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Background

The Challenge of the World's Hunger and Poverty continue to be a key theme for development agencies and indeed, it is still the theme for the FAO Conference 2005 from which I write this paper and there could be no better setting.

Leaders gathered at the World Food Summit in 1996 committed their countries to cutting hunger in half by the year 2015. A series of International Conferences and Summits during the 1990s identified other major goals and quantified targets with the same time horizon. These were brought together in the Declaration adopted by the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000 and later restated in the form of eight Millennium Development Goals

Goals number 1 and 2 which related to poverty aim to:

- Halve the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day (in purchasing power parity) between 1990 and 2015
- Halve the number of people suffering from hunger by 2015

Global and regional efforts towards meeting the 2015 goals

To facilitate the achievement of the goals, leaders of developed countries undertook to develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financing system to deal comprehensively with the debt problems of the developing countries and in cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies to all. This partnership was reached at the Millennium Summit and further spelled out in concrete terms at;

The March 2002 ministerial meeting on financing development at Monterrey, Mexico
The World Food Summit –five years later in Rome (2002)

The August 2002 World Summit on Sustainable development at Johannesburg, South Africa and further commitment was pledged during the
September 2005 review of the MDG's in New York.

At Monterrey developed countries, Pledged to contribute 0.7 percent of their gross national incomes to foreign aid. By beginning of 2005, five countries had reached this target (Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden). Another six had voiced their commitments, among them Britain whose Prime Minister, has established a high level commission for Africa- Blair commission.

Quite some modest implementation after several committal conferences

At the regional level similar commitments have been declared;

The New Partnership for Africa's Development NEPAD is a pledge by the African leaders to develop a program of action for the redevelopment of the African continent. The goals of NEPAD are to promote accelerated growth and development, to eradicate

widespread and severe poverty and to halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process.

In complete realization of the place of Agriculture in the continent, and acknowledging that the majority of the population depend directly or indirectly on Agriculture, at the 2003 heads of states summit of the African Union, African leaders adopted the Maputo declaration. In this they promised to spend 10 percent of their public expenditure on the Agricultural sector within the next five years. Plans for Agriculture were articulated in two further Summits in 2004.

In spite of these commitments:

Globally, the rate of poverty reduction in 1990-99 was less than one third of that needed to halve poverty in the period 1995-2015, and six times too slow in sub-Saharan Africa. The real value of aid fell sharply between 1988 and 1998. The share of aid to low-income or least-developed countries, which contain over 85% of the poor, has stayed at around 63%. And agricultural aid has fallen, according to IFAD Rural Poverty_Report 2001

Africa in the context of MDGs

It is evident that Africa continues to lag behind in spite of great intentions and initiatives and commissions. The reasons for this have been advanced from, armed conflict, poor governance, Corruption, poor Agricultural production among others. Are there only problems in Africa or are there opportunities for growth and turn round for the people? This presentation seeks to explore what could be done to achieve progress:

African Agriculture

- *Dependency on Agricultural commodities*

Agriculture has been the driving force of the economies of Africa countries. This has been especially the Cocoa, Coffee and Sugar.

In the last three decades, these commodities have suffered from a collapse of international prices leaving the countries unable to balance their national budgets which relied heavily on this foreign exchange. **At the national level even with the diminishing returns of the** commodities with the collapse of World Commodity prices, the governments still expect the Agricultural sector to play the role the commodities played of supporting other sectors of the economy. There has not been recognition that the sector that once offered support now requires support and this is a case of lag of policy to match up the practice.

The lack of value addition to these commodities at the point of production means they do not contribute to the growth of rural areas by creating jobs and being a platform from which other industries and off-farm activities can thrive, this has been a big draw back of farming in Africa where Agriculture is not contributing to the wider sector of rural development as most of the commodities are processed, packaged and handled out of the countries.

Farmers are diversifying to other products and still being encouraged to produce for the market, this is a big conflict where we are thinking of rural people being able to feed themselves and then get out of poverty. It seems to me were are still encouraging another type of commodity which people grow and not even consume and they are at the mercy

of the international market. It is important to start from the provision of food and then move to wealth creation, this will take more than Agriculture to come about as in the rural areas, and the only income is from the agricultural sector. Other services are not available, the same income has to pay for health services, education for the children, allow for recreation and purchase the non-farm family needs.

I would like to contend therefore, African Agriculture is a very rich agriculture, from where everything is taken and nothing is given back

- ***The structural adjustment of the 1990's*** these proposed that government should get out of non-essential activities. The first ones to be dropped were the Agricultural extension services, public research and livestock services in many countries of Africa.

The marketing boards which assisted farmers small-holder farmers in marketing their produce were blamed for all sorts of evils especially corruption. They were therefore set up for privatization and farmers were left stranded with no service provision and no market for their produce.

The assumption was that there was a private sector to take up these roles, which was not there and a big vacuum was created. Many small farmers were not able to continue with their work as they depended highly on these public services.

It is important to note that in most Countries were the countries were colonizes farming was in the hands of the colonial masters and the indigenous farmers were mostly emerging farmers who needed this kind of support to continue their production. The small-holder farmers have not studied agronomy and are genius in what they are doing **We all know they require this support but have kept our hands off, I would therefore propose;**

The Poor Performance of the African Agriculture is man-made.

One of the prepositions of economists towards getting the developing countries out of this crisis and poor performance is by increasing trade through global free trade.

According to free trade theory, the prosperity of all participating economies increases if every country exports those products and goods which it can produce most efficiently and import goods which can be produced more cheaply elsewhere. According to the economic theory of “comparative advantage”, a country benefits from external trade even if it can produce every good more cheaply than any other country. Free trade also results in marginal locations being squeezed out of production. These locations can be countries or regions. (World Bank)

The World trade Organization (WTO) is the international organisation committed to promoting global free trade. Under the WTO complicated and complex rules, provisions exist for special treatment and protection mechanisms, especially in the Agriculture sector. The developing countries have neither followed this process closely nor do they have relevant expertise to interpret them for their benefit. As every country pursues its own interests when trade issues are at stake the developing countries have little or no space for success with these rules.

The success of this process has been dumping into national markets and diminishing the access of these markets local producers. Traders have taken the place of farmers and have

firms in exporting and importing countries all over the world and are therefore able to buy their produce at very low prices.

The discussion today sets to examine the solutions to the African Agriculture.

Proposals have been made for a green revolution as the case of India.

To make any progress;

- The multifunctional nature of agriculture must be recognized
- Participation by the actors: The development of Africa has been left to governments with the citizen taking on little mainstream participation
- Making sure people meet their *food requirements first proposal develop one stable crop that the people use as food, develop research packages to improve yields, develop packaging, add value, process, develop other uses for the same for example cassava in Ghana. Work with the farmers using the local knowledge let the local be the best for the local people!!*
- To achieve this, institutions will be necessary; farmers banks, Public research, Institutions of higher learning, farmers institutions especially cooperatives and farmers associations management issues and participation of private sector.
- Ownership of the programs through capacity building and participation of the actors in decision making.
- Exploitation of the local Knowledge upon which new technologies should be developed
- The people describing what needs to be done are talking to themselves without the actors, The ones advancing theories are not the actors neither are they in a common forum
- The right to food for citizen should be a human right and governments to be held accountable when people die out of hunger
- Trade: Multinationals have taken over trade on the world scene and they are busy pushing for further opening of borders for all countries, this is KEY to killing the small producers who are not able to compete in the market and need protection of their local markets from dumping.
- Farmers organisations should take over the role of Multinationals in dealing with Agricultural Products
- Women in Africa have been left out of mainstream development for different reasons, this is a main reason for slow progress as When half of the human kind is not utilized the system results in Paralysis (Mahatma Ghadi 1946)

Recommendations

Farmers in developing countries should be able to save guard their Agricultural development by protecting their markets. All major economies have had time to develop through Agriculture out of it (with most of them having only 2% of their population in Agriculture to date) this process while it can be enhanced today with better technologies should be given time for developing countries as well

- The elimination of visible export subsidies, as well as the establishment of strong disciplines on export credits and program food aid, a quickly as possible.
- Re open international commodity debate in view of getting stable prices

- Should the WTO negotiations yield any result then the developing countries should have a development box to be able to have the right mix of policies to safeguard their farmers.

What then is the way forward?

Agricultural growth in Africa is essential to move the wheel of growth and get the majority of the population out of poverty. Agriculture must grow and help develop the rural areas where it is found and open it up for other no-farm activities.

There is need to develop a mix of technologies with the farmers being involved to develop especially the staples that are more tolerant to weather and pests.

Research agenda needs to be varied and to meet the needs of the farmers.

The development of any strategies needs to be in an integrated approach with possibility of processing, and getting the surplus to the market. Agriculture should be seen as a source of food and a tool for Wealth creation, the possibility of selling in the local market is therefore paramount.

This will call for two things, the right support policies by the government and the possibility to safeguard the local market and the availability of productive resources and usually the biggest hindrance for small holder farmer is availability for financial means.

The third need is of Institutions, small holder farmers will always be loose as long as they operate alone, it is therefore important for all development workers to encourage the process of institutions building.

In conclusion, it is the responsibility of the people and their governments to get people out of poverty. The private sector will not normally share the views of getting people out of poverty. I would therefore like to submit that at the lower end of Poverty Governments and Development partners need to play a key role and bring these communities where they will be of interest to the private sector and not vice-versa.

I would like to retort there is a way for Africa but we must move close and work with the people.

Are we saying one thing and doing the other we have professed to half the number of those hungry by the year 2015 are all our energies in the same direction, or are the rich in perpetual exploitation of the poor? Is there a genuine concern to get people out of poverty, then it can be done for we all know a what to do, but the issue of provision of services, health care, education to the very poor has become a highly academic issue.

We know what needs to be done we need to create jobs in the rural Africa with a vibrant Agriculture; it has happened before, all industrialized countries followed this route, the poor are at the Mercy of their governments and the very rich. We can do it if we really want.

References

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