



CONFERENCE NEWS

Daily updates from **Toward a Green Revolution in Africa**



Conference blog: www.stepscentre-thecrossing.blogspot.com

Farmers in the driving seat for Africa's Green Revolution

Alliances, funds, skills, innovations - all must meet needs of farmers

Farmers and their needs must be placed at epicentre of a uniquely African Green Revolution, conference delegates from across the board agreed on the final day in Salzburg.

Much of the discussion today, running across thematic groups, focused on building alliances of farmers and their organisations at national, regional and continental levels. This was seen as absolutely key for insuring that priorities are set and funds are spent in a way that meets the needs of farmers. The direction of initiatives must all move toward that goal.

However there is an urgent requirement for substantial investment in building capacity. Delegates believe the skills that need developing go beyond the technical to 'soft' skills. An equitable Green Revolution requires an increased ability to facilitate inclusive approaches, organisational skills, business management skills, policy, advocacy and impact monitoring skills, delegates said. These seem to be lacking at the moment and are a potential focus for follow up efforts.

One particular proposal for directing research innovation and technology development towards farmers needs was the establishment of an African-wide, farmer-owned and farmer-driven fund. Delegates went as far as to propose a name: the African Agriculture



Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid

Technology and Innovation Fund (AATIF). This would be an endowment fund supported by government, private sector, philanthropists and farmers to ensure demand-driven research with farmers in the driving seat.

Another key suggestion was that any funds or funding mechanisms to support the Green Revolution need to have independent accountability systems, operating with farmers at the centre. These would hold the delivery of key development actors to account, as well as offering a monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment function.

REPRESENTATIVE REVOLUTION

To ensure an African Green Revolution is equitable there is a pressing need to ensure that wide representation is assured, delegates said.

It is paramount that inclusive processes going forward are attendant to gender

Views and voices

Terwolde Berhan

"In this meeting progress has taken place. However, one meeting alone is not going to change one continent. It will contribute to changes because changes are always cumulative. And the more we focus on the prospects, the more people will see what is likely to be done in the future and the greater the chances for a synthesis, or a better future."

Victor Muhoni

"What we want to see here is clear cut: how is this going to get to the grassroots? That is very, very important. How are we going to make sure that beyond our agreements here this gets to the grassroots? The issue is the farmers, the communities involved, they should take part."

Susan Kaaria

"What is slipping through the cracks in these discussions is pastoralism and livestock farming, and debate about youth."

Press conference



and ethnicity issues. It should also be ensured, in particular, that smallholders and those farmers who are consumers, and not just producers, of food have a voice in farmer organisations.

At present, the interests of smallholders, women and other more marginalised groups, including pastoralists and livestock groups are not well represented by farmer groups or service providers – private or public.

In addition to assessing the achievement of this Green Revolution in quantitative terms, delegates recommended that qualitative targets are also set to define targets in relation to empowerment, voice and inclusion, taking into account a rights-based approach.

DATA, TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

The lack of data and information on crop productivity and prices, and the poor quality of the data that does exist, has been a recurrent theme throughout the conference and was stressed as key to the future on this final day.

Challenges to improving the quality and reach of data and information through the support of universities, research centres and statistical services was emphasised. The importance of efficient and more cost-effective systems for data-gathering and market intelligence were discussed, including the use of text, cell phone and internet systems in rural areas.

Data on household income, production prices and broader patterns of public expenditure were seen as priorities. Such data-gathering and analysis will allow the tracking of progress, the assessment of impacts as well as the

modelling of future options as the Green Revolution in Africa unfolds.

BEYOND STAPLE CROPS

The emphasis of the Green Revolution in Africa must go beyond a focus on a narrow range of staple crops, even though these crops remain important, was an issue pin-pointed as crucial to future action.

Livestock needs to be put centre stage and smallstock and poultry production are critical for poorer people, and women in particular, delegates said. And while pastoral areas remain a site of extensive poverty, they also hold extraordinary potential. Diversity in crops and livestock was seen as the key to enhancing a range of benefits in terms of production, nutrition and wider resilience of the agricultural and food system.

Ensuring that diversity is central to the Green Revolution challenge will require shifts in the thinking in mainstream professional training. How may university agriculture courses, for example, address wild crop relatives and pastoral issues, one delegate asked? The new Green Revolution requires curriculum reforms from universities through to community-based training and extension.

WHAT NEXT?

The conference defined some critical points of leverage, where delegates and their organisations can achieve a sustainable impact on priorities.

The essential ingredients of a Green Revolution in Africa, definition of priorities, desirable outcomes and the points at which value-added initiatives

can have an impact have taken shape here in Salzburg. Importantly, some of the competing priorities and unresolved issues and knowledge gaps have been identified.

Strategic alliances among many stakeholders and initiatives have been strengthened and the desire to work together, in partnership, to add value to the future of agriculture in Africa, was repeated time and again.

The momentum continues tomorrow at the 'Green Revolution in Africa: What Framework for Success?' seminar where delegates will revise and refine the work set in motion over the past three days. Then a series of sub-regional meetings in Africa will ground the debate firmly on the continent's soil. For news updates: www.future-agricultures.org

Views and voices

Lindiwe Sibanda

"The main thing we've achieved here is to be clear and to agree that if we are going to have a uniquely green African Revolution, then women have to be in the forefront. ..We want to see a food secure Africa, free from hunger whether we call it a Green Revolution, whether it's under the CAADP framework, the end goal is an Africa that can feed itself. To me that's one thing that we have really achieved: a common vision on what Africa wants."

Ummkalthum Dubow

"Donors and implementors are responding to the immediate, short term, needs of marginal groups. What is needed is for these actors to take a longer term view. They need to take action to improve the social positions of the marginalised."



Conference News Editorial

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