

today's highlights

Keynotes by Namanga Ngongi, Yusuf Abubakar and Philip Kiro

Panel discussion on agriculture transformation in Africa

Plenary session on raising and sustaining high agricultural productivity in Africa

13 papers and 9 posters in parallel sessions

Your social calendar

Today: Buffet dinner at Hilton Hotel (19:30 – 21:30)

Opening with style

Yesterday, AUC Commissioner Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, opened the conference in the presence of more than 300 participants.

IFPRI's Kwadwo Asenso-Okyere welcomed participants on behalf of the organizers; his Director General Shenggen Fan stressed the importance of country-led development strategies. On increasing investment, he particularly emphasized the roles and contributions of new actors – the private sector, philanthropic organizations and emerging economies such as China.

Calling livestock the 'Cinderella of the agricultural sector,' ILRI's Jimmy Smith boosted its contributions to Africa's food security. On the theme of the conference, he declared that "while improving agricultural production and activity is our first goal ... we need to achieve this in environmentally sustainable ways with regard to the effects of climate and agriculture"

The keynote address - 'harnessing the potential of science and the numbers' was given by FARA's Monty Jones.



He emphasized the need for 'radical approaches' and 'radical actions.' Africa should come up with its own unique interventions, he said, and listen to the voices of the 600 million African farmers.

Representing the WFP, Lynne Miller emphasized the agency's focus on food security at household and community levels. "We look more on the challenges of people becoming food secure, a lot of it is them being able to produce enough to feed themselves."



In his opening remarks, Ethiopian State Minister of Agriculture Wondirad Mandefro reflected on the wider continental food security situation.



He explained how the Ethiopian government has taken strong policy measures to support agriculture as an engine of the economy. The Federal Government now spends more than 14% of its GDP on agriculture, exceeding the CAADP target set in Maputo.

The Agricultural Transformation Agency is a concrete sign of our commitment to improve the policy environment.

Overcoming challenges to agricultural productivity



Plenary session 3 focused on the challenges to increase agricultural productivity in Africa.

Moderator Alemayehu Taffesse asked a 'simple' question of the 4 panelists - Thomas Jayne from MSU, John Dixon from ACIAR, Stephen Muchiri from EAFF and Sylvester Oikeh from AATF:

If a Minister of Agriculture says she/he can only adopt one change to overcome challenges to agricultural productivity, what would you suggest?

Sylvester Oikeh: Implement the 2003 Maputo pledge in every African country,

Stephen Muchiri: I believe in markets that are well organized. They are proper channels, which pull production.

Thomas Jayne: I would ask the Minister to invest in your own local capacity, your own policies.

John Dixon: Bring appropriate incentives for institutes and different organizations to work together in scaling out mechanisms.

Dorothy Mukhebi of the AWARD Program:

"Women have to be brought into the agenda. Women are the main producers, the main users and the main labour force and yet the policies do not suit them; also in regards to research, the type of products are not gender sensitive in terms of technologies. So we want policies and research to be more responsive to women."

Points of view

Sylvester Oikeh of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation:

"The major challenge is not having enough investment in agriculture, particularly by the governments in Africa."

"Most African countries pledged to contribute 10% of their national investment to agriculture during the Maputo declaration, but how many countries have commenced that? I can say about three countries, Mali, Ethiopia and Malawi are implementing and they are doing good progress.

For those that are not complying, what effort has been made to make them comply? We need to build a system to be able revisit that pledge and make sure the governments comply"

"Africa should be open to receive any technology that would make a difference to increase agricultural productivity, be it genetically enhanced technology or conventionally developed technologies. To adopt these technologies we should use the value chain approach and we should be able to build public private partnerships."

Stephen Muchiri of the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation:

"The major challenge in increasing agriculture productivity in Africa is low agro investment, markets are not well developed, there are market restrictions, farmers can't easily access the market, and they don't have power to have their own markets."

"If there is no access to markets, the entire value chain will be affected. Markets are the way to boost research, input, credit facilities and risk mitigation. When farmers are involved in value chains they are going to be able to access market information that helps them prepare their production in ways that suit market demand."

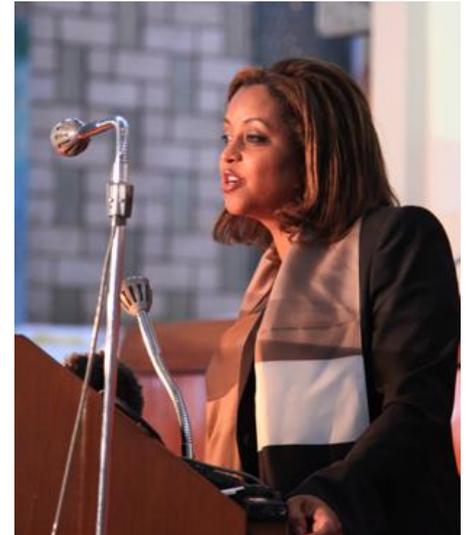


Business unusual

Eleni Gabre-Medhin was discussant in plenary session 2, advocating 'business as unusual'.

"As we think about the transformation we want to achieve ... we narrowly focus on the small farmer agenda. Are we ready to consider large scale, commercial, possibly foreign investors when we talk about agricultural transformation? How do we leverage this dual world?"

"The new agricultural agenda is agriculture 'plus' ... if we rise to the occasion, this is Africa's time, we can achieve those promises of an African green revolution if we get organized differently."



Interview: John Dixon on new International Centre for Food Security

"The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) has worked with Africa since the early 90s. The mode of operation of ACIAR is always to put together as partners scientists in Australia with scientists in Africa to work together on a common problem. Out of that emerges long-term relationships, long-term work that extends way beyond the life of any particular project.

And of course Australia and Africa have so much in common in terms of agricultural production. The soils, the rainfall, the variability and the risk from climate, cattle diseases, poor soils, distance to markets, so much is common between both countries that we have much to do in science partnerships.



Australia's Prime Minister recently announced additional assistance for Africa in the form of a new Australian International Centre for Food Security.

The new Centre will give farmers, government agencies and the private sector access to expertise and other support from a large network of Australian, African and international research bodies.

ACIAR will lead the Centre, for which the Government is providing \$36 million. As a first step, in 2012, it will organize an international conference on Food Security in Africa: Bridging Research and Practice.

Clearly it will look at increasing productivity and reducing vulnerability for households. In the next 6 months we will hold extensive consultations with African leaders to ascertain the exact focus of this new food security centre."

"We are gathered here today to streamline the way forward and to speak the same language in order to address farmers' needs in the matter of urgency"

– Wondirad Mandefro State Minister of Agriculture, Government of Ethiopia

Word of the day:

ሰላም ነዉ. ~ How are you? /sālam ne'w/

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Conference pics

The conference is organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute in conjunction with the African Union Commission, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa. It is co-sponsored by:

