



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP  
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE

## CONCEPT NOTE

### ***Making Sustainable Agriculture a future for youth in Africa***

*The African Union - European Union Agriculture Ministers Conference*

*2 July 2017, Rome, Italy*

2017 is a defining year for strengthening the partnership between Europe and Africa. The 5<sup>th</sup> Africa-EU Summit in November 2017 is a key opportunity to give a new impetus to this partnership. Profound economic and societal changes are taking place in Africa. The demographic growth is extraordinary: according to United Nations projections, Africa population is expected to double by 2050, from 1.2 billion people to 2.4 billion of predominantly young people. The International Monetary Fund estimates that the continent needs to create 18 million new jobs each year up to 2035, to absorb new labour market entrants, compared to the 3 million jobs per year currently created in the formal economy. Challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, threats to environment could be exacerbated by the population growth. Nevertheless, over the past two decades, Africa demonstrated impressive economic progress and positive transformation, providing new and unique opportunities, such as growing and increasingly integrated markets, and a dynamic SMEs sector.

The EU is also at the crossroads: discussing its own future direction but also the future of its relations with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific after the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020. The EU is Africa's closest neighbour, first foreign investor, first trading partner – offering free access to the EU market via Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) and the Everything but Arms initiative, and access under Free Trade Agreements. The EU is also Africa's first partner in development and the principal source of remittances. At the same time, the African governments are progressively negotiating the Continental Free Trade Area aimed at boosting intra-Africa trade. Moreover, demographic trends and the increasing mobility and migration add a new dimension to the need of a common agenda to promote sustainable economic development in Africa, in order to create the jobs that the continent needs and to make the most of the opportunities it offers while sustainably managing the natural resource base, which contributes significantly to the Continent's wealth.

There is a need to implement sustainable practices on consumption and production, as current patterns are increasing the pressure on already scarce natural resources. Climate change represents an additional burden, already undermining agriculture and food production in many regions. The African Union and the European Union have long-standing experience in agricultural and rural development policies. Sustainable agriculture is a cornerstone for economic development and sustainable growth in both regions. Recognizing the challenges, both the EU and AU need to step up their efforts to achieve poverty eradication, food security, improved nutrition, rural growth and livelihoods, as well as sustainable management and protection of natural resources.

Responsible investments in rural and agricultural economy, value chains and integrated markets, sustainable management of natural resources, have a key role for fostering economic growth, job creation and development in African countries. This should be accompanied by a better focus on research and innovation with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and digitalisation as important

enablers. Agriculture plays a substantial role in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as it is intrinsically linked to issues such as jobs, food, air, climate change, water, soil and biodiversity. Alignment with the African Union's Agenda 2063 vision and priorities is an essential part of the agricultural cooperation between the AU and EU. As countries develop climate policies in response to the Paris Agreement, and develop their plans to implement the SDG's and the AU Agenda 2063 there will be opportunity to integrate food security and nutrition into climate action.

For decades, the EU has been working extensively with African partners to support policies and initiatives in agriculture and natural resources management, to improve business and investments environments, to advance Africa's economic diversification, as well as to increase public and private investments for agricultural transformation. Given the challenges ahead, there is a strong sense that this partnership needs to be deepened, by better mobilizing and focusing efforts, resources and ensuring sustainable growth.

A series of high political events this year, from the G7 and G20 summits in May and June to the 5<sup>th</sup> Africa-EU summit in November, along with a number of Africa-EU business forums will give a new impetus to a more profound relationship with Africa.

## WHAT?

The African Union – European Union Agriculture Ministerial Conference "**Making Sustainable Agriculture a future for youth in Africa**" is taking place on 2 July in Rome, at the FAO Headquarters.

Considering the key role of agricultural development for structural transformation in Africa, the aim of the conference is to build up political engagement ahead of the Africa-EU Summit in November on a common vision on how to generate sustainable and inclusive economic growth, supporting decent job creation for African youth in the agri-food sector and rural economy while ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources. This vision would support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Malabo Declaration and the Paris Agreement.

## WHO?

The conference will be co-hosted by the African Union Commission, the European Commission and the Estonian Presidency of the EU. It builds up on the first AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Meeting under the theme "Investing in a Food Secure Future" organised in July 2016 in Noordwijk, the Netherlands.

Ministers of Agriculture from the AU and the EU are invited by Mrs Josefa Sacko, Mr Phil Hogan and Mr Tarmo Tamm to participate to this high level event, organised in the margins of the FAO bi-annual Conference. The meeting brings together policy makers in the European Union and in the African Union, agri-businesses and farmers' organisations from EU and African countries, international organisations, development agencies and NGOs.

## HOW?

High Level Panels are going to be channelled around four main themes, to be discussed in parallel sessions:

- **Promote responsible private sector investments and access to markets in the agri-food sector in Africa.** The role of the private sector is crucial in boosting agriculture and agribusiness in Africa, as the public sector alone cannot stimulate the necessary agricultural

transformation. Debates will focus on how to mobilize and incentivize private agri-food actors to invest in Africa and make investments profitable, socially acceptable and environmentally sustainable; how to accompany the countries in providing and improving the right framework for sustainable responsible investments; and how to create decent jobs for youth and women and bring sustainable growth. The session will also examine access to finance for value chain investments, as well as on facilitating trade and market access for agri-food products.

- **Research and innovation and the role of digitization in agriculture – The EU-AU partnership on food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture.** Fostering innovation and deepening collaborative research is crucial for sustainable growth and jobs in agriculture. The access and use of ICT, technology and big data are important enablers for development, including making farming more attractive to young people. Enhancing connectivity, and promoting e-Agriculture, digital entrepreneurship, and mobile payments in African agriculture will need to be accompanied by supportive policies tackling among others, prices, taxation and the regulatory environment. Farmers also need to obtain a fair share of the value added in the food chain. This calls for policy frameworks to encourage them to be better organised and have a stronger participation in food value chains, as well as to assure farming remains an attractive profession for young entrepreneurs.
- **Sustainable water management in agriculture** - addressing the water, energy, food and ecosystem nexus. Water in Africa is unevenly distributed. A large number of African regions have abundant water but, at the same time, suffer from long and severe drought periods and/or extreme water scarcity. Sustainable, efficient agriculture would imply better use of irrigation, drainage technologies and innovation. Prevention of water pollution coming from agriculture and adequate agriculture planning should become priorities for agriculture development. Therefore, water quality and water management become key challenges for ensuring sustainable growth and development.
- **Climate Smart Agriculture** and reducing **food losses and waste.** Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) is an approach that helps to guide actions needed to transform and reorient agricultural systems to effectively support development and ensure food security in a changing climate. CSA aims to tackle three main objectives: sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and incomes; adapting and building resilience to climate change; and reducing and/or removing greenhouse gas emissions, where possible. To enable people to achieve food security and for food producers to improve their livelihoods, there is also a need for reducing food losses and waste. About one-third of all food produced in the world is lost or wasted from farm to fork. This huge level of inefficiency has economic, social, and environmental impacts. Efficiency and reductions can alleviate pressure on climate, water, and land resources.

## WHAT NEXT?

**The outcome of the Ministerial Conference will be reported to the 5<sup>th</sup> Africa - EU Summit** in November 2017, provide important input to related processes at various UN fora, feed into relevant processes in Rome, New York and Nairobi, and will guide the next steps in the technical collaboration between the European Commission and the African Union Commission in this area.