



REPORT ON THE 7TH AFRICAN GREEN REVOLUTION FORUM (AGRF) 2017

Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

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Prepared by:

Amanda Namayi,
Regional Coordinator, East Africa,
GLOBAL COORDINATION UNIT

ABSTRACT

The African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) was established in 2010, following a three-year series of African Green Revolution Conferences (AGRC) held in Oslo, Norway from 2006–2008. It has emerged as Africa’s leading “platform of agriculture platforms” that brings together a range of critical stakeholders in the African agriculture landscape including African heads of state, ministers, farmers, private agribusiness firms, financial institutions, NGOs, civil society, scientists, as well as international.

The fora aimed at intensifying the spotlight on agriculture as the key driver of African economies and establish what it will take to ensure agriculture and agribusinesses are driving inclusive and sustainable rural development.

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INTRODUCTION

The Seventh African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 4 to 8 September, 2017 as a premier platform for global and African leaders to develop actionable plans to move African agriculture forward. The forum was hosted by H.E. President Alassane Ouattara, a continental champion of inclusive agricultural transformation, and his team of senior government officials, including Vice President Daniel Kablan Duncan, Prime Minister Amadou Gon Coulibaly, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mamadou Sangafowa Coulibaly, and several other key cabinet members. The other co-hosts were the African Development Bank, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), and the 15 members of the AGRF Partners Group. Additional resource and technical partnership was provided to the forum by another 10 partners who supported the cost of the forum and its sessions and content.

The Forum was attended by as many as 1300 delegates and high level dignitaries, including H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, H.E. Komi Selom Klassou, Prime Minister of Togo and Representative of H.E. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, President of Togo, H.E. John Kufuor, Former President of Ghana, H.E. President Olusegun Obasanjo, Former President of Nigeria, and H.E. Jakaya Kikwete, Former President of Tanzania. Other dignitaries included the President of ECOWAS, the African Union Commissioner for the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, eight ministers of agriculture and finance, business leaders, financial institutions, private agribusiness firms, farmers, NGOs, civil society, media, scientists, development partners, technical partners, and the next generation of African agripreneurs and leaders.

Source: The Abidjan Communiqué

OVERVIEW

The theme of this year's forum was Accelerating the Path to Prosperity: Growing Inclusive Economies and Jobs through Agriculture. This served as the guiding framework for a total of 52 sessions and more than 300 speakers around related topics, particularly youth employment, women in agribusiness, strengthening access to inputs, market access, financial inclusion, the enabling policy environment, and other critical barriers to value chain development and unlocking private sector investment.

The forum was closely aligned with and built heavily upon key global and continental gatherings earlier in the year, including the African Development Bank Annual Meeting, the African Union Summit, the CAADP Partnership Platform Meeting, and the G20 and G7 Summits that have all focused heavily on the creation of jobs for the youth and driving rural development and prosperity through agriculture.

The 2017 African Agriculture Status Report (AASR), entitled The Business of Smallholder Agriculture, once again served to provide a technical foundation and set of key findings and recommendations for the forum. The report acknowledged the importance of governments working with the free market to drive Africa's economic growth from food production. It emphasized the need to substitute imports with high value food made in Africa for a market forecast to be worth more than US\$1 trillion a year by 2030.

The AGRF 2017 looked at how governments, businesses, and other partners are delivering on the political, policy and financial commitments worth over US\$30 billion made at the AGRF 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya and the impact this is having on the lives and incomes of farmers and agribusinesses.

The AGRF 2017 benefitted from a series of six thematic working groups driven by the AGRF Partners throughout the year. These considered

- i) Youth,
- ii) Women,
- iii) Inputs,
- iv) Markets,

- v) Mechanization,
- vi) Finance.

Results of the year-long engagement included the launch of a toolkit on blended finance released at the forum, strengthened stakeholder communities for the youth and women working groups.

Source: The Abidjan Communique

The Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network (CSAYN) was represented by Mr. Ntiokam Divine, who is the Founder and Ms. Amanda Namayi from the Global Coordination Unit.

The forum was insightful and provided opportunities for the CSAYN duo to build useful networks and learn on the best practices and innovations in agriculture.

This report presents the summary of the forum events, lesson learnt/key lessons for CSAYN, network established/affirmed and proposed way forward.

EVENTS ATTENDED AND KEY LESSONS LEARNT

a.) Pre-Forum Event on Youth Agripreneurs

Session 1. *Agri-preneurship, Enterprise Development and Access to Finance.*

Session 2. *Agri-preneurship, Enterprise Development and Access to Finance and Youth Leveraging Agricultural Research, Technology and Innovation to Grow Agribusiness.*

Key Lessons

- a) Youth constitute majority population in Africa, majority do not have stable economic opportunities and are two-three times more likely to be unemployed than adults.
- b) There is low level of engagement of youth in agriculture across Africa.
- c) Agriculture is a potential source for youth employment as most live in rural areas, demand for food is increasing, demand for labour in agriculture is increasing,
- d) **Key challenge** to youth in Agribusiness is lack of access to finance
- e) **Solution to the challenge** is adopting alternative collateral/security and making credit easily accessible to the youth.

Other solutions to encourage youth engagement in agriculture are;

- i) Capacity building through proper trainings, mentorship programs
- ii) Transforming agriculture into a money making venture, to be attractive to the youths.
- iii) Encourage the youth to view agriculture as a profession and not a vocational job.
- iv) Modernization/Mechanization of agriculture

b.) Pre-Event: 2017 Africa Agriculture Status Report Launch and Plenary Discussion

The Business of Smallholder in sub-Saharan Agriculture

Key Lessons

- 1) African food systems are undergoing a period of dynamic change therefore creating growth opportunities but whose full exploitation requires agricultural transformation
- 2) The agricultural transformation needed in Africa has to be more focused and market driven and encompassing entire food system not just agricultural production.
- 3) The report emphasizes on inclusive transformation based on promoting the growth of smallholder farmers and small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in agriculture food system.
- 4) Agricultural assistance **including access to credit** aimed at commercializing more small farms need to be targeted to those farm households that have viable farm business prospects and capabilities.
- 5) An inclusive transformation of the food system requires proactive public sector policies and investments.

c.) Side Events:

Improving Prosperity of Women in Agriculture

Key Lessons

Women make crucial contributions in agriculture but face gender specific constraints that reduce their productivity and contributions to agricultural development.

Solutions to ensure the visibility, commercialization and scaling up of agricultural innovations that respond to the needs and priorities of a diversity woman across the agricultural value chains;

- Scaling up technological innovations.
- Creating awareness on how to deploy a gender lens to enhance the social impact of agribusiness investments
- Paying attention to female agribusiness farmers and facilitate connections to increase the funding and support from governments
- Enhancing returns on investments to make agriculture attractive and professional
- Prioritizing the importance of gender-responsive agriculture research and development.
- Develop institutional guides to gender-responsive agriculture

Abidjan Declaration

The ABIDJAN DECLARATION was signed and included,

- a) New types of partnerships MoU signed between IC and AGRA to set up a local AGRA office to strengthen country initiatives on Small Holder farmers
- b) More robust partnership between public and private required
- c) Rice growers to have improved access to inputs and double rice production through the MoU signed by key stakeholders

The Digital Revolution and African Agriculture

Key Lessons

Access to capital should be guided by access to information.

There is need to embrace Innovations like the E-platform that brings together farmers to access financial services, access markets, affordable insurance and financial inclusivity, can transform smallholder farmers' access to finance and levels of risk.

Any upcoming technologies must be user friendly, so much so that a farmer in the grass root level can be able to apply it.

A successful agri-tech model needs to be established that will provide revenues to farmers at no cost and have a well-defined value proposition for the farmers.

Governments and private sector players to team up to ensure that digital developments really reached farmers, rather than leaving the ICT sector littered with collapsed digital platforms.

Artificial Intelligence is playing a great role in improving the decision-making process, with emerging technologies already beginning to play a critical role in all aspects of farming.

Digital information offers the power to achieve vital changes in farming behaviour.

The AfDB together with the World Bank, AfDB has set aside \$800 million for the provision of agriculture technologies to African farmers

By leveraging advances in artificial intelligence, scientists can generate real-time insights from interconnected data flows on nutrition and food security to help predict and prevent future nutrition emergencies.

Closing the Deal - Investing in African Agriculture

(Hosted by African Development Bank, GROW Africa, AGRF Partners)

The session was dedicated to making commitments and deals to invest more in African Agriculture.

AFC made a commitment to support small-holder potato farmers to a tune of USD 2 million (Approx. Kshs 200 Million)

Farm to Market Alliance: made commitment on supporting increased access to market, quality inputs and technology

Creating Opportunities for Youth to Leverage Family owned Land / Business to Accelerate Agricultural Transformation - SACAU, AfDB and Grow Africa –

(Panellists included Madam Millicent Omukaga – Head of Operations AFC)

Key Lessons

- i) Youth engaging in agribusiness need to see it as a business not a hobby
- ii) There need to be innovative and adopt alternative collateral other than land
- iii) Value chain financing would greatly improve the leveraging of youth on family land/assets
- iv) Parents need to support youth engaging in agribusiness including granting them rights to use land and other assets for production.
- v) Besides land, other family owned assets are important if youth are to succeed in agriculture.
- vi) Agribusiness is profitable to those youths who are taking it serious.

CONCLUSION

The forum was insightful and an eye opener for the CSAYN participants. The representatives remain positive that their participation and lessons learnt will be of great contribution to the network's vision and objectives.

The team will endeavour to help inspire the rest of the CSAYN team in rededicating itself to the common objective of supporting growth of climate smart agriculture in the world.