



Fourth AFRICAN UNION - EUROPEAN UNION Agriculture Ministerial Conference

CONCEPT NOTE for the panel on Digital Solutions in Agriculture and Plant and Animal Health

Timing: 10.00-11.30 (CEST)

Subject: Use of digital solutions in agriculture to combat diseases and to strengthen rural communities

Format: A parallel thematic session – a high-level chair (ministerial level) will guide a discussion among a range of active players with differing experiences. Audience participation is expected.

CONCEPT

The use of digital technologies in agriculture (E-agriculture) offers strong potential for driving economic growth, raising incomes and improving livelihoods in rural areas, through increased efficiency of agricultural production and value chain development, including for smallholder farmers. It can also address global, pressing challenges, such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, increase of plant and zoonotic diseases, drought, desertification, high individual risk and inefficient supply chains. In addition, it can contribute greatly to the recovery from the COVID 19 crisis.

In a sector, that is becoming increasingly knowledge intensive, availability of timely and accurate data and information is essential. It can help agri-food stakeholders to make the best possible decisions and use the resources available in the most productive and sustainable manner. Digital technologies, that may include devices, networks, services and applications, can reduce transaction costs, increase accessibility/affordability of agricultural equipment through more circular models and make information related to production technologies, inputs, prices, markets, climate, sustainable practices and ways to prevent, control, diagnose and treat animal and plant diseases more widely available in less time.

In both Africa and Europe, there is increasing demand – and need – for adequate, safe, nutritious and affordable agri-food products. Food systems can stimulate green innovation and create jobs and growth in both Europe and African countries.

Nowadays, economic growth must not be achieved through unsustainable use of resources: both farmers and private sector operators need to be supported in their transition through greener practices, hence the need for innovative practices and skilled youth to strengthening African agri-food systems. It is imperative to reducing food losses along the supply chain by improving storage

techniques, processing and added value, as well as labelling and vocational trainings. Developing appropriate skills along the value chains has become even more a priority: new technologies need to be accompanied by human and financial investments which should in return also generate sustainable economic returns.

The discussion during this panel will focus upon the use of digital solutions in agriculture for combating diseases and strengthening rural African communities. It will take stock of the existing challenges and explore present and future opportunities for collaboration and investment in E-agriculture.

PROPOSED FORMAT AND POTENTIAL PANELLISTS:

- **Chair:** H.E. **Elsayed Elkosayar**, Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt

Introductory remarks (5 minutes)

Moderator:

Tassos Haniotis, Director, DG Agriculture, European Commission

- 10.15-10.25:
Jeremy Knops, General Delegate, COLEACP: Adjusting to the EU market requirements to unlock the agri-food potential in Africa
- 10.25-10.35:
TBC
- 10.35-10.45:
Sarah De Saeger & Marthe De Boevre, MYTOX-SOUTH coordinators, Ghent University, Belgium: “Current status of food safety big data in Europe & Africa”
- 10.45-10.55:
Alan Belward, EU Joint Research Centre (JRC-Ispra): Scientific evidence and knowledge to reduce food losses and improve food safety
- 10.55-11.05:
Nnaemeka C. Ikegwuonu, CEO, ColdHub Nigeria: “ColdHubs; digitalized solar-powered infrastructure to reduce food spoilage and make safe nutritious food available for consumption”
- 11.05-11.15:
Ishmael Sunga, CEO, Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)

11.15-11.25:

Open floor discussion

Chair’s concluding thoughts (5 minutes)