

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Conference on Successes in African Agriculture**

*Experts identify past successes and future opportunities for achieving sustainable agricultural growth in the Greater Horn of Africa*

Nairobi—High-level policymakers, senior researchers, farmers, and representatives from the private sector and donor agencies gathered here from November 22-25 for a NEPAD-IGAD conference on “Agricultural Successes in the Greater Horn of Africa.” The conference, officially opened by H.E. Honorable Kipruto arap Kirwa, Kenyan Minister of Agriculture, brought together over 70 experts with extensive practical experience in African agriculture to identify key opportunities and challenges for accelerating agricultural growth and improving food security in the region. The conference was co-organized by the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, NEPAD, IGAD, InWent, IFPRI, IWMI, CTA, and IFAD.

“In past decades, African farmers, policymakers, and researchers have achieved some significant successes in agricultural development, but these successes have not kept pace with the continent’s burgeoning population,” explained Professor Benson Mochoge, Director of the IGAD Secretariat’s Agriculture and Environment Division. “The goal of this conference is to learn from past agricultural successes in various countries, prioritize them to disseminate lessons, and identify key processes and technologies that countries can replicate and expand broadly to achieve sustainable agricultural growth in the Greater Horn of Africa.”

Roughly 80 percent of poor Africans live in rural areas, and over 70 percent work in agriculture. Even the urban poor depend heavily on rising agricultural productivity to reduce food prices, which already consume the bulk of household incomes.

“Africa remains the only region in the world where per capita food production has actually fallen over the past forty years. Given the necessity and possibility of reversing this trend, NEPAD and the

African heads of state have placed agriculture at the top of the development agenda for our continent,” said Richard Mkandawire, NEPAD’s Advisor on Agriculture. “Significant reductions in poverty will depend on the collective ability of African farmers, governments, and agricultural specialists to stimulate and sustain broad-based agricultural growth. NEPAD is committed to making that goal a reality.”

To improve the state of agriculture on the continent, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) launched a review of successes in African agriculture, which involved extensive consultations with over 1,000 Africa-based policymakers, scientists, and researchers. In parallel, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) conducted a systematic review of community successes to understand how some local communities managed to reverse the broad trend of resource degradation. In December 2003, NEPAD began a process of translating lessons learned from successful examples of agricultural innovation into accelerated growth on the ground.

“We documented and analyzed—from various perspectives—many of these past successes to identify promising opportunities for agricultural development,” explained Steve Haggblade, leader of IFPRI’s project on successes in African agriculture. “By extracting lessons from these past experiences, we hope to identify key strategies for expanding agricultural successes in the future.”

Discussions at the conference focused on the following successful case studies:

- Maize in East and Southern Africa
- Cassava in Southern, Eastern, and Western Africa
- Tissue Culture Bananas
- Horticulture Exports from Kenya and Ivory Coast
- Domestic Kenyan Horticulture Markets
- Smallholder Dairy in Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia
- Fodder Shrubs in Kenya

“From ‘bright spots,’ or community-driven successes, we have learned why and how these emerged, so that we can provide recommendations on upscaling these successes to NEPAD,” added Frits Penning de Vries, Senior Researcher at IWMI.

Conference participants examined the following community success stories:

- Implementing Water Harvesting in West Africa

- Adoption of Small-Scale Irrigation Systems in Kenya
- Empowering Farmer Communities in Somalia
- Farmer Field Schools in East Africa

"NEPAD's Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) is an extremely important aspect of NEPAD's agenda, and an extremely well thought-out program. Now, it remains to all of us to ensure its implementation, or the fight against poverty will not be effective," said H.E. Honorable Peter Anyang' Nyongo, Kenyan Minister for Planning and National Development. Together, we can make poverty a part of the past, and prosperity, justice, and fairness a thing of the future."

"Success *is* possible," emphasized Professor Mkandawire. "NEPAD is committed to supporting collaborative efforts to turn these strategic opportunities into action."

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### **Conference Organizers**

**InWent—Capacity Building International, Germany**

**NEPAD—New Economic Partnership for African Development**

**IFPRI—International Food Policy Research Institute**

**CTA—Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation**

**IFAD—International Fund for Agricultural Development**

**IWMI—International Water Management Institute**

**Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture**

**IGAD—Intergovernmental Authority on Development**