

Ten Years after the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa: Dialogue on Progress in West Africa

OPENING CEREMONY

Speech by Geert Laporte, Deputy Director ECDPM

Honourable Vice-President of the Republic of Liberia, Honourable Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Honourable Presidents of the Farmers Union Network of Liberia and the West African Farmers' Networks, representatives of regional organisations, members of the research community, members of the press, distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

ECDPM is very committed to support the process that you embarked on. We are an independent "think and do tank" specialising in key areas of EU-Africa cooperation with a particular focus on governance, economic transformation, trade & regional integration as well as the critical area of agriculture and food security in African development.

As a non-partisan broker we facilitate multi-stakeholder policy dialogue and we undertake practical and tailored policy analysis. We operate from Maastricht (the Netherlands) and Brussels (Belgium) with some 50 staff members from more than 20 European and African nationalities. In addition we can draw on a wide network of African partners and associates from official and non-governmental organisations.

The independence of the ECDPM is underscored by the combination of flexible funding from European middle sized countries (The Netherlands as core funder and seven other EU member states plus Switzerland) and a board on which the Africans and non-Europeans are in the majority. This unique formula has reinforced the Centre's legitimacy, credibility and trust. Policymakers and practitioners in both Africa and the EU increasingly make use of ECDPM's expertise as an operational think-tank as well as a facilitator or 'informal mediator' in complex policy processes.

The process in which we engage today is fully in line with our core business and with the key principles of CAADP-*the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme*. The conference **Ten years after the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa: Dialogue on progress in West Africa** aims to strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogue between governmental and non-governmental actors. It also aims to link evidence based research, policy and practice among the research community, the farmers organisations and the national and regional official institutions in West Africa.

We are particularly impressed by the excellent preparatory work of ROPPA (*Reseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*), FUN (*the Farmers Unions Network of Liberia*) and the REPAD research network (*Reseau de Recherches pour l'appui au developpement en Afrique*). It is encouraging to see that all expertise mobilised in this Monrovia City Hall comes from within the West African region. Our role

as ECDPM has been to work closely with ROPPA and REPAD to facilitate the conduct of the studies.

The Maputo declaration of 2003 and the CAADP aim to increase annual national budgetary allocations for agriculture to at least 10% and to ensure a growth of the agricultural output of at least 6 % annually.

Now, 10 years later it is a good moment to check on progress with these ambitious objectives, to learn and exchange lessons from various West African country experiences and the region as a whole, and to identify concrete steps for further action.

In a continent where 70 % of the population depends solely on agriculture, we should realise that this exercise is not just about collecting factual information and economic data on targets that have been set 10 years ago.

The Maputo declaration also calls on political leaders to step up investments in agriculture and smartly promote agricultural transformation, as the basic foundations for any inclusive and sustainable development in Africa. Political determination is therefore essential to make this work: without a vibrant and viable agriculture in Africa there will be increased risks for social instability and conflict. Without access and availability of food for everyone and at all times, health and education services will not attain their objectives. Without an increased focus on agriculture and food security, private business will not flourish nor will there be better opportunities for women to play their crucial role in the development of African societies.

Obviously there is no need to preach to the converted: All of you are fully aware of the crucial role that agriculture needs to play in African development.

The West African region can be commended for its achievements so far. The ECOWAS countries are clearly in the lead on the African continent if compared with other regions in Africa. ECOWAS was the first region in Africa to have undertaken the CAADP exercise and to adopt in 2005 the ECOWAP (*Economic Community of West African States' Agricultural Policy*) that is now being implemented at regional and national levels.

We express the strong hope that the most interesting country studies that have been produced by the African researchers, in preparation of this meeting, and the excellent advocacy work of ROPPA will bear fruits at the level of the national and regional West African policy makers and that this meeting will contribute to speeding up the process that was initiated some ten years ago in Maputo.

Let us not forget, however, that awareness raising and checking on progress are just the first steps in a longer term process of policy change and implementation. Progress on food security and agriculture depends, first and foremost, on political choices and political commitment.

We should therefore be ambitious and also try to identify the underlying factors that have caused sub-optimal results in some countries and identify concrete policy and institutional changes that are required at the national and regional levels to implement the Maputo agenda. Inevitably such a political economy analysis should also focus on the urgent need to mobilise domestic resources for agriculture in Africa so as to reduce the

dependence on external aid which in some countries seems to be growing. Allow me to be quite frank on this point: there is no country, region or continent that has developed in a sustainable way on the basis of aid!

We wish to convey our great appreciation to the organisers for their continuous efforts to make this conference an important milestone in West African agriculture and we look forward to the practical and operational conclusions at the end of this week.

Monrovia, 11 September 2013

info@ecdpm.org
www.ecdpm.org
KvK 41077447

HEAD OFFICE
SIÈGE
Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21
6211 HE Maastricht
The Netherlands Pays Bas
Tel +31 (0)43 350 29 00
Fax +31 (0)43 350 29 02

BRUSSELS OFFICE
BUREAU DE BRUXELLES
Rue Archimède 5
1000 Brussels *Bruxelles*
Belgium Belgique
Tel +32 (0)2 237 43 10
Fax +32 (0)2 237 43 19



I