



Annan sets sights on “uniquely African Green Revolution”

Bold pro-poor policies needed

Kofi Annan called for a “uniquely African Green Revolution” founded on “bold pro-poor policies” to address widespread poverty and chronic hunger.

As food prices escalate at an unprecedented rate and food shortages worsen, Mr Annan told delegates at the ‘Toward a Green Revolution in Africa’ conference that action is needed now.

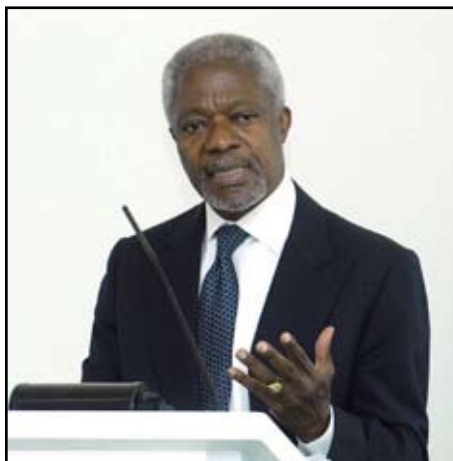
“The time for talk is over. We must implement immediate solutions for today’s crisis, and do so in the context of a long-term concerted effort to transform smallholder agriculture, increase productivity and sustainability, and end poverty and hunger,” said Mr Annan.

Climate change, higher fuel prices, and the conversion of maize production to ethanol have all impacted on Africa’s smallholder farmers, he said.

A uniquely African Green Revolution must be sustainable and equitable, with a tight focus on the African agriculture, environment, climate, culture and languages. And lessons must be learnt from the past; Latin America and Asia’s Green Revolutions have alleviated hunger and boosted production, but did not always benefit the poor, he said.

Setting out the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) vision for progress - as the organisation’s chairman - he stressed that AGRA could not work alone, and called for partnership with African governments, donors, farmer organisations and the private sector.

Policy priority must be given to women, the majority of farmers in Africa, said Mr Annan, and the role farmers can play



Kofi Annan rallies delegates in Salzburg

as researchers, testing new techniques and systems must not be underestimated. Systemic problems such as distribution, financing and infrastructure must also be addressed.

But in order for a uniquely African Green Revolution to succeed, all these issues must be supported by “bold pro-poor policies, both from African governments and their international partners.”

Touching on many of the issues to be discussed throughout the conference, Mr Annan rallied delegates to work together to make the African Green Revolution a reality: “Failure is not an option. Together we will succeed.”

EQUITY HIGH ON THE AGENDA

Equity is set to be one of the hottest topics of debate this week. How the benefits of an African Green Revolution are distributed to the poor and marginalised was one of the chief concerns expressed today. Ousmane Badiane of IFPRI highlighted the past decade was Africa’s first 10-year period

Views and voices

Gem Argwings-Kodhek

“There has been lot of talk at a global level, but we need more talk at the village level. It would be good to see farmers, researchers, transport and extension workers acting together”

Sunday Pierre Odjo

“Biodiversity is one of the key issues, We need to ensure that we maintain diverse agriculture and not rush to move food to fuel.”

Kofi Annan

“An African Green Revolution that doubles or triples the productivity of smallerholder farmers, preserves our biodiversity, and creates rural income will play a catalytic role in ending poverty and hunger.”

Today in pictures



of sustained economic growth and that the continent's exports grew at a faster rate than the world average for 5 years (2001-2005).

Africa has many success stories; we heard about initiatives taken to improve livelihoods and alleviate poverty in Ghana, Malawi and Benin. But these success stories need to be sustained and discussion centred around the need for research into the reasons behind current sustained growth in order to keep up momentum.

Structural change is needed to ensure more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic improvement. And it was stressed that the poor have not necessarily benefited from this recent sustained period of growth.

Africa has to go beyond boosting supply and short-term policies aimed at defusing the current food crisis. It was suggested that CAADP can provide the necessary framework for policy renewal and structural change.

WOMEN ARE THE KEY

If there is going to be one issue that everyone agrees on this week it looks set to be that women are the key to the success of an African Green Revolution.

Kofi Annan stated unequivocally that policies must give priority to women, who make up the majority of farmers in Africa, and throughout the afternoon this position was supported time and again.

Many delegates stressed that listening to farmers in the political process is crucial to progress towards a more sustainable and equitable future for African agriculture, and listening to

farmers means listening to women. The gender equity issue must be at the top of the agenda, cutting across every theme. Governments, donors, farmer's organisations, NGO, must all properly account for women's contribution to agriculture and ensure access to income and control over land.

But a consensus that women are the bedrock of Africa's agriculture future is not enough. How to achieve equity of distribution will be probed in this week's sessions, in particular in one of tomorrow's priority theme sessions, on equity, rights and empowerment.

AFRICAN CONTEXT IS ALL

A Green Revolution in Africa must be grounded firmly in an African context, taking African biodiversity, climates, cultures and peoples into account. So the continent's initiatives must be significantly different to those put in place in Latin America and Asia.

An the many different contexts within Africa must also be considered. That no one-size-fits-all solution will work across the continent was discussed. Whereas Asia's Green Revolution focussed on seeds and fertilisers as the key to growth, some delegates stressed today that it is crucial a wider perspective is taken in Africa.

In fact for some there had already been too much discussion about seeds and fertilisers, and the idea that the African Green Revolution pivots on boosting production was questioned. It was felt this could detract discussions from the bigger picture, taking issues such as better management of water, environmental issues and the political economy of agrarian change into account.

Views and voices

Salome Danso

"Mr Annan's speech was very timely, prompting us to sit up and organise ourselves, because we can do it, considering the rich diversity of Africa's natural resources, the uniqueness we have. Sometimes you need someone to push you, and Mr Annan can draw in the attention of leaders worldwide.

"The role of women is very important. In my country, if you are talking about food security, then you must focus on women. Small-scale farmers and women are the bedrock. It is important to focus on women and how best to empower them, because they are the holders of the domestic economies."

Today in pictures



Conference News Editorial

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