

The Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture urges African Leaders to endorse the Continental Framework and Guidelines for Land Policy

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Addis Ababa Ethiopia, 24 April 2009 (ECA) – The Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Tefera Derebew called for the endorsement of the Draft Framework and Guidelines for Land Policy in Africa by African leaders to tackle the poor performance of agriculture and the persistent food insecurity in the region.

Mr. Tefera Derebew was addressing the two-day Joint Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture, Land and Livestock which opened yesterday in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank.

This ministerial session will review the recommendations formulated by land and agriculture experts to improve the Draft Framework and Guidelines for Land Policy in Africa. These recommendations stress the need to:

- Address agricultural governance issues and the implementation of policies especially in countries where there is a resistance in terms of market access
- Identify vulnerable populations and include them in agricultural growth strategies
- Increase budget allocation to livestock from the current average of 0,2% to 3%

According to the Director of Food Security and Sustainable Development Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Dr. Josue Dione: "The poor performance of agriculture in Africa [...] is mainly explained by the severe undercapitalization of the sector resulting from decades of neglect and inconsistencies in policies and strategies".

It is to be recalled in this respect that only 8 African countries have so far reached the target of the Maputo Declaration whereby AU Heads of States committed themselves to allocate 10% of their national budgets to agriculture in order to reduce poverty by 2015.

However, Dr. Dione underscored, the considerable opportunities offered by Africa for solutions to the food crisis in his opening remarks. He indicated that only 45% of the suitable area for agriculture is currently exploited; only 4 % of the available water resources are used and only 6% of arable land is irrigated.

The Draft Framework and Guidelines for Land Policy in Africa under review is a concrete result of a 3 year effective partnership between AU, ECA and ADB. It encapsulates key land issues including: the status, challenges, lessons and needs relating to land policy formulation and implementation. It also provides elements and modalities for monitoring progress and good policymaking in this critical area.

The outcomes of this ministerial session will feed into the deliberations of the next Assembly of the African Heads of States and Governments which will be held under the theme: "Investing in agriculture for economic growth and food security."

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