New alliance for food security and nutrition

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The Committee on Development adopted the own-initiative report by Maria HEUBUCH (Greens/EFA, ADE) on the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition.

Members recalled that the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa (NAFSN) aims to improve food security and nutrition by helping 50 million people in sub-Saharan Africa out of poverty by 2020. The participating countries have negotiated Country Cooperation Frameworks (CCFs) setting out commitments to facilitate private investment in the agriculture sector in Africa.

Agricultural investment in Africa and fulfilment of the sustainable development goals (SDGs): Members observed that agricultural investment policies mostly focus on large-scale land acquisitions and on export-oriented agriculture that is usually **unrelated to local economies**. They stressed that under those circumstances the ability of mega-PPPs to contribute to poverty reduction and food security must be improved. Agricultural investment policies should be linked to and should support the development of **the local economy**, including smallholders and family farming. Members regret the fact that rural communities, farm workers, small farmers, fishermen and indigenous peoples, have not been taken into account in the decision-making process. Local civil society needs to be closely involved in NAFSN monitoring and evaluation.

Members recalled that NAFSN has made a commitment to promoting inclusive, agriculture-based growth that supports small-scale farming and helps reduce poverty, hunger and under-nutrition.

They called on governments and donors to suspend or review all policies, projects and consultancy arrangements that directly **encourage and facilitate land grabbing.** They urged the EU Member States to strive to transform NAFSN into a genuine tool for sustainable development and into an instrument of support for family farming and local economies in sub-Saharan Africa, recalling that family farmers and smallholders produce about 80 % of the world’s food and provide over 60 % of employment in the region.

For their part, the EU and its Member States, which, taken together, are the biggest development aid donor in the world, were called upon to:

- ensure that EU-based investors respect, the rights of local communities and the needs of small farms, in following a policy based on social responsibility;
- support local African enterprises and stakeholders as primary actors;
- implement the recent WTO decision to eliminate agricultural export subsidies, which are distorting local markets and destroying livelihoods in developing countries;
- eliminate tariff barriers that act as a disincentive to African countries adding value to raw produce locally.

Participating countries were called upon to: (i) ensure a fair contribution to the tax base of participating countries; (ii) ensure that their respective governments retain the right to protect their agricultural and food markets through appropriate tariff and tax regimes; (iii) adopt policies that promote responsible trade.

Governance, ownership and accountability: Members stressed that NAFSN must step up good governance as regards natural resources, in particular by guaranteeing that people have access to their own resources and by protecting their rights in the context of contracts on deals relating to natural resources. In this context, they stressed the need for strong institutional and legal frameworks to ensure a fair sharing of risks and benefits.

The committee noted that **multinationals operating under NAFSN favour large-scale contract farming,** which risks marginalising small-scale producers. It was therefore necessary to strengthen farmers' organisations so as to improve the bargaining position of farmers.

Access to land and security of tenure: Members warned that a pure focus on land titling often leads to insecurity for small-scale food producers and indigenous people, especially women. They underlined the need to have small-scale food producers in leading positions, allowing their own independent organisations to support them. They highlighted the fact that 1.2 billion people still live either without permanent access to land or else occupying property for which they have no formal claim. Members called on participating countries to **enact binding national measures against land-grabbing,** corruption based on land transfer and the use of land for speculative investment. They wanted to ensure legal certainty over land rights, including **informal, indigenous and customary tenure rights.**

Members called on the parties to NAFSN to put in place independent grievance mechanisms for those communities affected by land dispossession as a result of large-scale investment projects.

Food security, nutrition and sustainable family farming: recalling that food security is based on healthy living soils and productive agro-ecosystems, Members called for means of **replacing over-reliance on imported food with resilient domestic food production,** prioritising local crops that meet nutritional requirements. They stressed the need for strategies to minimise food waste throughout the food chain, to protect agricultural biodiversity, and invest in agro-ecological farming practices in developing countries.

Members also called on African governments to:

- avoid making food production systems over-dependent on fossil fuels;
- develop short food supply chains locally and regionally, as short supply chains are most effective in combating hunger and rural poverty;
- enable African farmers to access affordable, low-input technological solutions;
- encourage a wide variety of nutritious, local and seasonal food crops
- promote producer organisations such as cooperatives that strengthen small farmers' bargaining positions.

Furthermore, the committee stressed the **right to water** and recognised the role of access to water for farming needs.

It cautioned against over-reliance on producing biofuel feed stocks, which can have a detrimental impact on food security.

Regulatory reform in the seed sector: Members recalled that farmers' right to produce, exchange and sell seeds freely underpins 90 % of agricultural livelihoods in Africa. However, a major challenge is the over-dependence of smallholders on seeds and plant protection products **manufactured by foreign companies**. They deplored the corporate call to harmonise seed laws on the basis of the principles of distinctness, uniformity and stability (DUS), in the African context via regional institutions, which will hamper the development and growth of farmer-based seed systems at national and regional levels, since such systems usually do not breed or save seeds that fulfil the DUS criteria. They also recalled that while commercial seed varieties may improve yields in the short term, **traditional farmers' varieties**, landraces and associated knowledge are best suited for adaptation to specific agro-ecological environments.

Members urged the G8 member states **not to support GMO crops in Africa**.

At the same time, Members called on participating countries to give farmers the option of avoiding input dependency, and to support farmers' seed systems through maintaining local publically-owned seed banks.

Funding agricultural investment in Africa: Members called on donors to:

- align Official Development Assistance (ODA) with the development effectiveness principles;
- support education, training and technical counselling for farmers;
- promote the forming of farmers' organisations of a professional and economic nature.

They recalled that the purpose of development aid is to reduce, and ultimately to **eradicate, poverty,** and believed that ODA should focus on direct support to **small-scale farming**.

Members stressed that G7 member states should guarantee African countries the right to protect their agricultural sectors through tariff and tax regimes that favour family and smallholder farming, and called on the EU to address all the deficiencies of NAFSN, and to ensure that actions taken under it are consistent with development policy goals.