

Advancing African agriculture - Proposal for agricultural development and food security in Africa

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The Committee on Development unanimously adopted the initiative report by Luisa **MORGANTINI** (GUE/NGL, IT) welcoming the Commission's communication on advancing African agriculture – a proposal for agricultural development and food security in Africa.

Firstly, the report highlights that agriculture and rural development are crucial in terms of reducing poverty and stimulating growth. MEPs wish to reinforce the idea that for growth to have a poverty reducing effect, it needs to be **broad-based, small-holder oriented and result in enhanced labour opportunities**.

Competitiveness on regional and international markets is a priority according to the report. In this context, it underlines the importance of giving support and assistance to small producers allowing them sufficient access to these markets. It stresses the importance of integrating regional markets in Africa and to gradually lift barriers between African countries in order to enlarge markets for producers.

The report emphasises the need for policies to be implemented which will counter imports of devastating agri-food products which are damaging to local production. MEPs insist that food-aid policies and programmes must not prevent the development of local and national food-production capacity or contribute to dependence, the distortion of local and national markets, corruption and the use of foodstuffs which are harmful to health (GMOs).

They call on international bodies to implement policies which will gradually take the place of food aid by promoting support for, and the development of, local agriculture. If food aid is the sole alternative, MEPs insist that priority be given to local purchases, and/or purchases in areas adjacent to a country in difficulty or in the region.

The report stresses the importance of increasing the financial resources allocated by donors to rural development and food security and emphasises the need for African governments to include the agricultural sector among their political priorities in order to receive EDF support.

Other salient issues covered in the report can be summarised as follows:

Wider consultation: although the committee welcomes the wide consultation approach that the Commission adopted for issuing the Communication, it hopes that such an approach will not remain an isolated case but will form part of a mechanism enabling civil society and democratic institutions in Europe and Africa. It requests that the Commission set in motion a process of negotiation with parliaments and civil society actors regarding their roles in implementing and monitoring the Joint EU-Africa Strategy. MEPs stress the importance of promoting greater involvement on the part of governments, local authorities and both national and regional parliaments in decision-making processes relating to agricultural policy and food security, and also of facilitating more extensive participation by civil society. In this context invites the Commission to support the formulation and the application of regional common agricultural policies, with the effective participation of stakeholders. They express great regret at the prospect of the attendance of international outcast Robert Mugabe at the Lisbon EU-Africa Summit this December, whose presence will do much to discredit the good work of the Summit on

democratic governance. The African Union is called upon to revisit with renewed vigour its commitment to the values espoused in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which the predecessor to the AU, the Organisation of African Unity, pioneered, and to which Zimbabwe is also a signatory. Lastly, the report points out that the proposal to cooperate mainly with African continental and regional organisations, notably the AUC, NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and RECs (Regional Economic Communities), should also involve mechanisms to include interest groups, grassroots movements and civil society to better enable poor rural farmers to influence policy processes in a meaningful way.

Coordination: MEPs point to the need for the Member States and the Commission to ensure that development aid is coordinated and harmonised to a greater extent and, in general, to meet without delay all the other objectives set as part of the process of enhancing the effectiveness of European development cooperation. They stress how important it is for the Commission and the Member States to indicate clearly the way in which the beneficiary countries and civil society will secure full control over their development policies and to introduce performance indicators enabling national and regional parliaments and civil society to monitor the impact of development aid. The report stresses the importance of negotiations at European level including exchanges of views with consumers, producers and sectoral organisations, including from development countries, with a view to ensuring that the agro-industrial and processing sectors play a full, rather than a secondary, role. It stresses the need to strengthen a knowledge based African bio-economy, and therefore calls on Member States to share their agronomic know-how with African researchers and farmers and to share technology as well as other innovative methods in the agricultural sector with African countries in order to enhance their competitiveness and to increase the added value of agriculture on the continent. In the light of transparency, the committee calls on the Member States to indicate annually and with the utmost transparency their financial commitments to development aid and for the amounts assigned to initiatives which are not directly related to development (such as debt relief) to be specifically excluded from the calculation of the total expenditure on development aid.

Coherence: MEPs stress that EU policies in different fields should be coherent as regards their overall objectives. They insist that the EU trade policy and the Common Agricultural Policy should be coherent with the EU development policy. They stress the need to lift tariff barriers on all agricultural products - raw and processed goods - in order to rapidly open the European market for all agricultural products from the African continent. They call on the EU to establish a timetable leading to the abolition of agricultural export policies which are damaging to vulnerable agricultural businesses in the developing countries and to put pressure on other international actors to do the same.

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA): the report recognises that the EPAs can become an important tool for African trade and regional integration, but only on condition that they are "development-friendly", allowing for exemptions and long transition periods where needed in order for domestic producers and industries to adapt to new market situations. The committee asks to postpone the deadline for the conclusion of the negotiations and asks for possible alternatives to EPAs to be explored for the countries that will not sign them and in any case calls for the adoption of specific measures to mitigate the impact of EPAs on vulnerable groups. MEPs restate the need for development-aid policies and programmes to support the right of each individual people to establish its own food strategies and to protect and regulate national agricultural production and the local market.

Agriculture and women: the report highlights the importance of the role played by women in African agricultural production. It points out that agricultural-development measures in Africa should be directed first and foremost towards women, with specific policies being introduced to ensure access to and control over productive resources, particularly land rights, capacity building, funding for micro-enterprises, better living conditions, food and health welfare, education and more active involvement in social and political life. Aid should be directed, as a priority, to the less-favoured groups and less-favoured areas (remote rural areas - RRAs) first, where geographical isolation and physical constraints on agricultural productivity exacerbate the level of chronic poverty.

Sustainable agriculture: the report emphasises the need for European countries to honour the commitment to achieving a lasting peace as a precondition of food security and thus to put a particular priority to the promotion of peace. It urges the governments of both North and South to seek peaceful solutions to conflicts and reiterates the need to put a halt to trafficking in weapons and in anti-personnel mines. MEPs call for the right to water for all to be upheld at international level. The African governments are called upon to promote agrarian reforms in their countries in order to allow the rural population improved access to land and to production resources, particularly in the case of country families who have no property title. In this context, the committee calls for the Action Plan accompanying the [Joint EU-Africa Strategy](#) recently adopted (see [INI/2007/2002](#)) to put a high priority on the establishment and improvement of Land Registries, and on the strengthening of legal systems to allow tribunals to effectively enforce property law. Furthermore, the committee calls on the African governments to encourage greater diversification in production models so as to avoid the institution of intensive monocrop systems.

Improving development through training: MEPs call for measures to be taken to improve training to enable young people to pursue higher education in agricultural science and technology, as well as to create job opportunities for agriculture graduates with the main purpose of reducing migration from rural to urban areas, and indeed, from developing countries to developed countries. They call for a joint strategy to address the root causes of migration and to pay particular attention to the issue of brain drain. The report draws attention to the need for a comprehensive approach in the field of migration policy to be promoted on the basis of the principles of solidarity with African countries and of co-development, and calls for a stronger partnership between local institutions and those based in the Member States. It supports the Commission proposal to encourage circular migration in order to encourage the circulation of acquired knowledge and experience.