

USA



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Extended Remarks Upon
Which Intervention is Based

Intervention Delivered by: **Michael Curtis**, Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Development, Bureau of Africa, U.S. Agency for International Development

Summary

The United States recognizes that higher levels of sustained investments are needed to address the challenges posed by food insecurity in Africa. In helping Africans address food insecurity, the U. S. will work within the context of the African Union's (AU) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) that was developed with the New Economic Partnership for Development (NEPAD). This approach has been endorsed by African Heads of State and Government as a vision for the restoration of agricultural growth, food security and rural development in Africa.

While we note that many are calling for a green revolution in Africa, we recognize that agriculture in the African context is more complex than it was in Asia during that continent's green revolution. African agriculture comprises multiple important crops, requires massive infrastructure development, and needs additional capacity to make markets work. We therefore believe that a comprehensive approach is required, not one based solely on increasing agriculture productivity through technology development and transfer and providing subsidies for fertilizer. The AU/ NEPAD Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program reflect this complexity.

The United States will work both regionally and at bilateral-country levels to (1) reduce post harvest barriers, including eliminating trade and transport barriers to food staple trade, (2) increase agricultural productivity and accelerate the development and transfer of agricultural technologies, (3) promote sound market based principles for agriculture, and (4) accelerate the participation of the ultra poor in rural growth.

Over the years, our focus has been on countries with certain circumstances. For example, they suffer high levels of poverty and hunger, but they have the agro-ecological potential to rapidly expand agricultural output in the near term; they must have the policy conditions and political will to expand agricultural productivity and competitiveness; they have processes in place to leverage and ensure coherence of development and private investment in agriculture; they are connected to and are part of key trade and transport

corridors in the region; they should be committed to regional cooperation and economic integration; and they are politically stable.

While the food price challenge has somewhat abated, the demand for staple foods will continue to increase and African countries are not immune to the impacts of the deepening global economic downturn which could further exacerbate African food insecurity. Coordinated efforts among donors is particularly important now to maximize the impact of assistance resources, to avoid duplication, to know in advance of any plans to cut programs due to donor country budgetary constraints, and to share information on the economic panorama.

The Food Security Challenge in Africa

Background

Food insecurity is a global challenge, affecting poor people across the world. A majority of the countries facing food security crises and related food concerns are in Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa is an epicenter of food insecurity. A third of Africans suffer from malnutrition and over 120 million Africans – Africa’s “ultra poor” – suffer chronic hunger.

Addressing the root causes of food insecurity in Africa requires working with developing countries willing to make the policy and public investment decisions necessary to promote sustainable growth. Additionally, African countries need to work together on sub-regional approaches to allow food to move from surplus to deficit areas thereby fundamentally changing the imbalance in supply and demand of key food staples. The African continent has potential breadbaskets that, with support, can: (1) enable Africa to generate surpluses of key food staples; (2) transform some countries into net food exporters; and, (3) unleash the power of agriculture to stimulate broad-based economic growth. Realizing this transformation requires that countries work individually and together.

United States Commitment

African leadership is necessary to tackle the root causes of food insecurity that has and continues to plague the continent. The United States applauds the vision and action taken by the African Heads of State and Government to establish their Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), the most ambitious and comprehensive agricultural reform effort ever undertaken in Africa.

The United States commits to supporting African countries’ own programs and action plans to increase inclusive agricultural growth in line with the principles of CAADP. We will align our agriculture development programs to support the efforts of African countries to scale up agricultural investment and to build inclusive, multi-stakeholder partnerships that are needed to meet the CAADP goals of stimulating growth and reducing poverty. This support is predicated on full leadership and commitment from

African governments, including alignment of their resources to this shared agenda and an enabling policy environment for agricultural development.

Global Food Security Response – Africa Action Plan

The United States has established a robust and integrated response to the food security challenge in Africa that aligns with African priorities and addresses the root causes of the food security challenges. The U.S. response provides outcomes in three critical areas: increased availability and access to sufficient and nutritious food; improved production, processing, marketing, and trade systems; and, sustained reductions in poverty and increased resilience at the individual, national and regional levels. This response represents a new way of doing business, operating from a regional perspective, and strengthening partnerships with the private sector, national governments, and regional economic communities.

Focus on Key Food Staples

A substantial increase in key staple food production and intra-regional food staple trade in Africa requires concentrating actions in countries that can rapidly increase staple food supply within their own borders. These countries also need to increase supply in surrounding countries that have committed to regional cooperation and economic integration, including removal of both tariff and non-tariff barriers to food staple trade. Increasing the production and intra-regional marketing of food staples not only addresses the structural imbalance in supply and demand of food supplies, it also reduces food prices, increases income and revenue needed to buy food, and stimulates broad-based rural growth.

Increasing Agricultural Productivity

A first step is to increase the production and productivity of staple food through modernizing the systems that provide the basic agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizer, and technology. This will ensure more sustainable management of land and water resources, including land preparation and irrigation, and will enhance the private sector's capacity and incentives to deliver these services. Attention must also be paid to the "additional stress" of climate change on production systems. A crucial component of sustainable food security will be a new agricultural paradigm. Sustainable agriculture production will be an essential element – a regenerative approach that integrates natural biological and ecological approaches, such as soil regeneration, into food production that improves the resilience and resource use of individual crops to the impacts of climate change, rather than a resource-intensive model.

Private Sector Partners: The United States is working with many organizations -- local private sector seed companies like Kemseed, U.S. companies such as Pioneer Hibred International, the Africa Seed Trade Associations, the Gates Foundation and other development agencies -- to scale up and expand a public-private alliance to develop

commercial seed systems in West Africa. The goal is to provide quality seed to small farmers.

The United States is also partnering on a similar public-private alliance to expand commercial fertilizer operations in the region by developing the capacity of the newly formed Africa Fertilizer Association. We will also engage the International Fertilizer Association, the International Fertilizer Development Center, local fertilizer producers and traders, and international companies. A network of rural agro-dealers in seed and fertilizer will be trained to make seed and fertilizer more readily available to small farmers in rural areas. This network will also work with farmer and producer organizations at the local level to improve their capacity to deliver technical services and improve market access for their members.

Science and Technology: It is clear that a larger and more concentrated investment in agricultural research and education is required by both the public and private sectors. The small size and limited infrastructure of many African countries present challenges not easily surmounted at the national level. Regionally planned and coordinated research plays critical roles, pulling together expertise and other resources from countries to address issues of national and regional importance, catalyzing spillovers of technologies and knowledge into similar constraints that cut across borders. Cooperation among specialized scientists from different countries allows for sharing of scarce expertise that might not be available in individual countries.

Reducing Post Harvest Barriers: Storage, Processing, Trade and Transport

Regional trade in food staples can be increased by improving the operation of key trade and transport corridors, improving market structures, and expanding financial services for storage, infrastructure, processing, and trading. Facilitating expansion of domestic and regional staple food markets by reducing trade barriers along major trade and transport corridors is critical for efforts to stimulate agricultural production growth, broad based income expansion and poverty reduction. Long distances and poor transport infrastructure, combined with man-made impediments such as export restrictions, cumbersome customs procedures, and unpredictable government marketing operations, all work to restrain regional trade.

The U. S. is partnering with national and regional organizations to identify and address the main bottlenecks to marketing and trade in food staples. Key partners include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), government ministries of agriculture and trade, private sector trade associations, farmer organizations, and other development groups.

Roads: Investments to reduce post-harvest bottlenecks include improving rural roads to connect farmers to the main trade routes, expanding market information services by utilizing new information and communication technologies (ICT), making sure border posts are equipped to expeditiously clear and facilitate movement of staple foods across

national borders, and building the capacity of trade associations to identify and advocate for needed improvements along the trade and transport corridors.

Finance: Local and international banking institutions need assistance to increase financing for the production, processing, and trade of staple foods by developing public-private finance alliances with international banks, local commercial banks, non-bank financial institutions, and local producer organizations and expanding warehouse receipt programs. There is a need to build capacity for basic market structures -- such as commodity exchanges, warehouse receipt and storage facilities programs -- with key partners including the Commodity Exchange of West Africa, farmer and trade organizations, and local marketing organizations, including women's organizations.

Promoting Sound Market-Based Principles for Agriculture

A policy environment that is free of distortions and promotes competition is critical to the ability of smallholders to both increase their productivity and enter new markets. This encourages private sector investment in agriculture. The U. S. is working with national and regional organizations to remove key constraints and barriers to the production, processing, and marketing of food staples including instituting commodity standards, developing bio-safety regulations and harmonizing seed policies. Important partners include ECOWAS, COMESA, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Comité Permanent Inter-Etats pour la Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS), government ministries of agriculture and trade, private sector trade associations, and farmers' organizations

The United States will also work with African partner organizations to identify and address West African regional barriers to trade in food staples including trade tariffs; seasonal export restrictions; poorly harmonized labeling, phytosanitary and sanitary measures and quality grading standards; as well as corruption at customs posts. Key partners include the West African Network of Farmers' Organizations (ROPPA), the Network of West Africa Trader Organization (ROESAO), and Confédération des Fédérations Nationales de la Filière Bétail et Viande (COFENABVI) – the Confederation of National Federations of Livestock and Meat Networks – a livestock trade umbrella organization working in WAEMU countries.

Accelerating the Participation of the Ultra Poor in Rural Growth

In Africa, approximately one in five of the households represent the extreme or “ultra” poor. While the majority of these households are rural and dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, many are either landless or land-poor, or face other constraints that prevent them from becoming commercially viable agricultural producers. Excluding these households from economic growth is extremely costly in terms of human capital and meeting MDG 1.

Unfortunately, the poorest households are often those least prepared to take advantage of opportunities created by rural economic growth. Identifying economic entry points and

enabling households to take advantage of opportunities requires well targeted social and economic investments – “productive safety nets.” These investments range from protecting assets, to raising incomes, to establishing risk management protocols.

The United States will also work with African partner organizations to strengthen food and nutrition monitoring, and build the skills, capacity and opportunities of the ultra poor.

An Opportunity

We are witnessing, for the first time in the history of Africa agriculture, an integrated investment strategy which is the CAADP. This unified approach presents a road map out of food insecurity for those African countries willing to make the policy and public investment decisions necessary to promote sustainable growth. While stimulating regional integration, the investment strategy makes it feasible to move the entire continent from food-deficit to food surplus. This approach has the potential to create millions of jobs and stimulate substantial foreign and domestic direct investment that can spur broader economic growth and reduce poverty.

The food price challenge has abated, but African countries are not immune to the impacts of the deepening global economic downturn, which will likely further exacerbate African food insecurity. Coordination among donors is particularly important. We must maximize the impact of assistance resources, avoid duplication, have advance notification of any plans to cut programs due to donor country budgetary constraints, and share information on the economic panorama.