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Status of CAADP Implementation and the MDGs

Introduction

In 2000, United Nations member States set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were aimed at reducing poverty. Deliberations at the recent (September 2010) United Nations Summit on MDGs in New York, noted that with only five years before the 2015 deadline set for achieving the goals, there is no likelihood that many African countries can achieve the targets. Of particular importance is MDG one (1) of halving hunger and poverty by 2015 and seven (7) of ensuring environmental sustainability. The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) was established in 2003, to significantly contribute in addressing mainly MDG1 and partly 7.

Estimates from the CAADP monitoring report for 2009 indicate that the continent as a whole is not on track towards halving poverty by 2015. The continent's estimated poverty rate for 2009 stood at 38.6 per cent, which was 9 percentage points above where the continent should have been in 2009 to be on track towards meeting the 2015 target. The report shows that while many countries are on track to halving either poverty or hunger by 2015, only Ghana is on track to halving both and achieving MDG1 target. This, however, is based on the assumption that member States will maintain current trends in agricultural spending and resulting sectoral growth. Developments from implementation of CAADP, however, show that if countries adopt robust and projected CAADP spending and growth targets, it is possible for a number of them to achieve the MDG targets of halving poverty and hunger.

Key issues for Africa in meeting MDG1

Despite the fact that Africa has abundant arable land and human resources that could potentially be translated into increased production, incomes and food security, it nevertheless remains a region that has the highest proportion of people who suffer from hunger, and the largest poverty head count ratio compared to all other developing regions. In Africa, one in three people is chronically hungry.

The performance of the agricultural sector and the rural economy on which the majority of Africa's population depend for their livelihoods, is directly linked to the state of poverty, and determines the extent to which MDG targets can be achieved. In this regard, the biggest challenge in achieving the MDGs lies in transforming Africa's agricultural sector into an engine of economic growth and poverty reduction.

The major key issues, therefore, broadly include; (a) limited or low agricultural production and productivity; (b) inadequate infrastructure and markets for agricultural products; (c) unsustainable environmental management practices; and (d) weak institutions and policies to address them. Overall, Africa's agricultural production and productivity rates are the lowest by any standards. Moreover, the slow pace of rural infrastructure development and its low maintenance in Africa continue to hamper

marketing and movement of agriculture products from one region to another within a country, let alone their negative effects on inter-regional activities.

Furthermore, at least 95 per cent of Africa's farming systems are dependent on rain-fed agriculture. The region's agricultural production and livelihood processes are therefore directly dependent on the environment. Biodiversity in Africa is under constant pressure as a consequence of unsatisfactory regulations and their limited enforcement. Air quality has also emerged as a serious challenge. Moreover, the impact of climate change and desertification has been extremely severe in Africa. Interlinked with these challenges that undermine the performance of African agriculture and rural economy are institutional and policy environment deficiencies which need to be correctly identified and addressed.

How is Africa responding to these challenges?

Realizing these challenges, and noting the potential for agriculture in attaining MDG- 1 targets, Africa's Heads of State and Government, endorsed CAADP mainly to enhance investments in growth-stimulating sectors, create on-and-off farm jobs mainly for the youth and thereby significantly reduce poverty and hunger. CAADP is more defined on the principles of perusing a minimum of six (6) per cent average annual sector growth rate at the national level and increasing investments by allocating at least 10 per cent of national budgets to the agricultural sector.

Noting the benefits associated with regional cooperation, CAADP pushes for the use of regional complementarities and cooperation to boost growth. Further, CAADP emphasizes principles of policy efficiency, dialogue, review, and accountability. Also very important for realizing the MDG targets is the strong requirement for embracing partnerships and alliances with farmers, agribusiness, and civil society.

Mobilization of member States in the implementation of CAADP is fundamentally progressing towards attainment of MDG1 targets. Increasingly, more countries are allocating more of their public budget to agriculture. Although the share of agricultural spending has not reached or surpassed the CAADP targets of at least 10 per cent, the trends in a number of member States are extremely encouraging. In countries where CAADP implementation has advanced, increased resources to the agricultural sector are targeting growth-enhancing policies, strategies and plans. Moreover, and although there are still challenges of establishing a causal relationship, agricultural growth and per capita GDP in many member States are increasing.

Through CAADP, there is compelling evidence to believe that MDG1 targets can be achieved with enhanced investments targeting growth in the sector. Within the CAADP framework, it is noted that attaining the agricultural sector objectives and therefore CAADP targets require complementary investments in other sectors especially infrastructure, health and education. These complementary sectors are as critical in enhancing job creation.

In 2010, up to nine (9) countries had demonstrated a strong joint commitment by governments, private sector, civil society, farmers and development partners to a common vision and strategy for agriculture sectors by signing the CAADP Compacts bringing the current total to 22. Of these 22 member States over 16 countries have developed CAADP-based Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plans and were subjected to AUC-NPCA-led independent technical reviews. More countries will be signing compacts and developing investment plans within the context of CAADP.

Of the member States whose agricultural plans have been reviewed in line with CAADP, Ethiopia, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Togo have been allocated additional funds from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP), a Trust Fund established by the 2009 G-8 and G-20 to support countries that are demonstrating principles similar to those of CAADP and that are aiming to attain MDG1 targets.