

**Supporting agricultural transformation in Africa with evidence, knowledge, and partnerships**

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Turkey-Africa 1st Agriculture Ministers Meeting and Agribusiness Forum

April 27, 2017

Honorable Presidents,

Esteemed Ministers,

Distinguished participants,

First, let me express my profound gratitude on behalf of myself and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) for the opportunity to address the Turkey-Africa 1<sup>st</sup> Agriculture Ministers Meeting. I would like to thank H. E. Faruk Çelik, the Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of Turkey for the warm welcome and hospitality. Allow me to commend you for your commitment to supporting rural transformation in Africa.

Africa is the place to invest, as growth and transformation are well underway. Many African countries have recently experienced robust economic growth, and the economy of Africa south of the Sahara is expected to grow by around 3 percent in 2017. Now, more than ever, African economies are better positioned to make progress and investments have the potential for high returns. The global community should maintain this momentum by investing in Africa.

With these stellar prospects in place, spurring agricultural development in Africa is critical as the continent faces several key challenges. Over 230 million people—or one in five Africans—suffers from chronic hunger. Undernutrition also persists, as 32 percent of children are stunted and 42 percent are Vitamin A deficient. With 43 percent of Africans living in poverty and climate change continuing to adversely impact agriculture, it is critical that we help promote solutions to these challenges.

Looking to the future, several emerging trends present both challenges and opportunities for ending hunger and malnutrition in Africa. Throughout the continent, rapid urbanization is transforming rural areas and driving changes in food systems. Rural smallholders may be left behind by this transformation—or they can be supported to take advantage of this increased demand for more and higher value foods. At the same time, Africa is experiencing a youth bulge, with 43 percent of the population under 14 years of age. With the right policies in place, these young people can be supported to contribute a “youth dividend” and help to transform agriculture.

To address these challenges, agri-food system transformation has a big role to play. Building rural-urban linkages can leverage the strengths of both areas for win-win outcomes. Sound development and management of water resources can unlock potential to improve food security, nutrition, and health while sustainably addressing water scarcity challenges, especially in Africa south of the Sahara. Investing in smallholders to produce high value crops, strengthen their resilience, and boost their commercial viability can increase their capacity to contribute to global food security and nutrition as well as to combat climate change. Evidence-based policy research will be essential to help guide policies and programs to be effective and cost-efficient.

Institutional innovations are also needed to assist vulnerable groups, such as smallholders, women, and youth, gain access to markets and technologies. Promoting smallholder-friendly innovations, such as bundling financial and non-financial services, as well as extension services and risk management mechanisms are some examples. Improving women's access to resources such as land, inputs, credit, and education will be critical for improving agricultural outputs and reducing the number of undernourished people.

IFPRI is one of 15 research centers of the CGIAR—a global research partnership for a food-secure future. IFPRI remains committed to supporting rural development in Africa with data, knowledge, tools, capacity strengthening, and evidence-based research to help shape effective policies and programs. Building on the work supported by the Turkish G20 Presidency, FAO and IFPRI established the Technical Platform on the Measurement and Reduction of Food Loss and Waste, a crucial issue for Africa where 300 million people could be fed by the food currently lost.<sup>1</sup> We support countries across the continent with the implementation of CAADP and the achievement of the Malabo Declaration Commitments. We work actively with the African Union Commission, regional bodies such as ECOWAS and COMESA, and individual countries by providing evidence-based agricultural policy solutions. Through our country Strategy Support Programs, we are contributing to the great strides made in Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and beyond in reducing hunger and accelerating growth and transformation of their agriculture sectors. We are also working with African countries through our bold initiative Compact2025 to accelerate the end of hunger and undernutrition.

We at IFPRI believe that with evidence-based knowledge and committed partnerships, we can help improve livelihoods and end hunger and malnutrition in Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/>