



Speaker Summary Note

Session: Africa

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Title: **Rethinking How We Each Do Business: Regional and actor perspective**

The highlight of this section is on how agriculture links to improving food and nutrition security and addressing health challenges. This is a relevant and a long overdue issue that we in Africa consider as critical for advancing the welfare of our populations and the productivity of our work force.

As you all know very well, malnutrition is a major problem in Africa: One in four people suffer from malnutrition and 53 percent of pregnant women in Africa are said to be anemic. The dismal situation with general malnutrition point to worrisome prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies as well. Infectious diseases, which are common and persistent in much of rural Sub-Saharan Africa, contribute to a disproportionate burden of mortality among malnourished children. Malnutrition and high incidence and prevalence of diseases negatively impact cognitive development and overall health status of Africa's youth, which will perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Although inadequate access to food is just one of several causal factors for malnutrition, addressing household food insecurity, in its diverse manifestations, goes a long way towards combating poverty.

For Africa, the agriculture linkage to food and nutrition security and health, as well as the roles of the actors, are clearly anchored in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). CAADP is an AU-led Framework aimed at transforming African agriculture through evidence-based and inclusive planning focusing on the full gamut of food and nutrition security, market development, natural resource management and agricultural research and extension that benefits the majority of the rural population. One of the priority thematic areas under CAADP and which is of utmost interest to the deliberations here are encapsulated in its Pillar Three, which aims to increase food supply, address nutrition security issues and improve responses to food emergencies employing a combination of tried-and-tested as well as innovative measures. CAADP Pillar Three's Framework for African Food Security (FAFS) presents the principles that need to be considered in developing a food and nutrition set of interventions and the menu of options that countries could choose from. FAFS provides thoughts on some of the linkages between agriculture, nutrition and health through the following policy actions:

- Cereal and oil fortification with vitamin A, iron, folic acid and multiple micronutrients.
- Production of complementary and therapeutic lipid-based foods.
- Community based production and blending of special blended and fortified foods.
- Accelerated expansion of highly nutritious staples including orange fleshed sweet potato, red palm oil and small grains.

I would in particular like to draw your attention to the inclusiveness aspect of CAADP. In order to achieve the ideals of CAADP we expect closer inter-ministerial collaboration in addressing critical issues of hunger, malnutrition, natural resource degradation and poor market access. CAADP also calls for the engagement of not just government technical and political leaders but also civil society organizations in charting the agriculture and food and security agenda. We at the AUC believe that this is a new beginning and, indeed, a paradigm shift in the way agricultural and food security planning is formulated in Africa.

As noted earlier, CAADP provides the required tools and instruments to help countries in Africa reorient their respective agricultural and food security investment plans in ways that would benefit the majority of the population by at the same time accelerating growth as a precondition for further broad-based development. Importantly, as part of CAADP review of country agriculture and food security investment plans, advice and support is provided to countries to ensure that there are specific Food and Nutrition Strategies with responsibilities for their implementation shared between Ministries of Agriculture, Health and other important sectors such as Education. As in all other facets of life, the changes we are spearheading here do not always meet with enthusiasm, for development planning in Africa has for decades been pursued along strictly sectoral lines, with little or no appreciation of the synergies that could be realised from employing an integrated planning approach. The good news is that CAADP has started catalysing changes in this sphere as well. For instance, all the 24 countries that have signed CAADP compacts—i.e., commitment documents with identified investment priority areas—have indicated achievement of food and nutrition security as a top priority. This poses both a challenge and opportunity to all of us here including political leaders, policy makers, the research community and civil society. **I would like this panel discussion to provide us with further thoughts on how best we could capitalise on the gains of this reorientation in agricultural programme planning so that the complementarities and synergies between agriculture, nutrition and health are realised at the implementation stage in ways that empower relevant line ministries and pertinent CSOs in delivering the desired results.**

As part of taking forward the CAADP strategic framework for increasing agriculture production, productivity, food and nutrition security together with health, the African union launched the Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security, a day that will be celebrated annually on the 30th of October to raise awareness, and renew multi-stakeholder efforts towards improving food and nutrition security.

However, in order for our research and advocacy work to be of real value to our own populations in Africa, best practices obtained through implementing development projects as well as from time-tested indigenous practices of the diverse African cultures need to be synthesised and made available to programme planners. This will go a long way towards a better understanding of household behaviour in Africa in relation to the dynamics of food availability, nutrition deficiency and health improvement. Policy-makers need to work on providing countries with the knowledge of these practices and resources to upscale them. Commonly cited best practices include the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding for at least 6 months; targeted micronutrient interventions (vitamin A and iron) for pregnant women; micronutrient fortification and supplementation). **The question is how can policy-makers under different institutions work together to deliver these proven services at scale?**

CAADP provides the platform for strengthening the capacity of non-state actors (Farmers Organisations, Civil Society, Private Sector, Research Organisations as well as academia) so as to ensure that these key domestic constituencies understand the multi-faceted linkages between agriculture and nutrition and health outcomes. The platforms CAADP provide at country level are also believed to serve as advocacy fora for diversification of agricultural practices as well as education for ensuring adequate nutritional foods for better health. **A key challenge for the deliberations in this panel is how to reorganise agricultural research and extension as well as the rural service delivery system at large so as to realise both increased food production and improved nutritional and health outcomes are realised.**

With these remarks I now proceed to introduce the panelists for this session. I thank you!