



# Putting Agriculture at the Heart of Development in Africa

As Africa has moved toward country ownership and leadership in agricultural development, IFPRI has provided essential data, research, policy analysis, and capacity strengthening. Early research on the links between government policies, agricultural growth, hunger, and poverty laid the foundation for support to continental, regional, and country-level initiatives.

**A**fter decades of slow growth, the countries of Africa south of the Sahara have now built a strong framework to boost investments in agricultural development. While smallholder agriculture still forms the core of most economies, low productivity, poverty, and threats to food security are being addressed with increases in investment and comprehensive, coordinated development planning. In recent years, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has devoted about 50 percent of its resources to Africa, working in partnership with continent-wide, regional, and national organizations, governments, and research institutions. IFPRI's regional offices in Dakar, Senegal, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as well country programs in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Uganda, have enhanced these collaborations. Investment in research and capacity building from the continental level to the local level have played a vital role in developing the technical and institutional capacity of African countries as they take on the challenges of agricultural development.

## Early Research

Research in IFPRI's early years looked for ways to bring the productivity and poverty reduction successes of the Green Revolution to Africa. The experience of Asia could not be directly replicated in Africa south of the Sahara because of vastly different biophysical and socioeconomic conditions. But boosting food production was still the most promising route to economic development. Following the crises of the 1970s, which knocked Africa off its path of economic growth, IFPRI took a strong position that accelerated growth in agricultural production was the best way to achieve broad economic growth in Africa. And since smallholders produce about 95 percent of food in the region, they were considered the key to economic development.

Two influential IFPRI publications, *Accelerating Food Production in Sub-Saharan Africa* and *Agricultural Growth Linkages in Sub-Saharan Africa*, laid out the mechanisms through which agricultural growth could drive development. Rural areas in most of Africa have long suffered from lack of opportunity to use labor and land remuneratively. Low local purchasing power, combined with high costs of reaching larger markets because of poor infrastructure and long distances, impede growth. But growth in local incomes originating from outside local areas, when such growth is spread widely across households, increases spending on goods produced for the local market, including food, services, and manufactures. The sellers of those items also spend much of their new income locally, further stimulating the local economy. According to IFPRI's research in several African countries, this multiplier effect, often originating from the sale of crops and livestock in distant cities or for export, could be very substantial. Smallholders thus benefit directly from increased productivity, through better access to food and higher incomes; and their local areas also benefit from further spillover effects on other rural employment opportunities. IFPRI researchers stressed that agriculture-led growth was necessary and feasible—especially in countries where poverty makes famine a real possibility—but the changes would not be easy. Increasing productivity requires immense investments in research, infrastructure, extension, rural institutions, and markets, as well as policy reforms.

Famine has been a persistent threat in many parts of Africa, causing death, suffering, and displacement in Ethiopia in the late 1980s, in Sudan in the early 1990s, and in

southern African countries in 2002. In the face of difficult conditions, IFPRI conducted research in these countries to better understand the causes of famine and define policies to prevent the next disaster. The studies clearly showed that, although drought is the immediate cause of famine, chronic poverty and the government policies that ignore rural development create the conditions for famine. This conclusion pointed to the fundamental importance of increasing smaller producers' productivity, facilitating rural markets through infrastructure development and policies, and targeting assistance to those most in need.

## Continental Initiative

After decades of stalled development progress across the continent and repeated famines, the “agriculture-led path to development” began to gain favor with African governments and donors alike. This path was promoted by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), initiated by the African Union in 2001. To meet NEPAD's agricultural objectives, the participating African countries came together to create the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) in 2003. CAADP is a framework for promoting regional investment in rural development and agricultural productivity. These countries pledged to invest 10 percent of national government budgets in agriculture in order to generate the 6 percent annual agricultural growth needed to combat poverty. A recent retrospective on CAADP's goals has developed a more expansive agenda for the future. Throughout this process, IFPRI played a critical role in building regional and national capacity for agenda-setting and policymaking based on solid data and research evidence.

In the initiative's first phase, IFPRI collaborated closely with NEPAD, regional economic organizations, and country governments, providing technical assistance for the CAADP framework. This included support for the design of a “roadmap” for implementation at the continental, regional, and national levels, with mutual reviews and accountability measures built in. As the process moved forward, IFPRI partnered with CAADP to help develop modalities for national-level priority setting and implementation. IFPRI's analyses of agricultural growth and investment options for poverty reduction in more than 30 countries have fed into the CAADP process of roundtables and country compacts. Today 42 countries have developed CAADP Compacts, which set priorities for investment

with specific commitments on agricultural policy, budgetary expenditures, development assistance, and policy dialogue. More than 30 have moved on to prepare and execute National Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plans.

To meet CAADP's data and analytic needs, a network of regional knowledge platforms—known as the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support Systems (ReSAKSS)—was developed. The ReSAKSS serve as an essential tool to help African policymakers adopt practices of measuring, evaluating, and looking for evidence as the basis for policy and program planning and implementation. The ReSAKSS track CAADP's key indicators and publish its official monitoring and evaluation report, the *Africawide Annual Trends and Outlook*. They also bring CAADP stakeholders—including practitioners and theoreticians—together through an annual conference that ranks among Africa's premier academic events. Fifteen country-level nodes (SAKS) established jointly by the ReSAKSS and IFPRI provide similar support at the country level. The ReSAKSS and IFPRI have also collaborated to promote the adoption of more comprehensive, inclusive, and technically robust agriculture joint sector reviews, which assess performance and results in the sector.

Progress has been substantial since the CAADP framework was established. Spending on agriculture has increased across CAADP countries, and IFPRI's construction of baseline data and analysis, as well as the ongoing collaboration with the ReSAKSS, have facilitated CAADP's access to donor funds.

## Regional Initiatives

In addition to these knowledge platforms, IFPRI's technical assistance for regional economic and research organizations supported agenda-setting, field research, data gathering, and modeling expertise, providing critical evidence for policymaking and agricultural investment. Capacity building has been a key component of this support.

Working with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa and other partners, IFPRI contributed to a priority-setting exercise for 10 countries and published recommendations for agricultural development and research. Analysis pointed to the importance of agricultural growth, especially in staple crops, and domestic markets in providing food security and

reducing poverty. The research proved directly relevant to policymakers, who were able to identify focal agricultural subsectors before putting together a strategy to increase agricultural productivity.

Collaboration with the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) likewise supported priority setting. An analytic framework that integrated economywide modeling with spatial tools to identify agroecological potential highlighted the need to spur productivity growth, strengthen regional markets and integration, enhance linkages with other sectors, and expand regional cooperation. These results fed into national- and regional-level agendas and helped align regional strategies with CAADP priorities.

IFPRI developed regional networks to strengthen local research capacity for improved policy analysis in six East African countries. Out of these networks came an initiative for a collaborative Master's Program in Agricultural and Applied Economics, which operates in 12 countries and has enrolled more than 600 students to meet strong demand for African agricultural economists. IFPRI led the development of this program, which has now been successfully transferred to the African Economic Research Consortium and is thriving. More recently, IFPRI initiated the African Growth and Development Policy (AGRODEP) Modeling Consortium, which has now reached a critical mass of nearly 200 world-class modelers from about 30 countries.

## Country Strategy Support Programs

As country demand for technical assistance with policy development grew, IFPRI began to establish country programs. These Country Strategy Support Programs (CSSPs) in DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Uganda provide country-specific support for development strategies by building local capacity, generating new knowledge through research projects, and fostering policy dialogue. They deal with the broad range of policy issues that shape agriculture and poverty outcomes—from natural resource management to availability of inputs such as fertilizer to market access to nutrition to risk management. Ethiopia's program, initiated in 2004, was among the first and continues to be among the most successful. It has strengthened the capacity of the five primary Ethiopian institutions involved in

agricultural development, helped set government and donor priorities, and provided analysis critical for the design and implementation of Ethiopia's Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization Strategy.

The program in Ghana has also provided capacity building and institutional development to support the country-driven design of Ghana's agricultural and rural development strategies. Monitoring and evaluation of Ghana's progress in reaching the Millennium Development Goals for growth and poverty reduction have been a key activity of this CSSP. Economic models developed under the program are used to analyze the effectiveness of poverty reduction efforts. Capacity-strengthening investments have included providing support to a national statistical system with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, which makes data available for research and monitoring, and to the establishment of a modeling team in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. An external evaluation found that Ghana's CSSP plays a vital role in the country's strategy and policy development process.

## Local Research

While providing regional- and national-level technical assistance, IFPRI's research program continues to provide data and evidence needed at the local level to design policies suited to particular local environmental and socioeconomic conditions. Empirical work on land degradation in the East African Highlands, for example, looks at the potential of diverse policy, institutional, and technological strategies across different physical and socioeconomic landscapes. In Ghana's Upper East Region, a model of political power meant to elucidate stakeholder interactions at the river-basin level has increased local understanding of the complexity of water management. More recently, a series of three books provides locally specific assessments of the impacts of climate change and potential responses across Africa.

## Moving Forward

When African leaders met in Malabo in 2014, they not only recommitted to the original CAADP goals but also to an expanded agenda that includes increasing internal trade across the continent, improving resilience to climate change, and eliminating hunger by 2025. To support the goals of agriculture-led development, IFPRI will support the continued collection and analysis of data, evaluation of the impact of policies and investments, and the growing capacity of Africa's continental, regional, and national organizations and governments to lead the development process.

## Resources

For IFPRI's Africa-related research, see <http://www.ifpri.org/country/africa>.

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