



Fourth AFRICAN UNION - EUROPEAN UNION Agriculture Ministerial Conference

CONCLUSIONS

PANEL 1 Investment opportunities and challenges for local producers and the competitiveness of the agri-food sector

Message 1: Strategic investments will play a key role in ensuring we “build back better” after COVID-19 and make our agri-food systems more resilient and sustainable. Well-targeted investments are more than an agent of economic growth. They can spur the transition towards sustainable and integrated food systems that are capable of ensuring the continuous supply of safe, affordable, nutritious and environmentally sustainable food whilst improving the quality of life for millions of people.

Message 2: For sustainable agri-business and agri-food systems to reap the associated joint benefits of trade and foreign investments, decisive government actions need to be complemented by systematic public private dialogue, and capacity-building that will enable a green and digital transformation to take place.

Message 3: Participants stressed the importance that future sustainable and responsible investments focus on the achievement of the SDGs and the sustainable management of natural resources, whilst situating the smallholder, women and the youth at the heart of the policy concern.

Message 4: A deeper focus on human capital and well-targeted vocational education training will ensure youth enter the labour market with enhanced technical skills increasing employability. Smart public policies supporting also PPPs will also enhance the bankability of projects for sustainable investments in the agri-food sector. The access to microfinance for SMEs and smallholders should be strengthened. There also needs to be a multistakeholder approach in value chain analysis-linking small scale operators to final consumers with a strong role for civil society organization. Finally, the issue of illicit trade, which can hinder sustainable growth in the agri-food sector, should be given enhanced attention when discussing private investments -from both the enforcement and capacity-building angles to track and address.

Achieved deliverable:

- AU EU Agri-food business platform: in line with the Task Force Rural Africa recommendation and the Political Agenda signed at the 2019 AU EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference, we have started the work to set up Agribusiness platforms in targeted countries to boost private responsible investment through the identification of barriers to private investment and trade as well as the promotion of agri-business twinning. A pilot project has been launched in Ghana in July 2020 and its kick-off meeting was held in June 2021.
- Over the last two years, new innovative partnerships, based on African political and policy leadership and making use of European expertise and finance, improved the policy framework and created new opportunities for impactful investments. The Africa – Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs was taken to the next level. We are confident that this partnership will continue in the upcoming years to increase private investment from both Africans and Europeans, boost trade, enhance job creation and contribute to sustainable and inclusive development.
- African-European Farmers’ exchanges: this capacity-building programme aims to supporting Farmers Organizations’ institutional development, improving their capacity to influence policy dialogue and governance mechanisms of the value chains, as well as promoting knowledge sharing and peer learning in the areas of production, processing and marketing.
- Mobility scheme on agriculture/agribusiness between African and European VET schools: vocational education and training in Africa to improve the professional development of teachers and managers, their skills and employability.
- With its ‘Team Europe’ initiative, the European Union, has already committed EUR 40.5 billion to jointly support partners in overcoming urgent needs and mitigating (the health, social, economic, and humanitarian) impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, while countering the aggravation of inequalities, food insecurity and malnutrition.

PANEL 2 Agriculture research and innovation for soil health, agro-ecology and other innovative approaches

Message 1: Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the change in the EU's climate policy brought by the European Green Deal, the Taskforce Rural Africa (TFRA) updated its recommendations, and the AU set up a Task Force with FAO, EU and other stakeholders to address the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition. It became clear that food and nutrition security has become of such fundamental political, economic and social importance that it must be at the centre of all future policy and planning.

Message 2: The EU-AU agricultural research and innovation cooperation is essential as we seek to embark on a “building back better and greener” path to address challenges such as food and nutrition security, climate change, pest outbreaks, land degradation and (emerging) crises such as COVID-19. The R&I Partnerships will contribute to a Green Transition for both Africa and Europe reconfirming the importance of green and sustainable investments. Future investment opportunities for innovative green entrepreneurship ecosystems –will also contribute to building capacities for cutting-edge and applied research for innovation through multistakeholder approaches, support to innovation systems and entrepreneurship on the African continent.

Message 3: A Green Transition in Africa can be supported through R&I activities, by unlocking the potential of new green business opportunities in areas of sustainable agriculture. Activities such as the implementation of agro-ecological approaches for sustainable food production and of circular approaches to reduce food loss and make better use of agricultural and other organic waste or the potential of the One Health approach and healthy soils are amongst the areas of opportunity for sustainable development in the agri-food sector.

Achieved deliverable:

- In November 2019, the Pan-African Network for economic Analysis of Policies (PANAP) was launched. PANAP is a network among African academic/research and institutional partners collaborating with the European Commission Joint Research Centre to build research capacity on agricultural economics and policy issues with a focus on Africa.
- In June 2021 the EU Commission has adopted the main work programme of Horizon Europe for the period 2021-2022, whose first ever ambitious 'Africa Initiative' will include 4 topics (with a budget of around €69 million) relevant to the EU-AU Food Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture partnership: such as the implementation of Agro-ecology approaches in African agriculture systems or to explore the potential of One health approach for Food Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture. In addition, the future EU Mission in the area of Soil health and Food will open up additional opportunities for cooperation with Africa in ensuring global soil health and reducing the food footprint of our food systems. This reflects the joint priorities as agreed in the 10 year roadmap developed under this partnership and in the EU-AU Research and Innovation Ministerial meeting in July 2020.
- 'The EU funded DeSIRA initiative (Development of Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture), aims to contribute to a climate-relevant sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems in low and middle-incomes countries. It is a central plank of intervention under the EU's Green Deal, applying science to rural development in new and exciting ways to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, research and innovation projects in Africa (as well as in Asia and Latin America) are already strengthening research capacities and research governance involving key actors at national, regional, continental and global levels; with a significant support to African CAADP ex-pillar organisations for agricultural research and extension (FARA, AFAAS, CORAF, ASARECA and CCARDESA).

The initiative is implemented with a core group of EU Member States and in partnership with national research organizations, European research organisations and international research organisations.

The first projects were signed in 2019. The EU pledge of €270 Million made during the 2017 One Planet Summit will be achieved and even surpassed. In 2020, DeSIRA and GCCA+ (Global Climate Change Alliance +) joined approaches and resources leading to a portfolio of about €100 Million (excluding MS co-funding) in support to 21 projects. The total expected number of projects is about 80 in total. Information of the DeSIRA initiative and the projects already started can be found at :

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/desira>

PANEL 3 Use of digital solutions in agriculture to combat diseases and to strengthen rural communities

Message 1: Digital technologies, that include satellites, devices, networks, services and applications, offer tremendous opportunities for the sustainable development of future smart agrifood systems and for driving fair and inclusive economic growth, raising incomes and improving livelihoods in African rural areas. Digital solutions and applications should also target smallholder farmers' needs, especially as concerns market access. Building networks that include cooperatives, associations and extension services will help to raise awareness among farmers, increase knowledge exchanges and learn from previous experiences.

Message 2: Timely and accurate data and information is a sine qua non condition for policy makers, agri- managers, and medium and smallholder farmers in order to forecast and take the right decisions in the right moment at farm as well as at government level. Fair and equitable access to data, digital and extension services can empower farmers and their organisations and increase their negotiation power.

Message 3: As confirmed also during the discussion today, digital technologies have a great potential to combat diseases and to prevent and avoid significantly food losses, including by increasing recycling. Circular, holistic models and information related to production, processing and trade of agrifood products can contribute highly to build back better and greener and recover faster from the COVID 19 pandemic crisis.

Achieved deliverable:

- The proposal to support the creation of an international digital council for food and agriculture was adopted by the agriculture ministers at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) in Berlin in 2019. The Terms of Reference for the council were agreed end of April 2021. The Council will advise countries on digitisation issues and promote the exchange of ideas and experience.
- Data and information that will be provided by the Pan-African Network for economic Analysis of Policies (PANAP) launched in November 2019 can help policy makers taking timely decisions.
- Support to several African countries in developing an institutional and policy environment conducive to the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity in agriculture. This kind of projects includes actions at national level (promotion of ecosystem-based agricultural practices, policy support), regional level (exchange of best practices, policy support) and global level (link with CBD). They are supported as part of a 10M EUR grant by the European Union, to the FAO component of the third phase of the Capacity Building Programme related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in ACP countries, known as ACP MEAs 3 (2019-2024). FAO ACP MEAs 3 will also facilitate the transition to more sustainable, resilient and productive systems by promoting the application of ecologically sustainable practices and approaches.

PANEL 4 Regional trade integration for increased consumer access to safe food, improved food security and enhanced value chains

Message 1: The experience developed with the regional economic communities (RECs) suggested that reducing tariffs alone is not sufficient to boost intraregional trade. Poor trade logistics, including transportation infrastructure, border processes, customs practices, or typical non-tariff barriers such as quotas, licenses, complex or dissimilar rules of origin -as well as Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) rules, and technical barriers - also play a key role along with an inadequate business and regulatory environment. Trade policies should be combined with structural reforms that boost agricultural productivity to better leverage existing comparative advantage, also through targeted social programs and training programs to ease worker mobility across industries and promote employment. This will be key to the success of a free trade area.

Message 2: The AfCFTA is also expected to enhance competitiveness at the industry and enterprise level through exploitation of opportunities for scale production, continental market access and better reallocation of resources. A deeper integration level where production factors become mobile will have multiplier effects in improving continental food security sustainability from a trade perspective. Significant opportunities lying ahead of further regional trade integration could however be undermined either by structural feature (lower levels of income and economic size and generally longer distances compared with other regions) that would require a long-term commitment to change, or by the result of policy, such as tariffs, trade regulations, and regulatory requirements, whose removal would boost regional integration.

Message 3: Among the commitments of the CAADP Malabo Declaration, one clearly refers to boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services, not only to triple intra-Africa trade in agricultural commodities, but also to fast track continental free trade area and transition to a continental Common External tariff scheme. The EU is already supporting the AfCFTA through the EPAs, whose role as “building blocks” is consistent with the AfCFTA’s drive for greater economic integration and fit into a reform agenda where partner countries put in place the necessary policies and measures that enable businesses to create wealth. Through the EU-AU partnership on agriculture, adopting a (sub) regional approach to address non-tariff barriers (NTB) and focusing on strategic agrifood value chains, AU and EU could join forces to contribute to regional integration.

Achieved deliverable:

- Since the last commitments taken in the previous Ministerial, the EU Delegation to the African Union and the African Union institutions have worked jointly on an action/intervention aiming to address the need for a **robust and performing SPS governance system** at African continental level. This lays on the AU SPS Policy Framework, which is the agreed instrument to support the operationalization of Annex 7 (SPS) of the Protocol on Trade in Goods of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). The proposed intervention of 13 million Euros foresees a structured four components - approach able to mobilise and integrate the contribution of the key stakeholders in the sector: **1)** The African Union thematic department DARBE (Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment) will be the body responsible for designing, coordinating and harmonizing continental policies and for ensuring their translation into political decisions through the AU Policy Organs and

governance systems; **2) International specialised bodies** will provide expertise and technical guidance for SPS capacity assessment at national and regional level using internationally validated tools and develop costed investment plans to address capacity gaps and national and regional level; **3) Technical assistance and / or twinning style support** will be mobilised to ensure flexible support form technical expertise to be mobilised according to the needs.; **4) AfCFTA Secretariat:** DARBE will be able to liaise closely with other AU stakeholders in particular the AfCFTA Secretariat to advance harmonization of SPS measures for efficient trade. The involvement of the AfCFTA EU Task Force will ensure coordination and complementarity with the other mandates of the AfCFTA Secretariat.

- Since February 2020 the European Commission is providing financial support to the implementation of the **AU Strategy to develop Geographical Indications (GI)** in the continent, through the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Action under the Pan-African programme. In 2019, a GI digital hub has been established and a regional GI training has been organised in Yaoundé. The European Commission launched in December 2019 an initiative of EUR 8 million to support the development of an Intellectual Property Rights framework in Africa: GIs are one of the focus areas of this programme, which will support priority actions like GI pilot projects, training, improved legal framework on GIs, communication activities and studies. Examples of such actions: technical assistance to the GI registration Cabrito de Tete in Mozambique and Poivre de Penja in Cameroun, co-organisation of capacity building workshop on GIs in Nigeria on 22/04/2021. In addition, there has been recently good progress in the drafting of African GIs handbook and the identification of potential GIs from Africa to be further supported under the project.
- With the Sustainable Cacao Initiative launched in September 2020, the European Union already contributed €25 million to enhance the economic, social and environmental sustainability of cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Cameroon who are, respectively, the first, second and fifth biggest cocoa producers, generating almost 70% of the world production. This funding is a first step for strengthening the partnership between Team Europe (composed of the EU, its Member States, and European financial institutions) and these three cocoa producing countries and aims at ensuring a decent living income for farmers and revenues for producer countries, halting deforestation and eliminating child labor, all together. The initiative will also aim at advancing responsible practices of EU businesses involved in cocoa supply chains and feed into other horizontal initiatives (e.g. on due diligence, deforestation) to respond to the growing demand from European consumers for sustainable chocolate products.