



CREATING TRANSFORMATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

Where will we find enough food to feed 9 billion people? By 2050 we will need to feed two billion more people, most of them in developing countries, in Sub-Saharan Africa.- ‘There is no single solution and there are no grand solutions, however sustainability is a key issue,’- **Professor (emeritus) Ossi V. Lindqvist** reminded the audience in his opening speech in an event on Food Security organized by UniPID and the University of Eastern Finland on 4th June, 2014

Africa is an emerging market, highly dependent on agriculture and with 44% arable land. However, the region continues to face risks in food security, enhance by various factors like climate change, low capacity in production, know-how and poor supporting structures in spite of its great potential. The need to find sustainable solutions has seen enhanced global food and nutrition security labeled as a high priority by the African Union and European Union. At the EU-Africa Summit in April 2014, the revision of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) saw food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture take centre-stage as a priority under Science, Technology and Innovation with the two regions¹. Finland, an active actor in the JAES, has also prioritized food and nutrition security as part of its global responsibility action. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture through UniPID’s FinCEAL project² is increasing support for the Finnish research and science community working in Africa on food security, by bringing together researchers and science policy experts, and supporting bi-regional interaction in the scientific community and business sectors. **Ms. Sanna-Liisa Taivalmaa**, Agricultural Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and one of the key-speakers at the event, estimates that Official Development Aid from Finland to food security, agriculture and rural development agendas amounts to 50 million € annually, about 5% of total development aid. Most of this aid is channeled to Finland’s long term development partner countries and to multilateral organizations. NGOs receive about 10% of total aid to the sector. Finland supports cooperation on agricultural research for development between Finnish universities and research institutes and Consultive Group on International Agricultural Research institutes. The final objective is of the programmes is to transfer results for implementation to the grass-roots level, which constitutes development in practice.

Opportunities in Challenges

The global agenda for inclusive growth and sustainable development advocates for increased investments in agriculture to attain economic sustainability. The looming challenge is imminent. Small-scale farming and farmers are at the centre of the long-term response to global food security and while agriculture constitutes the battle against poverty and hunger, the people who produce food remain the poorest and hungriest. The poor farmers lack capacity and their limited access to finance, which is either not available or too expensive, leave them working in a rut: year in, year out. **Dr. Juha Virtanen** from World Vision summarized the value-vacuum in land and farming values of the small-scale farmers as the “take, take, take” mentality rather than “take care of” mentality.

¹ <http://www.european-council.europa.eu/eu-africa-summit-2014> ² <http://www.unipid.fi/en/page/157/>



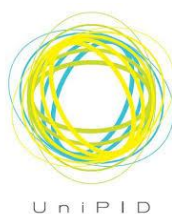
Dr. Eshetu Yirdaw of Helsinki University supported the sentiment calling for increased attention to land rehabilitation efforts to combat the problems faced by small-scale African farmers. Value-addition in agriculture is a significant propeller for development and indeed, the global food security agenda has grown from food availability and access, to include nutrition security and improved food utilization. **Ms. Anna Rosengren** and **Ms. Lesley-Anne van Wyk** from the European Centre for Development Management (ECDPM) reminded the audience that development of nutrition-sensitive value chains to address malnutrition is now very much part of the food security agenda in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). They also underlined the role of governments in multi-stakeholder partnerships geared towards the creation of market structures providing quality nutritious foods at the base of the pyramid.

Partnerships that count

More active and early engagement of NGOs and youth was encouraged as was private-sector interaction. The drivers for public-private sector engagement for agricultural growth-profit driven initiatives stem from the financial crises, the ability of the private sector to leverage finance and their access to new technologies, vast possibilities to secure supply chains, and importance of frameworks to ensure a healthy workforce and decent work.

Mr. Dennis Hamro-Drotz from Alleco Ltd. rightly pointed out that integrating private sector into consortiums is not always easy, especially as profit-making is not always seen as a noble act. There is still an unclear road-map for private sector engagement. Finnish stakeholders especially SMEs still try to do business with African governments instead of approaching the citizens of Africa that steer business on the ground. An important message relayed was that the terrain of SMEs in Africa is different from the terrain of SMEs in Europe, thereby calling for inclusion of local perspectives and finding the right mode of engagement. Approaches that take into account that Africans have the ability to take care of Africa should be supported and participants were reminded that failure is eminent if enough humility is not shown.

In regard to formation of partnerships, duplication and the lack of coordination and synergies was seen as a challenge. A small buzz caused by several actors rushing to the same partners on similar initiatives gives the impression that there are several soldiers and no generals on the battle-field to combat food insecurity. One challenge is that in many interventions it is not always clear who has the mandate to make certain decisions, leading to ad hoc, unaligned activity. While it is obvious that agricultural capacity building efforts require long term commitments and partnerships, a hindrance was seen in the durations of Finnish funded interventions that are aligned to Finnish government cycles.



Following, the importance of personal relationships in forming partnerships was discussed and emphasized. Social relationships and structures in local communities have a large role to play in engagement and should not be downplayed, especially stakeholders that shape faith-belief structures, as these can have a huge impact on implementation and execution of interventions and their ultimate success or failure. However, the consensus was that focus needs to be placed on simple solutions and identification of the right connections. The power of demonstration and model-making was highlighted. 'Small-scale farmers cannot believe technologies unless they see them. They cannot take the risk' stressed Dr. Juha Virtanen.

Research, Education, Food Security and Poverty

Rhetoric moved to address whether hunger and poverty can be eliminated through agriculture, research and education. A huge challenge precedent in the agricultural sector is that small-scale farming is not an activity that is viewed with professional pride, unlike more prestigious professions like medicine or law. This results in a vicious circle, where capacity and potential is invested in those youth who have left the farm or rural community, and the educated rural youth migrate to urban areas, creating a scenario where education counteracts poverty alleviation and makes poor communities even poorer.

Education and research are still, however, seen as key to address food and nutrition security. Education, however, needs to be geared to address research extension to the grass-roots level for instance by having universities creating solutions together with extension officers. Peer-to-peer education interventions for instance through farmer-to-farmer schools, was also seen as a significant means to transfer knowledge and skills. The key goal in education should be to transfer knowledge and information both ways, placing emphasis on valuable, local knowledge.

Policy coherence of education and research was accentuated, with the focus placed on the national relevance of curriculums instead of funder/donor requirements with a clear direction for whom research is done. **Dr. Daniel Sila** of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology presented well the need to create innovative ways of funds generation by putting research into local contexts and empowering of local farmers. Creative engagement, unique learning and idea-generation environments that nurture the future global workforce are essential and instrumental in shaping global food and nutrition security. It is a long and windy process, but as Professor (emeritus) Ossi V. Lindqvist summarized at the closing, slow development is better than no development.

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FinCEAL and the University of Eastern Finland held a seminar and roundtable discussion "Creating transformational partnerships for food and nutrition security" on 4th June 2014. The event addressed examples of innovative models for collaboration in addressing food security, explore how new partnerships can make a difference in advancing food security and what African and Finnish partners can learn from each other's best practices in effective engagement. It was part of a series of FinCEAL's thematic events aiming to strengthen research partnership with Europe and Africa.