

Experts review draft Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa

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Addis Ababa Ethiopia, 20 April 2009 (ECA) – The review of the draft framework and guidelines on land policy in Africa began in Addis Ababa Ethiopia today, paving the way for the first ever continent-wide policy document on land.

Experts on African agriculture, land and livestock began meeting to prepare for a landmark joint ministerial meeting that has been scheduled for 23-24 April to validate the review of a continental Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa, before the Heads of State Summit decides on it in July this year.

It would also bring to a successful conclusion a 3-year roadmap on Land Policy Initiative supported by the African Union-Economic Commission for Africa and Africa Development Bank, according to Dr. Josue Dioné, Director of the Division of Food Security and Sustainable Development at the ECA, who addressed the opening session of the meeting.

The AU-ECA-AfDB Land Policy Initiative developed a continental Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa, “following rigorous subregional assessment studies and multi-stakeholder consultations”, Mr Dione recalled.

The ministers will also try to address the perennial issues of low agricultural productivity and intra-African agricultural trade, according to the conference agenda.

The Joint Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture, Land and Livestock will address issues such as: “Climate Change: Opportunities for enhanced investments and growth of African Agriculture” and issues and challenges for stimulating economic transformation and growth in Africa through regional agriculture trade and market systems.

Agricultural development is key concern for the continent’s growth. Unfortunately, “intra-Africa agricultural trade remains low as, in 2000-2005, intra-regional exports average US\$ 3.8 billion against an average continental import bill of US \$33 billion, including US\$ 28.4 billion (86 percent) for food products” Dione explained.

Such a high import bill in the face of considerable regional production potential is symptomatic of a severe structural problem of African agriculture that needs to be addressed, hopefully by the joint ministerial conference.

Shortly after the opening session today a bureau of five was elected to run the conference: Egypt (chair); Lesotho, Congo and Niger (deputy chair); and Kenya rapporteur. The experts’ meetings on agriculture and on land policy are being held separately but the ministers are expected to begin reviewing their respective proposals in a joint session that opens on Wednesday.

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