

EU-AU Cooperation on Agriculture and Food Systems

Recommendations by African and European civil society organizations regarding the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration and Action Agenda adopted on 21 June 2019.

February 2020

INTRODUCTION

We, African and European CSO representatives, welcome many aspects of the Declaration developed in the 3rd AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference of 21 June 2019 (Rome). The commitment to fully implement the normative guidelines adopted by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)¹ can help to ensure that the AU-EU cooperation leads to positive transformative changes in the food and agricultural sectors. We also value the Declaration's stated intention to target actions to benefit family farmers, youth and women, and its acknowledgement of territorial food systems, agroecology and agroforestry as valid approaches to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, to create added value in agri-food chains, and to fight poverty and hunger.

However, the Ministerial Declaration's call for African countries to operationalize the continental free trade area ignores the risks posed by trade liberalization in a space in which labor, fiscal and social regulation is immensely diverse and sometimes weak. A continental free trade area, if not designed to promote and protect local food systems, would also undermine the territorial market approach that other passages of the Declaration commend. The AU and the EU should address the undue and unfair competition exercised by large agri-food companies that are expanding their presence in African markets to the detriment of small-scale food producers. The latter should be at the centre of the policies aimed at ensuring African food and nutrition security and improved livelihoods.

We note that a number of the important commitments made in the Declaration are not reflected in the Action Agenda that figures in its annex. We propose the following actions to increase coherence between the Declaration and the Action Agenda, and to ensure synergies with other international commitments such as the UN Decade on Family Farming Global Action Plan and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. We do believe that including the following proposals in a reviewed agenda might highly contribute to the SDGs.

We consider that public funding is best placed to help countries achieve the above political commitments. Respecting the Maputo pledge to allocate at least 10 per cent of national budgets to agriculture will have a crucial role to play there, and the EU should provide support to such efforts under the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

¹ In particular the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food (VGRtF), the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT), and the policy recommendations on 'Investing in Smallholder Agriculture' and 'Connecting Smallholders to Markets'.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR AU-EU COOPERATION

A human rights framework for responsible investments in agriculture and territorial food systems in Africa

Africa's small-scale farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk and local micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) play a key role in ensuring food and nutrition security in an ecologically and socially sustainable way. The policies and investments required to support them, to nurture local economies, and to promote and offer young people dignified livelihoods in rural areas are different from those that are aimed at creating a favorable investment environment for large corporate agribusinesses.

To protect and support the rights and dignity of small-scale producers and to enable rural areas to thrive, we strongly recommend that the implementation of the AU-EU cooperation on agriculture and food security be guided by the CFS policies cited above and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

The shape of agriculture and food systems and the allocation of investments should be subject to inclusive, transparent discussion and democratically decided public policies in the countries concerned. As financial partners, the EU and its member states should only support such country-owned and country-led policy frameworks and programmes, including the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). This must become a key principle for the African European Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs. In addition, donors and investors should ensure that all affected communities have the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) before any land-related initiatives on their land and other natural resources go ahead. This is crucial for securing their rights to control their land, lives and livelihoods. Such an approach will support a better insertion of youth in agricultural activities all along the value chains.

Territorial systems approach²

We urge the application of a territorial systems approach across the range of relevant actions foreseen, recognising Africa's diversity and the consequent need for context-specific locally driven solutions. We recall that African regional economic communities such as ECOWAS, SADC, and EAC, in close dialogue with small-scale producer organisations, have already developed regional agricultural policies and investment plans which are being adapted at national level by member governments to take specificities into account. We emphasize the importance of the territorially embedded markets through which the bulk of the food consumed in Africa transits and in which most small-scale producers – women in particular – engage. The notion of 'value chains' needs to be defined in the context of multifunctional small-scale family farming system, acknowledging that the 'value added' is not only economic and cannot be reduced to a simple linear input-output economic model. Echoing the CFS recommendations on 'Connecting Smallholders to Markets', we call for measures that ensure retention of value in rural areas for reinvestment and employment creation. Attention should be given to building up infrastructure for local/territorial markets and small-scale processing through a gender-sensitive approach, and to using public procurement as an instrument to promote local production of nutritious food by small-scale farmers. Contributing to the reduction of poverty in the rural areas is one of the outcomes of such a measure adopted in the agenda.

Agroecology and territorial food systems

We urge the promotion of agroecological approaches as a key element of transitioning towards more just and sustainable food systems and increasing resilience in the face of climate change. We note that there are several alliances working in this direction in Africa³ that merit support in the context of the Africa-Europe

² IFAD (2015), Territorial approaches, rural-urban linkages and inclusive rural transformation; CIRAD (2019), Fostering territorial perspective for development; FAO, OECD, UNCDF (2016), Adopting a territorial approach to food security and nutrition.

³ See for example the international conference on agroecology under the EOAI-Africa in June 2019, Kenya (<https://www.agroecologyconference.eoai-africa.org>), the Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa (3AO) (https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/news/alliance-agroecology-west-africa-takes-shape_ro) and the first National Agroecology Actors Symposium (NAAS) in May 2019, Uganda

partnership, and that normative guidelines on this thematic area are being developed in the CFS. We call for a holistic support by the EU to agroecology in relevant global spaces, such as the CFS and the UNFCCC. The promotion of agroecological & territorial food systems is a key strategy for a positive and sustainable transformation of family farming in most of the African areas.

Gender equality and women's rights

Women play a key role in food and nutrition security. More needs to be done to ensure rural women's rights to access, control and own land and other natural resources, and to improve their access to rural infrastructure and markets. National Adaptation Plans for climate change should integrate and build on women's rights and women's role as agents of change.⁴ Women's cooperatives should be encouraged, as powerful empowerment tools. The impact of trade and investment deals on local food systems and smallholders must be analysed with a gender lens and considered in the design of those deals. We strongly suggest actions directed to women empowerment into the value chains.

Youth in agriculture

60 percent of the growing population in Africa is under 30 years old. The agri-food sector, from production to processing, transportation, marketing and consumption, offers significant possibilities to create jobs and livelihoods for the youth given the scarcity of employment in many regions in Africa⁵. Various strategies have been developed to address the lack of employment opportunities for young people. Many of these, however, suffer from the limitation of considering young people as individual economic decision-makers, ignoring the ways in which they are deeply embedded in networks of family and social relations.⁶ From this viewpoint some of the most pragmatic proposals are often those promoted by small-scale producer organizations themselves.⁷ We urge African and European authorities to place the proposals of young people and producers' organizations at the center of their strategies for employment creation for young people. The EU's support in this field should be guided by the objective of enhancing employment opportunities for rural young people in the context of family farming and related activities, rather than that of reducing migration towards Europe. Both the Regional Economic Communities (REC) and Regional Farmers' Organisations (RFO) have developed actors-based strategies to ensure the insertion of youth in agriculture. Building coherent actions with the strategies developed will contribute to meeting this challenge.

Accountability and participation

African and European authorities should establish a transparent and inclusive monitoring system to guide the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force Rural Africa report⁸ and the Ministerial Action Agenda, and more generally, the various aspects of the Africa-Europe Partnership relevant to food systems and agriculture. This system should privilege the voice of small-scale food producers and local agri-food MSMEs, and guard against unequal power dynamics and conflicts of interest. We urge the establishment of an inclusive mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the actions that builds on and reinforces existing small-scale producer organization and CSO structures and platforms.

[https://www.agroecologyconference.eoai-africa.org/Report%20on%20Agroecology%20Conference%20June%202019%20FINAL%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.agroecologyconference.eoai-africa.org/Report%20on%20Agroecology%20Conference%20June%202019%20FINAL%20(1).pdf)

⁴ NAP Global Network, the Least Developed Countries Expert Group and the Adaptation Committee under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2019), Toolkit for a Gender-Responsive Process to Formulate and Implement National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

⁵ FAO (2016), Addressing Rural Youth Migration at its Root Causes.

⁶ IDS (2016), Young People and Agriculture in Africa; Nora McKeon (2018), 'Getting to the root causes of migration in West Africa –whose history, framing and agency counts?', *Globalizations*, Vol. 15, 2018 - Issue 6.

⁷ Such as the regional programme for installation of young people in farming, fishing and animal husbandry developed by the West African small-scale producers' network, ROPPA on the basis of broad consultation with young people and rural communities.

⁸ Task Force Rural Africa (2019), An Africa-Europe Agenda for Rural Transformation.

ACTION AGENDA DELIVERABLES

AU-EU Agribusiness platform (1)

The Action Agenda suggests establishing an AU-EU business platform. However, such a forum already exists.⁹ We recommend refraining from creating another AU-EU business platform that is at risk of being dominated by large companies. This being said, a platform for domestic and social enterprises, MSMEs and cooperatives rooted in their diverse territorial context would be greatly beneficial to local actors and can invigorate agency and multifunctionality in rural development. Any platform that discusses responsible investments in agriculture should be co-led by Africa's smallholder organizations.¹⁰ Public resources should go towards supporting small enterprise and small-scale farmer networking and collaboration, within Africa and between Africa and Europe. We recommend investing in creating more synergies between African networks of small-scale producers – who can be considered the most important private sector actors in African agriculture – MSMEs, social enterprises and cooperatives.¹¹

Research & innovation (2)

We support a stronger focus on research & innovation as proposed by the Action Agenda, and especially welcome the mention of agroecological intensification, agroecology, breeding networks, and livestock and pastoralism. We call for opportunities for Participatory Action Research (PAR) and active participation by civil society organisations and smallholder farmers' organisations and their networks. Research and innovation should be built on indigenous knowledge and the research topics should be defined by the needs of the local communities and smallholder producers. Support provided through the AU-EU Partnership should focus on strengthening what is working on the ground and what has been developed locally. It should involve African research institutions on an equal footing. A good example is the already existing research partnership of PAEPARD.

Diversified food safety approaches (5)

Requirements of diverse food systems do not all fit into regionally harmonised standards designed for large-scale commercial enterprise. Rather, the need is to accommodate diverse quality standards and requirements in small-scale agricultural production and distribution. This includes seed quality, soil fertility, fresh produce and many others. Smallholder farming households with their own diverse means of managing quality in production, storage and distribution are an important part of Africa's population and would benefit from on farm training and accompaniment. We call on the AU and EU to open space for flexibility and diversity in standards (sanitary and phytosanitary measures - SPS) and to support decentralised, multi-stakeholder participation in Africa defining these standards for diverse contexts accordingly. Consumers need to be protected in all cases, but the food safety related risks in the context of family farming and territorial markets are quite different from those prevailing in industrialized agriculture and global supply chains and retailing. While the commercial sector can be subjected to specific regulations and controls, these should not be imposed as a blanket on everyone.

Strengthening African farmers' organisations (6)

We very much welcome the proposal to support African farmers' organisations. Reinforcing their institutional and governance capacities will make them more effective in influencing policies and programmes. However, we call for an approach that includes but goes beyond integrating farmers into value chains as proposed in the Action Agenda. We call for strengthening territorial markets, applying the

⁹ An EU Africa Business Forum already exists and has met several times (<https://www.euafrica-businessforum.com>).

¹⁰ See experience on the 2016 pilot initiative '[Missing Middle Initiative \(MMI\)](#)' set up under the GAFSP; or the 2018 paper on '[Critical Capital for African Agri-Food SMEs](#)', supported by the Dutch government.

¹¹ A platform for domestic and social enterprises, MSME and cooperatives rooted in their diverse territorial context would be greatly beneficial to local actors and can invigorate agency and multifunctionality in rural development.

policy recommendations on 'Connecting Smallholders to Markets' adopted by the CFS in October 2016.¹² These markets offer space for diverse locally and sustainably produced products. Support should be provided for collective activities – particularly by women and young people – in order to transform and add value to agricultural products. We also call for public procurement to be used to build markets for smallholders producing agroecological products.

[African-European farmers' exchange programme \(7\)](#)

This activity should build on previous experience organized by and with African and European producers' organizations, such as the Europafrica programme funded by the EU.¹³ We call for it to explicitly include, among others, exchanges between farmers engaged in agroecology to learn and share with one another; it could also focus on how to build and strengthen local food systems, territorial markets and short supply chains, notably linking cities and peri-urban and rural areas.

[LEADER Africa Initiative – landscape initiative \(8\)](#)

We consider that a Leader-like programme would be particularly suited to working on territorial markets/food systems and on initiatives to create employment for young people in the context of family farms and rural economies. We would like to see agroecological developments included in this item, for example the establishment of local, national, regional and continental agroecology hubs and networks with landscape dimensions. Mention is made of integrated land use planning, sustainable land management, land restoration, agroforestry, incorporation of trees in production systems, and "other forms of climate smart agriculture." Agroecology fits all of these, and a deliberate programme of hubs and network development would be of value.

[Improving environmental sustainability, climate resilience and agrobiodiversity in the agricultural sector \(9\)](#)

We would like to engage with the ten African countries which will receive support for "integration of measures for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the sound management of chemicals and waste in agriculture, forestry and fisheries policies". This can include adoption and implementation of plant genetic resources plans, and laws incorporating recognition and support for farmer seed systems.



WITH THE SUPPORT OF CONCORD

¹² For more information, see <http://www.fao.org/cfs/home/activities/smallholders/en/>

¹³ For more information, see <http://www.terranuova.org/campaigns/europafrica-towards-food-sovereignty>

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