New alliance for food security and nutrition

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The European Parliament adopted by 577 votes to 24 with 69 abstentions a resolution on the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition.

Parliament 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): Parliament observed that agricultural investment policies mostly focus on large-scale land acquisitions and on export-oriented agriculture that is usually **unrelated to local economies**. Recalling that large public-private partnerships (PPPs) risk creating dominant positions for large agricultural companies in African agriculture that crowd out local businesses, Parliament also stressed that mega-PPPs could contribute to poverty reduction and food security Agricultural investment policies should be linked to and should support the development of the local economy, including **smallholders and family farming**. Members regretted 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.

Parliament 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.

It called on governments and donors to suspend or review all policies, projects and consultancy arrangements that directly **encourage and facilitate land grabbing**. It 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: Parliament 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, it stressed the need for strong institutional and legal frameworks to ensure a fair sharing of

risks and benefits. Parliament called for the EU to work with the UN towards the adoption by all countries, on a binding basis, of the Milan Charter and the commitments it contains.

Parliament 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: Parliament warned that a pure focus on land titling often leads to insecurity for small-scale food producers and indigenous people, especially women. It underlined the need to have small-scale food producers in leading positions, allowing their own independent organisations to support them. It 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.**

Parliament 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. It was also important to ensure that the principle of free, prior and informed consent is observed for all communities affected by land grabbing and that consultations are held to ensure the equal participation of all local community groups, in particular those that are most vulnerable and marginalised.

Food security, nutrition and sustainable family farming: recalling that food security is based on healthy living soils and productive agro-ecosystems, Parliament called for means of replacing **over-reliance on imported food with resilient domestic food production**, prioritising local crops that meet nutritional requirements. It 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.

Parliament 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, Parliament 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: Parliament 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**. Members 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.

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

At the same time, it 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: Parliament 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.

It 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**.

Parliament believed that the funding provided by G8 member states to NAFSN contravenes the objective of supporting domestic local companies which cannot compete with multinationals that already benefit from a dominant market position and are often granted business, tariff and tax privileges. It 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.

Lastly, Parliament 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.