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PUTTING FARMING FIRST – GROWTH THROUGH AGRICULTURE
May 12, 2011
Least Developed Countries Conference IV
Istanbul, Turkey

MEETING SUMMARY

Agriculture is the foundation for most LDC economies, and is the primary agent for eradicating poverty and hunger. The session explored the key policies needed to enable smallholder farmers to break the subsistence cycle and become small-scale entrepreneurs.

Panelists included farmers from Rwanda and Uganda explaining the importance of safeguarding natural resources, sharing knowledge, and providing local access to inputs and banking. Speakers from the business sector talked about the capacity to improve the quantity and quality of harvests with improved inputs and good nutrients, the power of local investment, the value of extension and technical advice, and the value of research. A leading NGO illustrated methods to foster development by aggregating smallholder farmers to have critical marketing mass and the importance of primary processing to add value in rural communities in LDCs.

Participants representing 19 LDCs, as well as a number of developed and developing countries, actively took up the discussion and highlighted the importance of best practices and the need for improved use of inputs. An increased investment in research and development is needed and one participant described the importance of furthering innovation through government funding more research and development amongst the private sector. As well, traditional knowledge was highlighted, including the need to offer technical support to blend existing farming practices with new ones. The importance of proper pricing and insurance was also noted.

The input of the discussion groups and participants' written comments on key questions are included in the highlights below.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- 1) Assistance is needed to break the subsistence cycle and allow smallholder farmers in LDCs to become small-scale entrepreneurs. A key factor is meeting Maputo commitments to investment of 10% of national budgets into agriculture in LDCs
- 2) More work is needed to find committed farmers, committed governments, and committed donors and put them together with the private sector to scale up rural development in LDCs.

- 3) Agriculture is knowledge-based. Extension services are needed to share best know how and best practices, especially through public-private partnerships.
- 4) There is a need for “sustainable intensification” of agriculture to reduce rural poverty.
- 5) Land tenure security is essential to allow farmers to access credit and to encourage proper stewardship.
- 6) Sustainable access to water is essential for farmers.
- 7) Improved infrastructure to link rural areas to cities, rail, and ports is essential.
- 8) Primary and secondary processing is needed to further rural development and economic returns and improve prices for farmers.
- 9) Access to markets, including domestic, regional, and export is needed. Farm organisations, NGOs, and business can help smallholders aggregate to access markets.
- 10) Holistic solutions that encompass the entire cycle of production are needed.

KEY THEMES & DISCUSSION POINTS

- Access to banking and credit for smallholder farmers is essential. Discussion included opportunities to create agricultural banks in LDCs
- There is value in both modern farming techniques and traditional knowledge. An optimal marriage of the two is needed to move agriculture forward.
- The image of farming must be improved to make it a desirable profession.

Voice of Farmers

- Smallholder farmers need holistic solutions to allow them to have viable and improved livelihoods
- Access to land tenure security, inputs, and finance are essential.
- Capacity building is needed for farm organisations.

Specific Projects

- The African Biofortified Sorghum (ABS) Project is working on developing an improved variety of sorghum that will contain increased levels of key vitamins. Led by Africa Harvest, an African non-profit, the project is a collaboration between non-profits, NGOs, institutes, universities and Pioneer, the scientific lead. Pioneer has donated technology worth at least US\$4.8 million, along with in-kind support. Earlier this month, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation awarded a grant to finish technical completion of the product.
- Toros Agri, the International Fertilizer Association, and the International Zinc Association have demonstrated, in Turkey, that the addition of key micronutrients to fertilizer can deliver improved nutritional qualities in food, addressing malnutrition in populations at a national scale.
- TechnoServe is partnering with over 150,000 small-scale farmers to help **East African coffee farmers** improve quality and secure higher prices in the marketplace. To date, results include the establishment or improvement of approximately 250 coffee wet mills, cumulative revenues of over \$30 million generated by participating farmers, and an average of 37% more income received by farmers. TechnoServe is also one partner in the **Cocoa Livelihoods Project**, which seeks to double the incomes of one third of approximately 200,000 cocoa farming households in West Africa within 10 years. In partnership with the Coca-Cola Company, the InterAmerican Development Bank and USAID, TNS will double the incomes of 25,000 smallholder mango farmers, creating employment and enhancing fresh and processed mango exports in the **Haiti Hope** project.

SPEAKERS

Cesarie Kantarama; Woman Smallholder Farmer; World Farmers Organisation ,Rwanda
Charles Ogang; Farmer and President of Ugandan National Farmers Federation, World
Farmers Organisation

Esin Mete; Chairwoman and CEO; Toros Agri Industry and Trade Co; Turkey

Bruce McNamer, CEO; TechnoServe

Paul Schickler, President, Pioneer Hi-Bred

Robynne Anderson, Main Representative to UN, World Farmers Organisation