



Assuring Food and Nutrition Security in Africa

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At a recent multi-actor all-Africa conference, a majority of the 500 participants—60 percent—believed that food security *can* be achieved in Africa by 2020 but only a minority—40 percent—believed that it *will* be achieved. Their predictions for nutrition security were much grimmer: 44 percent believed that nutrition security *can* be achieved whereas just 14 percent believed that it *will* be achieved. Participants at this conference on “Assuring Food and Nutrition Security in Africa: Prioritizing Actions, Strengthening Actors, and Facilitating Partnerships,” which was facilitated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and its 2020 Vision Initiative in Kampala on April 1–3, 2004, made it clear that a collective effort to assure political will and commitment at all levels is needed to undertake the necessary actions to end hunger and malnutrition in Africa.

So, what should these actions consist of? A group of distinguished African policymakers, civil society leaders, and intellectuals, under the chairmanship of Dr. J. J. Otim, senior advisor to Uganda’s President Yoweri K. Museveni, came together around the 2020 Africa conference and pointed the way to a future of food and nutrition security for all Africans. Their framework appears in the statement entitled “A Way Forward from the 2020 Africa Conference.”* This statement lists five areas of highest-priority action:

1. Strengthening governance and public accountability and ending conflicts—if these basics are not met, little can be done for sustainable food and nutrition security;
2. Fostering pro-poor economic growth through free access to domestic, inter-regional, and international markets and improved trade competitiveness, greater investments in infrastructure, and more effective management of vulnerability to shocks;

3. Raising agricultural productivity, especially among small farmers, and investing in sustainability of agricultural production through stronger attention to natural resources, especially soils, watersheds, and biodiversity;
4. Investing in pro-poor public health policies and actions, particularly the prevention, control, and management of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis; and
5. Building institutional and human capacity through accelerating investments in education, including primary education as well as higher education.

The “Way Forward” statement identified key priorities for implementation and sequencing of actions: first, scale up agricultural growth in the smallholder sector; second, scale up investment in infrastructure; third, design policy change to bring down trade barriers; and fourth, scale up nutrition- and food security-related investments in health and education. Of course, the appropriate means of implementation will vary from country to country, but best practices can and must be shared across Africa.

In addressing implementation constraints, the 2020 Africa Conference noted that no food or nutrition security strategy, whether at a continental, regional, country, or local level is viable if it does not include a well-developed and well-articulated implementation framework.

Observing that both traditional (e.g. governments) and new actors (business) are influencing food and nutrition security today, the “Way Forward” statement calls for acknowledging and respecting the different actors and their comparative strengths and for improving communications between them. Their influence and their capacity to implement action needs strengthening, and they must be empowered with information. The public sector cannot get things done alone, and sound partnerships with the private sector are

* This statement as well as more information on the 2020 Africa Conference are available at www.ifpri.org/2020africaconference.

needed to accelerate the mobilization of resources and promote their efficient use.

Very few economies around the world have achieved broad-based economic growth without agricultural and rural growth preceding or accompanying it. It is troubling indeed that per capita agricultural production has remained stagnant or even declined in many African countries during the past three decades. However, IFPRI research has shown systematic and sustained technological successes in African agriculture; they must be scaled up. IFPRI research has also shown large gains for the rural poor in some parts of Africa from opening up on internal and international markets.

Effectively promoting food and nutrition security will depend on wise decisions. To make these decisions, Africa will need to greatly increase its investments in research and capacity building. One of the key conclusions from the 2020 Africa Conference is that improvements in Africa's food and nutrition security and the underlying problems in agriculture and health will be driven by strong science and technology systems and policies.

We know that we will not accomplish our goals by continuing more or less as we are. In fact, IFPRI researchers have examined the food and nutrition implications of a "business as usual" scenario over the next two decades. This scenario is not just an extrapolation of past policies but an assessment of the policies that appear to be most likely in the coming decades. The results are bleak. Child malnutrition will increase by about one-third to reach 40 million in 2020. And, under a pessimistic scenario more than 50 million children will be malnourished.

We at IFPRI have adapted our agenda and activities in Africa as a consequence of the agenda setting by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Union, and the strategy-forming discussions at the 2020 Africa Conference:

1. With more staff and a stronger presence on the ground, we at IFPRI are scaling up our research and capacity-building efforts in Africa, in an effort to bring to reality the Millennium Development Goal of halving hunger by 2015, and indeed our 2020 vision of ending hunger completely. In particular, our newly established ISNAR Division, located in Addis Ababa, will focus on supporting innovation, integration, and strengthening of national agricultural systems and institutions. From this base in Ethiopia, IFPRI will also undertake global agricultural science policy research that will

contribute to follow through on the recommendations of the Inter-Academy Panel report, just released by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Moreover, IFPRI collaborates closely with NEPAD on policy research and has placed a senior researcher at NEPAD to provide strategic assistance to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP).

2. It would be misleading to conclude that we have all the answers and just need a call for action. Research has a key role to play in moving forward. IFPRI is broadening its research areas in Africa to include:
 - investigating state and market failures related to agriculture,
 - identifying strategies to make trade liberalization work for the poor and improve their access to well-functioning markets,
 - examining how to establish and strengthen social safety nets, and
 - designing information and knowledge systems that support strategies and implementation of road maps for food and agricultural policy change.
3. We at IFPRI have come to conclude that heavy investment in higher education, particularly at the masters and doctorate levels, is a necessity to build and maintain human capacity that will ensure that Africa has a cadre of people who can develop and implement agricultural and food policies and investments. IFPRI is facilitating two innovative programs to strengthen capacity in higher education, one will lead to a collaborative masters program in agricultural and applied economics in Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa, while the other will lead to a CGIAR global open agriculture and food university that will fill knowledge gaps through high-quality programs using a range of distance-education technologies. If we are serious about implementing action, we need to be serious about having the capacity to implement it.

In summary, the 2020 Africa Conference concluded that food security is achievable for all Africans by 2020. The more complex goal of nutrition security for all may not be completely achievable by 2020, but it must move higher on the agenda. The road map for the way forward toward ending hunger in Africa is clearly drawn. If the actors are strengthened and work together, then the goal can be reached in this generation.