

## ***The Role of South-South Cooperation in Agricultural Development in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges***

**Background to the Meeting in Brasilia – May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

### **1. Background and rationale**

#### ***1.1 Agricultural development: the challenges for Sub-Saharan Africa***

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as a whole faces a number of challenges including persistent rural poverty and inequality. While economic growth has generally stabilized and economies have diversified, persistent food insecurity still plagues the region. The negative consequences of climate variability and change are already making an impact on agricultural productivity and particularly small-holder and subsistence agriculture. Macro-policy efforts have usually targeted expanding international and or intra-regional trade and at the same time seeking to enhance agricultural productivity as well as profitability of the sector. When international food prices almost doubled between September 2006 and June 2008, the worst hit were low-income, food-deficit countries with meagre stocks. In 2010, 80% of African countries fell into this category (43 countries in total) and African countries made up 55% of the countries so designated (AfdB et al, 2011). For instance, the price of rice doubled in just one year from July 2007 in Senegal; in Eritrea, the price of wheat flour, a key staple, more than doubled in the same period, and similar rises were also seen in Sudan. SSA is also identified as having the highest prevalence of under-nourishment relative to its population (32 per cent). The challenges are multiple, multiplying and complex, particularly in achieving a balance between efficiency and effectiveness and in ensuring that economic growth also supports and finances sustained human development.

Increasing attention is now being paid to both the inclusivity of growth and its environmental sustainability – the green growth agenda. In this context, there is a growing focus on the potential role of South-South cooperation in helping countries in the South to leap-frog and benefit from lessons and good practices, tried and tested elsewhere. As the Government of Brazil hosts Rio +20, attention also falls on the country's key role as a broker for such South-South exchange on the "how" of such learning processes, particularly on inclusive green growth. A number of successes particularly in reducing inequality, enhancing both social and productive inclusion and engaging small holder farmers in the growth process while also maintaining a successful commercial agriculture sector are amongst the important lessons/entry points for Brazil-Africa exchange in this context.

A number of factors make this an urgent element of discussion for expanded South-South engagement, particularly for Sub-Saharan Africa:

1. Nutrition is a general requirement for health and productivity<sup>1</sup> more broadly, as highlighted in the April 2011<sup>1</sup> Fifth Session of African Union Conference of Ministers of Health on the implications of climate change for health and development.
2. Arable land per head of agricultural population in 2007 was 0.4 hectares per capita in SSA as compared to 1.5 in Latin America and the Caribbean. Irrigated land as a % of arable land was 2.2 as compared to 21.6 in the Middle East and North Africa and 35.7 in Asia and the Pacific. Water scarcity is predicted to worsen with climate variability and change and has been highlighted as a significant threat to food security in Botswana, Namibia, Kenya and Ethiopia (Williams, 2010). Erratic rainfall in Kenya is causing a shift in production from maize and potatoes; with drought related losses between 2003 and 2009 estimated at USD 3 billion (Kamadi, 2011).

---

<sup>1</sup>The Fifth Conference of the African Union Ministers of Health was held in Namibia, April 12-14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and focused on the implication of climate change for health and development. The overview document is available from:  
[http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/OVERVIEW\\_OF\\_THE\\_THEME\\_EN\\_17\\_21\\_APRIL\\_2011\\_SA\\_MINISTERS\\_MEETING\\_FIFTH\\_SESSION\\_AFRICAN\\_UNI\\_ON\\_CONFERENCE\\_MINISTERS\\_HEALTH\\_WINDHOEK](http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/OVERVIEW_OF_THE_THEME_EN_17_21_APRIL_2011_SA_MINISTERS_MEETING_FIFTH_SESSION_AFRICAN_UNI_ON_CONFERENCE_MINISTERS_HEALTH_WINDHOEK)

According to the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, there has been an increase of 300,000 farmers of potatoes over the last 8 years, with many also changing to sorghum and millet in an effort to bridge income gaps as well as food needs.

3. 300 million Africans (more than 35 percent of the population) have no access to safe drinking water, and 313 million lack basic sanitation (Osman-Elasha, 2009), with climate change's impact on water availability in Africa likely to worsen the current situation, potentially reversing some of the gains made in improving the lives of people living with HIV and AIDS.
4. The Climate Vulnerability Monitor released in early December 2010 noted that fifteen states, most of them in Africa, are acutely vulnerable to climate change and some are already feeling the impacts, particularly those facing persistent food shortages (Rowling, 2010).
5. The impacts of climate stress are exacerbated by gender inequalities; for example, Ghanaian women spend more than twice as much time as men on household activities such as gathering water, firewood and food (UNFPA and WEDO, 2009). Most small farms are dominated by female labour.

As Africa's growth expands, efforts to narrow the "energy gap" (75% of Sub-Saharan Africa and 90% of its rural population still lack access to electricity) have implications for carbon emissions in general and the carbon intensity of the agricultural sector in particular. The opportunities to expand bio-energy production could deliver critical economic, social and environmental win-wins as well as negatives for food security, the cost/availability of land and other indirect costs. Advancing a long-term agenda in Africa, based on climate-compatible development, requires that adaptation, mitigation, development and the increasing focus on "green growth" consider equality as well as appropriate frameworks for defining, achieving and securing equity.

## **1.2 South-South Cooperation and Brazil's role in supporting agricultural development**

Aid flows to the agriculture sector are currently on the increase after a period of decline. However, traditional models of development assistance have not always delivered, let alone been effective in supporting a quality of growth which addresses fundamental structural inequality. In a recent blog post David King, Secretary General of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers and the spokesman for the Farming First coalition asks a fundamental question of the G8 and G20 policy process on food prices – where is the farmer in the debates of the G20?<sup>2</sup>

This seminar's unique focus will attempt to bridge the gap on some of these issues. It will reflect on what is distinctive about Brazil's approach and how it might help to shape a South-South exchange which delivers a more inclusive form of growth. It will also explore how this can complement other more traditional forms of cooperation, as well as the work of other new or re-emerging development actors – such as China – in delivering a more inclusive process of growth in Africa, as well as the scope for sharing lessons from within the South and between countries of the South.

This is a high-visibility event that will engage a wide range of key stakeholders in Brazil's rapidly expanding programme of South-South cooperation in agriculture. Hosted by the International Poverty Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and co-organised with the Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC) with support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), Articulação SUL, the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD) and UN Women, the event will bring together in Brasília for the first time specialists in the field from African countries, from Europe and from China.

This unique forum is especially timely in view of Brazil's role in influencing the shape of the Busan commitments to a "new global development partnership", and of the rapidly-growing interest in the role of agriculture in South-South cooperation among stakeholders ranging from the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa to the BRICS governments themselves. It provides an opportunity for building the evidence base on South-South cooperation and its development impact, with a view to making better judgements on its effectiveness and its potential role as one of a number of tools on offer to Low-Income Countries.

---

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/katine/katine-chronicles-blog/2010/jun/26/david-king-farmers-food-security?INTCMP=ILCNETTX3487>

With a booming economy and an ambitious diplomatic agenda Brazil is rapidly expanding its presence abroad as a development cooperation partner. Africa is not only an increasingly important partner for private investment and trade, but also an ally in southern diplomatic initiatives such as IBSA, and a focus for Brazilian development cooperation. Long historical links and cultural affinities are important in these relationships. Portuguese-speaking African countries are amongst the top destinations of Brazilian investment in Africa and are also amongst the top recipients of Brazilian technical cooperation worldwide. But Brazil's ventures in Africa go beyond this familiar territory and, since 2003, it has opened (or reopened) 19 additional embassies, and it currently runs technical cooperation projects in 38 countries across the continent.<sup>3</sup>

Agriculture is the single largest field of Brazilian technical cooperation in Africa and projects concentrate mostly on agricultural research, technology transfer and sustainable water and soil conservation. Embrapa, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation, is the main Brazilian agency involved in cooperation in agriculture. Equally, the work of other SSC actors – including those in other sectors, social and economic, have implications for the agriculture sector and its development effectiveness. For example, South-South cooperation on Human Rights through the Secretariat for Human Rights and the significant South-South on CCTs e.g. Bolsa Familia or Brazil's broader Fome Zero programme. Pro-Savana, a trilateral partnership between Brazil, Japan and Mozambique, aims to turn Mozambique's subsistence agriculture into profitable export-oriented farming, drawing on the *Cerrado* development model in Brazil. Embrapa also hosts large numbers of African agricultural research and extension workers for study visits and training courses in Brazil. While Embrapa has hitherto been the dominant player in this field, other Brazilian actors are also becoming active, representing different approaches to agricultural development. The Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), which promotes smallholder agriculture (known as *agricultura familiar* or "family farming") in Brazil, has established an international cooperation unit and recently announced the extension of its *Mais Alimentos* programme to Africa. There are also attempts to engage Brazilian civil society organisations and social movements directly in cooperation projects. For example, a project initiated by the General Secretariat of the Presidency involves two social movements, *Movimento Camponês Popular* and *Movimento das Mulheres Camponesas*, in the recovery, propagation and storage of traditional native seed varieties in Mozambique and South Africa.

### 1.3 Research agenda and the role of the event partners

As the Brazilian cooperation framework expands in volume, reach and complexity, a number of questions emerge about its rationale, direction and impact. For example:

- What are the visions of development cooperation, agricultural development and African development than underpin Brazil-Africa cooperation?
- As Brazil also emerges potentially as an "environmental donor", as noted by one recent article (Hochstetler 2012), how can its South-South agenda and its environmental leadership merge effectively?
- To what extent are Brazilian agricultural development policies and practices transferable to the African continent and its heterogeneous agricultural landscape? What specific lessons emerge for tackling rain-fed/climate vulnerable agriculture for example?
- In what ways do Brazilian cooperation and its approach to development challenge established cooperation practices and dominant models for agricultural development in Africa?
- What can South-South offer specifically that lends itself to more development effectiveness and improved development outcomes
- How different is the Brazilian approach in relation to other rising powers, such as China?

The Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC), a research network of African and UK research institutions focusing on agricultural policy and development in Africa, has started investigating these questions. It notes the wealth of knowledge and perspectives within Brazil on the subject and a gradually emerging public space for debate within the research community and civil society.

---

<sup>3</sup>Source: Agência Brasileira de Cooperação.



The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, which is better known for tackling some of these questions from a social protection perspective, has in the last 2 years sought to explore similar questions in the context of rural and sustainable development. In particular, its recent work on Inclusive Green Growth highlights the potential for South-South cooperation to deliver effectively and tangibly in addressing some of the more complex elements for greening the economy and delivering both poverty reduction and equity. This debate is still relatively underdeveloped, and there is significant scope for widening and deepening public dialogue on Brazilian cooperation, particularly as regards African agricultural development, and in particular its implications for the broader development agenda for the continent.

By bringing together representatives of the Brazilian government, private sector, academia and civil society, alongside specialists from African countries and from China, another emerging world power with a rapidly expanding cooperation programme across Africa, a robust exchange will be initiated and an outline agenda for further research identified.

## 2. Objectives

The main goal of the event is to identify the key emerging issues for policy and research in the field of South-South cooperation in agricultural development in Africa.

The event will seek to achieve this by facilitating knowledge sharing and promoting critical reflection and debate on Brazilian, African and Chinese agricultural development and cooperation experiences. It will aim to identify current trends and key areas of potential in Brazil-Africa agricultural development cooperation, and draw out the implications of these for policy and research in the fields of food security, inclusive growth and sustainable rural development. In the process, it will:

- Bring together the diverse views of a broad range of actors involved in cooperation in the agriculture sector in Africa;
- Elicit the views of African specialists and other stakeholders on the challenges facing Africa and the current or potential contribution of Brazilian cooperation to meeting these challenges;
- Include perspectives from other key actors who may not currently be involved in cooperation activities, but who can contribute insights into the lessons that can be drawn from Brazilian agricultural development models and policies and their contribution to broader development goals; and
- Stimulate comparative analysis by considering some key lessons from the Chinese experience in Africa.

The event will be organised around three thematic panels, framed by an introductory session and a concluding debate.