



POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN AFRICA

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New hope for African agriculture?

“Donors just go home!” was the strong call made in the CAADP plenary session of day two of the PEAPA conference. “African economies are growing at 4-5% so they have plenty of fiscal resources. If donors pulled out, African governments would have to respond in investing more in agriculture.” However, echoing arguments made by **Adebayo Olukoshi** on Monday, the CAADP plenary panel re-emphasised that even if more resources become available, this would not necessarily lead to more investment in agriculture. “Agriculture is seen as a potential black-hole,” said **Mandivamba Rukuni** (pictured). “We have to convince banks and ministries of finance that their support will trigger more wealth; that for every dollar invested, a return of two to three dollars will be achieved.”

As well as working in countries where it has been adopted, CAADP could create new spaces for dialogue elsewhere, according to Rukuni. But, a decade on, the Programme needs a positive vision, passion and confidence in African history and practices.

African governments have been criticised for their lack of political will in investing more in agriculture, and for a gap between rhetoric and action. Can donors be accused of the same thing? After the food crisis of 2007/8, **John Barrett** of DFID admitted, donors woke up to the fact that they had neglected agriculture and rural development for the past 10-15 years. “There was a tremendous renaissance around tackling food security,” Barrett said. The L’Aquila Declaration was “the first time we had a commitment, a number and a target but the challenge is how to transform that into food on plates.

Five years on it is important for us to examine what impact that has had.”

“CAADP could be the best thing that has happened to Africa,” said Bubu Khan, although some countries are better than others at implementing it – and learning from their mistakes. “CAADP is one framework that has African ownership. However it now needs a strong focus on women and youth and a more pragmatic response on climate change.” **Colin Poulton** expressed concern that whilst 40 CAADP compacts have now been developed in recent years, many of these exist only on paper in order to be donor compliant and have not been implemented. “More monitoring and evaluation for effective implementation is required.”

However, what progress can be made when, as **Chance Kabaghe** (a former Zambian Minister) said that from his experience, “politicians will always take advantage – so will technocrats. We start out well with the best of intentions but we now have to ask ourselves how we best get out of the situation.”

Gem Argwings-Kodhek threw out a challenge to his peers, suggesting that “perhaps we need to hear more from the politicians so we get to know what they really think so we can enter into a more effective dialogue, instead of just talking to one another.”

Centralisation: a necessary evil?

During the opening session of this conference, there was a clear message that smallholder farmers are not passive actors in policymaking and that change sometimes comes from below, where rural uprisings in democratic states have the ability to influence agricultural political processes.

But what about states where governments have a tight grip on power and citizen activism is almost non-existent? One of yesterday’s parallel sessions took a bird’s eye view of regimes that almost entirely control agricultural policies. Preferring centralised transformation and a problem-solving approach, the elites in these states determine national strategies for tackling food insecurity.

On Rwanda, **Fred Golooba-Mutebi** showed how production increased and poverty was reduced after the government took radical measures to increase its investment in agriculture after food shortages in 2007.

The government in this case took a top-down approach to implementing agricultural policy. But does this mean that democracy is bad for agriculture? Not necessarily, said Golooba-Mutebi, but we should recognise that incentives to invest in agriculture are not always created by democratisation or bottom-up pressure. One audience member cautioned against this line of thought, pointing to Ethiopia, where the federal government has had tight control of agricultural policies for a long time but poverty rates still remain high.

Further presentations from **David Booth** and **Ton Dietz** considered the comparable agricultural fortunes of Africa and south-east Asia, which has taken a smallholder-focused approach, and the influence on agricultural production of different political regimes in Tanzania.

CAADP: national-level progress

Following the CAADP retrospective in afternoon plenary, a break-out session provided an opportunity to explore the dynamics of CAADP at country level.

Reports from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania provided a generally downbeat message of limited added value from CAADP initiatives. However, efforts on monitoring and evaluation, donor coordination and having the 10% spending target as a benchmark emerged as positives.

Attributing wider socio-economic gains to CAADP is more difficult, and it was argued that in Tanzania and Mozambique, national CAADP processes have been used in the interest of agribusiness and political elites.

The papers will be posted on the conference website soon.

Extending the extension debate

The challenge of finding effective ways to deliver extension services to farmers was starkly illustrated in a series of presentations made yesterday. In recent years the trend has been for private, demand-led approaches. Yet implementation often falls short.

Anne Mette Kjaer and **Hannington Odame** described how, in Uganda and Kenya, extension reforms have been reversed or failed to get off the ground. Uganda's NAADS programme underwent large changes to reincorporate the public sector and local government involvement. This is due to political factions "wanting in" on the action, impatience with long-term initiatives, and bureaucrats not agreeing with the original values of liberalisation and privatisation. Short-term thinking of politicians preoccupied with election cycles and rent-seeking, but also of donors, has been a constraint on extension service delivery in Kenya, too.

Blessings Chinsinga questioned the very paradigm of private demand-led extension. In Malawi, he said, most farmers could not afford to 'demand' private extension services. And the idea that the private sector would provide its own extension agents has not materialised. Instead, NGOs are hiring government extension staff,



Future Agricultures 'hub' co-ordinators from Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and the UK celebrate the transition to Africa-based regional centres for the consortium's research and outreach. Pictured (L-R): John Thompson, Andries du Toit, George Kwadzo, Hannington Odame and Gaynor Paradza

who are already busy with the logistics of fertiliser subsidies. Meanwhile, in a presentation that gave a historical review of approaches to extension, **Miguel Loureiro** showed how the currently fashionable approach of 'Agricultural Innovation Systems' has origins not in agriculture but in thinking on innovation in industry. Of several objections to this approach was Loureiro's concern that focusing on 'innovative' farmers to receive extension excludes other, more vulnerable members of rural society.

Lastly, **Kojo Amanor** presented an update from Ghana, where farmers have been offered a package of inputs as part of the Block Farming Programme. Amanor argued that smallholder-targeted extension has been used to integrate farmers into the value chain and provide opportunities for agribusiness. Describing a case in which input suppliers have been licensed by the government to provide new maize varieties developed outside Ghana, Amanor asked, who are the clients of extension officers? What is the role of extension? And should extension officers not respond to farmers' preferences rather than forcing them to adopt inputs from agribusiness?

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