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Focus on Africa



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Home grown school feeding programme targets most vulnerable groups in Africa

by Prof. Wiseman Nkuhlu, Chairman of the NEPAD Steering Committee and Head of the NEPAD Secretariat, speaking at the World Food Programme Executive Board meeting in Rome, 11-14 October 2004

NEPAD and the World Food Programme signed a memorandum of understanding in November 2003. Over the course of the last year our cooperation has resulted in a Continental Food System Review and the development of the Home Grown School Feeding Programme.

Africa remains the only region in the world where per capita food production has fallen over the past 40 years. About 200 million people are chronically undernourished in sub-Saharan Africa and up to 30 million people face starvation in any given year.



Only 15% of people in Sub-Saharan Africa live in countries that are on track in achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for nutrition.

To reverse this trend, African Heads of State and Government have placed agriculture at the top of the development agenda in Africa.

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) has been endorsed by the African Heads of State and Government as a framework for the restoration of agricultural growth, food security and rural development in Africa.

The Home Grown School Feeding Programme is one of the programmes, under CAADP, which has been identified by NEPAD as having an immediate impact on food insecurity in Africa with the potential to contribute to long-term development goals.

NEPAD recognises that priority should be given to improving food security in Africa as a pre-requisite for sustainable development. We also believe that a holistic approach to combating food insecurity is essential if we are to achieve the MDG of cutting hunger by half by 2015.

If we are to achieve NEPAD's vision of an agriculture-led development on the continent and the objective of 6% agricultural growth, we will have to address food emergencies and malnutrition, increase agriculture productivity and eliminate demand side constraints.

The Home Grown School Feeding Programme not only targets the most vulnerable groups in Africa, but also has the potential to expand local demand and stimulate production by smallholder farmers.

If we could feed our school children with wholesome meals made from food grown and processed in our own countries, we would be providing 50 million children with adequate nourishment, we would be stimulating agricultural productivity, and we would have gone some way to addressing demand side constraints.

In addition there are the substantial economic benefits from:

- improved school enrolment, attendance and student performance through the provision of nutritious meals,
- the creation of local jobs and market opportunities through the local purchasing of products.

As the name signifies, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is in essence about changing Africa's future through the creation of new relationships, both within Africa and between Africa and the rest of the world. The Home Grown School Feeding Programme is an example of this New Partnership in action.

Coordinated by NEPAD, agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the Millennium Hunger Task Force, United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Bank, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and World Health Organisation (WHO) are cooperating on the programme.

Another strength of the programme is the ownership and financial commitment which is required from the implementing countries.

NEPAD facilitated the development of the programme by the WFP and the Millennium Hunger Task Force.

Uganda and Ghana were the first countries to prepare a clear plan for implementation at the national level. The NEPAD Secretariat facilitated the preparation of a bankable project proposal for Uganda with the support of the WFP. As a result the Government of Uganda is expanding its school feeding programme over the next five years (2005-2009) to cover 2.5 million students.

Other countries have shown great interest in the programme. Mali has submitted a proposal, Senegal, Nigeria and Ethiopia have asked for support from WFP to develop their own programmes.

The NEPAD Secretariat will continue to advocate for the programme among other NEPAD member countries. In addition the NEPAD Secretariat will mobilise financial support to complement the contribution made by the implementing countries.

If the global commitment for development is to bear fruit, the continued support of our development partners will be essential, as will their commitment to changing their way of doing business in Africa.

To ensure the successful implementation of the Home Grown School Feeding programme, development partners will have to increase cash contributions and reduce "in kind" contributions, so as to stimulate local production.

African countries will have to set up transparent and effective governance structures at the national and regional levels, take ownership of these programmes, commit their own resources, facilitate private sector participation and provide the necessary support to schools and farming communities.

To achieve the goals we have set ourselves we must be willing to find innovative solutions to poverty and hunger. We need to implement more programmes like this one, which will provide immediate relief, whilst ensuring long-term development.

NEPAD will continue to support and facilitate programmes and initiatives that address the entire spectrum of agricultural productivity, to achieve food security and agricultural growth.

NEPAD food-reserve study gets go-ahead for action

THE go-ahead has been given to the recommendations put forward in the NEPAD study to explore further options for food-security reserve systems in Africa. The study, commissioned by NEPAD, was carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP) in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the World Bank, the European Union, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), individual countries concerned and the African Regional Economic Communities (REC).

Following the go-ahead, a process must now be established to ensure buy-in by African countries and support by potential partners to ensure that the recommendations in the study report are implemented.

NEPAD will lead this effort, in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities and its partners, including the WFP.

The NEPAD study noted that Africa has suffered from increasingly serious food crises over the last three decades as a result of natural and man-made disasters and the growing impoverishment of the rural population.

The combination of drought, civil strife, poverty and the impact of HIV/AIDS has resulted in a high rate of undernourishment among Africans: over 40 percent of the total population, especially women and children, experience chronic food insecurity. Among children, malnutrition is responsible for very high rates of stunting and infant mortality.

African leaders decided to take action to reverse this trend. At the second summit meeting of the African Union in Maputo in July 2003, African Heads of State and Governments resolved "to ensure the establishment of regional food-reserve systems, including food stocks, linked to Africa's own production, and the development of policies and strategies under the African Union and Regional Economic Communities, to fight hunger and poverty in Africa".

The mandate given for the NEPAD study was to focus on food-reserve systems, based on a review of the origins and operational experiences of eight sample countries: in the Sahel, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger; in Southern Africa, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia; and in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia and the Sudan.

It draws lessons from these experiences that could enhance the effectiveness of existing and future national food-reserve systems in supporting food security policies.

Main conclusions of the study are:

- All African countries would benefit from clear food-security policies that (i) provide food safety-nets for chronically food-insecure people, (ii) envision special relief programmes in the event of food emergencies (iii) explain the roles of domestic food production, food trade and food reserves in maintaining adequate supplies, and (iv) clearly specify the roles to be played by governments, farmers and the private sector.
- Domestic food production will continue to be the major source of food supply throughout Africa for the foreseeable future; actions to improve productivity and production performance will therefore be crucial for the success of any food-security policy.
- Countries have a variety of options for maintaining supplies when harvests are poor and for managing supplies destined for beneficiaries of safety-net or emergency food-relief programmes; these range from complete reliance on trade to relatively large physical reserves complemented by financial reserves and measures to promote development of domestic food markets.
- If an option that involves holding physical reserves is preferred, a number of measures have to be put in place, including: (i) compatible food-security, market-development and trade policies; (ii) credible early-warning and food-security information systems; (iii) suitably located and well

maintained transport, storage and communications infrastructures; (iv) clear stock-management and accounting procedures; (v) trained staff; and (vi) adequate funding arrangements. A system that meets all these conditions is referred to as an integrated food-security reserve system. Mali's Programme pour la restructuration du marché des céréales is given as the best example of an integrated food-reserve system reviewed in the course of the study.

- The Ethiopian Emergency Food Security Reserve is seen as one of the best current examples of an emergency food-security reserve system.
- Action at regional level could complement national food-security policies and reserve systems in the areas of market information, early warning, assessments of food security and food needs, facilitation of cross-border and intra-regional trade, and emergency preparedness and response. Platform for National and Regional Action.

The NEPAD study outlines a platform for national and regional action:

National Physical Reserves

It is recommended that African governments with a record of food insecurity consider the establishment of emergency food-security reserves where appropriate if they have not done so already.

- Emergency reserve stocks should be sufficient to meet urgent food needs resulting from emergency-induced food shortages for up to three months.
- Chronic food needs among poor and vulnerable populations should be met through programmes designed for that purpose. National food-reserve stocks can be rotated through such safety-net programmes.
- Competent and experienced independent bodies should be mobilised or established to provide policy guidance and manage food reserves. Political interference in decision-making should be avoided.
- Staff with skills appropriate to managing stocks and keeping accurate account of stock movements should be mobilised or recruited. There should be an incentive structure to retain them and ensure a high standard of performance.

Complementary National Measures

The needs for complementary national resources are as follows:

- Physical reserves should have financial components for purchasing urgently needed food from places close to the area of operation where there are surpluses, and for covering management and logistics costs.
- National early-warning and food-security information systems should be established or strengthened to provide reserve managers with credible and timely information about harvest prospects, potential food shortages and relief food needs of the vulnerable population.
- Private stock-holding should be encouraged through measures such as promoting greater use of traditional on-farm storage technologies with low rates of post-harvest loss, promoting pilot schemes to provide farmers with credit against warehouse receipts for stored grain and encouraging development of local milling and processing capacity.
- Governments should make clear their commitment to creating an enabling environment for development of domestic agricultural markets, including (i) making a commitment to refrain from imposing cumbersome regulations on internal and cross-border trade and (ii) facilitating transparent circulation of information about market conditions.

Complementary Regional Actions

Regional financial reserves:

- Consideration should be given to establishing regional financial reserves to be managed by a respected independent financial institution. Rules for the disbursement of funds to meet urgent needs would need to be established and strictly adhered to. The Regional Economic Communities should initiate discussion.

- NEPAD should consult potential donors regarding the possibility of establishing a donor-held financial reserve to fund large-scale emergencies.

Trade:

- African countries, supported by NEPAD and the Regional Economic Communities, should accelerate the establishment of sub-regional and regional trading zones to consolidate benefits from the considerable informal cross-border trade. Enhanced intra-regional trade in food will contribute considerably to stabilising food supplies in the region.
- Improvements in communications infrastructure, especially road and railway networks, are urgently needed; establishment of a shared account for infrastructure maintenance and use of regional contractors to service several countries under a single contract are recommended. NEPAD and the Regional Economic Communities should develop projects and mobilise resources for this purpose.
- The use of commodity exchanges to enhance trade in food commodities is still in its infancy in Africa. The Regional Economic Communities should organise capacity-building support for existing exchanges and encourage new exchanges in their communities, with emphasis on encouraging trade in commodity options as an instrument of food-security policy.

Calendar of Events

- **22 - 23 October**, NEPAD Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- **25 October**, NEPAD advisory panel meeting, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- **1 - 2 November**, Water Centres of Excellence Workshop, Botswana. **(postponed to early 2005)**
- **20 November**, NEPAD Steering Committee Meeting, Algiers, Algeria.
- **20 - 21 November**, African Peer Review (APR) Panel Meeting, Algiers, Algeria.
- **22 - 23 November**, NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSIGC) Meeting, Algiers, Algeria.
- **23 November**, APR Forum Summit, Algiers, Algeria.
- **22 - 25 November**, Conference on Successes in African Agriculture, Nairobi, Kenya.

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