DEVELOPMENT POLICY FORUM

THE GLOBAL DEBATE ON DEVELOPMENT

INVESTING IN AFRICA
THE CHALLENGE OF AGRICULTURE

Spring 2014

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INVESTING IN AFRICA
THE CHALLENGE OF AGRICULTURE

Report of the Development Policy Forum (DPF) High-level Dinner Debate

Spring 2014

Brussels

Rapporteur: David Koczij
Publisher: Geert Cami
Director: Nathalie Furrer
Programme Manager: Lindsay Digneffe
Photographer: Thierry Roge
Design & Layout: Cristina Frauca

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INTRODUCTION

With the African Union (AU) having declared 2014 "The Year of Agriculture"[1], attention has shifted to the opportunities and challenges in African agriculture. "Agriculture is Africa's lifeline," said moderator Shada Islam, Director of Policy at *Friends of Europe*, at the Development Policy Forum (DPF) High Level Dinner Debate, held in Brussels on the eve of the European Union (EU) – Africa Summit. "It holds the key to the future and yet is not performing as well as it should."

"Agriculture is Africa's lifeline. It holds the key to the future and yet is not performing as well as it should."

Shada Islam, Director of Policy at *Friends of Europe*

Developing the agricultural sector is now a priority for over thirty African countries, said Andris Piebalgs, EU Commissioner for Development. What is missing most from the equation is money and support, in particular for the smallholder farmers that create a great majority of Africa's agricultural output.

The EU has earmarked 8.2bn euro in official development assistance (ODA) for Africa's agricultural sector over the next seven years, he said. These funds will be coordinated with national master plans and much remains to be done in terms of

[1] 2014 Year of Agriculture on the AU's website: http://pages.au.int/caadpyoa

determining how they should be used. It is especially important that the private sector becomes a major investor in Africa's agriculture.

"ODA (official development assistance) can be used to support political processes," Piebalgs said, "but without mobilising private sector investments, there will be missed opportunities in terms of knowledge and technology transfers. We need to find the right synergies so that we can really create new value."

"Without mobilising private sector investments, there will be missed opportunities in terms of knowledge and technology transfers."

Andris Piebalgs, EU Commissioner for Development

The economic and social gains from agriculture in Africa are not commensurate with the over two-thirds of the population engaged in the sector, underlined Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission.

A myriad of challenges face African farmers, policymakers and their partners in development including poor soil quality, climate change, non-cohesive policies and above all, outdated technology and fragmented and under-developed infrastructure.

As a result of these and other challenges, African farmers sometimes produce yields as low as half the global average, and wastage can be as high as 40% due to poor transport and logistic networks. "If we cannot transform the agricultural sector in Africa to improve yields and reduce waste for our farmers, there is no transformation possible in our approach to combating poverty and malnutrition," said Mwencha.

This transformation will require not only commitment but implementation, and beyond that, action, added Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture.

> "If we cannot transform the agricultural sector in Africa to improve yields and reduce waste for our farmers, there is no transformation possible in our approach to combating poverty and malnutrition."
>
> Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission

"Over 700 million people are employed in the agricultural sector in Africa," she said. "If we want economic growth and development in Africa, we have to put more resources towards agriculture."

Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in 2003, the policy environment in the sector has become more coherent across the continent, resulting in annual 4% growth, noted Mwencha. Great advances have been made in overcoming the silo mentality in policy-making, including farmers in the discussion and demanding better donor coordination.

"We need all actors to get their act together to shift from a donor mentality to an investment mentality and change our agricultural sector."

Erastus Mwencha Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission

He added: "African and international partners in the private sector must be mobilised. We need all actors to get their act together to shift from a donor mentality to an investment mentality and change our agricultural sector."

Creating this value means including the farmers in the discussion, noted Mwencha. Responsible investment should be geared towards the needs of smallholder farmers and to including and creating access for youth and women.

"Donors can only help to enhance existing processes. African ownership of these processes is a clear prerequisite to transforming the agricultural sector."

Andris Piebalgs, EU Commissioner for Development

In the end, transforming Africa's agricultural sector will require close cooperation between policymakers, farmers, donors, and private sector partners to enhance African ownership of the necessary initiatives, indicated Islam.

Assessing the needs of Africa's agricultural sector

Investing in African agriculture must begin with clear intentions on the base issues, noted Piebalgs. "At the end of the day, donors can only help to enhance existing processes. African ownership of these processes is a clear prerequisite to transforming the agricultural sector."

The assembled experts outlined the main areas that require attention. These include arranging better access to technology, markets, and infrastructure for smallholdings, as well as focussing on developing vocational education, skills, and attracting young Africans to the agricultural sector.

"We need to choose the right investments but not in terms of amount. We need to consider what the right areas to invest in are." indicated Ishmael Sunga, Chief Executive Officer of the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU).

For example, one participant noted that almost 70% of farmers in West Africa lack modern farm machinery and still depend on manual methods. Furthermore, African smallholder farmers are behind their global counterparts in irrigation, which exists in less than 5% of arable land, as well as access to seeds and fertilisers.

"We need large-scale private investment and access to simple technology.
However, what is produced requires infrastructure. It also needs to be transported, processed, and stored."

Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO of the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT)

Investments are also lacking in key drivers such as communications technology, transport, logistics, and infrastructure. "We need large-scale private investment

and access to simple technology – seeds, fertilisers, agronomic processes to improve production, and so on," stressed Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO of the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT). "However, what is produced requires infrastructure. It also needs to be transported, processed, and stored."

Education is a major area in need of more investment. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) African Economic Outlook 2013, only 2% of higher education students in Africa are in agricultural studies, noted Jan Rieländer, Economist in the Africa Unit at the OECD Development Centre. While focusing on attracting youth to agriculture remains a great challenge for the agricultural sector, more emphasis must also be placed on developing vocational training.

Inclusiveness in African agriculture

Collectively, the largest investors in agriculture in Africa are smallholder farmers, noted Steve Muchiri, Executive Director, Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF). He added that "smallholder farmers are essential. They feed the cities, the rural areas, and even export to the EU. It is important to not wish these people away when considering investing in African agriculture."

National, regional, and pan-African farmer associations are working together to create business plans in all areas of agriculture, from crops, to agro-forestry, to fisheries. Successful investment initiatives undertaken by these associations – for example grain farmers in Uganda or coffee growers in Ethiopia – demonstrate the importance of the role of farmers in investing in complete value chains.

"What we actually need is to harness some of the opportunities before us," he indicated. "Investing in farmer-led initiatives is a good way to stimulate the transformation of African agriculture."

The future of agriculture in Africa depends on including farmers in the discussion. Furthermore, Mwencha indicated, developments in human resources in the sector must be considered, in particular with regards to education and vocational training.

"Human resources are an important element in the move towards agribusiness," noted Rhoda Peace. "We must strive to change the mindset of young people who see agriculture as unattractive. If we make it attractive, they will come."

"We must strive to change the mindset of young people who see agriculture as unattractive. If we make it attractive, they will come.

Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture

There is an increasing need for managers trained in agribusiness, she added. The EU has been supporting educational initiatives to address this need, with funds and technical knowledge being offered to regional agricultural universities to build information networks between universities aimed at changing the mindset of young people.

In order to make agricultural education more attractive, the agricultural sector must first be made more productive, through more investments and development assistance, said Mwencha.

A further possibility for EU support for educational initiatives is the Erasmus+ Programme, which has two strengths in this area: Opportunities for exchange students and capacity building between universities. Over the next seven years, 2bn euro will be made available, indicated Piebalgs.

“At this stage, the possibilities for the Erasmus+ Programme are very open,” he said. “If potential recipients among our African partners insist that agricultural education should be a priority, there should be no difficulty in accommodating them. African ownership and demand is very important in determining where to concentrate our resources.”

Education also means educating those involved in crafting and controlling policy in the field, noted Rhoda Peace. The AU Commission, through the process of adoption of CAADP compacts by a majority of African nations, has been working on demonstrating the value of investing in agriculture and the possibilities for both governments and farmers.

Moreover, through the Land Policy Initiative [2], there exists a policy framework at the national level to help smallholder farmers, and women in particular, to access and develop land for agriculture.

Jurgen Haslestad, Yara International, Modibo Traoré, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Ishmael Sunga, Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions

[2] The Land Policy Initiative is a joint programme of the AU Commission, Africa Development Bank, and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, aimed at increasing land use for development. More information: http://www.uneca.org/lpi

Women farmers, who often face challenges in some of Africa's male-dominated societies, are a special focus for African policymakers. "Women need capital to be able to invest in their agricultural future," she stressed. "To address this, most African countries have implemented micro-financing schemes aimed at helping those women and small-scale farmers gain access to credit."

Blending loans and grants

The number one problem in agriculture development is access to financing, stressed Piebalgs. While ODA can be a powerful tool for development, problems arise when funds are earmarked for goals that fail to properly address the needs of recipients.

"If farmers gain access to stable financial resources, they will know what to do with them," he said. "The grant projects that we support as donors do not allow them this freedom."

In order to mobilise the necessary finances, blending loans and subsidies will create greater returns than subsidies alone, noted Jean-Luc François, Head of the Agriculture, Rural Development, and Biodiversity Division at Agence Française de Développement (AFD). "We must make efforts to engage local financial institutions, banks, and micro-financing organisations to benefit the thousands of small agribusinesses that create jobs and grow food to feed urban populations," he said.

Though blending loans and grants could be a viable option for agricultural development, opinions within the EU institutions remain divided. Commissioner Piebalgs noted that, in consultations with the European Parliament, he was faced with scepticism.

"We need more concrete examples of blending being successful," he said. "The challenge with grants is that we are not in business. We seek results but not profits. Let us start with some clear, tangible projects with farmers needing financial support to determine if there is interest from partners to support market-based investments."

Though the process can be complicated, blending offers opportunities that neither grants nor loans could on their own, said Roberto Ridolfi, Director for Sustainable Growth and Development at the European Commission Directorate General for Development and Cooperation (DEVCO). While it is difficult to provide grants directly to farmers and other beneficiaries, loans risk causing greater problems in the case of unpredictable setbacks to the farmer such as drought or adverse climate events.

In an example of a positive experience with blending, DEVCO began running a project in Uganda to provide equity finance for farmers three years ago. The initial grant was provided and a fund targeting agribusiness was established. In the intervening years, the original grant has been leveraging other financing possibilities, with, for example, the Ugandan pension authority investing in it. This financing structure has the added benefit of using African savings to invest in the future of African agriculture, he noted.

“Finance is the way forward,” he concluded. “We do not need to teach African farmers what to do, they know what to do. What we can do is give them the means to accomplish it.”

Roberto Ridolfi, European Commission

The future of private sector investment in African agriculture

"Growth in the agricultural sector improves the food supply and is by far the most effective way of reducing poverty," noted Jurgen Haslestad, CEO of Yara International. "Investment is needed to create this growth and there is an increasing consensus that the private sector, through public-private partnerships (PPPs), must be involved."

The partnership platform Grow Africa attracts investments that aim to support policies defined by African countries through CAADP and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Through this platform, increasing numbers of companies are undertaking market-based development projects, spurred on by returns on investment, he said.

"There is a movement towards making agriculture a real business in Africa. There are many areas in which the private sector is invited to focus their investments."

Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture

With over 40 countries having adopted the CAADP framework, credible investment plans are being put into action through Grow Africa and cooperation between the public and private sectors in investment opportunities, but also in streamlining policies.

"There is a movement towards making agriculture a real business in Africa," stressed Rhoda Peace, adding that challenges in the sector limit actions by small-scale farmers, who are generally risk-averse. "Farmers cannot invest in a new direction if the prospect is difficult or if there is no value chain in place. There are many areas in which the private sector is invited to focus their investments."

Grow Africa
2014

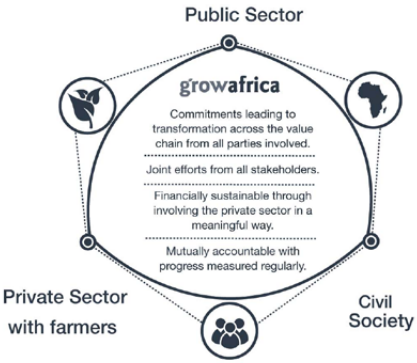
growafrica

The Grow Africa partnership was co-founded in 2011 by the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Agency and the World Economic Forum to galvanize greater private-sector investment and financing for African agriculture, in support of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP).

As an African-owned, country-led, multi-stakeholder platform, Grow Africa seeks to mobilize private-sector investment aligned to individual Country Investment Plan priorities.
During the last three years, Grow Africa has been instrumental in prompting private-sector commitments totaling over USD 5 billion for specific agriculture investments in nine countries.

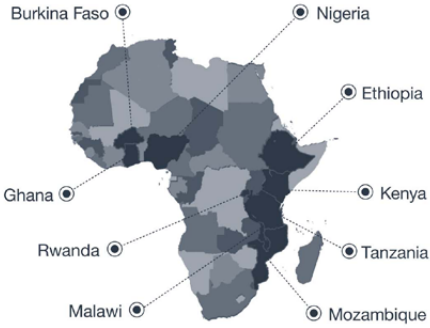
COMMITED PARTNERS

We catalyse collaboration between partners committed to African agriculture.



CURRENT PARTNER COUNTRIES

In principle, participation in Grow Africa is open to all CAADP countries that demonstrate readiness to attract investment aligned to a national strategy for agricultural transformation.



2014 Africa's Year of Agriculture and Food Security

The continent's leaders will renew their commitment to transforming agriculture as

- driver of job creation
- improved incomes
- access to nutritious food

Over the next decade, we believe Africa can not only feed itself, but also establish itself as a breadbasket for the world.

NEPAD TRANSFORMING AFRICA

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE STATE OF THE WORLD

As Africa's regional economic integration continues, the perspectives for private investment are broadening. Furthermore, as Grow Africa gains momentum and agricultural development becomes an even more important pillar in the EU-Africa relationship, both ODA and private sector investments will be drawn to partner countries that offer the greatest returns.

"The Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania is public-private partnership in motion. Tanzanians have ownership of this process and as a result are 118% self-sufficient in terms of agricultural productivity."

Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO of the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT)

That being said "there are many obstacles still to overcome concerning PPPs," Piebalgs stressed. "There are a lot of good intentions but not as much movement as one would expect. The private sector is in one boat and the public sector in another and so far, I am not feeling any pressure to move towards any partnerships."

"The European Commission is indeed not working that much with the private sector," noted Haslestad. "Farming is a business and we need industry input throughout the entire agricultural value chain. This is where the European Commission should be focussing on partnerships with the private sector."

One clear example of a successful PPP is the SAGCOT, which came about in 2008 as a result of discussions between Tanzania's government and private sector representatives, noted Kirenga. The result of these discussions was the policy of 'Agriculture First' – (*Kilimo Kwanza*) in Swahili.

Kilimo Kwanza is a doctrine that positions agricultural development as the key driver of poverty reduction, economic growth, and security. With this perspective as the cornerstone of agricultural development in Tanzania, the committee formed of both local and international private sector representatives and the local government has created and implemented the SAGCOT.

"The Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania is public-private partnership in motion," he said. "Tanzanians have ownership of this process and as a result are 118% self-sufficient in terms of agricultural productivity."

Conclusion

The development of Africa's agricultural sector is essential to combating poverty and ensuring greater health for the entire continent. In order to tackle the wide range of challenges facing the sector, Africa and its global partners in the field of development need to streamline policies and direct development programmes towards market-based investment opportunities with partners from the private sector.

With support for PPPs growing through initiatives such as CAADP's Grow Africa programme, the policy environment for investments needs to be better adapted to facilitate synergies between farmers and investors.

EU development agencies and the European Commission must continue exploring other avenues of financing in terms of blending loans and grants and in maintaining focused ODA.

"The intention of the Commission is to honestly support competitiveness and internal strengths while continuing to deliver resources to Africa's developing countries," concluded Piebalgs. "The discussion between the EU and Africa should focus on increasing ODA and supporting investments in all sectors, especially agriculture."

The challenges to overcome remain access to technology and markets for the large proportion of smallholder farmers that make up the agricultural sector in Africa, as well as guiding policies, particularly in education, to open up and increase the attractiveness of the sector to young people and women.

Moving forward, the AU and African national governments, together with the EU and other global partners, need to concentrate on including all actors, especially smallholder farmers and their representatives, by inviting them to the table and involving them in the debate.

"We must keep in mind that we are talking about huge opportunities in Africa," concluded Islam. "What we are looking for are fresh perspectives on the EU-Africa relationship, shifting away from the donor-recipient relations of the past and exploring ways to work together as equal partners."

ANNEX I – Programme

INVESTING IN AFRICA:
The challenge of agriculture

Agriculture is Africa's lifeline – and holds the key to the continent's future growth and development. Increasing Africa's agricultural productivity is essential to eliminate hunger and ensure food security. With 65-70 % of Africans employed in the sector, agriculture is also Africa's largest generator of jobs. Although crucial to Africa's economic transformation, agriculture across the continent is in dire need of investments in input and infrastructure as well as stronger and more effective policies to boost productivity, including for small farmers, encourage research, open up new employment opportunities for Africa's growing number of young people and establish a thriving agri-food sector. AU declares 2014 the international year of agriculture and food security. What is holding back African agriculture? Are African governments and their development partners doing enough to unlock the full potential of agriculture through sustained multi-sectorial interventions? Has the African Union established an agenda for revitalizing African agriculture that goes beyond declarations? Is the CAADP established by AU an effective agenda for revitalizing African agriculture, beyond declarations? What role is there for the private sector in ensuring sustainable and inclusive African agriculture and establishing global production networks? Are measures being taken to improve research in the sector? In which way does Africa's agricultural sector benefit from initiatives such as 'Grow Africa'? With women making up more than half of Africa's farmers and producing up to 90% of Africa's food supply, are there special policies in place to help women farmers? What is the role of information technologies in helping African farmers?

Geoffrey Kirenga	Chief Executive Officer of the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT)
Erastus Mwencha	Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission
Andris Piebalgs	EU Commissioner for Development
Tumusiime Rhoda Peace	AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture

Moderated by Shada Islam, Director of Policy at *Friends of Europe*

Lucy Muchoki, Kenya Agribusiness and Agro-industry Alliance (KAAA), **Geoffrey Kirenga**, Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) and **Arne Cartridge**, World Economic Forum

Jean-Luc François, Agence Française de Développement (AFD)

ANNEX II – List of participants

Chris Muyunda, Chief Technical Adviser, PanAAC

Isabelle Adam, Secretary General, European Cocoa Association (ECA)

Yemi Akinbamijo, Executive Director, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)

Onallo Akpa, Chairman, FCDI

Emily Alpert, Deputy Director, Agriculture for Impact, Imperial College London

Jean-François Arnal, Représentant de l'AFD auprès des institutions européennes, Agence Française de Développement (AFD)

Maud Arnould, Member of Cabinet, Pan-African Issues, EU-Africa Strategy, Food, Agriculture & Water, European Commission, Cabinet of EU Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs

Marcel Beukeboom, Head of Cluster Food & Nutrition Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands

Charles Bois d'Enghien, Adjoint du Directeur général, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium

Anna Burylo, Head of Operations, European Commission, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy

Geert Cami, Co-Founder & Director, *Friends of Europe Les Amis de l'Europe*

Cecily Carmona, Principal, A.T. Kearney

Arne Cartridge, Chief Executive Officer, Grow Africa, World Economic Forum

Céline Charvériat, Director of Advocacy and Campaigns, Oxfam International EU Advocacy Office

Luc Christiaensen, Senior Economist for Africa, The World Bank

Sean de Cleene, Senior Vice President, Global Initiatives, Strategy and Business Development, Yara International

Laurent Demuynck, Chief Executive Office, Kigali Farms, Mundi Center

Mohamed Lamine, Dhaoui, Director of the Business, Investment and Technology Services Branch, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna International Centre

Lindsay Digneffe, Programme Manager, *Friends of Europe Les Amis de l'Europe*

Andrea Engel, Brussels Representative, International Finance Corporation (IFC), European Stakeholder Liaison

Paul Engel, Director, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)

Natalia Federighi de Cuello, Director Public Affairs & Institutional Relations, Yara International

Horst Fischer, Director, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Jean-Luc François, Chef de Division, Agriculture, Rural Development and Biodiversity, Agence Française de Développement (AFD)

Matt Freeman, Director, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

Paul Frix, Director Ad Interim, Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE)

Nathalie Furrer, Director, *Friends of Europe Les Amis de l'Europe*

Frazer Goodwin, Senior Advocacy Adviser, Save the Children, EU Advocacy Office

Michael Hailu, Director, Technical Centre for Agricultural & Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA)

Jean-Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit, Rural Develoment, Food Security, Nutrition, European Commission, Directorate General for Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid (DEVCO)

Jacob Hansen, Director General, Fertilizers Europe

Fatima Haram Acyl, African Union (AU) Commissioner for Trade and Industry

Jorgen Haslestad, Chief Executive Officer, Yara International

Anthonia Ifeanyi-Nwanze, Special Assistant to the Deputy Chairperson, African Union Commission, African Union Headquarters

Shada Islam, Director of Policy, *Friends of Europe Les Amis de l'Europe*

Jacek Jankowski, Ambassador, Embassy of Poland to Ethiopia

Gwilym Jones, Member of Cabinet, External Relations, European Neighbourhood Policy, Development, Aid, Trade, Internal Market, Justice & Home, European Commission, Cabinet of EU Commissioner for Agriculture & Rural Development Dacian Ciolos

Leah Kasera Oduor, Associate Director, Head of Government Relations, Grow Africa, World Economic Forum

Geoffrey Kirenga, Chief Executive Officer, Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT), Ground Floor, Tanzania Private Sector Foundation (TPSF)

Michel Lavollay, Founder, Public Private Partnership Europe

Huub Löffler, Director Wageningen International, Wageningen University & Research Centre

Dušan Lovre, Yara International

Francisco Mantero, President, Portuguese Association for Economic Development and Cooperation (ELO), Edificio AIP

Mothae Anthony Maruping, African Union (AU) Commissioner for Economic Affairs

Cristina Miranda Gozalvez, International Affairs Officer, European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development

Leonard Mizzi, Head of Unit, ACP, Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, South Africa, UN/FAO and G8/G20, European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development

Steve Muchiri, Executive Director, Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF)

Lucy Muchoki, Chief Executive Officer, Kenya Agribusiness and Agro-industry Alliance (KAAA)

Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson, African Union Commission

Valerie Ndaruzaniye, President, Global Water Institute

David Norman, Senior Manager, Sustainable Development Policy, SABMiller

Adam Nyman, Director, Debating Europe

Bernhard Pacher, Chief Executive Officer, Adcon Telemetry

Christian Pallière, Director, Agriculture and Environment, Fertilizers Europe

Monique Pariat, Deputy Director General, Bilateral and Multinational Relations, European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development

Carolina Peláez, Minister Counsellor, Mission of Colombia to the EU

Bernard Petit, Consultant, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, London Office

Andris Piebalgs, European Commissioner for Development

Francesco Rampa, Programme Manager - ECDPM Food Security Programme, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)

Patricia Reilly, Member of Cabinet, Health and Consumer Protection, Biotechnology, Agriculture and Food, Maritime Research, European Commission, Cabinet of EU Commissioner for Research & Innovation Máire Geoghegan-Quinn

Bernard Rey, Deputy Head of Unit, Food security, Rural Development and Nutrition, European Commission, Directorate General for Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid (DEVCO)

Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission, African Union Headquarters

Roberto Ridolfi, Director, Sustainable Growth and Development, European Commission, Directorate General for Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid (DEVCO)

Jan Rieländer, Economist, Africa Unit, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Development Centre

Ulrich Sabel-Koschella, Head of Key Account Management and Co-financing Africa, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Zita Schellekens, Public Affairs Consultant, Heineken

Olle Schmidt MEP, Member, European Parliament, Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

Shachi Sharma, Manager, Market Development, Syngenta Crop Protection

Guy Stinglhamber, Director of the Programme, COLEACP - PIP (Pesticides Initiative Programme)

Ishmael Sunga, Chief Executive Officer, Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)

Modibo Traoré, FAO Representative to African Union, to ECA and to Ethiopia, Sub regional Coordinator for East Africa, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Office in Ethiopia

Ben Valk, Global Head Multilateral Development Banking, Rabobank

Michel Verhulst, President, Caritas International

Patrick Walsh, Director, ACP Investment Facility, European Investment Bank (EIB)

Marius Wanders, Director, World Vision International, EU Representation Office

Ewald Wermuth, Director International Public affairs, IDH

Claudia Wiedey-Nippold, Head of Division, Horn of Africa, East Africa and Indian Ocean, European External Action Service (EEAS), Directorate for Africa

Yoichiro Yamada, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan to Belgium

Aiichiro Yamamoto, Associate Fellow & Representative of JICA to the EU, *Friends of Europe Les Amis de l'Europe*

Christophe Yvetot, Representative to the European Union, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Friends of Europe – Les Amis de l'Europe
4, Rue de la Science, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel.: +32 (0) 2 893 98 17 – Fax: +32 2 893 98 29
Email: info@friendsofeurope.org
Website: www.friendsofeurope.org

With the support of the Europe for Citizens programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with the support of the European Commission.
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