

Major Groups Statement to the Windhoek High-Level Ministerial on African Agriculture in the 21st Century: Meeting Challenges, Making a Sustainable Green Revolution, 9-10 February 2009

Major Groups have reviewed the Declaration of the High-Level Ministerial and urge that failed pathways be de-emphasised while viable alternatives are promoted. Given that Africa is a sub-theme among the themes of the current CSD cycle, and that the continent is closely enmeshed in the other sub-themes, it is pertinent that Africa seizes the opportunity to make real contributions towards radically solving the regional as well as global challenges.

The official ministerial submission focuses more on issues already endorsed in CSD 16 whereas the CSD 17 submission from Africa should focus on policy formulation directives.

The major focus of this ministerial submission has been on agriculture and crucial to Africa are the following: land, drought, desertification and rural development.

Sustainable agriculture in the African context must be seen as a multi-functional combination of plant and animal based livelihood systems. Policies, technologies and support initiatives should consciously build on and enhance a mix of products and income streams, which reduces the vulnerability to uncertainty and market dynamics.

Our submission is that policy development and implementation must address the following points:

1. The revolution that African agriculture needs is a radical emphasis on the smallholder family farm. The farmer must remain at the centre of efforts, including policy making, to revitalise African agriculture. For this to happen, farmer organisations should be supported and allowed to develop independently.
2. Emphatic promotion of agro-ecological approaches hinged on changing management of plants, rangelands and livestock to ensure abundance of biodiversity.
3. Agrarian and overall land reforms to ensure access to land as well as security of tenure.
4. Policy makers must recognise that with the appropriate facilitation, sound rangeland and grazing management livestock can make positive and substantive contributions to livelihood security, nutrition security, climate change mitigation by contributing to soil carbon sequestration .
5. A truly green revolution must include public investments in education and participatory research so as to generate new and innovative technologies for rangeland management, enhancement of perennial grasslands, climate mitigation and adaptation, reclamation of vast areas of semi-arid and arid parts of the continent not suited for crop production. Also critical is the protection of water bodies and seas from pollution, over-fishing and general destruction of fisheries.
6. The Green Revolution must also adapt new technologies to local conditions and integrate them with indigenous and traditional technologies. Recognition of local and traditional knowledge and practice as leverage for

advancement in appropriate people-centred science and technology, information sharing, innovation and progress.

7. Food and energy sovereignty as promoted by farmers' movements, civil society groups and governments must be a key anchor for all efforts.
8. Staple food production should first and foremost aim to meet local and regional needs. This necessitates development of markets within the continent as well as other measures of regional integration, including rural, local and regional infrastructure and agricultural market systems. A strong local and regional economy, including the support for strong local entrepreneurs, is a direct contribution to the health of the global economy.
9. Re-examine the process of integration of African markets and ensure that global trade promotes the rights of women and other small-scale farmers. Agricultural trade policies must be harmonised to generate sustainable employment, livelihoods and decent working conditions.
10. African countries should develop industries that support agriculture.
12. State intervention in agriculture (including cropping, livestock, rangeland and fisheries) should happen through investments. In infrastructure, research, education and extension services must be effective and accessible. A mechanism for sharing and scaling up successes needs to be in place. This also requires effective data collection systems, on a long-term basis, with databases that are updated regularly and used to inform policy development.
13. Illiteracy must be addressed in rural Africa.
14. Africa needs open access to credit for smallholder farmers including pastoralists and fisher folks. The state should underwrite financial risks.
15. Support of rights of women over land and related resources as well as guaranteed representation in decision-making and leadership.
16. The use of African land and staple crops for agrofuels production must not compromise food self-sufficiency.
17. Local governments should be recognised and capacitated to be active partners in agriculture.
18. There is need to build the capacity and to empower Civil Society-Public/Private Partnerships to jointly engage in policy development and delivery. Institutional strengthening and better coherence between implementing agencies is required. Partnerships between interest groups should be encouraged. There is need to put in place mechanisms to ensure effective dialogue between the Government and the Major groups.
19. Ensure readiness to execute agreed decisions such as the Maputo Declaration for increased investment in agriculture.
20. Political will to support the home-grown initiatives is critical allowing space for external support and advice that adds value to policy and development processes without taking away ownership.