

Climate change will aggravate Africa's food insecurity and poverty, says ECA's Dione

Addis Ababa, 5 March 2008 (ECA) – Calling for a new business approach to African agriculture, ECA's Director of Food Security and Sustainable Development, Josue Dione, said in Addis Ababa that climate change would aggravate the continent's food insecurity and poverty.

In a paper presented at the ongoing international conference on "Science with Africa" which opened here yesterday, Dione said Africa would experience a 10 percent decrease in rainfall in Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa by 2050.

Africa will also experience reduced water resources from major glaciers, major lakes and rivers, while up to 90 million hectares of agricultural land in arid and semi-arid areas would be lost, he said.

Dr. Dione said higher temperature would reduce soil moisture storage capacity, quality and fertility while the length of growing seasons would be reduced by more than 20 percent in the Sahel by 2020.

Quoting studies, he said Africa would also experience reduced crop yields from rain-fed agriculture by up to 50 per cent in many countries and up to 31 percent reduced income from dryland agriculture. He called on African countries to address the gaps in technologies, infrastructure, institutions and policies in order to make African agriculture develop sustainably.

"These gaps must be addressed, not only at the farm level, but throughout the value chains of strategic food and agricultural commodities," Dione said.

The African Union in December 2006 adopted some strategic commodities, including Rice, maize, legumes, cotton, oil palm, beef, dairy, poultry and fisheries at the continental level; cassava, sorghum and millet at the regional level.

The challenge, Dr. Dione said, is to build the NEPAD agricultural pillars around such strategic commodities in creating "Regional Strategic Commodity Belts" and for further research into the implications of climate change on crop, animal breeding, health, water resources management, soil fertility management and food crisis prevention strategies.

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