

# The Agricultural Initiative to End Hunger in Africa

Formally launched at a workshop held August 29, 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Agricultural Initiative to End Hunger in Africa originated in the global recognition that hunger in Africa is one of the most significant development challenges facing the world today.

USAID's commitment to implementing the initiative rests on the recognition that clear political and technical options for reversing the trends of hunger and poverty in Africa now exist. The initiative recognizes that success requires sustained investments in agriculture-based strategies, programs and policies, in conjunction with



improvements in health, education, infrastructure, environment and public policy management.

The initiative calls for a partnership with African leaders and governments to work and invest in a smallholder-oriented agricultural growth strategy.

Since significant domestic and foreign investment from the private sector is also

necessary, the conditions to attract and support private investment need to be established and maintained.

## THE HUNGER CHALLENGE

The problem of hunger in Africa is widespread and getting worse. The numbers are staggering. It is estimated that one in three people in Africa are currently undernourished and that a third of all the world's undernourished people reside in sub-Saharan Africa. According to a USDA study, by 2010 Africa may account for nearly two-thirds of the undernourished people in the world.

Widespread poverty compounds the problem of hunger in Africa. Low per capita agricultural income is directly linked to high rates of poverty and hunger in Africa, forming a vicious, recurring cycle that leads to a low-growth trap: poverty limits people's ability to purchase food, while malnutrition and poor health limit their ability to earn income, leading to still deeper poverty.

At the same time, the spread of major infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, resulting in extraordinarily high death rates, also drains labor from rural economic activities. The total costs in human suffering, lowered economic productivity, and lost intellectual resources to rural Africa can scarcely be overstated.

Reducing hunger and poverty in Africa is of key strategic importance to Africa and the United States. This country has strong political, economic and human-

itarian interests in supporting higher agricultural growth in Africa. Without such growth, widespread hunger and poverty will increase the likelihood of political instability and costly conflict across the continent. U.S. exports to Africa are already substantial, totaling \$6.1 billion in 1996 alone and creating an estimated 100,000 American jobs, but an expanding African agricultural sector and greater African economic growth means expanding markets for U.S. exports and even more American jobs.

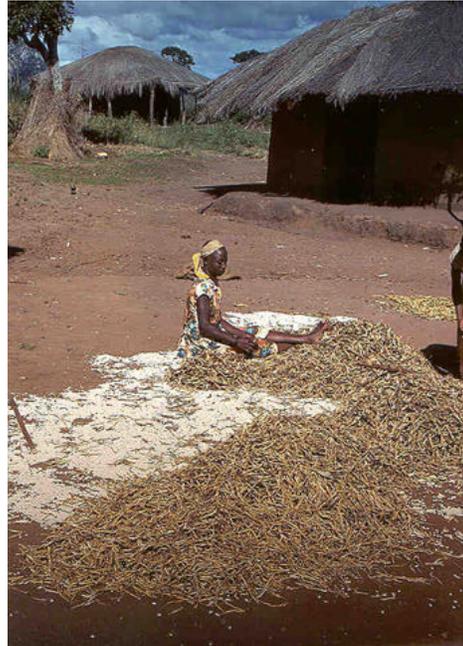
#### AN AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

The Agricultural Initiative to End Hunger in Africa focuses on promoting agricultural growth and building an African-led partnership to cut hunger and poverty. The primary objective of the initiative is *to rapidly and sustainably increase agricultural growth and rural incomes in sub-Saharan Africa.*

To grow out of poverty, smallholder farmers and agricultural firms need to generate profits and income from their products and services. Elements of an action plan to tackle the problem of hunger in Africa therefore include:

- ❑ Create a coordinated subregional/multi-country momentum and dynamic to induce and encourage agricultural growth.
- ❑ Support the efforts of countries and leaders committed to agricultural growth as a critical development pathway.
- ❑ Identify and target options and opportunities to accelerate smallholder-based agricultural growth, leading to more efficient and profitable use of resources.

- ❑ Forge effective linkages with other sectors and initiatives, including education, health, macroeconomic reform and infrastructure improvement, to achieve common economic and social development objectives.



- ❑ Build alliances and a broad-based political and financial commitment among public and private development partners, both in Africa and internationally, to cut hunger in half by 2015.

A regional vision is crucial. Regional cooperation and harmonization of agricultural trade systems will play a critical role in creating national, regional and international opportunities for farmers and firms. Regional portfolios to promote agricultural growth will focus on agricultural trade, technology development/transfer, and information systems that help countries identify and take advantage of opportunities, promote spillover of benefits, and avert disasters.

African leadership is likewise indispensable if progress is to be sustained. In particular, African leaders need to put agriculture at the center of programs targeting economic growth and poverty reduction. Experience demonstrates that where African leaders are committed to agricultural growth, donors partner with them and achieve significant results.

The initiative's agricultural investments must be focused, not scattershot; therefore, tough choices on the allocation of efforts and resources must be made. We have used two key criteria. First, we are targeting investments that are *important for African smallholders and firms*, using recent hard-won lessons to identify the likeliest enabling conditions for success as well as interventions that offer proven sustainable benefits to these two groups. Second, we are targeting investments that are *appropriate for USAID* and that complement the activities of the private sector, African governments and other donors.

Multisector approaches to reduction of malnutrition and poverty are essential, involving the promotion of better public health, education, and clean water, as well as increased food supplies and non-farm sources of income. Integration of HIV/AIDS education, health care, and family assistance into agricultural projects and rural investments can all nurture rural livelihoods and agricultural growth.

Finally, to achieve the initiative's goals, substantial investment will be needed. African governments, international development agencies, private sector investors, civil society, universities, and a broad range of interest groups that

provide support for African development, including USAID, must work together to mobilize the necessary resources.

## FOCUS COUNTRIES AND INVESTMENTS

The concept of focusing used here has three important dimensions for achieving agricultural growth and the success of this initiative.

- **Focus countries** display promising conditions and opportunities for achieving agricultural growth.
- **Focus subregional strategies and programs** are those that are likeliest to create the conditions for spillover of innovations and spread of benefits across countries.
- **Focus goods and services** offer the greatest potential for raising rural incomes through agricultural production and off-farm enterprise development.



The approach will concentrate on focus countries in each of three subregions—i.e., Eastern, West/Central, and Southern Africa.

A subregional platform to complement country-level efforts will be vital to

accelerating agricultural growth. Of particular importance is the fact that it will spread the benefits of the agricultural initiative beyond the focus countries. Therefore, both the nine focus countries and the appropriate USAID subregional units (REDSO, WARP and RCSA) will prepare individual five-year action plans. In preparing their plans, the focus countries in each subregion will work closely with each other, with their subregional unity, and with AFR/SD and EGAT for maximum coordination and synergy.

The initiative will encourage a focus on crops, livestock and environmental goods and services where African farmers and firms have a comparative and competitive advantage. Emphasis will be placed on supporting the development of a basket of goods and services relevant to global, regional and national markets. This includes traditional and nontraditional export and food commodities that (a) have the potential to raise incomes and attract private investment and (b) lend themselves to smallholder production and technical innovation.

#### **A FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE USAID AGRICULTURAL GROWTH INVESTMENTS IN AFRICA**

Evidence from Africa and throughout the world demonstrates that few regions can emerge from poverty without sustained agricultural growth, and that sustainable agricultural growth requires a continuous flow of innovations that increase productivity. Increased agricultural productivity and more competitive markets are essential ingredients of smallholder agricultural growth, and both offer numerous

opportunities for high-impact USAID investments.

Country and subregional action plans will be built around six focal themes for maximum coordinated impact:

**Scientific and technological** applications that harness the power of new technology (e.g., information technology and biotechnology) and global markets contribute to agricultural growth. Science and technology can help



bring more nutritious, higher yielding and stress resistant varieties of key staples to African farmers, can help reduce seasonable risks faced by small farmers, and help raise household incomes, improve food security and provide a buffer against famine.

USAID is committed to doubling investment in developing and disseminating technologies appropriate to African agriculture, by expanding programs to improve farmer's crop management and use of natural resources and increasing research on new strains of traditional African staple

crops. The Initiative will help shape the next generation of African agricultural leaders and scientists, by increasing investment in training programs, improving the linkages between U.S. and African researchers and research institutions, and providing access to the tools of modern biotechnology through the Collaborative Agricultural Biotechnology (CABIO) initiative. Finally, USAID will support efforts to improve the micronutrient content of basic African foods by expanding research, development and dissemination of enhanced varieties of maize, beans and sweet potatoes.

Improving the efficiency of **agricultural trade and market systems** contributes to agricultural growth by raising African competitiveness in export and domestic markets, connecting African farmers to consumers, and integrating African countries into global markets. More effective market systems will add value to products and processes, deliver high-quality, safe products, and reduce costs for consumers. Furthermore, they will



create a climate and infrastructure that attract private and foreign investment to Africa agricultural businesses.

**Community- and producer-based organizations** contribute to agricultural growth by providing a wide variety of business, training and leadership development services and by giving a

political voice to the economic interests of farmers, who are normally too poor and too scattered to be heard. Such organizations can also create basic linkages between farmers (especially small-scale farmers) and businesses (input vendors, food processors, manufacturers, traders and food outlets) or research groups that are unable or unwilling to deal with them individually. These linkages create opportunities and add value to producer efforts while offering businesses an efficient means of reaching producers.

**Developing human capital, infrastructure and institutions** is a fundamental building block of agricultural growth. It is vital to build Africa's human and institutional capacity to shape and lead policy and research, as well as provide agricultural education. Furthermore, over the past decade there has been significant policy reform, but limited institutional reform. Many institutions created during central government control of markets and services now find themselves ill-equipped to work in a liberalized market environment and in need of restructuring. Finally, the need to develop Africa's infrastructure—in transportation, energy, water/sanitation and telecommunications—is increasingly urgent.

Another essential element in Africa's agricultural growth must be **integrating vulnerable groups and countries in transition** into sustainable development processes. This effort recognizes that hunger and poverty are not immutable issues, but are often human-made problems to which human-made solutions in many cases already exist. Specific objectives include: (a) helping

the chronically poor and hungry in rural Africa find viable paths out of poverty by accumulating assets, (b) reducing the vulnerability of poor people to weather-, market- and conflict-induced shocks, and (c) enhancing the capacity of countries to manage shocks that have regional and national impacts.

Finally, **environmental management** contributes to agricultural and rural sector growth through the conservation and production of environmental goods and services that generate public and private economic benefits. Proper environmental management makes agricultural production and water management sustainable and reduces or reverses degradation caused by inappropriate farming practices, overgrazing and poor forest management.

#### **OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR 2002 AND 2003**

“Quick Start” activities have already begun to lay the foundation for the initiative’s launch in 2003. These activities emphasize (a) training in agricultural science and policy and (b) wide dissemination of agricultural technology packages, including biotechnology, especially through the new TARGET program.

Initial efforts will concentrate on **a key country in each of three regions: Uganda** in East and Central Africa, **Mozambique** in Southern Africa, and **Mali** in West and Central Africa. These countries are leaders in policy reform, public investment, and government

commitment to agricultural growth and poverty reduction. They are representative of the key economic and agricultural characteristics of their regions. These countries also have the greatest potential for rapidly influencing regional agricultural productivity and economic growth through trade and technology diffusion. The Initiative will be expanded in the future to include a total of nine countries.

The process of consulting with focus countries, the development community, and private investors has been underway since last year. It will continue with the firming of commitments and the weaving of strategies, programs and alliances with input and feedback from all these stakeholders.

Monitoring and evaluation commenced with the Quick Start activities and will continue throughout the life of the initiative. The process of elaborating sample indicators for the initiative is already well advanced, and planning will coordinate timing and content of projects to make it possible to learn from comparisons between both focus countries and subregions.

Strategic analysis to guide strategies, workplans and monitoring has also begun, and the focus countries and subregional units will start crafting their workplans in the next few months. A new funding mechanism will permit them to add dedicated staff to help realize the vision—ambitious, yet eminently realizable—of this initiative.

