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Strategic Plan of the African Union Commission on Rural Economy and Agriculture

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Abstract: African agriculture and the rural economy suffer from low productivity, limited diversification and continuous degradation. Sustainable development of agriculture and the rural economy is critical for ensuring food security and poverty reduction in Africa. The African Union Commission considers the development of agriculture and the rural economy as a necessary condition for promoting accelerated economic, social and political development, and for attaining its shared vision of *building an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, an Africa driven and managed by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena*. The Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture (REA) is one of eight portfolio Directorates of the Commission given the mandate to initiate, promote and facilitate the implementation of policies, strategies and programs that can contribute to the transformation of the rural economy by increasing agricultural productivity, conserving and protecting natural resources as well as enhancing environmental sustainability. To more efficiently and effectively contribute to the AU Commission's vision, the REA Directorate has an elaborate strategic plan that will guide its actions over the next four years (2004-2007). The plan identifies the strategic objectives and outputs to be achieved and defines the activities and strategies for accomplishing the outputs. It envisages actions that address four strategic objectives through six program areas. Successful implementation of the plan, it is believed, will help create enabling conditions and facilitate actions to improve agricultural productivity, reduce food insecurity and rural poverty as well as to ensure sustainable management of natural resources and the environment.

Introduction

The development of the rural economy is of common concern to every African country as it supports most of the agricultural production, water, energy, fisheries, forestry and other natural resources. In spite of this however, the rural economy suffers from low productivity, limited diversification and continuous degradation.

The Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture (REA) is one of eight (8) portfolio Directorates of the Commission of the African Union (AU). It is charged with the responsibility to initiate, promote and facilitate the implementation of policies, strategies and programs that can contribute to the transformation of the rural economy by increasing agricultural productivity, conserving and protecting natural resources as well as enhancing environmental sustainability. The overall goal is to ensure food security and reduce the level of poverty in Africa.

To accomplish this goal, the Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture (REA) has elaborated a strategic plan that will guide its actions over the next four years (2004 - 2007). The plan identifies the priority areas of work and strategies that will translate the Directorate's mandate into concrete action and contribute to the vision of the Commission. The rationale for having a strategic plan arises from the need for a well-defined path through which the goals and priorities of the REA Directorate will be converted in to tangible results. The strategy seeks to clarify the objectives and outputs for Africa's rural economy and agriculture, highlight priority areas in which work will be carried out, and identify the operational resources. By so doing, the effectiveness of REA in operationalizing its core functions will be strengthened and the resources availed to it will be allocated and used more effectively and efficiently to meet the priorities thus identified. The strategic plan document has been put together by the REA Directorate with information and ideas provided through a highly-participatory process involving all key stakeholders.

Following this introduction is a brief presentation of the African Union, its vision, organs and the AU Commission. This is followed by the key challenges facing the Commission and the latter's mandate, objectives and core functions defined to address the challenges. Next is the REA 2004 – 2007 strategic plan. It defines the strategic objectives and program areas, and then lays out the strategies for achieving the defined outputs. The operational modalities are presented at the end.

The African Union

The origin of the African Union (AU) is traced to the Sirte Declaration of September 9th, 1999 in which the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in their quest of unity, economic and social development, called for the creation of the African Union (AU in a nutshell, 2002). In July 2000 the Constitutive Act of the Union was adopted in Lome, Togo, and in July 2001 the road map for the implementation of the AU was adopted in Lusaka, Zambia (The Constitutive Act, 2002). During the 1st Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Durban, South Africa in July 2002 the AU was established and launched in accordance with the provisions of the Constitutive Act. Following this, a one-year interim period was used to prepare the structure of the Commission of the AU. The latter was presented to, and approved by, the Heads of State and Government during the 2nd Assembly held in Maputo, Mozambique in July 2003. The 2nd Assembly also elected and appointed Members of the Commission (Assembly, 2002; 2003).

Vision of the AU

The AU has a strong and shared vision to *build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, an Africa driven and managed by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena* (Strategic Plan of the AUC, 2004). The Union's ambition is to achieve by the year 2025, greater unity and solidarity between African countries and peoples through the promotion of accelerated social, economic and political integration of the continent. Promotion of peace, security and stability is fundamental to the AU vision for having a united and strong Africa, bonded by partnership between Governments and all segments of civil society.

Organs of the AU

The Constitutive Act that establishes the African Union also provides for the creation of a number of Organs for implementing the activities of the Union (AU in a nutshell, 2002). The Constitutive Act entrusts the accomplishment of the goals and ambitions of the Union to these Organs, each of which has a specific role to play. Among the Organs is the Commission, which is the main organ in charge of the Union's day-to-day activities (Figure 1). Although the Commission is the engine of the Union, the success of the Union depends, to a large extent, on effective understanding and collaboration between the various organs, as well as on respect for their individual roles and functions.

The Commission of the African Union

The Commission of the AU is one of ten (10) Organs (Figure 2) of the Union established by the Constitutive Act. As the Secretariat of the Union, the Commission is responsible for translating the Union's Vision and Mission into concrete action. It is supported by the other organs of the Union as well as by the building blocks of the Union, namely, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The Commission's role is to provide *leadership*, particularly in areas of comparative advantage such as peace and security; undertake *advocacy* by coordinating positions, representing interests and negotiating in global arenas; acting as a *change agent* in setting and monitoring common standards; and ensuring *harmonization* in socio-economic policy areas.

The functions, regulations and structure of the Commission are determined by the Assembly. Functions include the following, among others:

- Representing the Union and defending its interests
- Elaborating common positions of the Union

- Preparing strategic plans and studies for consideration of the Executive council
- Elaborating, promoting, coordinating and harmonizing the programs and policies of the Union with those of the RECs
- Ensuring mainstreaming of gender in all programs and activities of the Union.

The Commission comprises of the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners and Staff Members (Figure 3). There are eight (8) Portfolio Directorates, each of which is headed by a Commissioner (Figure 4).

The Commission of the AU and the African rural economy

Key Challenges

Majority of Africa is still largely rural in spite of the increasing rate of rural to urban migration. About 65% of Africa's 860 million people reside in and derive their livelihoods from rural areas. The development of the rural economy is therefore of common concern to all African countries. In every country, the rural economy supports most of the agricultural production, water, energy, forestry, fishery and other natural resources. The rural economy also supports tourism, recreation and other revenue generating activities.

As the dominant economic activity of the rural economy, agriculture provides food and fiber; employs the largest share of the human population; generates income, and; provides inputs into other sectors of the economy. Agriculture also provides opportunities for investments in other sectoral development activities in rural areas.

Notwithstanding the importance of the rural economy, however, it still suffers from low productivity, limited diversification and continuous degradation. These contribute to food insecurity and increasing poverty levels. The Commission of the AU therefore considers the development of the rural economy and agriculture not only as a priority, but as a pre-condition for the development of other sectors as well as for the social, economic and political integration of the continent.

The body that is responsible for promoting the development of Africa's rural economy and agriculture is the Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture (REA) of the AU Commission (Figure 4). The important challenge facing the Directorate is to initiate, promote and facilitate the implementation of policies, strategies and programs that can lead to the transformation of the rural economy by increasing agricultural productivity, ensuring food security and reducing the level of poverty.

The Directorate has three Divisions (REA Directorate, 2004) and six Specialized Technical Offices (Figure 5). The three Divisions comprise of the following:

- (i) *The Rural Economy Division*: Responsible for improving rural livelihoods by promoting integrated agriculture and agri-business activities, rural infrastructure and financial institutions development, capacity building at the rural level, and enhancing market access.
- (ii) *The Agriculture and Food Security Division*: Contributes to food self-sufficiency by promoting activities that help to increase the productivity of crops, livestock, fisheries and range management; promoting policies and measures that reduce post harvest loss; facilitating regional and sub-regional cooperation and agreements on agricultural development; and promoting agricultural research and development.
- (iii) *The Natural Resources and Environment Division*: Responsible for facilitating the management of natural resources of the continent, promoting regional cooperation in environment and natural resources management, supporting African common positions on environmental matters and creating awareness amongst African policy makers on environmental and natural resources issues, and facilitating the assessment and auditing of the various agro-ecosystems including monitoring the various natural resource bases.

The specialized technical offices comprise of the following:

- (i) The *Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources* (IBAR): Responsible for assisting AU member States to sustainably improve their animal resources so as to enhance the nutrition and incomes of their people, especially the rural poor (AU-IBAR, Proposed Structure, 2004).
- (ii) The *Inter-African Phyto-Sanitary Council* (IAPSC): Responsible for plant protection issues including developing policies and strategies for plant protection in Africa.
- (iii) The *Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development* (SAFGRAD): Responsible for research and development of food grains adapted to semi-arid areas of Africa.
- (iv) The *Pan-African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication and Control* (PATTEC): Responsible for the control and eventual eradication of tsetse flies, trypanosomiasis and sleeping sickness from Africa.
- (v) The *Pan-African Vaccine Center* (PANVAC): Responsible for the control and certification of animal vaccine quality.
- (vi) The *Regional Program for the Integrated Management of Fouta Djallon Massif*: Responsible for the integrated management and development of the Fouta Djallon highlands.

Mandate

To contribute toward the strategic objectives and vision of the AU Commission, the Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture is charged with the mandate to initiate and promote policies and strategies that can contribute to development of the rural economy while at the same time promoting measures that conserve and protect natural resources, and enhance environmental sustainability. The overall aim is to have food security, reduce poverty and improve the standard of living of farm (and urban) families.

Objectives

In order to accomplish its mandate, the Directorate has defined the following strategic objectives:

1. Improve agricultural systems and productivity so as to attain food security, enhance nutritional quality, and expand export markets for agricultural products
2. Promote measures to enhance the development of sustainable agriculture with concurrent improvement of the environment, paying particular attention to improved management of water and its sources
3. Promote the diversification of the rural economy so as to increase employment and incomes
4. Contribute towards enhancing the human and institutional capacities for rural development.

Core Functions

The implementation of programs and measures that improve the productivity of agriculture, conserve and protect natural resources and the environment, and ensure overall growth of the rural economy is fundamental to accomplishing the mandate and objectives of the Directorate. As one of eight (8) Departmental Portfolios of the AU, the Directorate's core business is to perform the following functions:

1. Promote and coordinate initiatives and strategies for the development of the African rural economy among RECs, specialized institutions and other centers involved in this field
2. Initiate, propose and coordinate policies and programmes for the development of production capacities (agricultural, livestock and fisheries) so as to ensure food security in the African continent
3. Promote and facilitate development initiatives of rural communities as well as coordinate efforts towards the transfer of technologies
4. Organize and provide technical assistance to specialized institutions in the fight against desertification, drought and management of natural resources and environment
5. Coordinate RECs in their efforts towards the harmonization of the initiatives to eradicate poverty and alleviation of conditions faced by rural communities, such as pertaining to infrastructure and energy, rural women, processing of agricultural products
6. Ensure effective and constructive participation of the Commission in regional and continental efforts towards sustainable development of the rural economy, as well as uplifting the standards of living and production capacities of rural communities
7. Follow up agricultural policies and strategies at RECs' level and to promote their harmonization

8. Organize and ensure the participation of the Commission in agricultural research and propaganda of extension services to African countries.

Need for a Strategic Plan on Rural Economy and Agriculture

For the AU Commission, the need for a strategic plan to guide actions for addressing the problems of Africa's rural economy and agriculture stems from the fact that Africa is still largely rural, characterized and dominated by peasant farmers who produce mostly for subsistence. They make very little use of external inputs, incur large post-harvest losses because of minimal processing and frequently face problems of recurring droughts. Agricultural productivity remains low with declining per capita food production, declining/stagnating agricultural exports, increasing food imports, degradation of the environment and falling returns to agricultural investments. This is compounded by environmental degradation that threatens human well-being, undermines long-term economic growth, and impairs critical ecological systems upon which sustainable development depends. The situation is made worse by policies and institutional frameworks that do not respond to and support sustainable development of the rural economy and agriculture. Notwithstanding this gloomy situation however, the Commission recognizes the fact that the rural economy has a large potential for being the main engine of economic growth, as evidenced by the presence of large unexploited land resources, untapped water resources, a growing labor force and a large global market.

Promoting sustainable development of Africa's rural economy and agriculture is a necessary and critical element for achieving the AU Commission's vision for Africa. This helps to create conditions for economic growth and poverty reduction, food insecurity reduction and a protected environment. The intention of the Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture is to encourage sustainable development of the rural economy, its natural resources and environment so as to promote broad-based equitable economic growth that helps to convert poverty into prosperity in Africa's rural (and urban) areas. This is the most effective way of bringing poor, disadvantaged and marginalized groups into the mainstream of an expanding global economy. A policy environment that promotes efficiency and economic opportunity for rural people, well-functioning rural institutions, sound investment and human capacity development are the key components of such broad-based economic growth and poverty reduction in rural areas.

To effectively address the challenges facing the African rural economy, there is a need for strategic coordination of all activities that fall under the Directorate's portfolio. The Directorate has therefore elaborated a strategic plan to guide its actions over the next four (2004 – 2007) years. The rationale for having a strategic plan arises from the need for a well-defined path through which the goals and priorities of the REA Directorate will be translated into concrete action. The strategy seeks to clarify the objectives and outputs for Africa's rural economy and agriculture, highlight priority areas in which work will be carried out, and identify the operational resources. By so doing, the effectiveness of REA in operationalizing its core functions will be strengthened and the resources availed to it will be allocated and used more effectively and efficiently to meet the priorities thus identified.

The strategic plan, which takes into consideration the AU Commission's vision of economic integration of the continent, charts the way forward by defining the activities and strategies needed for the creation of enabling conditions and the facilitation of actions to improve agricultural productivity, reduce food insecurity and rural poverty as well as to ensure sustainable management of natural resources and the environment. The plan, which of necessity integrates into and supports the global strategic framework of the Commission, will contribute to the achievement of the Commission's strategic objectives and vision of the Union.

The 2004–2007 Strategic Plan

The REA strategic plan (REA, Global Objectives by 2007) traces the roadmap that the Directorate has to follow over the next four years. It outlines the activities and approaches for translating the Directorate's objectives into deliverable results and defines milestones for the realization of these deliverables for the 2004 – 2007 period. While the plan is guided by the overall vision of the AU Commission, its primary focus is on strategies for increasing economic returns through value addition in Africa's rural economy and

agriculture activities. The outcome of the plan's implementation will be reflected in the contribution that the Directorate makes to the improvement of the rural economy and the increase in the quantity and quality of agricultural products. It will also be reflected in the contribution it makes to the creation of enabling conditions and the facilitation of measures for achieving the AU's vision of continental integration.

Building on the Directorate's own expertise and that of its specialized Technical Offices (Figure 5), the DREA strategic plan is poised to address the priority problems of Africa's rural economy and agriculture through collaboration with national, regional (e.g. RECs) and international partners around the world.

Strategic Objective: Improve agricultural systems and productivity so as to attain food security, enhance nutritional quality and expand export markets for agricultural products

To accomplish this objective, the REA plan envisages actions through two strategic programs: (i) Crop production and productivity improvement and (ii) animal and fisheries production and productivity improvement.

Program 1: Crop production and productivity improvement

African agriculture is largely based on crops. About 80% of the food produced and consumed is crop based and over 70% of farm income comes from sales of food and cash crops. Of the total per capita food supply of 2,444 calories per day in Africa, 93% (2,267 calories) is derived from crop products while the rest is from animal products. Of the total per capita protein and fat supply of 62 and 50 grams/day, 80 and 76% come from crops respectively.

Assisting countries to increase crop production, as well as farm productivity and profitability in Africa where soils are less fertile, rainfall is erratic, inputs are not adequate and available on time, local capacity remains weak, and most farmers have limited access to technology and market opportunities, is one of the most challenging tasks of the Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture. In the coming four years (2004 – 2007), the Directorate will endeavor to address a number of strategic issues that touch on increasing crop productivity with emphasis on crop quality and commercial competitiveness. These will include, but not limited to, measures that will promote (i) soil fertility improvement; (ii) adoption and use of new crop production technologies; (iii) farm labor productivity; (iv) crop genetic material improvement; and (v) market access for strategic crop commodities.

Strategies

- Facilitate consultations to develop and harmonize policies and strategies to improve crop production, productivity and marketing
- Promote development of strategic commodities to exploit comparative advantages
- Promote production and productivity of semi-arid crops for food security
- Promote phyto-sanitary measures to ensure food safety and quality standards
- Facilitate increased adoption of improved crop production, conservation, storage and processing technologies
- Promote value-added processing of products

Outputs

- More rapid and enhanced agricultural development and food security encouraged
- Policies that provide incentives to farmers and other agricultural entrepreneurs, encourage investment in agriculture and other rural economic activities, and promote market access developed, improved and harmonized
- Programs that facilitate the use of sustainable agricultural practices facilitated and promoted
- Strategic commodities that ensure food security and greater incomes identified and their production and productivity encouraged and promoted
- Production and productivity of crops adapted to semi-arid areas encouraged and promoted

- Measures that ensure food safety, quality standards and value-addition adopted, encouraged and promoted
- Access to improved crop production, conservation, storage and processing technologies facilitated and encouraged

Program 2: Animal and fisheries production and productivity improvement

Livestock and fisheries production is an integral part of Africa's rural economy, contributing to between 5 and 20% of the Gross Domestic Product of most countries. Livestock and fisheries contribute significantly to the welfare of rural (and urban) populations at both household and national levels by providing food of high protein content (e.g. meat, milk, eggs), income, inputs (e.g. manure and traction) and meeting other socio-cultural values of society. In spite of these valuable contributions, the livestock and fisheries resources of Africa are less productive for a number of reasons that include, among others, poor management, inadequate nutrition, poor breeds, poor health and limited value addition. There is mounting evidence on the high potential for growth of the African livestock and fisheries resources. These include, among others, largely untapped land, water and pasture resources; a fast livestock revolution spurred-on by a rapidly rising population and increasing income levels; an unfulfilled domestic demand due to inadequate supply; and a growing export market available in the developing countries of Asia and the Middle East.

Sustainable development of Africa's livestock and fisheries resources is critical for ensuring food security and reducing poverty levels in rural (and urban) areas. The challenge facing the Directorate is to initiate and promote policies and institutional frameworks that lead to improvement of the productivity of livestock and fisheries resources; enhance market access (domestic and export); and improve quality assurance for the public.

Strategies

- Facilitate the development and harmonization of policies for improved livestock and fisheries production, productivity and marketing
- Promote cooperation on trans-boundary diseases and pest control
- Promote the eradication of tsetse and trypanosomiasis from Africa
- Facilitate and monitor the progress of specialized technical offices of the AU Commission in livestock production, marketing, and disease and pest control.
- Promote drought mitigation programs for improved livestock, fisheries and pasture management
- Promote investment in livestock and fisheries
- Promote value-added processing of products

Outputs

- Policies that provide incentives to livestock and fisheries producers, encourage investment in the livestock and fisheries sector, and promote market access developed, improved and harmonized
- Cooperation in the control of trans-boundary animal diseases and pests promoted and encouraged
- Impact of tsetse and trypanosomiasis on livestock and human populations minimized or reduced
- Activities of specialized technical offices of AU Commission in livestock production, marketing, and disease and pest control monitored, streamlined and synchronized
- Drought mitigation programs for improved livestock, fisheries and pasture management elaborated and implemented
- Measures that ensure safety, quality standards and value-addition to meat, milk, other livestock products and fisheries adopted, encouraged and promoted
- Access to improved animal production, conservation, storage and processing technologies facilitated and encouraged

Strategic Objective: Promote measures to enhance the development of sustainable agriculture with concurrent improvement of the environment, paying particular attention to improved management of water and its sources

To accomplish this objective, the REA plan envisages actions through a strategic program on sustainable natural resources and environment development and management.

Program 3: Sustainable natural resources and environment development and management

Today, sustainable natural resource and environmental development and management is a great challenge for ecological and economic planning in Africa. Sustainable development involves a complex set of cross-cutting issues which touch all sectors of society. Pressure on renewable natural resources in Africa, particularly land, water, and forests comes from a series of forces and trends which include: population growth and migration, particularly to areas of large reserves of exploitable natural resources; poverty and growing desperation of rural families living in marginal areas (arid and semi-arid) who depend on natural resources for their survival; concentration of the most productive land and renewable natural resources in the hands of the few (inequitable access and control); the need for Governments to earn foreign exchange from exploiting natural resources (e.g. timber, minerals, etc.); and the vulnerability of renewable natural resources to free market forces in a context in which the capacity to manage them sustainably is lacking.

The key challenge for REA is to assist countries and regional organizations devise a coherent policy framework for the sustainable management of renewable natural resources and to implement those policies in a coordinated fashion.

Strategies

- Promote the development and harmonization of policies for the use and management of shared water and other natural resources
- Facilitate implementation of relevant environmental and natural resource conventions, protection and sustainable utilization of Africa's biodiversity, forests and wetlands
- Promote integrated optimal water resource management
- Promote awareness for sustainable natural resources and environmental management and governance
- Promote common positions at international negotiations on environmental issues
- Support RECs and national Governments to harmonize policies, laws, regulations, and other tools for implementing policies for natural resource and environment development and management
- Foster coordination and cooperation among all the players involved in the sector who manage and/or use renewable natural resources;
- Promote synergy between the different development projects and initiatives

Outputs

- Policies that facilitate proper management of shared water and other natural resources adopted and promoted
- Implementation of relevant environmental and natural resource conventions on the protection and sustainable utilization of Africa's biodiversity, forests and wetlands facilitated
- Public and community level of awareness of environmental and natural resource sustainability and governance issues and remedies enhanced
- Common positions at international negotiations on environmental and natural resource issues coordinated and harmonized
- Efforts of RECs and national Governments to harmonize policies, laws, regulations, and other tools for implementing policies for natural resource and environment development and management encouraged and supported
- Coordination and cooperation among all key stakeholders involved in the management and use of renewable natural resources promoted and encouraged
- Synergy between the different development projects and initiatives promoted

Strategic Objective: Promote the diversification of the rural economy so as to increase employment and incomes

The aim of the Commission is to support the development of a diversified rural economy that builds the required infrastructure as well as the human and physical capital, allowing the simultaneous flow of social, economic and environmental benefits to and from rural to national and global markets.

Program 4: Diversification of the rural economy for improved livelihood systems

Many rural areas of Africa lack or have inadequate basic infrastructure and business activities that would enable rural residents to competitively participate in national and global commercial activities. An integrated infrastructure development will help to diversify the rural economy by stimulating new industrial and agricultural growth, thus enabling the rural economy to integrate more effectively into the global economy.

The Commission recognizes the critical importance of improved rural infrastructure not only for more efficient and competitive production in rural communities but to extend the essential linkages of these areas to the broader regional, national and global economies.

The AU Commission therefore seeks to promote the integration of rural communities into the mainstream of each national and regional economy, and to encourage the diversification of business activity in rural areas. Benefits to be derived from this initiative include improved production efficiencies and resource utilization, higher investment levels, greater employment creation, more rapid per capita economic growth, and better living quality for residents in rural (and urban) communities. Concrete action is envisaged in diversification through policies and programs that promote rural infrastructure development and appropriate tenure practices.

Strategies

- Promote and advocate for increased investment in rural development and rural institutions and infrastructure development
- Promote rural growth and employment to increase access to economic opportunity
- Strengthen linkages between rural economy and industrial sector
- Promote agriculture-based income diversification
- Project a positive image of rural areas for investment in rural development activities including infrastructure
- Advocate the development and harmonization of appropriate land tenure policies

Outputs

- Investment in rural development and in rural institutions and infrastructure development encouraged and promoted
- Production and market linkages between high and low potential agricultural areas improved
- Access to economic opportunity through growth and employment enhanced
- Linkages between rural economy and industrial sector facilitated and strengthened
- Income from agriculture-based activities and enterprises diversified and sustained
- Positive image of rural areas for investment in rural development activities and infrastructure created and projected
- Development and harmonization of appropriate land tenure policies supported

Strategic Objective: Contribute towards enhancing the human and institutional capacities for rural development

To accomplish this objective, the REA plan envisages actions through strategic programs on: (i) capacity building and knowledge management, and (ii) monitoring and evaluation

Program 5: Capacity building and knowledge management

African countries differ significantly in their level of human and institutional capacities and in the nature of the economic, political and social environment surrounding them. Severe capacity constraints exist in literally every sector, particularly in rural areas that are characterized by shortages of skilled manpower, weak institutions, and inadequate training facilities. The need to strengthen rural institutions, systems, processes, procedures and practices is vital for promoting development of rural economic activities. Capacity is needed to entrench and sustain good governance, design and manage effective policies and programs, manage the environment, accelerate rural development and enable it participate in the global economy.

Given the rural nature of most African economies and the concentration of the poor in rural areas, there is a pressing need to increase capacity to promote agricultural development. Human resource and institutional capacity building is high on the African development agenda and is currently the preoccupation of the AU Commission.

Strategies

- Promote and adopt policies that foster the development role of rural institutions
- Strengthen the capacity of rural institutions to plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and participate in agricultural and rural development and marketing activities
- Increase Africa's capacity-building in knowledge development and management to increase agricultural productivity, enhance food security and rural development
- Facilitate information sharing for best practices in rural economy and agriculture development management
- Increase Africa's technical know-how in the area of agricultural and rural development
- Evolve an African "Think Tank" for Africa's agricultural and rural development

Outputs

- Policies, laws, regulations and programs that foster the development role of rural institutions fostered and promoted
- Capacity of rural institutions to plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and participate in agricultural and rural development activities strengthened
- Institutions that reinforce and support competitive markets for agricultural products strengthened
- Institutions that support agricultural production, rural agricultural enterprises and rural infrastructure strengthened
- Africa's capacity in knowledge development and management increased
- Access to and availability of appropriate agricultural and rural development technologies increased
- Access to information and availability of information on rural economy and agricultural development management increased

Program 6: Monitoring and Evaluation

The REA Directorate considers monitoring and evaluation as a central and operational component of effective management of its strategic plan. Monitoring and evaluation will not only assist in characterizing how the Directorate's human and financial resources are used, and how these can be adapted, but also how use of these resources result in tangible benefits. Tracking the level of progress in achieving desired targets using specific measures of change will enable the Directorate take corrective action when expected results are not being achieved. The information gained through the monitoring and evaluation program will be a cornerstone in identifying alternative actions and refining corrective efforts. The program is therefore not only an integral part of the REA strategic plan, but also a critical aspect of adaptive management, affording the REA Directorate, the information to maintain or change strategies as necessary.

Strategies

- Facilitate the strengthening and establishment of mechanisms to mitigate food security emergencies
- Facilitate establishment of a monitoring mechanism for AU/NEPAD plans in agriculture, environment, natural resource management and rural development
- Promote corrective measures to ensure successful implementation of policies and programmes
- Monitor the implementation of commitments of Declarations in the area of agriculture, natural resource management and rural development

Outputs

- Mechanisms to mitigate food security emergencies established, facilitated and strengthened
- Monitoring mechanism for AU/NEPAD plans in agriculture, environment, natural resource management and rural development established and facilitated
- Corrective measures to ensure successful implementation of policies and programmes for the rural economy and agriculture promoted
- Implementation of commitments of Declarations in the area of agriculture, natural resource management and rural development monitored

Operational Modalities

To successfully implement the strategic plan, the REA Directorate will mobilize the appropriate human and financial resources from the core funding provided by the AU Commission and from relevant development partners. To this effect, the Directorate will seek to establish good working relations with the key relevant development partners in and out of Africa. It will collaborate and work closely with all the relevant stakeholders; AU member states; the Regional Economic Communities (RECs); the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) – within the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP); other Organs and Directorates of the AU; international organizations (e.g. FAO, OIE, ILRI, IITA, WTO, etc); and relevant Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

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Figure 1. The Commission as an Organ of the AU.

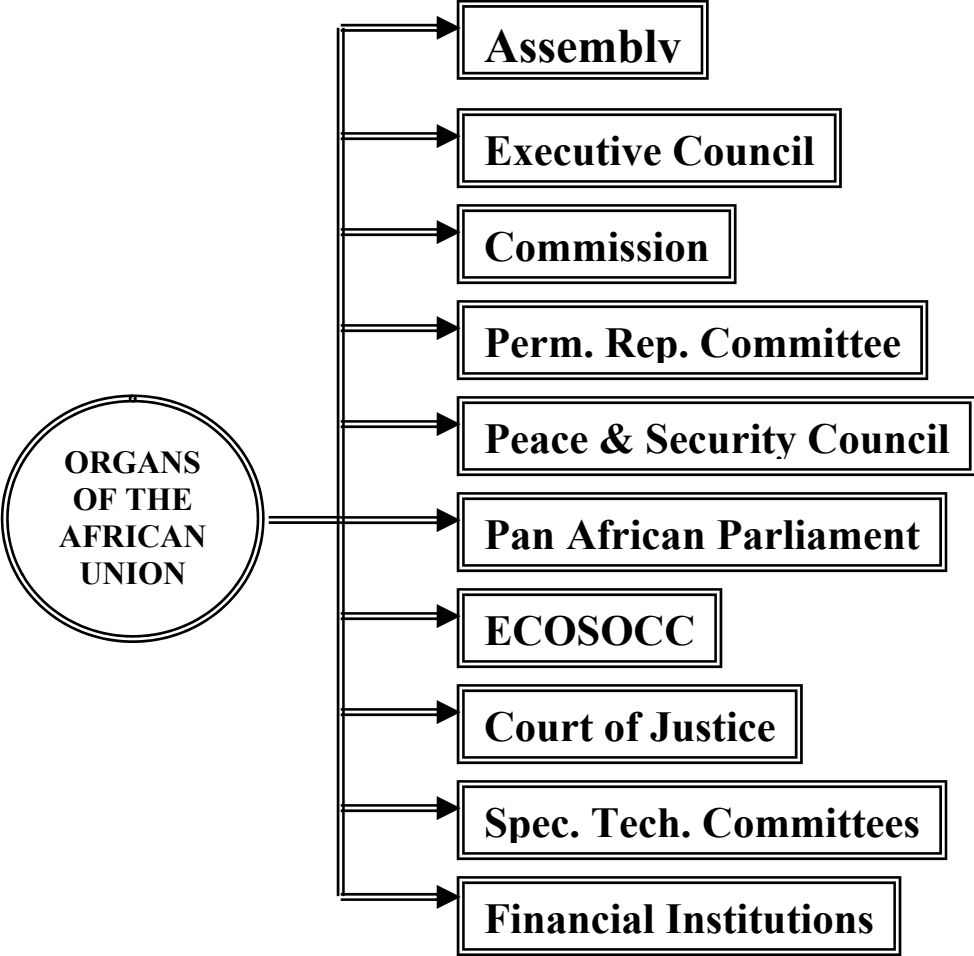


Figure 3. The African Union Commission.

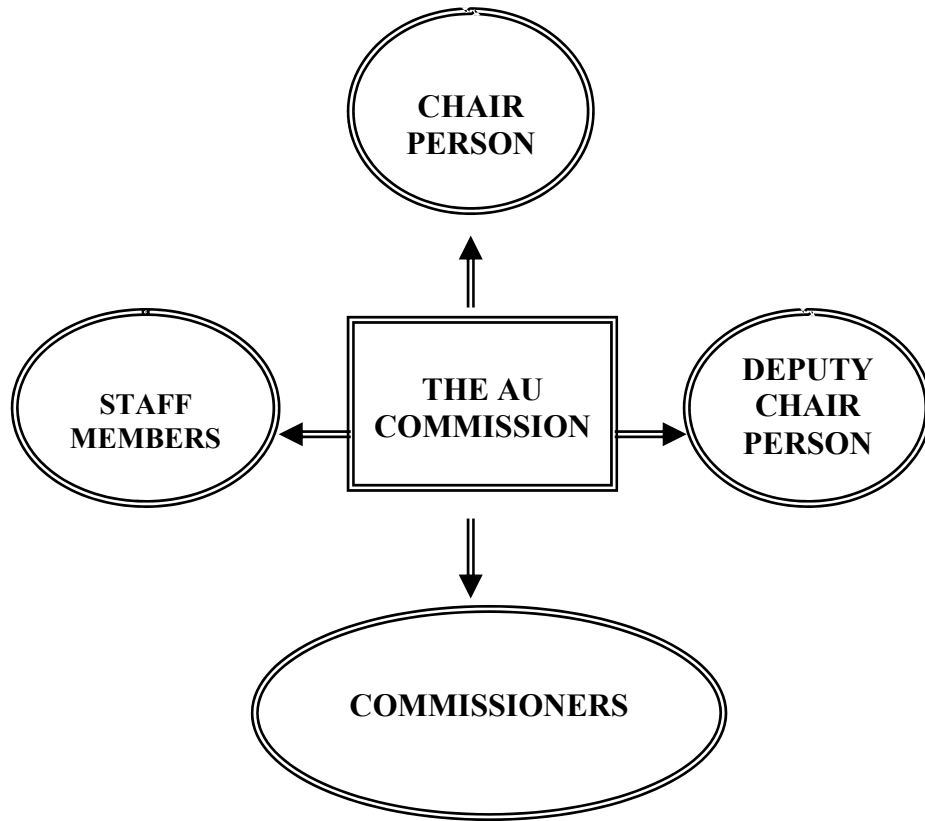


Figure 4. Portfolio Directorates of the African Union Commission.

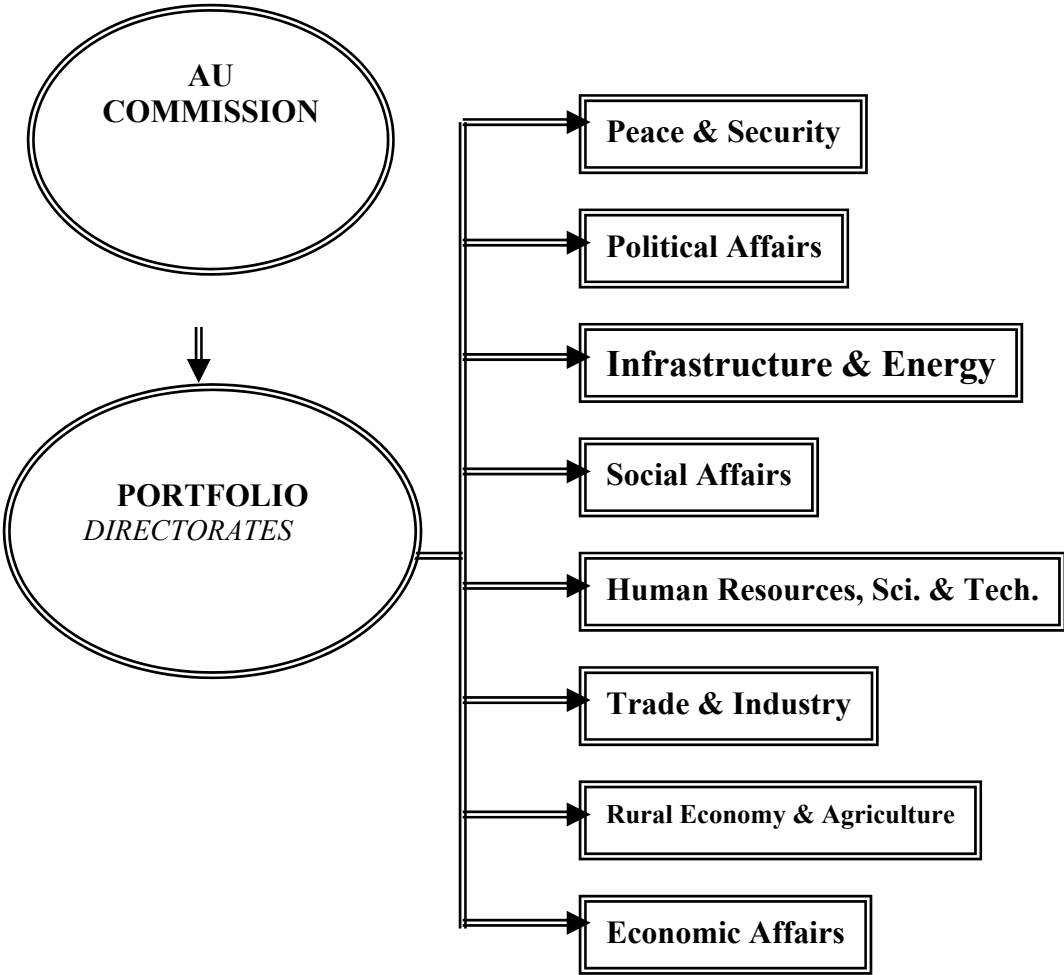


Figure 5. Divisions and Specialized Technical Offices of the REA Directorate

