



Walking the Talk on Youth and Women: Bringing Inclusive Agricultural Markets to Life

The Fifth African Green Revolution Forum

September 29th - 2nd October 2015

Hotel Intercontinental, Lusaka, Zambia

Highlights from the AGRF

Who came and what did we deliberate on?

More than 600 men, women and youth attended the AGRF 2015. Over 200 came from the host country, Zambia. Many attended the AGRF for the first time. Over the course of 36 separate but related events, the participants have deliberated on the AGRF 2015 theme as aligned to the Malabo Commitments and as impacting on three key constituencies: youth, women and the domestic private sector. Both before and during the AGRF, the delegates and interested parties have deliberated on the next 10 year Vision of CAADP enshrined in Malabo Declaration.

What were some highlights of our conversations?

New AGRF Framework

AGRF was started to bring together leaders from the public and private sector to engage in thought leadership, and make commitments for how Africa can wage a successful and distinctly African Green Revolution. From 2015 going forward, the AGRF and its stakeholders will, in response to the call by the AU and in respect to the agreed systems and structures, commit to support implementation at country level, measure, track and report progress being made against set goals. Recommitment to Malabo Goals

1. Recommitment to the principles and values of the CAADP Process
2. Recommitment to enhance investment finance in agriculture
3. Commitment to ending hunger by 2025
4. Commitment to halving poverty, by 2025, through inclusive agricultural growth and transformation
5. Commitment to boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services
6. Commitment to enhancing resilience in livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other shocks
7. Commitment to mutual accountability to actions and results

To achieve these, we will work through five Thematic Working Groups on:

1. Finance
2. Inputs
3. Agriculture Infrastructure
4. Trade and Markets and the Domestic Private Sector Development
5. Capacity development, Youth and Women in Agriculture

Additionally, from the AGRF 2015 conversations the following key issues emerged:

Youth Inclusivity in Agriculture

Africa's farmers are aging; with the average age being 60 years. More than 60% of the continent's population is under 25. Africa's very survival depends on attracting young people to the agriculture sector – for the continent to feed itself and feed the world. Agriculture must be made attractive to young people through creative programs and initiatives that clearly define profitable opportunities. Mentoring opportunities and relationships must be made available to young entrepreneurs.

Women in Agriculture

Women are the backbone of rural agriculture and their role needs to be supported. Women smallholder farmers should be supported to form viable produce marketing organizations to seize lucrative market opportunities for their agricultural products. Financial institutions should be encouraged to create financial products tailored to women, while both public and private organizations should enhance extension services and provide appropriate technologies to women smallholder farmers to increase agricultural productivity, access markets while making their lives better.

Finance

Financiers need to support alternatives to traditional collateral such as value chain financing and warehouse receipt systems in addition to using land as collateral. Moreover farmers must be supported to see business planning for production ventures as part of collateral process. Deliberate efforts to make financial services, especially for agriculture and agribusiness, more inclusive for women should be scaled up across Africa. Risk finance products should be responsive to the agriculture sector, supported by reliable data that will empower financiers to make evidence-based decisions.

Inputs

For Africa to achieve step changes in crop yields, both government and private sector actors need to work together to ensure access technological packages including quality seed and fertilizer, including lime, to restore Africa's depleted soils. Efforts should include creating awareness among farmers on the value of using certified seed, the best fertilizer combinations and lime application rates; promoting soil testing and mapping, as well as improving the supply and access of fertilizer and lime for smallholder farmers. The private sector should invest more in youth and women-owned distribution systems especially at local levels to ensure affordability and availability of seed and fertilizer.

Agriculture Infrastructure, Technology and Mechanization

Efficient infrastructure, technology and mechanization are key drivers to increasing agribusiness competitiveness and modern farming in Africa. Public Private Sector Partnerships are needed for greater investments in agricultural infrastructure and availability of affordable technologies and machinery along the whole value chain. Equipment leasing should be enhanced as a model of ensuring youth and women have more access to modern agricultural technologies. More investments should target the development and utilization of integrated ICT-4-Ag solutions with special focus on youth.

Trade and Markets including Domestic Private Sector Development

More advocacy and communication is needed to enhance regional trade and policy interventions that will spur growth of domestic private sector and agribusinesses. There should be adequate focus on agricultural value chains including livestock and horticulture subsectors. More investments and policies should be directed at incubating and developing local agro-processing facilities and agribusinesses run by youth and women. All stakeholders in African agriculture working with smallholder farmers must redouble efforts to help organize the agriculture sector into functional value chains. A strong continental network of the domestic private sector needs to be set up to give a collective voice to African domestic private sector actors to strongly and effectively participate as equal partners to agriculture businesses.

Capacity Development

African agriculture is dynamic and requires a diverse mix of capacity building initiatives targeted at both smallholder farmers and actors supporting them. This should include both long and short-term courses in aspects such as: agronomy, extension, as well as business development and management. This will prepare youth and women to become active members in agricultural value chains.

Public-Private Partnerships

The experience of public-private partnerships has shown positive results. This partnership has facilitated transport infrastructure, and farmers have been able to access inputs in time. We should pursue these partnerships

purposefully in all sectors and ensure that all the actors have the required ability to engage in win-win relationships for the benefit of smallholder farmers, youth and women.

Policies

African governments need to review, put in place and continue implementing the policies that promote an enabling environment for business and improve the ease of doing business. Governments and actors will need to provide incentives to businesses to enhance participation of youth and women in agribusiness while at the same time adopting policies that make the agriculture sector attractive to them. Governments need to enact policies that promote land ownership by youth and women. Harmonization of regional agricultural and related trade policies should also be pursued. Youth and women call for an increased voice and vote in the agriculture and trade policymaking processes.

Demand-Driven, Market-Led Agriculture

Encouraging Africa's smallholder farmers to farm as a business will ensure that they professionalize their farming operations and invest in making this profitable. By creating strong value chains that support smallholder farmers and agribusinesses to meet market demands in terms of volume and quality, all actors will build their capacity and motivate them. In this way, farmers will attract financiers who will have increased confidence in recouping their loans.

Looking forward

The AGRF 2015 thereby pledges to advocate for, facilitate and support youth and women with regard to the aforementioned 10 thematic focus areas. And we the youth, women and participants of AGRF 2015 adopt the new AGRF Results Framework as an implementation and monitoring tool to achieve the goals outlined in Malabo Declaration. The next AGRF will take place in Nairobi, Kenya in early September 2016.