



Increase Aid for African Farmers to End the Food Crisis

A group of UK NGOs (1) is calling on governments to increase Aid (2) for small-scale African farmers in ways that will help them to feed their people, improve their livelihoods and sustain the environment.

Aid to improve local food production and consumption does not, however, appear to be the priority, despite the urgency of the food crisis.

The evidence presented in a report published today "*More Aid for African Agriculture: policy implications for small-scale farmers* (3)" is that there is an apparent consensus among major donors to focus aid rather on five main issues that support economic growth and the liberalisation agenda: aid effectiveness; market- and private sector-led agricultural growth; exiting agriculture; improved governance; and African ownership of problems and solutions (4).

Patrick Mulvany, Chair of the UK Food Group, said: "*The big question for governments is will they change aid priorities in order to benefit hungry people for the long-term?*" Mulvany continued: "*Will they listen to the advice and demands of small-scale farmers who feed the continent? Or will they continue to use Agriculture Aid to promote globalisation and the production of food and fuel, primarily for the rich, with safety nets for the poor who lose out?*"

Aid for African agriculture is back on the international policy agenda under the umbrella of the Common Framework for Action (CFA) proposed by the High-Level Task force on the Global Food Crisis. African governments have committed to allocate 10 per cent of GDP to agriculture. The UK and other EC member states, with renewed commitments to increase aid to agriculture and rural development, have an unparalleled opportunity to influence the international agriculture agenda under the umbrella of the EU's policy for Advancing African Agriculture (AAA).

Speaking for Concern Worldwide (UK), Lyndall Stein, Executive Director, said "*Poor and marginalised farmers in Africa have been ignored by policy-makers for too long. The UK Government must listen to the voices of these farmers and put their needs at the heart of its approach to agriculture. Only then will more aid to agriculture lead to reductions in poverty and hunger.*"

Dr Dan Taylor, Director of Find Your Feet, added: "*The UK, together with its European partners and others, should also change trade policies to allow governments to support and protect their farmers and feed their people.*"

A new agriculture agenda should give priority to the local control of food provision that would realise the Right to Food, rather than using agriculture as an 'engine of economic growth'. This approach is supported by the International Agricultural Assessment (IAASTD (5)) whose 22 Findings show the necessity for a radical transformation of agriculture if the world in the future is to have less hunger, increased equity and a more sustainable environment.

Belinda Calaguas, Director of Policy and Campaigns for Action Aid UK, commenting on the urgency for a radical change in UK aid policy said: "*The seriousness of the food crisis highlights the need for a change in agricultural policy. More of the same recipe that exacerbated the crisis is not acceptable*". Calaguas went on to say: "*The UK and EU have a unique opportunity to make a real difference and ensure that everyone can realise their Right to Food: they must use the Accra conference to right wrongs.*"

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Contacts:

UK Food Group

Patrick Mulvany
t: 07949 575711
e: patrickmulvany@clara.co.uk

Action Aid UK

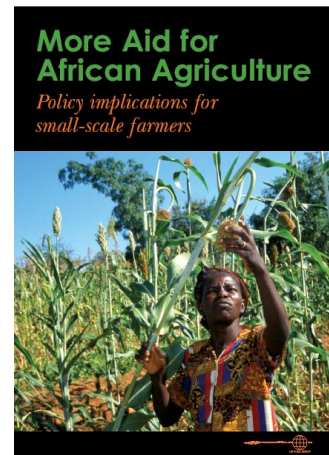
Belinda Calaguas
t: 020 7561 7617
e: Belinda.Calaguas@actionaid.org

Concern Worldwide (UK)

Peter Shelley
t: 020 78011861
e: peter.shelley@concern.net

Find Your Feet

Dan Taylor
t: 020 73264534
e: dan@fyf.org.uk



NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The NGOs are members of the UK Food Group and include Action Aid UK, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide (UK), Find Your Feet, Oxfam GB, Practical Action and Self Help Africa. Additional support was provided by the international campaign for More and Better Aid to Agriculture www.moreandbetter.org.
2. Governments are meeting in Accra from 2- 4 September at the third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-3), which will review progress in implementing the Paris Declaration.
3. The report is titled "*More Aid for African Agriculture: policy implications for small-scale farmers*". It is published today by the UK Food Group. Printed copies are available on request from ukfg@ukfg.org.uk. In addition to the main report, there is a 200 page online report of evidence with annexes. Both reports are available at: <http://www.ukfg.org.uk/more-aid-for-african-agriculture.php>
4. The report raises a number of questions about how the new agriculture agenda will be realized.
 - a) **Aid effectiveness.** Will there be a shift in agricultural aid towards the production of food by local food producers, involving local communities and farmers' organizations in the design and implementation of targeted programmes that also secure their livelihoods? Or will the policy conditionality attached to aid merely change appearance from an 'aggressive' to a more 'tailored' liberalization tool supported by 'aid for trade'?
 - b) **Market- and private sector-led agricultural growth.** Will the 'growth agenda' be tailored to the increasing needs of local communities for the sustainable production of food using technologies that cannot be privatized? Or will it be dominated by export-led and high-value crop production, supported by proprietary technologies including GM crops and increased use of agrochemicals?
 - c) **Exiting agriculture:** Will the new agenda defend small-scale farmers, especially women, and protect local food production and food provision? Or will there be continued pressures on small-scale farmers to stop producing food, with safety nets, including food aid, providing welfare for those who lose their livelihoods and the resources with which to produce food?
 - d) **Improved governance and political processes:** Will the new aid architecture and related food, agriculture, trade and environment policies respond to the challenges of increasing food provision at a time of significant challenges including climate change? Or will governance systems be unable to deal with the pressures from the corporate-sector and powerful interests, seeking to benefit through dominance of the food system and the resources used, that limit options for local and national control.
 - e) **African ownership:** Will African peoples, from local communities to nation states, be allowed to determine their own development of their own food systems? Or will this mean that African states have to take ownership of historical problems and of imposed solutions that are compliant with donors' priorities.
5. IAASTD is the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, approved this year by 58 governments including the UK. Available at: www.iaassessment.org.