the famine in the Sahel observe that in the midst of the famine, there is food in the markets, but people have lost the purchasing power due to loss of livestock, as well as rising costs of the available food (Guardian; 2010). This is therefore a case, not of lack of availability, but of lack of affordability. 60% of farmers in Africa are net buyers of food (Rockefeller; 2010). They rapidly sell the harvested produce at low prices as households seek to pay school fees, purchase inputs and prepare land for planting. They then later buy food to feed their families.

Conflict is a major cause of low agricultural productivity, hunger and food insecurity in Africa. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Eritrea have the greatest levels of hunger in the world in 2010. More than 50% of people in Burundi, DRC and Eritrea are malnourished. In 2010, DRC experienced the greatest deterioration in hunger, largely because of conflict and political instability. The country also registered the highest proportion of undernourished people, nearly three quarters of the population (IFPRI;2010). Coupled with conflict is the high numbers of refugees in the continent and internally displaced persons.

Weak, marginal or non-existent markets are a huge hindrance to agricultural productivity in many African countries (CAADP 2003). These market challenges are largely due to high energy prices (FAO;2010), low global prices for staple food crops; limited economies of scale; lack of or inadequate market information; poor infrastructure including roads, storage facilities, production facilities, education and health facilities and poor telecommunications and disintegrated marketing structures (CAADP;2010).

Environmental and climatic conditions are a major factor in determining the level of agricultural output. 96% of agricultural production in Africa is rain fed (World Bank :2008), yet most African countries are witnessing droughts and famine and subsequent decline in soil fertility. It is estimated that 23 million risk hunger in Eastern Africa alone in 2010 because of reduction in rainfall in recent years. Previously the rainy season recorded 200mm between March and May, and this has recently reduced to 40mm, a significant 80% average reduction (theyworkforyou). The perennial drought in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa also attests to this phenomenon.

Efforts by African Governments to Address Food Security

The highest policy-level framework and financing mechanism for the development of agriculture in Africa is the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) developed by the New Economic Partnership Agreement (NEPAD) in July 2003. CAADP's goal is to help Africans reach a higher path of economic growth through agriculture-led development. It is noted that CAADP has the potential of eliminating hunger, reducing poverty, improving food security and enabling expansion of exports. CAADP aims to increase agricultural growth by 6% per year in all African countries in order to create wealth needed for rural communities and households to prosper.

In 2010, CAADP acknowledged that African agriculture is in crisis and the situation demands a crisis response. However, agriculture and policy experts decry the lack of political support for the CAADP. By 2005, only six countries had achieved the target of at least 10% financing for agriculture: Niger (10%) Ethiopia 16.8 % Burkina Faso (13.7 %) Chad (12%) Mali (11%) and Malawi (11%). The average allocation for 24 countries was 6.6 %. The countries that have exceeded the CAADP target of 6% agricultural growth by 2015 are Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Chad, Guinea and Congo-DRC. To date, only Togo, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Malawi have accessed CAADP funds to implement its core strategic investment pillars.

As a continental policy framework for addressing food security and agricultural productivity, the pace of ownership and implementation of CAADP by African governments is slow. To date, 18 countries have signed country level compacts on the implementation of CAADP, thus drawing up programmes and activities and aligning resources to the implementation of the framework. Several others are at different stages of progress towards signing compacts. It is notable, however, that Africa's large economies including Egypt, South Africa, Angola, Libya, Tunisia and Botswana have not yet launched the framework nationally. This raises concerns about the level of commitment of these countries to the objectives of the framework. Indeed it is noteworthy that these are countries the largest economies in both the northern and southern African region. This is telling on why so far only west Africa under the

Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) has a regional compact in place, which provides a guiding framework for attaining sustainable food security and enhanced regional integration. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) regional compact is in draft form and member countries have been urged to sign up and to align their agricultural programmes to CAADP.

One of CAADP's key objectives is the commitment to increased food supply, reducing hunger and improving response to food emergency. This is a significant policy focus, going by the existing trends in food insecurity in the continent. This objective is prominently encapsulated in the CAADP Framework for Food Security in Africa (CFAF). The continental vision within this framework is that by 2015, Africa should attain food security by 2015. The framework provides the strategic direction to guide country developments and partnerships by directing resources for food supply, reducing hunger and improving responses to food emergency crises. The twin focus of the food security framework is increasing agricultural productivity by linking vulnerable people to opportunities for agricultural growth. The second is reducing vulnerability of poor households to economic and climate shocks such as erosion of assets, deepening poverty, and repeated shocks.

The strategic focus of the framework aptly responds to the causes and nature of hunger and food insecurity in Africa. By targeting household and community level vulnerabilities and lack of opportunities for agricultural productivity, the CAADP food security framework makes an accurate assessment of and proposes appropriate interventions for tackling food insecurity in Africa. There is notable disconnect, though, between the proposed strategies and alignment of resources to date towards the implementation of the CAADP. A synopsis of the CAADP areas of investments under the Multi-donor Trust Fund (MDTF) launched in 2008 with an initial commitment of US$ 50 million reveals a mixed bag of priorities and disaggregated pieces of intervention. These range from support to pastoral livelihoods in the Horn of Africa; technical studies, policy dialogue and capacity-building on food security and risk management in East and Southern Africa; and commercialization of cassava in Southern Africa, as well as homegrown school feeding programmes. Funders that have committed variously to these projects are USAID (US$ 19.8 million), the European Union (Eur 10 million); World Bank and DFID-UK ($ 3.8 million); and SIDA-WFP ($25 million).

The scale and frequency of hunger and hunger-related deaths in Africa demands a robust continental Marshall Plan response that rallies communities and governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and systems to address the structural inequities in the market and political systems. Piecemeal interventions within specific sub-regions, policy roundtables, technical studies, capacity-building programmes and endless research and evidence gathering such as are the nature of the on-going CAADP investments are a mockery to the gross suffering of people, and are a strain on African governments to tackle hunger in the continent. CAADP has marshaled resources, albeit not enough and these resources must be put to good use. Isolated regional, even country specific interventions will not deliver the desired agricultural revolution to safeguard the continent against hunger.

Such a continental framework as CAADP ought to be embedded within state and intergovernmental systems, not spearheaded by stand-alone private research and academic institutions, as are the CAADP financing mechanisms which are overseen by the programme pillars. The crisis in Africa calls for concerted action by the millions of small scale farmers and farmers' groups and all relevant agricultural institutions, working towards a common goal, and with equitable share of distributed resources and responsibilities, with communities as the driving force behind the interventions. The CAADP investment programmes have failed to realize this common agenda and remain obscure, largely known and owned by a few governments, donors, the African Union and the NEPAD, as well as the lead agencies of the various CAADP programme pillars which include academic and other private institutions.

Although a sound framework to address linkages between poverty, hunger and malnutrition, the CAADP remains largely on paper and off course. Launched seven years ago and with massive resources already committed, CAADP has not demonstrated efforts to provide safety nets for the millions of poor dying from hunger and poverty in Africa everyday. It has failed to trigger state-led provision of access to agricultural inputs such as credits, training, extension services, fertilizer and seeds, and markets, all necessary to cushion farmers' efforts to produce food and earn incomes. The needs of the small-scale farmers remain grossly unmet under CAADP. Nor does the programme demonstrate a continentally driven emergency response programme to the escalation of hunger as is implicit in its Food Security plan.

Alongside the CAADP is the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security signed by African Heads of State and Government in July 2003. Among these commitments was the target allocation of 10% of budgetary resources to agriculture and rural development policy implementation within five years. While the budgetary commitments to agriculture remain small for most African countries, national agricultural investment policies remain committed to ensuring sustainable food production, promotion of export-led agriculture, promoting research in agriculture and building trade and marketing. The areas of real investment, however, tend to favour large scale and commercial production, neglecting small scale producers that form the bulk of the sector. In Ethiopia, where 13 million people currently require food aid, the government is offering 3 million hectares of most fertile land for the production of food for export. Most of these small scale producers remain unskilled women, without technical knowledge in using the mechanized forms of agricultural input and other new technologies. The bulk of the small-holders also lack access to credit and financial inputs. Only a few countries such as Ghana, have managed to improve food security through investment in agricultural subsidies and promoting access to financing for small scale farmers.

One of the greatest causes of food insecurity and failed agricultural production in Africa is floods and droughts, yet efforts at improving land and water management through water harvesting and irrigation remain minimal due to low investments. Only 7% of Africa's arable land is irrigated (IFPRI: 2010). A few governments have made efforts to scale up support for public programmes to improve agro-forestry systems as in Zambia, and large scale irrigation as in Nigeria and Mali, as well as for effective water management in rain-fed systems. However, these efforts are not happening across the board and require a scale up.

The focus of much of the new vaunted investment in agriculture is on private sector and small and medium sized enterprises, robbing the vast majority of farmers without financial support (Reuters: 2010). This also seems to be the approach supported by the CAADP and the private investment funds operating in Africa, yet African governments have not stepped up to fill in the gap for the majority of the vulnerable small scale farmers such as livestock keepers who lack financing for livestock trade, livestock insurance, cooperatives and research on diseases. The majority of farmers in Africa grow staple food crops such as maize, tubers and oil crops yet face underdeveloped markets and cannot afford post harvest storage.

Efforts by Global Funds and Private Funds to Address Agriculture and Food Security

The dramatic rise in food prices in 2008 spurred new thinking on how to address the declining agricultural productivity in Africa and meet the food security needs of the continent's growing population. Amidst loud calls for African governments and the international community to increase financial investments into agriculture, a number of non-traditional global funding agencies have thrown their funds and efforts into agricultural research and technology in Africa, in a bid to spur an agricultural revolution in the continent.

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) was launched in 2006 with an initial budget of a US $ 150 million grant and has adopted a technology approach to agricultural development in Africa. It seeks to strengthen food security and help millions of small scale farmers and their families get out of poverty and hunger through sustainable growth in farm productivity and incomes. AGRA notes that food production in Africa could be doubled in the next decade with improved use of new technology such as seeds and increased access to inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. Its areas of focus are improving access to more resilient seeds that produce higher and more stable yields; promoting soil health and productivity; building more efficient local, national and regional agricultural markets; promoting improved policies and building partnerships to develop technology and institutional changes needed to achieve a green revolution.

AGRA together with its partners are committing US$ 42 million to a programme that seeks to connect small-holder farmers in Africa to local, regional and international markets. The partners are the

Rockefeller Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Swedish Government and the Danish Governments. The programme's activities support value addition by promoting grades and standards, facilitating development of low-cost small and medium scale processing facilities for drying, sorting and packaging. It also supports increased demand for commodities by developing markets for alternative uses such as for animal feed. The programme also seeks to improve access to credit and addressing inappropriate policies that create major challenges for a variety of stakeholders across staple food commodity value chains in Africa.

According to AGRA, Africa's regional market for food staple is valued at $150 billion and demand is expected to double by 2020. Thus, through its market programme, AGRA is currently overseeing $14 million in investments through 17 projects in six African countries, expected to directly benefit over half a million farmers. The programme initially targets 4.9 million farmers living across 13 countries and improving the market infrastructure for Africa's core food staples such as cassava, maize, millet, sorghum, grains, and legumes. However, these interventions are critically too little to make a meaningful impact. Indeed the foundation has been criticized for its preference for small grants which benefit multinational agribusinesses which do not take into account the local needs in Africa (Global Justice; 2010).

While AGRA blames poor pricing of commodities, insufficient infrastructure such as roads, poor storage facilities and weak markets for Africa's continued dependence on food aid, the foundation's improved technology approach has alienated small-scale and large scale farmers in Africa. In Kenya for example, a group of 86 women have been trained in production and post harvest handling skills linked to the World Food Programmes's Purchase for Progress initiative to which they have sold US$400 000 worth of maize. It is expected that such partnerships provide smallholder farmers secure markets for their grains and encourage them to adopt productivity and innovative technology to produce higher incomes. This has, however, created a divide between poor farmers without the means to secure even the most basic inputs and access for subsistence production with those who can afford. The cost of improved technology is also exorbitant to the majority of these farmers. The interventions are also far too small in scale to ensure a community's ability to secure food. Revolutionary technology must redistribute wealth, incomes and assets across the board to reduce hunger.

Recommendations

It is imperative that both the international community and African governments remain committed to financing agriculture. Donor aid commitments must be honoured to scale up agricultural investment at country and sub-regional levels as committed to in such frameworks as the CAADP as well as bilaterally with Africa governments.

For their part, African governments ought to increase their national budgetary allocations to agriculture to support large scale investment in infrastructure, improvement of markets, research, training and extension services, as well as in safeguarding vulnerable livelihoods through emergency programmes. While private funds are increasingly investing in agriculture in the continent, their reach and scale are too low to bring about meaningful impact. African governments must increase public investment for small scale production of agriculture to improve agricultural growth, poverty reduction and food security objectives. Public investments must be increased for research into crop and livestock research, investment into post harvest storage, access to improved seeds, access to affordable farm inputs, and extension and other farm support services. State investments in these and other areas would stimulate private sector investments through innovative technologies such as fertilizers, seeds, machinery and trade.

Agricultural financing must strike a balance between food staples, traditional bulk exports and higher value products such as horticulture and livestock production. Financing efforts must aim to secure the livelihood and food security of subsistence farmers, the majority of whom have limited access to resources and market opportunities. Currently, staple foods dominate production in Africa and are set to continue in the near future. Farmers need improved productivity in subsistence agriculture to allow them secure food consumption and health. This requires investment in yield stabilizing technologies such as pest-resistant varieties, water conservation to reduce better access to smallholder livestock and off-farm employment. In addition, increased investment in agricultural research and extension systems, access to financial services and better mechanisms for risk management, as well as support for women farmers would accelerate the adoption of new technologies. Such interventions would spur a smallholder-based productivity revolution.

More than half of the world's conflicts in 1999 were in Africa, although this number has reduced significantly. However, the negative impact of these and other existing conflicts on economic growth still linger. For sustained agricultural growth to take place in Africa, conflicts must be reduced in the continent.

Building markets and value chains is crucial in order to improve agricultural productivity and food availability and affordability. Regional markets offer excellent prospects of growth and trade in agriculture. For African agriculture to grow and meet the growing demands of food there must be increased investment in the expansion of regional markets rather than country-specific markets. This implies heavy financial investment in roads, communication, linking farmers to towns and investment in institutional regulation, market information, risk management and organization of producers. The CAADP framework should ensure this linking across the region.

Ultimately, it is imperative to address poverty in Africa to ensure sustainable agricultural growth and reduce hunger. African governments must work concertedly with development partners to address the causes of poverty and hunger and support vulnerable populations against shocks. Agricultural policies and investments must go hand in hand with addressing issues of household incomes and vulnerabilities, as well as understanding the nature of appropriate technologies necessary to sustain the majority small scale producers of agriculture.

The ultimate responsibility of increasing agricultural production and ensuring food security in Africa rests with African governments. While global funders and donor agencies will continue to play their respective roles, African governments must define the investment priorities to channel investments appropriately, as well as increase their own ownership of the agricultural sector through adequate budget financing.

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Reality Check

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The Reality Check is the official newsletter of the Reality of Aid. It is designed to highlight current issues in aid regime written from a regional perspective but with global significance, edited in rotation by the leading networks in the following regions:

The Reality of Aid Project exists to promote national and international policies that will contribute to a new and effective strategy for poverty eradication, built on solidarity and equity.

Established in 1993, The Reality of Aid is a collaborative, not-for-profit initiative, involving non-governmental organisations from North and South.

The Reality of Aid publishes regular and reliable reports on international development cooperation and the extent to which governments in the North and South, address the extreme inequalities of income and the structural, social and political injustices that entrench people in poverty.

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