# WALKING THE TALK ON YOUTH AND WOMEN: BRINGING INCLUSIVE AGRICULTURAL MARKETS TO LIFE

**Conference Theme Paper for AGRF 2015**

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# Contents

## List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AGRF | African Green Revolution Forum |
| AICD | Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic |
| AIRCA | Association of International Research and Development Centers for Agriculture |
| AU | African Union |
| AUC | African Union Commission |
| AYC | African Youth Charter |
| BAGC | Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor |
| BOO | Built Operate and Own |
| BOT | Built Operate and Transfer |
| CAADP | Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme |
| CBL | Central Bank of Lesotho |
| CIS | Credit Information Sharing |
| ESA | Eastern and Southern African |
| FANRPAN | Food and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FFVs | Fresh fruits and vegetables |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| KMP | Knowledge Management Partnership |
| KTA | Knowledge Transfer Africa |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MIRA | Micro Reforms for Agribusiness |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| PIDA | Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa |
| PPPs | Public-private partnerships |
| PRB | Population Reference Bureau |
| SACGOT | Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania |
| SGDs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCDF | United Nations Capital Development Fund |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| ZFU | Zimbabwe Farmers' Union |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) is a multi-stakeholder partnership and dialogue on transformative change through agricultural development in Africa. AGRF 2015 is the fifth such convening and AGRF 2015 will focus on "***Walking the Talk of Youth and Women – Bringing Inclusive Agricultural Markets to Life"***. AGRF seeks the right conditions for private sector investment into pro-smallholder farming. There is need for beneficial linkages that secure markets and access to technology, services, innovation and knowledge so as to generate improvements in livelihoods and employment opportunities, as well as direct benefits for communities from such investments in infrastructure and services. Several factors and issues, however, pertain towards a more inclusive agriculture sector growth that provides more opportunities for women, youth and the domestic private sector. Of such issues, AGRF 2015 has isolated the following 5: finance; inputs; agricultural infrastructure; trade, markets, domestic private sector; and capacity development for women and youth.

This papers aims to enrich the dialogue at AGRF 2015 by identifying and reviewing key policy developments, investments and initiatives and opportunities that promote inclusive value chain development in support of family farming, smallholder agriculture and domestic private sector growth and expansion, within the said 5 thematic areas. AGRF 2015 is organised along five sub-themes: catalysts for increased inclusion in African agriculture and agribusiness; keys to effectively financing youth and women owned enterprises in Africa; improved inputs and increased mechanization toward modern farming on the continent; fostering continental partnerships and regional expansion strategies; capacity development and access to markets: important drivers of inclusion in agriculture. This paper concludes by attempting to surface issues to be addressed in these sessions by AGRF 2015.

In the preparation of this pre-conference review, multiple approaches to gathering data and information were used. A desk review was completed of existing literature encompassing regional policy documents and research papers. Case studies and insights were gathered from various pre-conference meetings including:

- The 2015 Grow Africa Investment Forum, Cape Town, South Africa – June 3 – 5 (a side meeting focusing on Inputs)
- Side meeting focused in Finance around the IFAD – AFRACA Regional and Rural Finance Thematic Conference, Harare, June 10 - 12
- Capacity Development for Women and Youth,– week of June/July in Nairobi, Kenya
- Markets, Trade and Domestic Private Sector meting– week of June/July Nairobi, Kenya.

### 1.1 Background

The talk on women and youth inclusion in development has been a topical issue for at least the past two decades. African governments have formally recognized the role of agriculture in job and wealth creation for women and young people as evidenced by various agreements and protocols; particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Malabo Declaration of 2014. Some African countries have made significant progress in addressing the development gap between male adults and women and youths but still far from the ideal. However, the nexus between those population groups and agriculture in Africa as a whole has only partially and insufficiently been developed and translated into public policies in many of the countries.

Women comprise roughly half the world's population and any development agenda should therefore take into account the specific needs of women. Moreover, youths also comprise the greater part of the demography of developing nations like those in Africa south of the Sahara. Africa had 200 million people aged between 15 and 24 years, comprising more than 20% of the overall population in 2010 (FAO, 2012). Generating productive employment for this cohort is one of the continent's major challenges. At present, three out of every four youths live on less than US$ 2 per day, and lacking the resources and skills to be competitive in the labour markets. Certain countries have even bigger youth and or women bulges thereby presenting urgent cases for policy intervention.

As Africa urbanises, there is increasing male migration into cities and towns, hence; the rising number of rural households headed by women. As a result, the female rural population is increasingly being marginalised and this development is also attributable to abandonment, single motherhood, separation of spouses and the violence associated with armed conflicts, among other factors. Rural poverty is typically frequent in areas with the largest numbers of woman-headed households and hence, effectively making rural poverty an engendered phenomenon. Addressing the disparities has to be tackled with an engendered approach.

Youth on the other hand is a time of transition: from childhood to adulthood; and from dependency on others to independence through paid or self-employment. The definition for "youth" can be a point of conflict when designing development programmes that are tailor made to suit the needs of young people. Institutional differences at country level and the difficulty with which youth transform from dependency to independence and the mechanisms ordinarily available for the transition determines the length of the youth span. Thus, there has to be an operational definition for youths as a contextual base. In this paper, the United Nations bracket for "youth" will be adopted; which encompasses young people between the age of 15 and 24. As the UN systems migrate from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), the evidence points to fact that achievement and performance on MDG 1 in Africa was mixed. MDG 1 called for the "eradication of extreme poverty and hunger" through target 1.B which encourages the achievement of "full and productive employment and decent work for all including women and young people".

African heads of state met in Malabo in 2014 and agreed to a new set of goals which were to be pursued under the renewed Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) efforts in the second decade of implementing CADDP. The outcome was a list of targets or commitments; with target 4 calling for the "Commitment to Halving Poverty, by 2025, through inclusive Agricultural Growth and Transformation through among other things; creating job opportunities for at least 30% of the youth in agricultural value chains and preferential entry and participation by women and youth in gainful and attractive agribusiness". The female population in Sub Saharan Africa was measured at 50.02% of the total population in 2013, according to the World Bank (2014). Women constitute a large proportion of the agricultural work force; with 43% of the farmers in developing countries being women (IFAD, 2001). These women depend almost entirely on agriculture for their livelihoods (more than 60% of women who are economically active in Sub-Saharan Africa work in agriculture). They have an average of 20-30% lower productivity than men and this is attributed to low input usage (Ibid).

The global youth (15-24 years) population which was in excess of 1.2 billion in 2012 is the largest in history and represents approximately 18% of the world's population (UNCDF, 2012). More than 80 per cent of the world's youth live in Africa, Asia and Oceania, where employment in agriculture comprises at least 35 per cent of total employment. The majority of African countries are young populations; some with an under 20 bulge of more than 60% (such as Malawi) whilst other have less. The concern on youths is certainly valid as Africa's youth population has been increasing at a faster rate than in any other part of the world (PRB, 2009). According to the

Africa Growth Initiative (2012), 200 million people in Africa fall into this category, making up 20 percent of the population, 40 percent of the workforce, and 60 percent of the unemployed on the continent. In Zimbabwe, 22.1% of the population is aged between 15 and 24 with prospects for further increase due to a large (38.4%) proportion of children under the age of 14 (PRB, 2009). Therefore, dealing with poverty in Sub Saharan Africa involves to a greater extend, working with women and young people in Africa's most popular productive sector-agriculture.

The inclusion of previously marginalized and/or discriminated groups continues to take the centre stage in the post 2015 African development agenda. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) declared during its Executive Council held in January 2009 in Addis Ababa, that the years 2009-2019 are the Decade of Youth Development in Africa. The decade is an opportunity to advance the agenda of youth development in all member states across the AU, to ensure effective and more ambitious investment in youth development programmes and increased support to the development and implementation of national youth policies and programmes and facilitate the implementation of the African Youth Charter (AYC).

The poverty incidence amongst youths is also alarmingly high in most African countries (Table 1.1). Notable cases are Uganda, Nigeria and Zambia with 93.8, 92.9 and 86.3 respectively. The incidence of poverty is an indicator of deep seated inequality which has to be addressed in a multipronged approach. Although two countries may have similar economic growth rates, the Gini coefficients of the two countries may differ greatly thereby reflecting deep seated discrimination or exclusion. Agenda 2063 of the Africa Union dictates the expectations for women and youth in the next 50 years.

**Table 1.1: Incidence of poverty among youths in selected Sub-Saharan countries**

| **Country** | **Poverty incidence** | **Country** | **Poverty incidence** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Uganda | 93.8 | Sierra Leone | 68.0 |
| Nigeria | 92.9 | Ghana | 66.5 |
| Zambia | 86.3 | Malawi | 66.3 |
| Burundi | 85.7 | Kenya | 54.5 |
| Mozambique | 75.4 | Côte d'Ivoire | 46.5 |
| Ethiopia | 70.7 | | |

**Source**: **AU, 2011.**

With the majority of African countries having agriculture as their economic mainstay, the empowerment of women and youth in agriculture becomes an important strategy towards the achievement of gender parity. Goal 14 of the Agenda 2063 stipulates that African governments need to achieve full gender equality in all spheres of life by 2063. Goal 15 also outlines the vision for youths by 2063; who are expected to have been engaged and empowered economically by then.

## 2. AFRICA'S EMERGING STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION TRAJECTORY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVANCING WOMEN AND YOUTH

This paper is anchored on two significant characteristics of Africa's structural transformation as follows:

- Africa is the only developing region where the accelerating urbanisation is NOT driven by manufacturing. Rather Africa's rapid urbanisation is driven by services.
- Africa's real 'private sector' are the intermediary groups most aptly described by Reardon, T, Tschirley, D, Haggblade, S, Minten, B, Timmer, CP, Liverpool-Tasie, S. in the classic 2013 article 'Five Inter-Linked Transformations in the African Agri-food Economy'.

A discussion on these 2 developments, it is argued by the author, is critical in interpreting further the opportunities that are important to discuss under the AGRF 2015 Conference Themes.

### 2.1 Africa Urbanising without Manufacturing

The search for opportunities in wealth creation for the poor (or the 'new economy') is related to the sustained economic growth enjoyed by African countries since 2000. Rodrik (2014) argues that this growth is 'pivotal' given its sustained nature, and given that Total Factor Productivity (TFP) has grown for the first time since the 1970s. Several African countries have in fact 'de-industrialized' since the 1960's. These countries who, according to World Bank data, are poorer today than they were in 1960, and the list includes countries that also had robust economies in the past: Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Zambia, Zimbabwe and others. An argument in favor of potential growth for these economies is the low capital-labour ratios that should be a basis for achieving higher returns to investment, everything else held equal. Rodrik quotes Acemoglu, Gallego, and Robinson (2014) who claim that differences in institutional capacity and quality account for as much as 75% in variation of income levels around the world. Experience in Asia and South America is mixed in this regard although in essence the impact of institutions is believed to be substantial. In this regard, Rodrik concludes that it is not enough to go by the 'formal' trappings of good institutions and there is need to get to their effectiveness.

What is probably the most insightful in Rodrik's analysis is the uncharacteristic nature of structural transformation in Africa. While rural to urban migration has accelerated in Africa, the main beneficiary has been services, and not manufacturing. Manufacturing share of employment still stands at a mere 8% average, and share of GDP a mere 10% average, down from 15% in 1975. It would appear therefore that Africa has been de-industrializing well before it was fully industrialized. The bottom line is that the large numbers of rural to urban migrants are being absorbed mostly into services and not manufacturing as Africans escape the drudgery and low productivity of smallholder agriculture and the rural economy. What this means is that the pattern of structural transformation in Africa is radically different to that of Asia and Europe. Large quantities of rural labour are being absorbed into not-so-productive services and into the 'informal' sector. Rodrik offers four options for rapid economic growth into the future for Sub-Saharan Africa:

- Revive manufacturing to follow the path of Asia and Europe
- Diversify into agriculture-led growth, based on diversification into non-traditional agricultural commodities
- Generate fast growth in services, anticipating the future structural change

- Exploit natural resource base as a lead sector

Hart (2008) also argues that indigenous commerce, often dubbed "informal" offers social forms that organize this indigenous commerce and mobilize enormous resources, and that there are growing chances that this sector will play a decisive role in shaping the future growth of African economies. Hart takes a long view, quite similar to Rodrik actually, that recognizes Africa's divergence from the general historical trajectory of Europe in terms of the path to structural transformation. The broader lesson for Governments and their development partners is therefore to seek deeper understanding of the cultural, social and economic dynamism that underpins the informal economy's most progressive clusters.

A general observation is the difficulty of competing with Asia and Europe in manufacturing that is; having liberalized trade at a time Africa can not compete abroad and at home. Services have limited growth potential in most African countries at the current stage of development, and to accelerate growth requires an accumulation of human capabilities, effective institutions and advanced governance systems. Meanwhile the experience with extractive industries as the lead driver has, with limited exceptions such as Botswana, led at worst to the 'resource curse', and at best to highly unequal growth (growth with no development). An agriculture-led social and economic transformation, however, still holds most hope for inclusive growth and balance TFP. All the four options play a role in crafting a national development agenda, and the challenge is in getting the priorities and sequencing right especially in terms of public sector policies and investments. Whatever the options or possibilities for various African countries, the main consideration is that the path to transformation in most African countries is unlikely to follow the traditional path, and that Africans have to be more original, confident and innovative.

### 2.2 'Five Inter-Linked Transformations in the African Agrifood Economy'

The Emerging "Quiet Revolution" in African agrifood systems that Reardon *et al* (2013) describe so vividly is an argument for harnessing the 'invisible' innovations already happening in Africa. Reardon *et al* identify the central need to leverage urbanization and diet diversification to promote rural-urban supply chains and rural growth as solutions to rural poverty. This is so given the well-known problems that rural Africa faces formidable problems of poverty and malnutrition, inadequate farm yields, low use of fertilizers, certified seed, and irrigation, and often poor roads and other infrastructure. The said study identifies the emerging opportunity. The rest of this section is literally para-phrased form Reardon *et al* (2013). Broad-based rural economic growth offers Africa's best opportunity for overcoming the problems of rural poverty. Rural suppliers need to sell to sources of dynamic, growing demand: typically rural purchasing power is too limited to propel a rural area out of poverty.

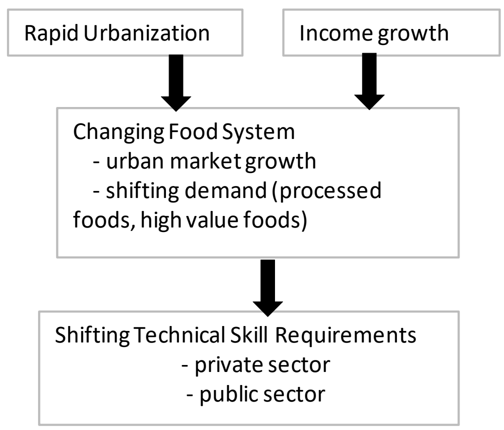
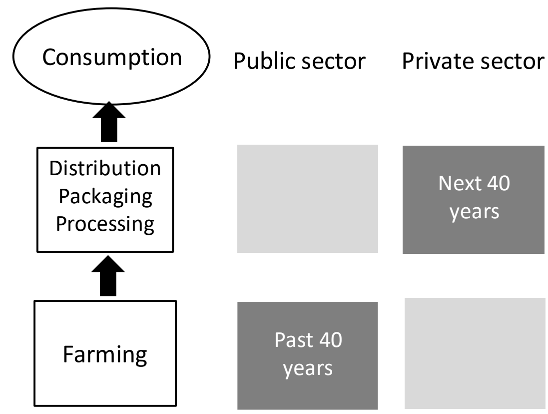
New opportunities are via rural-urban food supply chains, linking the massive and growing and diversifying urban food market in Africa. Those supply chains are "two way super-highways" – bringing food and fiber one way, and an avalanche of money the other way, back to the producers at every step in the chain. Intermediary commercial groups drive this entire 2-way super highway (not large corporations)! There is a growing diversity of these intermediaries including: the farmers, truckers and wholesalers, warehouse and cold store operators, and processors. "This avalanche of income fuels – and will fuel far more as time goes on – grass-roots investments (much of it in rural areas or rural towns) by these millions of small and medium producers in the midstream and downstream segments of the rural-urban supply chains, in farming, and in the input supply chains". This is the leverage point for rural growth that will spread out to the poorest and over time to the hinterlands. African policymakers have a major new opportunity in leveraging and encouraging this enormous development for the benefit of women and youth.

The African agrifood systems are transforming as part of "5 interlinked transformations": urbanization, diet diversification, food supply chain transformation, factor market change, and emerging intensification of farming. Urbanization in (Sub-Saharan) Africa has caught up with the average urban share in population of all developing countries. Africa's urbanization is now growing faster than the rest of the developing world. This varies by sub-region, with West Africa fastest, then East Africa and southern Africa slowest. This rapid urbanization took place before in a context of stagnant economies, but since around 1998, it has been paired with robust economic growth. The combination of these two dynamics is a game-changer for African development. In West Africa, the urban share in overall population is about 50%; and urban share in all food consumption is about 60%, and urban share in purchased/marketed food is roughly 70%. In ESA, the respective shares are 30% (population), 40% (total food), and 50% (marketed food), roughly. For overall Africa then it appears to be roughly 40%-50%-60% (roughly like overall developing Asia). That is, African farmers face a majority-urban market when selling food! This means that the rural-urban food supply chain went from an interesting but marginal story in the 1980s to a major fundamental food security theme in the 2010's. It is also surprising to think about how important the local and African regional urban market is compared with the global export market: the global export market is roughly 5% or at most 10% of marketed food supply, compared to the 60% urban share. That is a signal for policymakers to see the urban market as at least as much an opportunity as the export market, and more accessible to small farms and firms!

Reardon *et al* further point out that the nature of African urbanization is that while large-cities (above one million population) are proliferating, their share in total urban population in Africa is declining – with secondary cities and rural towns making up most of the difference. This is a "de-centralized urbanization" that can "spread the wealth" around to surrounding rural areas with greater opportunities for spin-off effects for rural non-farm employment generation and growing markets for fruit/veg, meat/fish/dairy. Reardon *el al* (2013) findings are also that African urbanization is accompanied by rapid growth in urban incomes and the middle class itself, and by urban (and to a lesser extent rural) diet diversification. On one hand diet diversification goes beyond basic grains. This diet diversification means new income gains for farmers, producing and selling to towns/cities their meat or dairy or fruit earns a farmer 5-10 times more per hectare than grains. On the other hand is diet diversification into processed foods in a substantial way, and into shopping at supermarkets in an emerging way. As in other developing regions, urban consumers lead this shift. It is driven by the quest for convenience as women enter the labour force, adding thus to family incomes but also reducing their time for preparation and shopping, and men work away from home. The challenge of this trend is that without care for methods and nutritional quality of ingredients, the shift to processed foods (and more meat) can and already is leading to problems of obesity and related health concerns, as in the rest of the world. The opportunity of this trend is that the value-added income from processing is an important boost to agrifood economy incomes. Technology improvements in processing also bring more efficiency and lower food prices, and opportunity for some firms to expand from backyard/backroom enterprises to medium and small enterprises that become a backbone to supply chains as we discuss next.

Haggblade (2012) places the youth bulge issue in perspective of required investments in the appropriate skills for a futuristic workforce configuration in Africa that recognizes the shift from farm to non-farm jobs for Africa's youth (Figure 2.1). For starters, Africa needs to maintain a steady supply of interested farmers, extension agents, and scientists in a career and business that traditionally attracts no new comers. According to the UN FAO, the average age of an African farmer is 60 years.

**Figure 2.1: Changing African food systems and demand for shift in skills base for youth**

| Changes in African Food Systems | Shifting Clients for Graduates of African Agricultural Training and Education Institutions |
|---|---|
|  |  |





Source: Haggblade, 2012

Coupled with low levels of labour saving technologies used in African Agriculture, youth have shown a declining interest in this noble trade. Sixty percent of Africa's population comprises of the youth, aged between 15-24 years. Most of them aspire to migrate to urban centers in search of the elusive white-collar job, and see no future for them in their rural neighborhoods. There is evidence that the youth are less keen on the input supply and farm production parts of the value chain, and that they may have greater interest in the processing, packaging and consumer, food safety and marketing parts of the value chain.

The challenge in addressing these opportunities, however, is in the 'invisibility' of this intermediary private sector in the eyes of governments and donors. The opportunity for policy makers is to promote the rural-urban food supply chains that are developing rapidly to meet urban demand:

a. The post farm gate segments of the supply chain – the midstream segment (processing and wholesale/transport) and downstream (retail and food stalls) - together form 50-70% of food costs to urban Africans. That means that these actors are as important as farmers for national food security.
b. There is also an emerging "Quiet Revolution" in supply chains, with tens of thousands of small and medium scale firms in trucking, wholesale, warehousing, cold storage, first and second stage processing, local fast food, and retail, making major investments in recent years.
c. There is an explosion of growth the past 5 years in processing and consumption by the emerging middle-class of traditional foods: (eg. teff mills-cum-retailers in Addis; millet supply chain in Senegal; rapid transformation of the chicken supply chain into urban areas; rise and transformation of the sorghum beer market (Haggblade, 2012); rapid rise of dairy processing companies, linked to small farmers, in Kenya and

Zambia; rapid rise of gari/cassava and palm oil small and medium companies in Ghana and Nigeria and new initiatives by the Nigerian government to support small/medium second stage processors of cassava;

d. These small/medium agrifood companies are the "missing middle" in the African food debate. They have long thought to be missing in fact; with laments of lack of African grass-roots investments, and turning to either parastatals again or to multinationals for investment. Yet there is a surge in African grass-roots companies investing, and in the medium-long run, and it can be argued that as in Asia, these will form the backbone of the quiet food revolution. A number of them will also develop into Africa's Lions in the global food arena, large private companies that will be region-wide and eventually important globally. They will be key to African competitiveness.
e. Farmers are making, in the aggregate, massive, investments in using inputs and irrigation. Where farmers are linked to growing urban and regional markets (such as teff in Ethiopia, vegetables in Mali and Senegal, potatoes in Rwanda, dairy in Kenya), they are making investments in soil conservation, building organic matter in their soils, using productivity enhancing seeds and breeds and fertilizer, and even investing in irrigation and sometimes machines.
f. Rural nonfarm employment (about 40%-50% of rural incomes in the continent) are major purveyors of funds for farm investments. Promotion of this employment will be a major means of helping farmers to fund productivity investments. In fact this source of cash far exceeds what credit markets purvey.
g. The continuing challenge is to develop rural factor markets for irrigation, fertilizer, seed, pesticides and herbicides, credit, land preparation services, spraying services, and others. These input supply chains are obviously of extreme importance for the farm supply base of urban supply chains to be vibrant and inclusive.

The overall implications of all this are:

a) Urban markets now form roughly 60% of the purchased/marketed food market in Africa. That means they are major financers of rural development as this is a major source of funds back to rural areas. Rural-urban supply chain actors form 50-70% of food prices in urban markets. So rural-urban food supply chains have become central to food security of African countries. Investment in these chains is as important as investment in farming for food security.
b) Urbanization combined with income increases and diet diversification provides major opportunities as "motors of growth" for rural areas of Africa.
c) The small and medium enterprises – tens of thousands of them in the distribution and processing segments of the supply chains – are in the midst of launching a Quiet Revolution in food supply chains in Africa. They have been the "missing middle" in the food debate and now deserve major attention and help.
d) International agribusinesses – from Brazil, Asia, Europe and America – have taken note of Africa's rapidly growing domestic food markets. Africa's growing imports of cereals, soybeans, milk powder and poultry reflect the increasing competitiveness of agricultural imports into Africa. In order to compete successfully with imports in their own growing domestic and regional agribusiness markets, African farmers and agribusinesses will need to improve value chain efficiency at all levels.
e) It is important to note that the local domestic food economy and the intra-regional market are at present the main opportunities. About 95% of the African food market (in value terms) is domestic (local and regional); exports and imports constitute the rest. But over time the global export market will also grow as an opportunity.

f) It will be important to help a broader set of farmers to access inputs and rural services and extension information to take advantage of this growing market. At first this will be an issue of volume and cost, and increasingly over time, of quality differentiation and food safety.
g) There will be need for a number of kinds of coordination – cooperatives of farmers to achieve scale, clusters of small/medium food supply chain firms with training and market-linking assistance to maximize efficiency and innovation, and coordination over agriculture ministries, energy ministry, commerce ministry, infrastructure ministries, to bring about integrated solutions to bottlenecks holding up this emerging dynamic transformation.
h) Tschirley, D., M. Ayieko, M. Hichaambwa, J. Goeb, and W. Loescher (2011) show five points regarding the middle class[1] in developing East and Southern Africa. (1) 55% of the region's middle class – 37% of the "non-vulnerable" middle class – is rural. (2) 61% to 83% of the middle class's food is purchased. (3) Processed food occupies 70- 80% of the class's food expenditure, with similar shares in urban and rural areas. (4) Perishable products account for 44% to 55% of the class's expenditure. Policy attention to processing and to food products "beyond-grains" thus needs to be "mainstreamed". (5) The import share of food expenditure does not rise with income in urban areas.

The context to AGRF 2015 provided so far is as well argued in the research literature as it is captured by the vision of African leaders when they adopted CAADP in 2003. A decade after CAADP, however, the AUC and NEPAD Agency reviews confirmed that the CAADP vision was just as valid in 2014 as it was in 2003. The Malabo Declaration of 2014 is therefore further confirmation of the validity of an overall strategy that prioritizes an agriculture-led social and economic transformation. In that vision lies broad-based inclusive development that has the best shot at advancing women and youth. Malabo takes on board the major shortcomings of the first decade of CAADP. These included: a) not enough emphasis on policy reforms (including not enough pro-poor orientation); b) not enough emphasis on institutions and building systemic capacities for rural and agricultural development; and c) not enough emphasis on mobilizing domestic capital (unhealthy emphasis on donor financing and FDI). This overall context has to be taken forward in addressing the AGRF thematic issues of finance, inputs, infrastructure, markets and capacity of women and youth. The CAADP review finding are most relevant in terms of addressing these issues with policy and institutional reforms in mind, and importantly- with the aim to catalyzing domestic financing- especially of Africa's indigenous commerce- the vibrant intermediary groups driving Africa's food systems.

[1] To capture diversity in behavior across households, use is made of the strata presented by Ncube et al., that is, up to $2 (the poor), $2 to $4 (the vulnerable middle class); $4-$10 (the lower middle class), $10 to $20 (the upper middle class), and above $20 (the upper class)

## 3. FINANCE - ACCESSING INCLUSIVE FINANCE FOR AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS

### 3.1 Key financing policy and practise issues in Africa

Agricultural financing is probably the most elusive issue to address when dealing with smallholders; particularly the women and the youths. The primary source of agricultural financing in most African countries has traditionally been commercial banks who are usually reluctant to lend uncollaterized loans. Typically, women and youths lack immovable properties or movable productive assets particularly those that can be used as collateral. Moreover, women and youths have very limited access to land in most African countries where land is a paternal asset. Less than 2% of communal land in Africa is owned by women (FAO, 2007) and the alienation of women in particular, from land ownership further jeopardizes their chances of accessing credit from formal institutions. In addition to that, input credit from companies under contract arrangements usually discriminates against women and youth because their lack of land is tantamount to loss of credit-worthiness.

The overarching finance challenge for rural farmers; men, women and youths included has to do with the lending institutions' risk perception of smallholder farmers. An IFAD study on Eastern and Southern Africa identified constraints for rural finance interventions that include: risk perception; inadequacy of rural physical infrastructure; high cost of service delivery due to dispersed populations; lack of demand for financial services due to inadequate financial literacy; and lack of appropriate rural finance policy frameworks (KMP, 2014).

The landscape of financing women and youths alongside rural financing is changing tremendously; to include new types of financial service providers and innovative technologies and these have sparked new partnerships between public and private players as well as development partners like IFAD, FAO and a range of other social and commercial investors.

### 3.2 Investments and interventions in financing women and youths

Various countries in the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) region have made some policy interventions, introduced regulations or amended laws to mainstream rural farmers for inclusion; particularly women with support from IFAD.

- In Ethiopia, MFIs have adopted a multi-pronged role in rural finance to enhance access to finance by rural women through studies, researches and policy dialogue. Government has also improved its commitment to rural financing through government-owned MFIs (Ibid). These MFIs have improved credit access for all demographic groups including women and youths through bringing the financial system to the rural areas. The policies governing MFIs were also re-drafted with support from IFAD to enhance growth and diversification in savings, credit and insurance. As a result, women and youths are now better able to access finance through the formal system even though the ideal levels of access have not yet been reached.
- Kenya has leveraged on mobile banking applications as a way of ensuring the bankability of the rural population as well as initiatives in micro insurance, financial literacy and consumer protection through establishment of the Deposit Protection Board. This initiative in financial literacy has benefited women and youths more since they have traditionally been left out in such capacity building programmes. Kenya also launched the Credit Information Sharing (CIS) platform in 2014, allowing potential financiers to view client information on their credit history before lending. This enables women; who are known to be more honest than their male counterparts to better access credit from formal institutions.

- In Southern Africa, Lesotho has introduced a Micro Finance Forum for discussions of rural finance policy issues. Lesotho has also launched the Rural Financial Intermediation Policy by the Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) to enhance the link between the formal and the informal sector and the programme was supported by IFAD.
- The Republic of Mozambique also made significant progress in enhancing financial access by women and youths. The government evolved and approved the Rural Finance Policy which has a string strategic thrust on women; to improve financial inclusion of the rural population. The Mozambican government also supported the formation of producer groups which led to the legislation requiring the registration of producer groups.

Whilst these initiatives are necessary conditions for women and youth inclusion, they are not sufficient to ensure inclusion. The targeting of women and youths has to be deliberate; with public and private support and monitoring.

### 3.3 Opportunities for investment into women and youth access to finance

The rural finance sector has massive opportunities for investment if given the right policy and regulatory framework. Despite the fact that smallholder women and youth farmers themselves remain the biggest investors into agriculture, public and private partners can also tap into the existing financing gap. However, policies are often not predictable and investors have to be innovation in order to when they venture into opportunities such as:

- Provision of enterprise targeted finance for women and youths who demonstrate capacity and competence within particular enterprises.
- Investment into creation of credit bureaus to provide credit information and credit rating for smallholder farmers who lack collateral. The credit rating can be accessed and taken as social collateral by other financiers at a nominal cost.
- Lease finance – to assist women and youth with acquiring the use of processing equipment and mechanization equipment
- Development of “challenge funds” by development partners to crowd in funding within value chains that involve women and youth owned enterprises
- Governments and large corporations developing affirmative procurement programs and supplier development programs involving women and youth to drive the proliferation of contract based financing and factoring
- Investment into mobile banking targeting the rural sector. In many African countries, the mobile banking sectors are still at their infancy with the exception of Kenya.
- Building the capacity of women and youths to improve their financial literacy and hence, their understanding of the financial system and financial products and ultimately, their credit performance.
- Investment into knowledge management and learning for rural finance policies. IFAD and the Knowledge Management Partnership (KMP) have been working in the ESA region to enhance knowledge management since 2011.
- Investment into building the capacity of rural social institutions that have influence in rural societies and how they function.
- Use of nano-financing to provide credit to young farmers similar to the platform used by Mobile Decisioning (MODE) in providing small loans to ordinary people.

## 4. INPUTS-INCREASING YIELDS AND SOIL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH GREATER AND SMARTER USE OF INPUTS

The level of input usage in Africa is typically low; particularly for fertilizers and improved seeds. At its simplest, farmers cannot afford inputs because they are too expensive in most African states. Governments usually participate in input markets; through subsidies and price controls and that usually causes market distortions. Market distortions coupled with currency depreciation in most African countries south of the Sahara has rendered input costs out of reach for many smallholder farmers; particularly women and youths. In some cases, the price structure and yield response is such that the use of certain inputs may no longer be justified on crops produced for the domestic market.

The affordability of inputs has to be dealt with to ensure fairness of pricing if women and youths are to improve the smartness of their input usage. Often, inputs are not available in some contexts in Africa. This has been largely been attributed to the remoteness and hence difficult all weather access of certain locations. Magnay (2009) also attributed the unavailability of inputs in some countries to the low populations and hence little usage of such inputs. Farmers sometimes lack information on the availability and usage of inputs including benefits thereby restricting the use of such inputs.

### 4.1 Key African initiatives and policies on inputs and the implications on women and youth farmers

The Malabo declaration reinstates the commitment of African governments to the total elimination of hunger by 2025. This is also in support of the Millennium Development Goals which are coming to an end by the end of 2015. Many interventions by public, private and development partners have been pioneered in Africa; often in partnership with each other. Input usage however, remains critically low especially for women and youth farmers who have no access to agricultural finance and have limited off farm income generating options when compared with men. Policies that improve women and youth access to inputs particularly improved seed and fertilizers must ensure input availability on time, pricing and appropriate packaging as these are often a hindrance to input access even if the inputs are available.

Fertilizer consumption levels, particularly for Sub-Saharan Africa, are still extremely low as has been highlighted. Average fertilizer use per hectare in SSA has remained between 5 kg/ha and 10 kg/ha since 1990, which is less than 10 percent of the world average (NEPAD, 2015). African Ministers of Agriculture met and agreed on the 12-point "Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer" which set the target of fertilizer usage for Africa at 50 kg per hectare. However, input usage remains far below the 50 kg/ha minimum target set by the Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer despite the efforts. The African Development Bank, with the support of the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission, was tasked with the establishment of an Africa Fertilizer Development Financing Mechanism that will meet the financing requirements of the various actions agreed upon by the framework of the Abuja Declaration. However, there is still a lot of work to be done since many African countries still lack an up to date fertilizer policy which can be used as the basis for public and private investment.

The use of improved seed is also very low for the entire ESA region. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have been promoted as a model for attracting investments in the seed sector in recent years. PPPs are ideal for optimizing resources, improving efficiency and enhancing delivery and impact of interventions aimed at improving the performance of the agricultural sector. The

Eastern Africa Seed Committee (EASCOM) exemplifies a public-private partnership that evolved to address the gaps in policy and practice regarding production and trade in seed across 11 countries in eastern and central Africa. African governments are also far from inclusively clarifying rights for men, women and youth farmers for seeds that they produce. Movement of seeds across borders is also difficult because of phytosanitary requirements in the different countries. There are initiatives to harmonize seed policies, laws, regulations and procedures so they are the same for each of the countries to enhance movement of seed across borders for both the formal and informal seed systems.

### 4.2 African interventions and investments to enhance input availability for women and youths

Despite the low input usage in agriculture, a lot has been done in terms of investments to enhance input usage. Governments, development partners and private sector players like have played a significant role in ensuring improved input access.

- AFAP and IFA have pledged to collaborate on joint activities to engage and support private and public sector initiatives to identify, enable and deliver improvements. Both organizations will act as intermediaries between the private and public sectors to ensure that the goals of all parties are being met and that an enabling environment is developed and maintained consistent with the objectives set forth in the 2006 Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer to increase fertilizer use to 50 kg per hectare across the continent.
- In Ghana, the government revised fertilizer regulations in order to improve fertilizer usage in the country with the assistance of AGRA under AGRA's policy action nodes. The new regulations will assist in lowering fertilizer prices which were hindering farmers; especially poor women farmers from utilizing inorganic fertilizers. The policy node approach has also been very useful in improving input access especially for women and youths despite the fact that the policy advocacy was not necessarily targeted at women and youths only.
- Other countries where the policy node approach by AGRA was being pushed include Tanzania, Mali, Mozambique, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. The same model was being used for all the six priority countries and the revision of fertilizer regulations by governments of those countries went a long way.
- AGRA also recently launched an initiative, called Micro Reforms for African Agribusiness (MIRA), which will identify, prioritize and advocate for the reform of specific agricultural policies and regulations that currently deter or limit private investment in small and medium-sized agribusinesses operating in smallholder agricultural value chains. The programme aims to reach at least 25 significant policy or regulatory reforms in selected African countries, leading to measurable increases in private sector investment in local agribusinesses.
- FANRPAN has been working on the assessment and promotion of policies designed to increase access to agricultural inputs and build input markets. At the same time, it has been providing relief seeds and other inputs in Malawi and other ESA countries and studies done have shown that it is a worthwhile and cost-effective investment when done right (FANRPAN, 2011). Moreover, the FANRPAN Seed Voucher Study in Malawi demonstrated that such assistance can be used to sustain agricultural growth provided while building commercial input markets.
- The International Fertilizer Development Centre (IFDC) has led successful initiatives in bringing on board the private sector in expanding the farm input market in ESA

countries; notable examples being Nigeria and Rwanda. To improve fertilizer availability in Nigeria, IFDC has previously facilitated the privatization of a government-owned urea production plant that was idle for several years and revived operations to reduce fertilizer imports. In Rwanda, IFDC is working directly with the Ministry of Agriculture and the private sector to fully privatize the supply of fertilizer and improve access to finance by supply chain private actors. IFDC is also helping to build networks of capacitated agro-dealers across Africa into agro dealers-cum-extension workers to improve the contact between the farmer and extension knowledge.

### 4.3 Opportunities for investment in improving input access for women and youth farmers

The input industry (particularly fertilizers and improved seed) in Africa is still largely undeveloped with the majority of inputs coming from outside of Africa.

- The 50 kg per hectare fertilizer target set by the African Union leaves Africa with a huge deficit of fertilizer which has to be filled immediately. This calls for massive investment in technical knowledge and fertilizer production to satisfy Africa's growing fertilizer market.
- Investment in the seed sector is also critical. This is because of the usage gap of improved seed which is still very wide. Thus, there is need for investment in breeding, seed multiplication and distribution networks and channels including warehousing.
- Investment in storage facilities and the logistics value chain, including identification of possible consolidation opportunities with larger corporations distributing products (i.e. beverage companies, milling companies and agro-processors.)
- Investment in credit guarantee facilities for importers and agro-dealers which enhances their chances of accessing credit from formal financial institutions for distributing inputs
- Expansion of training to hub agro-dealers to expand their capacity to provide extension services to sub-agro-dealers and farmers on the correct use of inputs
- Investment in agro-chemicals: usage of agro chemicals in Africa is also low due to their unavailability, their high cost or lack of knowledge on how they work. Therefore, there is need for investment into knowledge and capacity as well as the production and distribution of critical agrochemicals; particularly herbicides and insecticides; which have a significant effect in reducing drudgery and increasing efficiency and hence, productivity.

## 5. AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE, FEEDER ROADS, ON-FARM INFRASTRUCTURE, ICT AND MECHANIZATION

Infrastructure development has been identified as a pillar of economic development under the African Union's NEPAD and development partners such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) are paying increased attention to financing the necessary infrastructure for the development of the agro-industries sector. Rural infrastructure remains a priority of African governments with the second pillar of CAADP being aimed at "Improving market access through improved rural infrastructure and trade-related interventions".

Agriculture often entails bulk movement of inputs from cities to farmlands or produce in the reverse direction over fairly long distances. The importance of agricultural infrastructure; particularly all-weather link roads and telecommunications cannot therefore be overlooked in the context of trying to improve women and youth access to agricultural markets. FAO (2012) highlights that public infrastructure is critical in that it connects production and input-output markets, thus reducing the risks of investment in agricultural development and providing greater security for producers. Both physical and virtual communication infrastructure plays a pivotal role in facilitating trade and movement of agricultural commodities. Women farmers need assembly, wholesale and retail market infrastructure to be able to function more effectively in agricultural markets.

The AfDB asserts that infrastructure is a major determinant of agricultural productivity growth in addition to other factors such as human capital, credit markets, extension services, and technological research (AfDB, 2011). The presence of reliable physical and virtual infrastructure increases both output per capita and output per unit of land. The cost of poor infrastructure is often reflected in the spatial price differences experienced in different markets which are not production zones. The Regional Agricultural Trade Information Network (RATIN, 2011) collected information on spatial price differences in three countries and witnessed price differences of almost 40% and the extra cost was attributable to poor infrastructure. Table 5.1 shows the price differences in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda of two major commodities.

**Table 5.1: Cost of infrastructure as reflected in spatial commodity price dispersion in selected East African countries**

| Country | Commodity | Price dispersion (Jan-June 2011) |
|---|---|---|
| Kenya | Maize | 32% |
| | Rice | 39% |
| Tanzania | Maize | 25% |
| | Rice | 37% |
| Uganda | Maize | 14% |
| | Rice | 30% |

**Source: RATIN, 2011.**

Africa has also been experiencing major post-harvest losses as a result of insufficient storage facilities. The AfDB estimates that post-harvest losses for perishable agro-commodities such as fruits and vegetables average 35-50 percent of total attainable production, while for grains the loss varies between 15 and 25 percent (AfDB, 2011).

Africa requires investment in key infrastructure in sectors such as energy, rural feeder roads, assembly, wholesale and retail market infrastructure as well as storage and on-farm structures. It is estimated that Africa has 13% of the world's population and consumes only 3% of global commercial energy (NEPAD, 2002). It is disheartening that only 30% of Africa's population has access to electricity, compared to 70-90% in other parts of the developing world; with the majority of them being in urban areas (PIDA, 2012). Rural smallholders will thus find it difficult to access energy for storage, processing and domestic use. Other major sectors are also prohibitively lagging behind global trends. In 2010 for example, Kenya had only about 32% of its rural people living within two kilometers of an all-weather road. The figure was 31% for Angola, 26% for Malawi, 24% for Tanzania, 18% for Mali and a mere 10.5% for Ethiopia (Juma, 2012). Expanding rural road networks (in addition to investing in electrification and irrigation) is a strategic investment for rural development and should not be judged against narrowly defined economic criteria. Of great importance is the fact that transport costs are 100% higher than in other developing nations elsewhere outside Africa and this has a bearing on market access and profitability for women and youth farmers. African water resources are underused with only 5% of agriculture under irrigation (Ibid). Africa's infrastructure gap is further pictured in Box 5.1.

**Box 5.1: State of African infrastructure**

**Energy**

With 13% of the world's population, the continent consumes just 3% of global commercial energy. Less than one-quarter of households are connected to electricity networks, the lowest connectivity world-wide. Solar usage is very low; yet Africa receives an average of 2500 hours of sunshine per year, which is enough to generate power for every household.

**Connectivity**

Sub-Saharan Africa has 15 telephone mainlines per 1,000 people (the average for low and middle income countries is 270/1,000), while the average cost of a local call (US$0.09 per 3 minutes) and international call (US$3.55) is the highest for any region world-wide (the world averages are US$0.06 and US$2.09 respectively). It has 16 internet users per 1,000 people compared to the global average of 131 and the East Asian figure of 44.

**Transport**

It is the continent with the greatest number of landlocked countries, but poor transport networks and very high transport transaction costs. Measured as a share of the value of exports, transport and insurance payments are very high: 55.5% in Malawi, 51.8% in Chad, 48.4% in Rwanda, 35.6% in Mali, 35.5% in Uganda, and 32.8% in the Central African Republic. The world average is under 5.4%; and in developing countries 8.2%.1 For the majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 'transport cost incidence for exports (the share of international shipping costs in the value of trade) is five times higher than tariff cost.' Africa has the lowest density of roads for any region – 0.86km/1,000 people versus South Asia's 1.8km or the world average for middle-income countries of 8.5km. Port facilities, apart from those found in parts of Southern Africa and in Egypt are considered deficient; while notable airport activity is restricted to a few hubs including Johannesburg, Dakar, Cairo and Nairobi.

**Water and Sanitation**

While access to clean water in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 49% of the population in 1990 to 58% in 2002, this is still well short of the MDG target of 75%. Moreover, less than 20% of the continent's irrigation potential has been utilized effectively.

**Source: Adapted from Mills (2006)**

## 5.1 African policies for farm and off-farm infrastructure and the implications for women and youth farmers

One of the most vital initiatives to ensure sustainability and equity at this time; when Africa is undergoing massive growth is closing the infrastructure deficit. Improved infrastructure would facilitate increased intraregional and international trade, reduce the cost of doing business and enhance Africa's competitiveness within itself and in the global economy as well as act as a catalyst to Africa's economic transformation and diversification through industrialization and value addition and sustainable and inclusive growth. Africa is the continent with the greatest number of landlocked countries and consequently, many countries face extraordinary costs in transport for accessing global markets. Rural and farm transport infrastructure consists of a network of rural roads and tracks on which the rural population travels by means of walking or using non-motorized and motorized vehicles.

The lack of adequate and reliable infrastructure touches the life of every rural African family daily. Investments in rural infrastructure, particularly rural roads, storage, processing and market facilities, will therefore be required to support the anticipated growth in agricultural production and improve competitiveness. Dilapidated road and communication infrastructure often leads to heavy losses for market gardeners. The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) initiative is being led by the African Union Commission (AUC), NEPAD Secretariat and the African Bank to develop a vision and strategic framework for the development of regional and continental infrastructure (Energy, Transport, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Trans-boundary Water Resources). The World Bank estimates the cost of developing African infrastructure at US$ 93 billion per year (World Bank, 2012). However, individual African governments or the African Development Bank may lack the necessary capacity to fund projects to that tune.

### 5.2 Investments and interventions in farm and off farm infrastructure and mechanization

Only 34 percent of rural Africans live within two kilometres of an all-season road, compared to 65 percent in other developing regions (Torero and Chowdhury, 2005). Properly planned rural road links to the formal road network can create new markets and opportunities for isolated communities. Private financing is emerging as an important source of infrastructure finance, especially in the ICT and transport sectors. However, public revenue has traditionally been the main source of finance for infrastructure projects including roads with high social but low financial returns.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has worked with other partners, both public and private, to support the formulation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), an infrastructure agenda that will radically makeover Africa's infrastructure. PIDA was approved by African heads of state and government at their 18th Summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2012 (WEF, 2013). PIDA specifically calls for new models of partnership between business, government and donors to implement the 51 Priority Action Plan (PAP) infrastructure projects already identified. The projects and programmes span sectors from power generation and transportation to water and telecommunications, with an overall capital cost of US$ 68 billion through 2012 to 2020, or US$ 7.5 billion in expenditure per year up to 2020. Power generation alone consists of 15 projects worth US$ 40 billion focusing mainly on creating hydroelectricity generation capacity, building interconnectors between power pools and constructing regional oil pipelines. Transportation consists of 24 projects worth US$ 25 billion to link the major production and consumption centres, provide connectivity among the major cities and open the landlocked countries to enhance regional and continental trade (Ibid).

On the other hand, the African Commission established by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair argues for aid expenditure on African infrastructure which was initially pegged at US$10 billion annually until 2010, to increase possibly to US$20 billion per annum until 2020 (Mills, 2006). The main investment sectors are again, those with pro-poor and pro-growth benefits, notably power, roads, irrigation, ports, energy and telecoms.

The SADC region has invested in a trans-boundary road network stretching for thousands of kilometres from Windhoek to Maputo through Botswana and Zimabbwe. This has enhanced the movement of people and agricultural goods in search of services and markets respectively. The mooted trans-African highway and railway line if implemented, will also see an improvement in intra and inter-regional movement of agricultural commodities. Railway development in Africa will also be critical as the population is set to more than double in the next 35 years and its road transport arteries are already congested and efficient railways could significantly de-congest them. Another initiative, The Agriculture Fast Track, a new and first-of-its kind joint effort by the African Development Bank, the Government of Sweden and the U.S. Agency for International Development, addresses infrastructure constraints to growth by establishing a fund aimed at increasing the number of investment-ready infrastructure projects and public-private partnerships in Africa (Feed the Future, 2013). As African countries' grids need significant development and expansion, off-grid solutions involving solar and gas exploitation around agro-processing and storage hubs will be critical. Large government promoted initiatives include the Staple Crop Processing Zones in Nigeria (supported by UNIDO) and the Agriculture Parks initiative being developed in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The government of Tanzania in collaboration with private sector partners commissioned the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SACGOT) under a "New Vision for Agriculture" which was meant to increase private sector investment, smallholder incomes and clustered infrastructure (Milder et al, 2012). Likewise, the Mozambique has a similar Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor (BAGC) in Beira. Such growth corridors are also critically important as they crowd in infrastructure development in key fertile agricultural regions around the continent. The replication of such corridor based investments can go a long way in addressing the infrastructure challenges and food security issues that African countries are constantly faced with.

Investments linked with Agriculture Transformation Agencies and Agendas are also important in ensuring the beneficiation of produce from small women and youth farmers. An initiative in Ethiopia led to the establishment of industrial parks to promote processing, packaging and marketing of value added agricultural processes. These are in sync with Declaration 4 of Malabo which seeks to enhance agricultural transformation through value addition of farm produce. Such parks could be expanded to move beyond just large capital outlay processing equipment to involve smaller processing implements to afford farmers, particularly women and youth, to add greater value nearer the farm gate using machinery. Thus, farm level investments are also critical in raising the productivity especially of smallholder women and youth farmers who have the lowest productivities. Many governments have embarked on mechanization programmes but many of them usually do not benefit the poor woman farmer or the typical rural youth. In Zimbabwe, the government embarked on a mechanization programme; giving out equipment worth over US$2 billion over a period of 4 years between 2006 and 2009. However, independent media and some scholars claim that there were not many rural women farmers or youths who benefited from the programme (Newsday, 9 September 2015; Chisango and Ajuruchukwu, 2010). However, it is key for farmers to employ break even analysis to understand how much acreage needs to be employed under mechanization for the farmer to be able to pay for the equipment, maintain it and make a profit. AGCO has developed such analysis which needs to be popularized under their "Future Farm" model which was piloted in Zambia. It was opened in May 2015 and is a potential model learning centre for mechanization diffusion in Africa.

### 5.3 Opportunities for investment in farm and off farm infrastructure

- Investment in lease financing of farm equipment: lease financing for farm equipment can also be used to enhance the access to women and youth farmers to equipment and machinery which would otherwise be out of reach because of the prohibitive cost.

- Investment in storage: there is need to invest in public storage mechanisms, leveraging on innovations like the Warehouse Receipting System to enhance standard storage of farm produce
- Investment in localized value addition and processing: self-contained, farm based and localized value addition can also be used as a way of improving the value of farm produce. However, women and youths need equipment and machinery for processing which can be manufactured locally at lower costs or sourced within the region.
- Investment in virtual infrastructure for information sharing and access: virtual infrastructure is also increasing in importance in recent years. This can be used to share market information with small farmers to enhance their participation in markets.
- Investment in a market information system for Africa: Africa also needs to invest in a market information system which will enhance marketing of farm produce.
- Investment in national road, rail and port infrastructure: national road, rail and port infrastructure can also be improved to enhance the movement and handling of goods.
- Investment in inter and intra-regional connectivity: Africa also needs to invest more in projects that enhance regional connectivity through trans-boundary transport infrastructure in PPPs.
- Investment in energy is desperately needed; particularly self-contained solar power stations for homes or light industry to enable value addition and processing.

## 6. TRADE AND MARKETS AND THE DOMESTIC PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Access to lucrative markets is one of the problems that women and youths face in their agricultural activities. Markets form the basis of all agricultural production activities and without commodity markets, farmers will not enter the production process. Market access for farmers means the ability to acquire farm inputs and farm services, and the capability to timely deliver agricultural produce to buyers (IFAD, 2010). In Africa, farmer access to markets is not always easy; often becoming extremely difficult during the rainy season when all weather roads are not available. This has been a result of a myriad of challenges that the African rural population meets on a daily basis; particularly the women and youths. The second pillar of CAADP is hinged on "Improving market access through improved rural infrastructure and trade-related interventions". This reaffirms the commitment of the African Union and its member states; to improving the state of rural infrastructure and markets in which smallholder women and youth farmers also participate.

### 6.1 Key trade and markets policy and practice issues for women and youths

Low population densities in rural areas, remote locations and high transport costs present real physical difficulties in accessing markets. Rural women and youths in particular are also often constrained by their lack of understanding of the markets, their limited business and negotiating skills, and their lack of an organization that could give them the bargaining power they require to interact on equal terms with other, larger and stronger market intermediaries. Furthermore, rural producers from Sub-Saharan Africa face significant impediments in accessing niche markets in more developed countries. Market interventions that address women and youth concerns should have commitment to the objective of improving physical access to markets, by seeking ways to effectively increase the market share of the rural poor and improve the terms in which they participate in markets. There is also a need to accelerate the development of one stop border posts in promoting regional value chain development. UNECA and UNDP's African facility for Inclusive Markets have been promoting regional value chain development –but African governments must accelerate policy reform to remove non-tariff barriers if such efforts are to be successful. In addition to that, market interventions should achieve greater market access and market development for women and youths and effectively improve at national, regional and international levels the rules of trade in favour of the rural poor.

IFAD (2001) divides market access constraints into three groups: physical; structural and information and organization-related. The physical access constraint is therefore only one of those affecting the poor even though it is a very important factor throughout the developing world; particularly in Africa and Asia. IFAD (Ibid) reports that in almost all cases where physical constraints to market access exist, they have a greater negative effect on women than on men. Some roads leading to market places are usually impassable during certain times of the year; particularly during the rainy season. Physical access to markets becomes much more important where the commodities being produced are of a perishable nature; mostly fresh fruits and vegetables (FFVs). Most women in Sub-Saharan Africa are engaged in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector and hence, timeous access to markets is of importance for their upliftment. On the other hand, youths are also engaging more in perishables and small livestock production which again, requires good market access.

Many women engage in production for family consumption, or for the sale of small surplus in local markets. Access to more distant markets for women and youths is necessary when production is market oriented or where there is oversupply in local markets. However, where distant markets are difficult to reach because of cost, distance or transport inefficiencies, husbands or older sons usually do the marketing, and the men usually keep part of the proceeds (reference?). For this reason it is important that women do their own marketing. While in Africa men may use bicycles (which may be taboo for women in some societies), head loading is the normal form of transport for poorer women, which limits the distances they can cover. In addition, hiring truckers is expensive, even more so if roads are in poor condition. Off farm income generating activities are also gaining centre stage as a livelihood resiliency mechanism for women, men and youths engaged in more subsistence agriculture. Market access for women is also important in the sale of non-farm products. Women who spend long hours on off-farm income-generating activities, often earn very little because of marketing constraints.

Rural markets are characterized by extreme asymmetry of relations between large numbers of small producers or consumers, and a few market intermediaries. Such market relations are characteristically uncompetitive, unpredictable and highly inequitable. Rural producers who face difficulties in reaching markets often become dependent on traders coming to the village to buy their agricultural produce and to sell inputs and consumer goods to them (IFAD, 2001). However, due to very low competition in remote areas, producers are often faced with limited choices and they end up accepting the first offer of the first trader who shows up; even if it is unfavourable. It is also common for such traders to be the only source of information on prices and other relevant market information. The lack of market information can also lead to further exploitative pricing or conditions of trade with farmers on the losing end.

Women and youth farmers also lack skills, organization and information. In their participation in agricultural markets, women and youth producers find themselves at a major disadvantage due to their poor understanding of the market, how it works and why prices fluctuate; they have little or no information on market conditions, prices and the quality of goods. In addition to that, they lack the collective organization that can give them the bargaining power they require to interact on equal terms with other, generally larger and stronger, market intermediaries; and they have no experience of market negotiation and little appreciation of their own capacity to influence the terms and conditions upon which they trade. With little marketing experience, limited information and no organization, they have no basis upon which either to plan a market oriented production system or to negotiate market prices and conditions. Ultimately; women and youth farmers can be exploited by those with whom they have market relations; and that they fail to realize the full value of their production.

Until the mid-90s, major markets in many developing countries were controlled by governments. Monopolistic parastatal marketing agencies were typically responsible for both the delivery of agro-inputs and the marketing of agricultural produce, through a network of distribution outlets and marketing depots, and at prices (usually pan-territorial) that were determined in advance. In practice, however, the road to globalization is beset with difficulties – particularly for those least able to participate effectively in the global marketplace. In many countries, the closure of the former parastatal market chain has exacerbated this problem, leaving large numbers of farmers far from any markets (IFAD, 2003).

There are regional and international protocols and policies that have been passed and ratified in support of women and youth empowerment in markets and other economic spheres. UN Women (2012) also reiterates the call to empower poor rural women through economic integration and food security initiatives. Under the "Accelerating Progress Toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women," a five-year initiative of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), several agencies, including the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP) have launched programs in several countries. The program has four main goals: improving food and nutrition security; increasing incomes; enhancing leadership and participation in rural institutions; and creating a more responsive policy environment at national and international levels (UN Women, 2012).

### 6.2 Investments in trade and markets and their implications on women and youths

Most African households have diverse livelihood strategies, encompassing a range of activities. However, agriculture remains a key element of strategy for most people and many are also engaged in non-agricultural activities, including microenterprises (agro-processing, trading and other off-farm occupations). Through these various activities, households seek both to ensure their food requirements and to generate the income they require to satisfy their immediate consumption needs, social purposes and investments.

Markets are where women and youths as producers buy their agricultural inputs and sell their products; and where, as consumers, they use their income from the sale of crops, or from their non-agricultural activities, to buy their food requirements and consumption goods. Virtually all households in rural areas are, by preference, both producers and consumers, buyers and sellers; and many sell agricultural produce and buy their food at different times of the year. For markets to work inclusively; there is need for interventions at policy level, at market level as well as at household level where the production and or consumption is being done.

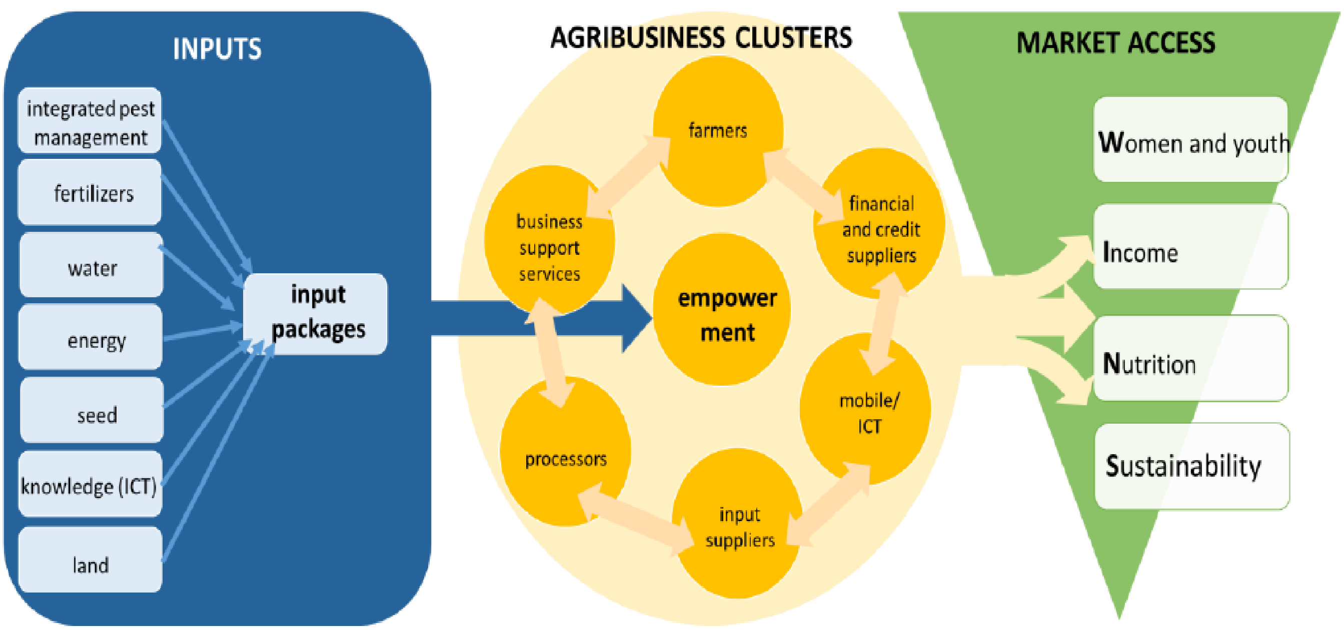



**Fig 6.1: Making markets work for women and youths**
**Source AIRCA, (2002)**

Making markets work for women and youths involves access to inputs and the development of agribusiness clusters. Inputs are important in the farm production sector whilst agribusiness clusters can also be set up under Built Operate and Transfer (BOT) or Built Operate and Own (BOO) schemes in partnership with the private sector. The agribusiness service centres will also be important in the value addition of commodities; to absorb market shocks and enable women and youths to realize greater value from their produce. Other downstream services can also lead to employment creation for other rural people including men. African governments can also leverage on the Seoul Declaration by the G20 in its "Development Consensus for Shared Growth - Multi-Year Action Plan on Development", of November 2010. The declaration aims to "promote increased procurement from smallholder producers and to strengthen their access to markets, in line with domestic and regional strategies".

The African Union's Market Facilitation programmes are currently being funded in the COMESA and ECOWAS regions to promote the integration of regional markets and raise the competitiveness of local products in these markets. On the other hand, NEPAD's Fertilizer Support Programme was created to improve the use of fertilizer across Africa in the spirit of the Abuja Declaration of 2006.

### 6.3 Opportunities for investing in agricultural trade and markets.

Commodity markets for agricultural produce in Africa a in a dire state due to decades of underinvestment and excessive controls by central and or local governments. There are opportunities for investment by both farmers and private and public investors. Innovation is the solution to many of the problems that women and youths face in trying to access lucrative markets. However, one innovation is not a universal panacea to the problems bedevilling women and youths since the underlying social and economic conditions vary greatly from country to country and from region to region. Therefore, innovation has to factor in contextual differences between regions, countries and societies. To ensure that markets work for women and youths, there is need for a multifaceted approach which entails but may not be limited to:

- *Public and private investment in market infrastructure:* Market infrastructure is one of the hindrances to women and youth participation in people's markets in developing countries. Most people's markets exist under sub-standard infrastructure; where ablution facilities and running water may not be always available for basic hygiene standards. This creates a potential health hazard in many of the markets and hence, their transformation into inclusively modern markets requires investment into physical infrastructure at the markets. In Zimbabwe and Zambia, these markets operate in the early hours of the morning thereby rendering them hostile to urban and peri-urban women farmers. Required infrastructure for standardizing these markets include ablution facilities, overnight accommodation, secure storage facilities and proper stalls or shades to house produce during the day.

- *Investment in farmer aggregation:* One of the main reasons why dealing with smallholder farmers can have high transaction costs is the distance between producers; when taken in the context of small volumes produced by each farmer. The bulking of produce thus, becomes very prohibitively expensive to intermediaries working in the market space. Thus, farmer aggregation would allow women and youth farmers producing the same commodity line to lump their produce well before the harvesting period and to be able to introduce standardization and hence, negotiate for premium prices for their produce. The setting up of agri-shared facilities which would serve as one-stop shops for agricultural enterprises to seek shared services and processing technology would enhance aggregation.

- *Investment in farmer enterprise groups; agro-service centres, incubators and credit associations that are owned and operated by women and youth farmers:* Support for smallholder enterprise group development (formation and or strengthening of groups and associations, and of local NGO capacity). The aim will be to develop financially viable, sustainable smallholder business organizations by assisting enterprise groups and their members in strengthening management/business skills, knowledge, and capacity to participate actively in input and output markets. Agro service centres and incubators will allow less capacitated women and youth farmers to access processing infrastructure and equipment thereby adding value to their produce.

- *Networks for women and youth:* Women and youth farmers must also be included through the creation of a competitive and efficient network of agribusiness/trading enterprises serving smallholder farmers. This would allow farmers to access markets and business services that are relevant in markets in a more cost and time efficient manner. AGRA introduced the Micro Reforms for Agribusiness (MIRA) programme in their priority countries to improve the agribusiness network within those countries. This will go a long way in solving some of the market problems that women and youth farmers are encountering in their quest to access lucrative markets. The MIRA AGRA model that is successful may then be replicated in other countries to improve the agribusiness environment. Similar programmes can focus on market linkage development focusing on investments that, responding to locally-defined needs and priorities, can strengthen commercial relations between smallholder producers and market intermediaries, to the benefit of both.
- *Market Information Systems:* Investing in market information systems by leveraging on ICTs can also be a useful strategy to reduce information asymmetries in agricultural markets. Farmers must be able to obtain real time information on markets; prices and demand at any given time at a nominal cost. This would allow them to respond to demand and supply with full knowledge of what will be happening at the market place; especially people's markets. In Zimbabwe, Knowledge Transfer Africa (KTA) has invested in information gathering in Zimbabwe's informal markets to show the growing purchasing power that they represent and to help farmers selling through them to monetize this value. Due to the evidence gathered, KTA has been able to negotiate a credit scheme from a local bank for smallholder farmers who participate in those markets. This model can be replicated in other African countries as a means to improve women and youth access to formal financing from credit institutions.
- *Innovation Platform:* The creation of market innovation platforms for learning and change that are run by women and youth farmers through learning and exchange programmes. Certain issues that may constrain women and youth farmers from obtaining the best out of markets will be known but not having obvious solutions.
- *Leveraging continental partnerships*: Emerging continental partnerships such as the India Africa Partnership; FOCAC (China – Africa cooperation); TICAD (Japan – Africa cooperation); Brazil – Africa Partnership; Turkey-Africa Partnership; emerging U.S. – Africa partnership and AGOA in particular; to create markets for African exports and to link African foodstuff outputs to global value chains.
- *Leveraging on emerging regional African multinational food retailers*: Emerging supermarket chains are potential growth markets which can be utilized to improve market access by women and youths. Large retail supermarket chains such as Shoprite/ Checkers; Nakumatt, Pick 'n' Pay and Uchimi can be useful in linking smallholder women and youth farmers to formal mainstream markets. The increase in globalization also mean an increase in the tourism industry and growing hotel chains are emerging as a market for foodstuffs as are healthcare facilities, academic institutions and the growing fast food and food franchise sector in Africa.

# 7. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

## 7.1 Capacity assessment of women and youths in agriculture

Africa needs to continue to develop capacity in order to sustain the high economic growth momentum and ensure that growth generates jobs and reduces poverty in an inclusive manner. One of the hindrances to productivity in agriculture for rural farmers is lack of technical capacity. This affects especially women who are usually left out in capacity development initiatives due to the discriminant nature of gender roles in most African societies. On the other hand, youths are mostly inexperienced and their ascendancy to excellence in productivity and market intelligence entails capacity development and knowledge co-creation.

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) defines capacity as "the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully; and that is the process by which people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time" (ACBF, 2011). Capacity entails the ability of individuals, organizations and societies to set goals and achieve them; to budget resources and use them for agreed purposes; and to manage the complex processes and interactions that typify a working political and economic system.

## 7.2 African investments and interventions in the capacity building of women and youths

Despite the fact that Africa has more women and youth smallholder farmers, women still have less access to extension services than men. Consequently, women farmers' rates of adoption of many technologies and their productivity are less than those of men farmers. Agricultural extension systems in many countries are not sensitive to the needs and circumstances of women – both staff and farmers (AFAAS, 2011). FAO (2011) and Doss (2010) also highlighted that despite the importance of women in agricultural production and processing, women's access to extension services is lower than men's.

In Uganda, the Makerere University Gender Mainstreaming Division targets an increased pool of women with science qualifications serving the local governments with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The programme targets women with diplomas in science for enrolment in Bachelor's degrees which would enable them to serve in more senior capacities as decision makers. On the other hand, the youth are generally included in mainstream educational programmes. Other similar initiatives elsewhere in advancing women's capacity from an educational perspective include the Programme on Strengthening Agricultural Technical Training in Sudan at two different centres with the aim of increasing the numbers of female staff, students, leaders, managers and entrepreneurs in the agricultural-sector workforce through support from FAO.

In Zimbabwe, youths belonging to that country's largest farmer union, the Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU) partnered with a local university called the Harare Institute of Technology to develop the capacities of the youth in agro-processing. The University provides processing technology and equipment as well as training on how such technologies are applied in a standardized manner. The result has been the development of a Youth brand of processed foods which have been produced and processed purely by youths.

Other non-conventional means of capacity building have also been used in countries including Mozambique and Zimbabwe. A project funded by Ciba Geigy and implemented in the Sanyati district of Zimbabwe targeted cotton farmers and promoted the safe use of agro-chemicals through song and dance. Women and youths widely participated in the project and the results of this year-long project included an observed decrease in mishandling accidents, and damage to environment, especially appropriate handling of empty containers. There was a sharp increase in yields against low chemical use, compared to other areas where the project was not implemented (FANRPAN, 2011). Initiatives by various public and private partners have been mooted and tried with mixed results but are on course to address the issue.

### 7.3 Opportunities for investment in capacity building of women and youths

There is also a huge investment gap in capacity building of women and youths in African agriculture.

- Capacity building for export orientation by women and youth farmers to enable them to access global markets.
- Capacity building for standardization by producer groups to enhance their access to niche markets
- Establishment of a private sector quality control mechanism for agricultural products to help women and youths access niche markets.
- Capacity development of women and youth farmers for value addition and processing
- The skills and competencies of individual women and youth farmers for input use, agronomy, marketing and business concepts
- Increasing the number of research institutes and agri-centre partners that are gender responsive to women in leadership.
- Capacity development for social institutions that aide development of women and youths in rural areas
- Capacity development of the broader institutions by addressing gender capacity gaps of men and policy.
- Establishment of an acceleration ecosystem that would include such facilities as innovation hubs.
- Creation of opportunities for the development of out of school skills in the area of agriculture.

## 8. ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY AGRF 2015

As the AGRF convenes for the fifth time on African soil, there are issues that have to be addressed with a strategic focus; with a particular alignment to addressing the specific needs of women and youths. There are issues that AGRF 2015 has to address which are central in the empowerment of women and youths in the agriculture sector. Agricultural policies, programmes, and initiatives should be engendered and at the same time offering equal or preferential opportunities for youths to ensure the maximum participation of women and youths. This includes equal access to productive resources such as land, labour, capital, financing and farm infrastructure. In addition to that, the access has to be backed up by strong and influential farmer organizations, SACCOs and other social structures through integrating communities of practise through aggregation. Women and youths also need to actively participate in the making and gazetting of policies that influence the way they do business in the agricultural sector. AGRF i2015 has the main themes as: "**Walking the talk on Women and Youth: Bringing inclusive agricultural markets to life"**. The five Forum sub-themes for the AGRF 2015 are:

1) The catalysts for increased inclusion in African agriculture and agribusiness
2) The keys to effectively financing youth and women owned enterprises in Africa
3) Improved inputs and increased mechanization -toward modern farming on the continent
4) Fostering continental partnerships and regional expansion strategies
5) Capacity development and access to markets: important drivers of inclusion in agriculture

The paper has attempted to surface the emerging policy issues, experiences and opportunities. It is proposed therefore that the conference themes invest more time in addressing the opportunities for the future.

### 8.1 Conference Theme 1: The Catalysts for Increased Inclusion in African Agriculture and Agribusiness

Africa is at a policy crossroads. On one hand policy makers and policy documents appear to favor an inclusive path to development, yet in practice Governments actively seek lumpy foreign investments and in cases favor large scale land acquisition as opposed to investments into prime-movers for smallholder family. The Conference may want to therefore address issues that expose such opportunities for greater inclusion as follows:

a. How can policy makers leverage urbanization to promote rural-urban supply chains and rural growth as solutions to rural poverty?
b. What are opportunities for realising new means of income generation for women and youth entrepreneurs that leverage on growing diet diversification in rural towns/cities for meat, dairy and fruit given their higher returns as compared to grains?
c. Address the challenge of 'invisibility' of women and youth as part of the intermediary private sector in the eyes of governments and donors.
d. Why is Africa not experiencing more organised supply of farm inputs and rural factor markets for irrigation, fertilizer, seed, pesticides, herbicides, credit, land preparation services, spraying services and small scale machines given growing use of these inputs in response to demand from rural towns and cities?

### 8.2 Conference Theme 2: The Keys to Effectively Financing Youth and Women Owned Enterprises in Africa

Given the growing examples and lessons in financing smallholder family business, in particular women and youth, the Conference may want to contribute to this desired goal by debating some of the following issues:

- What are the tested models that could be scale-up for targeted finance for women and youths?
- Does social collateral have a greater opportunity for women and youth especially with the opportunities through ICT for credit bureaus and ratings service for this group?
- What is holding back investment into mobile banking targeting the rural sector?
- What can the financial service sector do to partner with government and civil society in building the financial literacy of women and youths?
- Address the limited innovation by the banking sector when it comes to developing financial products and services that meet special needs and circumstances of such a large market of women and youth.

### 8.3 Theme 3: Improved Inputs and Increased Mechanization -Toward Modern Farming on the Continent

The African women farmer has used the hand held hoe for more than a century as the main mechanisation innovation. The Conference has to dialogue the lack of innovation and growth in the mechanisation and input factor markets in Africa. Some of the issues for debate include:

a. What accounts for the factor market's lack of supply response, particularly fertilizers, improved seed and small machines?
b. Why is Africa's failing to develop an appropriate rural based manufacturing capacity, as opposed to focus on large scale industry and imports?
c. Given the cost and low adoption of fertilisers, what are the options for increasing productivity in light of Malabo targets of elimination hunger and halving poverty by 2025?
d. What are the political economy issues towards a more open space for small and medium size seed services in terms of investments into breeding, seed multiplication and distribution networks and channels including warehousing?
e. What are the successful lessons from on lease financing of farm equipment for smallholders?
f. Discuss harnessing the massive opportunities for expanding current investments by intermediary groups into storage, warehousing and warehousing receipt systems, rural processing and distribution.
g. Discuss PPP investment opportunities into rural infrastructure that is catalytic to rural intermediary and indigenous commerce.

### 8.4 Theme 4: Fostering Continental Partnerships and Regional Expansion Strategies

The AU/NEPAD strategies are primarily based on the belief in regional integration as means of accelerating economic growth and acquisition of global market share. CAADP as a transformation framework has regional integration as a core result area in its Sustaining CAADP Results Framework. AGRF 2015 could take this further by discussing those regional integration issues that leverage inclusion of women and youth.

a. Discuss the issue of iinvestment (including PPPs) in inter and intra-regional connectivity and trans-boundary transport infrastructure that serve entrepreneurial African women and youth.
b. Discuss farmer aggregation strategies and investments that allow women and youth farmers, producers, and entrepreneurs to better serve markets by reducing costs, standardization, and so on.
c. How to stimulate greater investment in farmer enterprise groups, agro-service centres, incubators and credit associations that are owned and operated by women and youth farmers.
d. What models and successes can be shared across regions to aid Africa's investment into Agro service centres and incubators as well as other institutional innovations that capacitated women and youth farmers to access processing and value-adding infrastructure and equipment?
e. What opportunities exist for cross-border networks for women and youth, especially in terms of market information systems and innovation platforms?

### 8.5 Theme 5: Capacity Development and Access to Markets: Important Drivers of Inclusion in Agriculture

The Conference could attempt dialogue on some of the following issues:

a. What support is needed for the growing diversity of intermediary commercial players including: the farmers, small and medium scale firms in trucking, wholesale, warehousing, cold storage, first and second stage processing, local fast food, and retail?
b. Given the desired future shift in workforce configuration towards processing, packaging and distribution, what are the PPP opportunities in education and training towards needs of the private sector?
c. How best to take advantage of the explosion of growth in processing and consumption of traditional foods by the emerging middle-class
d. Address the challenge of coordination needed to realise opportunities by youth and women- cooperatives of farmers to achieve scale, clusters of small/medium food supply chain firms with training and market-linking assistance, and coordination over agriculture ministries, energy ministry, commerce ministry, infrastructure ministries, to bring about integrated solutions to bottlenecks holding up this emerging dynamic transformation.


**Fig 8.1: Precursors for inclusion of Women and youths in Agriculture, trade and markets**

**Source: Author, 2015.**

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the AGRF 2015 has to contribute to a successful agricultural transformation agenda into an African green revolution by leveraging on the Malabo declaration (Declaration 4) and the Agenda 2063 (Goal 14 and 15 for women and youths respectively) of the African Union to facilitate women and youth related policy dialogue at regional and international level. There is urgent need to register quick wins through facilitating correction of obvious information asymmetries in agricultural markets which hinder women and youths from effectively and profitably participating in commodity markets through enhancing investments in ICTs in agricultural markets. As AGRF continues to bring together and trigger the engagement of stakeholders including NGOs, private companies, cooperatives and innovators working towards a common agenda to share experiences; innovations and progress, it is crucial to zero in on practical recommendations that enhance the fortunes of women and youth.

Women and youths need support for increased participation and their empowerment, which includes giving them equal or better equal access to resources such as land and agricultural finance. This are essential components of a sound social and economic transformation agenda. Empowering women and youths will also improve agricultural development and food security for the community as a whole; besides contributing immensely to poverty reduction. Policies, strategies and projects intentionally designed to benefit women and youths can work within existing cultural norms and through the public and private sectors in ways that benefit society as a whole.

The AGRF as a multi-stakeholder forum is a perfect platform to push the agenda forward by leveraging on the policy and institutional arrangements that have been pioneered by the African Union and regional economic blocs. The framework provided by the declarations, institutions and policies can be used by the AGRF as a building block to take the agenda further to the relevant stakeholders by facilitating dialogue, advocacy and convening on specific policy and investment issues that have to be addressed in order to realize the full potential of women and youths and ultimately, society in the agricultural sector.

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