Communique from the Joint NSA & AUC Continental Conference on Food Security and Agriculture as part of discussions of the Joint Conference of Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Development, Fisheries and Aquaculture

Held at the AUC conference complex on Wednesday 30th April 2014, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Theme: "From *Rhetoric to Action: Towards Transforming Africa's Agriculture for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, through harnessing opportunities for inclusive growth and sustainable development*"

We, the Non-State Actors (comprised of the African farmers, pastoralists, fisher folks, civil society, rural women small holders, youth, media, private sector, and Academic organisations) would like to congratulate the Joint Conference of Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Development, Fisheries and Aquaculture, the African Union Commission and NEPAD for hosting such an informative and enlightening meeting. We have been extremely impressed by the quality, richness and depth of debate.

The joint NSA & AUC forum, with about 200 participants including some member States, discussed the CAADP Result Framework in line with Sustaining the CAADP momentum, joint Non-State Actors' 10 point recommendations, and CAADP engagement at the regional and national levels, while reviewing key messages on the five priority sub-themes for consideration by the Ministers.

In light of the deliberations arising from the joint NSA & AUC forum, we the non-state actors would like to thank the African Union Commission and the joint conference and recommend the following:

1. Increase agricultural production and productivity

Reaffirming the crucial need to increase production and productivity, we emphasise that the increase in production should be sustainable and diversified, covering a mix of enterprises (crops, livestock, trees and fish) and conserving the environment and agro-biodiversity.

Recognizing that the Ministers have also stressed the need for greater investment in irrigation, we wish to reinforce this through focusing support to small holder schemes.

We noted that the need for quality seed was highlighted. We would like to recommend that the improvement of indigenous seed varieties should be considered, as they are more adaptable to climatic shocks and could strengthen farmer's resilience.

We recommend that the issue of GMOs should be properly investigated, in order to provide governments with evidence to guide them to take informed decision without compromising farmer's ability to conserve their own seed.

We recommend the development of appropriate technologies that are more female friendly for both on farm and off farm activities, in order to reduce the labour and drudgery of women farmers.

2. Harnessing agricultural markets, infrastructure and trade opportunity

The meeting underscored the importance of market access for small holder famers, reiterating the points made by the Ministers. However, the NSA also recommends the implementation of the regional integration agenda for the facilitation of intra-regional and inter- African trade.

We urge ministers to simplify the inter-country tariff and excise structure. We reaffirm the need to review and harmonize agriculture trade policy frameworks in the region.

Quality standards are essential and need to be disseminated and enforced. Actions need to be taken to ensure that quality is achieved, and is thus certified.

Infrastructure, especially roads and energy, increase the cost of production. For instance transportation frequently makes up 50% of the total cost incurred by most businesses. Therefore development of strategies that mitigate the impact of transport costs would be appreciated.

3. Food security and Nutrition towards ending hunger and malnutrition in Africa

For the wellbeing of Africa, food security and nutrition should be prioritised and enhanced. We have already mentioned the need to diversify agriculture production.

The food and nutrition policy brief suggested stunting is halved by 2030. We demand that this is changed to “stunting is eliminated by 2030”. To facilitate the reduction of stunting to 0 by 2025, we insist that country policies are coherent. Food security and nutrition strategy objectives with common indicators must appear in all policies..

We urge ministers to review their country’s agriculture extension policies to ensure that household nutritional behaviour is changed in a permanent and sustainable way.

4. Enhancing resilience of Africa’s agriculture to climate change

We recognise the efforts made by the AUC and different countries in building farmers’ resilience against climatic shocks. We encourage governments to have climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies that are aligned with the AUC CCMAF.

We urge governments to revisit the model of agriculture and farming systems that they are promoting, as there are more sustainable and climate resilient approaches such as agro-ecology. The need to diversify alternative livelihoods for farmers is also important in the face of climate change, as is the needs to build farmers’ capacity to ensure that natural resources are conserved.

Furthermore, there is a need to connect resilience building with country disaster risk reduction plans. The need to plan ahead of disaster or drought cannot be overemphasised.

5. Enhancing public and private sector investment in agriculture

Since Maputo, 8 countries have achieved the 10% public expenditures threshold for agriculture. We are confused as to what represents the 10% public expenditure thresholds for agriculture. NSA urges that the AU develops an acceptable template to determine what public expenditure is eligible for the 10% and expenditure that cannot be included.

We further urge government for greater transparency by involving farmers in policy and priority setting, to ensure that the budget clearly reflects the declared agriculture policy and investment plans. Country budgets are approved by legislatures, therefore the need for NSAs engage to the legislature to influence legislative discussion on appropriate policies that benefits smallholders.

Access to credit is an important mechanism for smallholder growth and development. The development of greater smallholder financial literacy is a crucial element in the process. Governments should consider establishing necessary institutional and legal mechanisms that support access to credit by smallholder farmers. This will include the establishment of reasonable interest rates and repayment schedules that are congruent with the agricultural year. Ministers are urged to engage with the private sector for the provision of credit, thus enhancing public and responsible private sector investment in agriculture.

We respectfully ask for greater investment in science, agricultural research and technology that responds to smallholder farmer needs and African farming systems. Further investment, redesign and reconfiguration of extension systems to meet farmer demands should be considered. Policies should be directed towards developing a competitive agriculture, a key driver to the agriculture transformation process.

Cross-cutting issues

Land policy:

There is a need to strengthen small-scale producers' land rights, as enshrined in the Sirte Declaration (2009). This includes increasing small-scale producers' security over the land they use, and increasing their access to additional areas of land needed to expand their farming enterprises. ,

National leaders and policy makers must therefore implement reforms to create more equitable access to land and to improve tenure security over communal lands and individual plots, particularly for women, the poor and the vulnerable. The worrying "land grab" trend needs to be curbed through adoption and implementation of the guiding principles for "Large Scale Land Based Investments" developed by the AU Land Policy Initiative, along with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure adopted at the Committee on World Food Security. This should ensure that land investments are negotiated in a transparent way that protects the rights of smallholders and stops large scale land-grabbing. African food producers, in particular women, need to have land rights that enable them to invest in, and benefit from that investment, in land. Implementation of these policies should include significant investment in building the knowledge, capacity of and legal support for communities on the issue of land tenure.

Youth: Youth are the trustees of the future and the land. Youth participation and influence is critical to youth development. We urge Ministers to provide mentoring, internships, financial resources, tax and other incentives (awards, profiling and land ownership rights) that will serve to promote agriculture as a culture, career and a business among the African youth. We recognise that access to land and credit is critical to youth and agricultural development. We therefore advocate the development of a policy and legal framework to promote access to land, land ownership and access to credit for young farmers.

Gender: women are at the heart of agriculture in Africa. We urge a greater focus on women within extension services, to have more female extension officers, and to have female oriented extension messages. Ministers must secure better access to land for woman so that woman can better access credit and participate in public investment activities. We also urge the disaggregation of all data by gender and age.

Monitoring and Evaluation: the M&E system is critical. The aim is to develop good quality African based data for planning and reporting purposes. We urge greater investments in M&E systems, structures and methodologies that are common throughout the continent. Human resource capacity in M&E must be developed and enhanced. The data collected should be gender disaggregated and taken down to the district and Ward levels. The implementation of the joint sector reviews (JSR) using the AU guidelines should be emphasizing as this enforces mutual accountability across all the levels