



Conference Paper No. 2

The NEPAD-IFPRI-INWENT-CTA International Conference on African Successes: documenting the concept and process.

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Summary

Upscaling the successes that have been achieved in African agriculture is very much needed indeed. Crucial questions therefore are: 'what were those successes?', 'how were they achieved?', and 'how can these be replicated?'. The International Conference on African Successes provided some of the answers, and these are documented in a companion paper (...).

Both the format and the impact of the International Conference on African Successes were unusual. This paper documents the development process of the Conference on improving African agriculture, what lessons are learned, and how we use them.

Learning about successes achieved by others and elsewhere can be a strong stimulus for change. Since there are already significant successes in African Agriculture, is it very valuable in a continent that longs for good news to present such success stories, particularly when these are accompanied by analyses that show which causes of success could be repeated by whom.

The International Conference on African Successes presented a number of major successes and their underlying causes to an audience that was composed of representatives of all stakeholders in rural developments: government, planners, farmer organizations, NGO's and researchers. Strong candidates were selected from these categories. The facilitated meeting showed much enthusiasm of the participants to promote in their own environment other 'successes', and to exchange information and collaborate to achieve this. The 'Pretoria statement' (see Annex) expresses up the recommendations from the meeting.

Major donors of development projects in Africa, including the Worldbank, USAID, and the G8-secretariat received the Pretoria Statement as doubly positive message: (1) there are successes in Africa and there are insights on how the repeat and promote these, (2) NEPAD is an effective facilitator of agricultural development in Africa.

Introduction

'Best practices' have already been promoted widely for a few decades in communities of practice as a professional way of doing things efficiently and effectively. Recently it was shown that also successful processes of development of enterprises, communities and even of rural development can be subjects for 'best practices'. In such cases, the starting point is often the observation that while many development processes are slow and unsuccessful, there are at least some that defy the odds and make good progress in spite of large obstacles. Such cases have been identified in start up micro- and small enterprises in all developing countries (Brokopp et al., 2002), in farming communities that adopted safe and sustainable production (Pretty et al., 2003), in farming communities that did significantly better in terms of livelihoods than their neighbors and earned the term Bright Spots (Noble et al., 2004), and in a number of village analyses across Africa (Wiggins, 2000). With the expectation that there are generic patterns underlying such success stories, scientists started to analyze case studies and probe what elements could be repeatable in other situations and under what conditions.

Despite a sluggish aggregate performance by Africa's agriculture, it has achieved a series of agricultural surges of varying magnitudes – across regions, commodities and over time. In 2001, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) started a project to collect and analyze success stories in African agriculture (Gabre-Madhin

and Haggblade, 2001). The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a new African political organization that strives to promote best practices for governance and development among the African nations. The desire of both IFPRI and NEPAD to promote African Successes, plus the support that Germany's Capacity Building International (InWent), ACP's Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) provided, lead to the Conference on African Successes (ICAS) in Pretoria in December 2003. Together the conference partners have endeavoured to systematically identify instances where a significant, durable change in agriculture has taken place. By identifying the institutions, investments, processes, and policies that have made these successes possible, the partner organizations aimed to foster partnerships and an enabling environment in which agricultural successes can become the rule rather than the exception. We believe that both the format of the conference and its impact were unusual and that salient points deserve documentation.

ICAS objectives

The ICAS brochure announced that "This conference aims to contribute to improved policies for food security and sustainable agricultural growth in Africa. To do so, participants will work together to produce three specific outputs:

- a. a summary of key lessons learned from past successes in African agriculture;
- b. an assessment of policies and institutions enabling replication and upscaling of successes;
- c. a shared statement of findings identifying priorities for future actions contributing to sustainable agricultural growth in Africa."

Concepts

The first concept is 'learning from successes'. While the problems of development in Africa in general and those of agriculture in particular are well known (*cite a few places*), and while degradation of natural resources is seriously threatening sustainable developments in many areas (Wood et al., 2000, Penning de Vries et al., 2002), small and large scale successes must also be noted. In fact, the more we look around, the more successes are recognized. The view of the organizers of the ICAS is that many such successes are not merely positive coincidences, but that there are approaches, mechanisms and methods underlying the successes that can serve as examples in some situations and at provide lessons for action in other. Indeed, NEPAD has taken 'upscaling of successes' as one of its guidelines with the view that even if not all detail is known or understood of a particular success story, there are often valuable lessons and encouragement to be derived it. In this sense, 'learning from successes' is like adopting 'best laboratory practices' (e.g. EPA, 2004) or following field tested 'guidelines' (WorldBank 2003, MicroSave-Africa, 2004) that are based on much experience and insight. Learning from successes and telling the stories is not necessarily innovative, but it accelerates the dissemination of knowledge about them.

One could describe 'learning from successes' as a bottom up approach to development programs: try to repeat with local adaptations what has been shown to 'work' without prior knowledge of really why it worked. It contrasts to a top down approach, in which careful planning, based on scientific and engineering concepts, provides the outlines of development programs and sometimes even the details. Implied in this observation is the next step: merging the bottom up learning from successes with the

top down scientific planning, particularly with respect to the adaptations required for upscaling of the successes in different biophysical and socio-economic environments.

The second concept is 'inclusiveness and stakeholder participation'. Development processes have many stakeholders, and it is broadly accepted nowadays (WorldBank, 2003) that representatives of all stakeholder groups should participate to reach the best results and to create a feeling of ownership of the outcomes. Yet, conferences with only scientists or government officials are common. The approach chosen here was to invite representatives from all groups of stakeholders in agricultural development: farmer organizations, private sector, NGO, government, scientists, donors. Knowledgeable representatives that have a keen ear for the opportunities and constraints of interaction and that speak their minds in terms that all understand can develop a common and integrated view of what successes in agriculture could mean in their own environment, what the achievements could be for those whom they represent, and what the efforts and constraints would be to achieve them. Identification of strong and 'representative' members of the stakeholder groups was an important part of the preparations for the Conference.

The process

Preparations. The core of the preparations was in the identification of African Successes, and in the identification of stakeholder-participants.

Identification of African Successes actually started in an IFPRI project in 2001, well before the idea of a conference emerged. IFPRI asked over 100 persons and organization to briefly identify and describe what they thought were the best successes in agriculture in Africa (details are in Gabre-Madhin and Haggblade, 2003). A wide range of answers were received, from broad and ancient ones to large ones from the past decades to minor but well documented cases. Of these many successes (*Steve, are you documenting this? Then please insert reference*) IFPRI selected about 10 (set of) cases that had a significant impact in national economies, that might well have elements that can be repeated and that came from different sectors and different countries (Haggblade, 2004). These successes were further elaborated, analyzed in terms of impact and process and lessons, and properly documented in multi-authored papers. The implications for the policy environment were highlighted. These papers became eighteen background papers for the 2003 Conference (IFPRI, 2003). Typical cases were presented, and summaries distributed, at the meeting.

The case studies considered the following categories of successes:

Cassava: The cassava breeding, pest and disease fighting efforts of the past three decades have improved the lives of probably a hundred million poor consumers and farm family members across West, Central and Southern Africa. The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and associated government research programs have averted a series of devastating mealybug and mosaic virus attacks across the continent. They have simultaneously produced a series of improved cassava varieties that yield 40% more than traditional varieties (Nweke, 2003; Haggblade and Zulu, 2003). Without recourse to purchased inputs, farmers across a broad swath from West Africa to Madagascar are adopting improved cassava varieties, thereby placing downward pressure on staple food prices and benefiting farm families and the urban poor who consume cassava products. Dubbed Africa's "best-kept secret," by Nweke et al. (2002), these efforts have arguably proven the continent's most powerful poverty fighter to date.

Maize in East and Southern Africa: The development and diffusion of modern, high-yielding varieties of maize have transformed this cereal from a minor crop in the early 1900's into the continent's major source of calories today. At the instigation of local farm lobbies, governments of then Southern Rhodesia and Kenya launched maize breeding programs that produced major technical breakthroughs during the 1960's. Research efforts subsequently spread throughout the continent with support from international centres such as CIMMYT and IITA from the 1970's onward. Although unsustainable financial subsidies and heavily subsidized state marketing systems artificially inflated production gains in many locations, the breeding breakthroughs are an undeniable success, with improved maize germ plasm probably benefiting five to ten million small farms throughout Africa as well as tens of millions of its urban consumers (Smale and Jayne, 2003).

Horticulture exports from East Africa: From the early 1970's onward, Kenya's private traders have steadily expanded high-value exports of fruits and vegetables from Kenya. Smallholders supply about 75% of all vegetables and 60% of all fruits. By the mid-1990's, between 100,000 and 500,000 Kenyan farmers and distributors earned income from this horticultural export trade. One of the country's fastest growing foreign exchange earners, horticultural exports have tripled in real terms over the past 30 years, growing to \$175 million in 2000 (Minot and Ngigi, 2003).

Sustainable Natural Resource Management: Old strategies for coping with new pressures on Africa's natural resource base are becoming increasingly infeasible. Classic systems of fertility replenishment via shifting cultivation and long-term fallows are not sustainable. The withdrawal of fertilizer subsidies across much of Africa and the collapse of rural credit systems during the structural adjustment liberalizations of the 1990's has rendered reliance on chemical fertilizers increasingly less profitable for farmers. Among many hundreds of innovative and effective efforts across the continent, two sets were reviewed in detail. These included the use of planting basins which have emerged in recent decades in both the Sahel and in Zambia (Kaboré and Reij, 2003; Haggblade and Tembo, 2003), and a strategy for use of improved fallows, introduced over the past decade in Eastern Zambia and Western Kenya (Kwesiga et al, 2003; Place et al, 2003).

Who has taken the key initiatives for successes? Which levers of change have proven most powerful? What policy environments have most effectively facilitated scaling up to achieve large-scale impact? To help answer these questions requires considerable judgment and collateral knowledge. For that reason, the "Successes in African Agriculture" conference assembled a group of experienced agricultural specialists, including farm organizations, agribusiness leaders, government ministries of agriculture, finance and trade, researchers and donors.

The identification of the participants was done by the organizers jointly. Since the meeting addressed a SubSaharan Africa wide audience and yet could not have more than 100 participants, of which 70 from the target group, there could not be a full set of representatives from all stakeholders from all countries. For the target group, representatives from stakeholders were selected from many countries to achieve a certain degree of 'coverage' of the continent, and to have a fair diversity of backgrounds. Suggestions for candidate participants were categorized and then prioritized within each category with a main criteria 'expected active involvement' and diversity of countries or origin. Since the meeting language was English and simultaneous translation was not provided, this was a handicap for native speakers of

French and other languages and some proposed candidates could not be selected. Financial criteria were not applied beyond the setting of a quota, as the cost for the target group was covered by the organizers. Only to a very limited extent was it necessary to revisit the original matrix of participants and to issue additional invitations.

The second group of participants consisted of 'supporters', and included organizers (about 10 persons including facilitators), donors (about 10 persons), and observers (about 10 persons). These participants were all self-funded and were partly invited by the organizers and partly self invited. A ceiling on the number of participants was retained, not only because the conference site had a limited capacity but also because the meeting was intended to stimulate personal interactions.

Photograph 1 shows the conference participants. (*insert conference picture. Who has and where is the original?*)

The Conference. The second ingredient of stakeholder participation is the emphasis on their active involvement in small workshops and, consequently, less so on plenary lectures and fora. INWENT, one of the co-organizers of the meeting, has ample experience in facilitation of meetings and in particular in facilitating of discussions sessions. Overall, less than half of the effective conference time (i.e. 18 hours in 3 days) was in plenary sessions and more than half in discussion meetings of groups of 15-25 persons each. The self identified groups choose their own chair and rapporteur. All workshops were professionally facilitated and focused on answering a set of questions. These questions, predetermined and connected to the earlier presentations, were formulated to promote awareness, understanding and assimilation, to obtain additional evidence, and at integration of the new ideas in the participants experiences and insights. Reports on meetings were shared in plenary sessions.

A proper structure of the conference, able chairmanship and facilitation, the setting in a resort, the availability of ample background information, and an informal atmosphere all contributed to the active participation of all participants and to the success of the conference.

The meeting produced a conclusion, baptized the 'Pretoria Statement' (see Annex 2) that was adopted after reading. Participants remarked that while they fully endorsed its contents, there should have been more time for their involvement in this final product. The main points in the Pretoria Statement are the Conference's belief that "with renewed commitment to building partnerships between government, farmers' organizations, international partners and the private sector, significant gains are achievable in African agriculture", and the identification of five areas of promising opportunities:

- a. Soil and water conservation. There is a large number of promising innovative efforts by farmers and researchers to sustain soil fertility and water resources in response to increasingly degraded natural environments.
- b. Replication of commodity specific breeding and processing successes. Strong complementarities across regions suggest regional cooperation and sharing of biological and technological technologies will magnify returns.
- c. Marketing and information systems. Mechanisms for aggregating and improving the quality of the products of smallholder farmers and providing relevant and timely market information will enhance market efficiency.
- d. Vertical supply chains. Successes in cotton, horticulture, dairy and maize all reveal the importance of vertical farmer-to-market coordination.

- e. Regional cooperation in trade and agricultural technology. Regional trade offers significant potential for moderating food insecurity through cross border exchange. NEPAD and the regional economic organizations remain uniquely suited to facilitate such exchange.

The meeting concluded that the emphasis on African successes was appropriate, encouraging and instructive, and that brief, well targeted presentations are enough to set directions in workshop discussions. The conference format of intensive discussions among all types of stakeholders was much appreciated; leadership and/or facilitation is needed to reach conclusions. The impact of the next conference can be further enhanced if participants leave the conference with ideas for national level action plans. Country or region specific plans were not developed at the conference, and this was probably a missed opportunity.

Afterwards. The NEPAD secretariat has taken the Pretoria Statement to African Governments and regional economic communities. This led to various coalitions to implement some specific actions:

- a pan-Africa cassava initiative;
- a regional maize marketing round table;
- stimulated regional exchanges on conservation agriculture.

Follow through

The positive responses of participants and of NEPADs sponsors have led to plans to hold similar conferences on African Successes in Agriculture in each of the four African economic regions: IGAD (Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea), ECOWAS (*name states*), ...(*name states*) and SADC (*name states*). The first meeting, for the IGAD-region, will be held in November 2004. For this meeting, in addition to the original four organizers, two more join the team: the International Bank For Agricultural Development (IFAD) because of its interest in upscaling of successes that it recognizes among farmer organizations in its projects, and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) that brings results from its Bright Spots project in the drivers for community successes are analyzed.

For these regional conferences, partners are committed to retain the strong emphasis on understanding and promoting agricultural successes and inclusiveness of stakeholders. Partners will also retain the interactive form of the conference. To increase the impact of the meeting, the next conferences will probably have from each country participants from all main stakeholder categories so that new coalitions can emerge. New coalitions between national and regional participants are badly needed since the government cannot do it all and many parastatals are bankrupt. The private sector now controls marketing and processing, and new technology is often first acquired by the private sector (seeds; irrigation). Therefore private agribusiness and farmers must be key players in building future successes. Perhaps the greatest opportunities for replicating and scaling up past successes involve regional collaboration in trade and research. In Africa, constellations of small countries cohabit common agro-ecological zones. So technology developed in one location can benefit farmers of other nationalities in that same region. Africa can achieve considerable efficiency gains through regional partnerships in both agricultural trade and research.

To facilitate more of such coalitions to be formed and actions to be prepared, one day is added to the duration of the conference to give time to work in groups, by country or issue, and to agree on actions plans. These action plans by new coalitions are expected to capitalize on the successes presented and discussed, the drivers of these successes, and on the national and regional networking that will be encouraged at the meeting. The objectives of these regional conferences are therefore more impact oriented those of ICAS, and read as follows:

- a. to identify strategic opportunities for accelerating agricultural growth in the IGAD and East African region;
- b. to build new coalitions to exploit these opportunities.

Lessons learned

Lessons learned from the Conference are that there are ample African Successes that can inspire action in many countries and by different stakeholder groups. A conducive policy environment must be provided by national governments to empower the stakeholders, in particular to the smallholder farmers and the private sector. There is much scope for NEPAD and all other participants to carry this message across Africa and revitalize agricultural development with enlightening examples. But networks, coalitions to take action and scale up are essential if this is going to have impact.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Brief profiles of the partner organizations

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI, www.ifpri.org) was established in 1975 in recognition of the need for an independent research institute that would deal with socioeconomic policies for agricultural development. IFPRI joined the CGIAR in 1980. The Institute's mission, as it was re-stated in 1996, is (a) to identify and analyse alternative national and international, policies for meeting food, needs on a sustainable basis, with particular regard for low-income countries and poor people, and for the sound management of the natural resource base that supports agriculture; (b) to make the results of its research available to all those in a position to apply them or use them; and (c) to help strengthen institutions conducting research on food policies and institutions in a position to apply such research results in developing countries.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD, www.nepad.org).

"NEPAD's key objectives include: promotion of peace, security and political stability, entrenchment and protection of democracy, human rights and good governance, poverty eradication; sustained high economic growth and development; increased subregional and continental political and economic integration; improving Africa's competitiveness and strengthening Africa's participation in multilateral global institutions including working for a new global finance and trade architecture. ... NEPAD has ushered the dawn of a new Green Revolution in Africa by placing agriculture development at the top of the agenda. Acknowledging that agriculture will be the engine for economic growth in Africa, the African Heads of State and Government have at the summit in July 2003 committed themselves to substantially increasing their national budget for agriculture." (Nkuhlu, 2003).

InWent (<http://www.inwent.org/en/uberinwent/kurzprofil.html>)

InWent – Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gemeinnützige GmbH (Capacity Building International, Germany) is an organization for international human resources development, advanced training and dialogue. It was established through a merger of Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft e.V. and the German Foundation for International Development and can draw on decades of experience in international cooperation. Its practice-oriented programs are directed at experts, managers and decision-makers from business and industry, politics, public administration and civil society from all over the world. Its Development Policy Forum organizes a high-ranking, informal policy dialogue on current issues of development policy.

InWent's goals are the promotion of sustainable social, economic and ecological development all over the world, the training of junior managers and executives promoting their ability to act in an international and intercultural environment, to support a global structural policy through advanced training and dialogue, and to contribute to an international peace policy.

ACP's Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA, www.cta.nl.)

CTA's niche

From CTA's strategic plan 2001-2005

The center will act as a broker between organisations and between professionals in ACP and EU States. It will seek to establish for a promoting dialogue and the exchange of information between different and disparate bodies and professionals in ACP States. It will focus on the information themes related to enhancing the capacity of ACP stakeholders to make decisions, and use the device of partnerships to bring in the technical capacity and skills which it does not have but which will complement its effort on information exchange and capacity building.

CTA's Operational objectives

On the basis of its new mandate, CTA has two operational objectives:

1. To improve the availability of and access to relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and well-adapted information on priority information topics for ACP agricultural and rural development .
2. To improve the information and communication management capacity of ACP agricultural and rural development organisations.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, www.ifad.org) is a specialized agency of the United Nations, established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference. The Conference was organized in response to the food crises of the early 1970s that primarily affected the Sahelian countries of Africa. One of the most important insights emerging from the Conference was that the causes of food insecurity and famine were not so much failures in food production, but structural problems relating to poverty and to the fact that the majority of the developing world's poor populations were concentrated in rural areas.

IFAD's mission is to enable the poor to overcome poverty.

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI, www.iwmi.cgiar.org) is a nonprofit scientific research organization focusing on the sustainable use of water and land resources in agriculture and on the water needs of developing countries. IWMI works with partners in the South to develop tools and methods to help these countries eradicate poverty through more effective management of their water and land resources.

IWMI's mission: Improving water and land resources management for food livelihoods and nature.

Annex 2. Pretoria Statement.



Pretoria Statement on the Future of African Agriculture

Preamble

Significant poverty reduction will not be possible in Africa without rapid agricultural growth. Only improved agricultural productivity can simultaneously improve welfare among the two-thirds of all Africans who work primarily in agriculture as well as the urban poor, who spend over 60% of their budget on food staples.

Regrettably, past performance has proven inadequate. Africa remains the only region of the developing world where per capita agricultural production has fallen over the past forty years. To stem deepening poverty, social inequity and political instability, African farmers, governments, international partners and the private sector must all do better in the future. Recognizing this imperative, African Heads of State and Government agreed, at the African Union Summit in July 2003, to make agriculture a top priority and to raise budget allocations for agriculture to a minimum of 10% of total public spending within five years.

Africa's sluggish aggregate performance, however, masks a rich historical record of substantial agricultural successes. Though these episodic and scattered booms have proven insufficient to sustain aggregate per capita growth in agriculture, they do prove informative in pointing to promising areas for effective intervention in the future. In a rapidly changing global environment -- with increasingly concentrated market power and rapidly changing biological, information and communication technologies -- and given increased pressures on the natural resource base, public budgets and the growing threat of HIV/AIDS, governments and their private sector partners must learn to apply the lessons from these past successes.

Evidence from a series of successful episodes in African agriculture suggests two fundamental pre-requisites for sustained agricultural growth as well as a number of promising specific opportunities:

Fundamental pre-requisites

- *Good governance.* High-level political commitment has consistently proven essential to improving the welfare of farm households. It translates directly into favorable policy environments and budget allocations to agricultural support institutions and related infrastructure. Effective farmer organizations remain central to improving the communication and articulation of farm sector needs to government. Both farmers' organizations and governments must take responsibility for initiating overtures and organizational forms to make this possible. We call upon governments to work closely with the private sector, civil society and farmers' organizations in the allocation of increased public funding to agriculture. In consultation with the private sector, governments should create and facilitate an enabling environment for the private sector to perform.

- *Sustained funding for agricultural research and extension.* Raising productivity remains central to boosting farm output and lowering consumer food prices. Virtually all of the successes we have identified involve some form of improved technology: biological, agronomic, mechanical or

organizational. Therefore, governments must elevate funding for agricultural research and extension. Furthermore, it is important that farmers' innovations be mainstreamed into the research agenda. Governments, together with donors, must ensure the training of staff capable of mastering new biological research technologies. Given the growing role of private research in biotechnology and hybrid breeding, governments must develop partnerships and protocols for making new technologies developed in the private sector available to smallholder farmers.

Promising opportunities

- *Soil and water conservation.* We have been impressed with the number and range of innovative efforts by farmers and researchers to sustain soil fertility and water resources in response to increasingly degraded natural environments. Therefore, further testing of these models across national borders merits additional examination and support with the aim of refining and scaling up successes in restoring and sustaining soil fertility. This will require interaction among formal researchers, farmers and their supporting institutions.

- *Replication of proven commodity-specific breeding and processing successes.* We are impressed with the importance of upscaling cassava breeding and processing research to meet food security, livestock feed and industrial uses. Strong complementarities across regions suggest regional cooperation and sharing of biological and mechanical technologies will magnify returns. Tissue-culture bananas and Nerica rice offer further examples of commodity-specific replication potential. NEPAD and leading centers of technology development should take the lead in initiating this exchange.

- *Marketing and information systems.* Mechanisms for aggregating and improving the quality of the products of smallholder farmers and providing relevant and timely market information will enhance market efficiency. This will prove necessary in enabling them to compete in increasingly concentrated domestic, regional and global markets. A variety of models exist - contract farming among cotton and horticulture producers, dairy marketing groups and others - for grouping small farmers into economically viable market entities.

- *Vertical supply chains.* To improve efficiency, raise value-added in production and processing, and ensure improved coordination between producers and final markets will require increasing attention to supply chain management rather than an exclusively production orientation. Successes in cotton, horticulture, dairy and maize all reveal the importance of vertical farmer-to-market coordination.

- *Regional cooperation in trade and agricultural technology.* Regional trade offers significant potential for moderating food insecurity through cross-border exchange. Harmonization of trade regulations on a regional basis will prove necessary to facilitate these commodity flows. In research as well, countries along common agro ecological zones mean that regional technology and information exchange offer significant opportunities for sharing research and development overheads, expanding benefits and reducing costs. This cross-border technology exchange has proven vitally important in the cases of cassava, maize and natural resource management technologies. For this exchange, capacity-building is necessary. NEPAD and the regional economic organizations remain uniquely suited to facilitate such exchange.

We believe that with renewed commitment to building partnerships between governments, farmers' organizations, international partners and the private sector, significant gains are achievable in African agriculture. And achieve them we must, to ensure significant economic growth and poverty reduction in the decades ahead. We call upon the organizers of this conference and all participants to play their rightful role to ensure the realization of these recommendations.