

today's highlights

Keynotes by Martin
Bwalya and Abebe
HaileGabriel

12 presentations

Panel on the action
priorities to increase
agricultural
productivity and
enhance food
security in Africa

Concluding session
and way forward

Altogether:

12 keynotes
99 presentations
24 posters
5 panels

Africa's green revolution

On Wednesday, AGRA's Namanga Ngongi placed smallholders at the center of our discussions on agriculture. He declared agriculture to be "by far the most important sector for any reform agenda in Africa and the main catalyst for ending poverty on the continent."

AGRA is supporting the development of technologies required for a green revolution in African agriculture. "We support 60 seed enterprises throughout Africa that last year produced 25,000 metric tons of seed." In 2018, he said, "we should get 250,000 tons, enough to plant between 12 and 15 million hectares of crops." Then, we should see the transformation of African agriculture. We need to take it to scale.



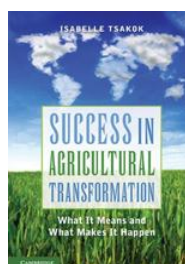
Making finance available to farmers through credit schemes is one of AGRA's latest achievements. "Farmers need access to affordable finance to make farming a business. Until now, banks have avoided lending to smallholders, considering them too risky. AGRA is helping to change this."

Sitting at the same table

According to Kwadwo Asenso-Okyere (IFPRI), speaking yesterday, "we have forgotten the importance of agriculture, health and nutrition linkages."

"We need to make sure that when policy makers devise agricultural programs they bring on board health personnel. Similarly, when health sectors devise health programs, they have to involve agriculture people. There should be a way to talk to each other to make sure that the problems are internalized and solutions are found."

"We need to bring everyone together at one table so that we all know that agriculture will produce the good food, health will protect the wellbeing of the people, and nutrition will make sure we have balanced and healthy diets."



Success in agricultural transformation

Isabelle Tsakok, panelist on Tuesday afternoon, recently published a book examining cases of successful agricultural transformation. More information at www.isabelletsakok.com/

Overcoming challenges to food security: Points of view

Khalid Bomba, ATA:

“The major challenges are the efficient implementation of many of the strategies and technologies that we already have. I don’t think we need new technologies and new strategies.”

“From a long-term perspective, I think that the environmental and social sustainability of our strategies needs to be an important part of the equation. We can’t be trying to address food security merely for today.”

Teresa Okiyo, KARI:

“We are growing the wrong crops which are not adapted to our local and specific environment.”

“We have to talk to farmers to encourage them to do the right thing in the right way at the right time.”

Mary Oyumga-Ogubi, KARI:

“You find agricultural people sitting on their own, the health people on their own, nutrition people on their own, yet they all claim they have the same agenda to improve people’s health.”

“There is a gap between research and consumers” - research never reaches the end-user; when it does, they are not able to implement it.



Jean Claude Rubyogo, CIAT-PABRA:

“Food security means production as well as access to cash. In my view the key challenges are low investment (from government, private sector, exporters, traders) and lack of good infrastructure for development.”

“If we involve the private sectors, the government and farmers will respond to incentives and use the technologies. Otherwise, if farmers don’t see the rewards they are not going to use them.”

Elisabeth Atangana PAFO:



“It is important to talk about political transformation in Africa to put agriculture at the centre. It is also important to increase participation and the involvement of farmers to identify their needs. We have training, technology, extension and markets which all together can improve productivity in Africa.”

Edward Paice, Africa Research Institute:

“We have here a collection of some of the leading research specialists in the world as far as research into agriculture in Africa is concerned.”

“So I feel privileged to be here as an interested observer. If I think of the lessons learned so far, many of the solutions are there but the political will to follow them is not and this I think is really one of the critical problems.”

“The standard of the presentations on the whole has been extraordinary and I would like to congratulate the organizers for the very relax but professional air about the whole proceedings.”

Agriculture and climate change mitigation -

UNECA’s Seleshi Bekele chaired a parallel session on climate change adaptation and mitigation in African agriculture. The four papers showed how climate change affects agriculture in terms of reducing production, productivity and how it aggravates poverty.

According to the cases shared, countries are tackling the challenges through policy and strategic interventions - National Adaptation Plans, vulnerability assessments, and attention to agricultural resilience. They are also looking for solutions that integrate various interventions – agroforestry, seeds, fertilizers, land and water management, etc. so that agriculture becomes more productive and highly resilient to both climate variability, and climate change.

Radio feeds farmers ...

Margaret Kingamkono of Farm Radio International explains the potential of radio.

“We work with partners in sub-Saharan Africa to build the capacities of radio stations. It provides resources and training so the radio stations can produce high quality and relevant information for small farmers so they can improve the way they do agriculture and also improve food security.

Farm Radio International also disseminates information from knowledge partners like extension and agricultural research. It gathers information and package it in ways that are attractive to farmers.

“We have a good methodology for dissemination of information that has the farmers’ and expert voices which is very entertaining and also creates an opportunity for farmers to learn and try new things. We also have a tested and proven methodology that we call ‘participatory radio’ that we tried and tested in many countries.”



Interview: Monty Jones on walking together to increase productivity



“In the 1990s, there was a decline in trade and food production in Africa. There was also a substantial decline in investments in agricultural research.

If we are able to increase investments in research, we will be able to increase production and eventually agricultural productivity.

Investments will allow us to produce better technologies; it will also

ensure that we bring the required external inputs like fertilizers and chemicals to the farmers.

We also need to look at other issues that we believe will eventually boost production such as institution strengthening because the tendency for African institutions is to function isolated from one another.

We need to create comprehensive programs that bring all the key players along the value chain, whether researchers, extension agents, farmers, policy makers or the private sector. Bringing them all together to conceive the problem, to develop a protocol and implement it.”

Another issue is to include the farmers. “It sends a powerful message if we are able to mobilize the farmers so that they advocate for increasing funds in research.”
“We need to bring several issues

together on the table, closing the gap on productivity by adopting appropriate technologies, by using inputs, putting the policy issues on the table to create a conducive atmosphere.

We also need to build institutions so that instead of walking in isolation, we walk together. Addressing key problems like climate change all at the same time and putting all the results in one basket will boost agricultural productivity in Africa. Farmers can serve as policy shapers, making sure that their voices ring very loud in the ears of the policy makers.”

In conclusion, the way to increase agricultural productivity is to develop partnerships that bring everybody together.”

Word of the day:

ደሕና ሁኑ ~ goodbye! /dehna hunu/

Thank you for reading



Conference pics

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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:

