

First feedback – Information for Meeting Africa’s Agricultural Transformation and Food Security Goals (IMAAFS) Conference. Addis Ababa, UN Conference Centre, 1-3 October

The African Union Commission and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission organized a scientific Conference at the UN Conference Centre in Addis Ababa from 1 to 3 October which aimed at widening the availability and use of evidence-based information for agricultural growth and improved food and nutrition security. With over 180 international participants, the event brought together scientists and policy makers from a wide range of institutions and research organisations from Africa, Europe and the United States, as well as major UN agencies.

The agricultural sector in many African countries has been evolving rapidly in response to dynamic population growth and movements, and as a result of regional or national policies and more pronounced interventions by private and external actors. Accurate, objective and timely information is needed by all parties involved in agriculture and development to address issues such as the early identification of risks and the assessment of the severity of emergencies, in order to better plan and monitor national/regional agriculture and trade policies and, ultimately, to reach the objectives of improved food security and sustainable agriculture.

2014 marks the 10-year anniversary of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and in 2012 was declared by the African Heads of State and Government as the “Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa”. The IMAAFS Conference has set itself the goal of supporting and motivating continent-wide production, by gathering evidence that can inform Africa’s agricultural transformation towards improved food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture. It offers three days of presentations, workshops, and side events, including various poster and media presentations.

The main technical areas of discussion included:

- Assessment of current information systems (agricultural statistics, household surveys, market and price information systems);
- How to use new Earth observation techniques and promote coordination among systems;
- Managing climate-related risk
- Linking information to decision-making and action.

The Conference was opened by representatives of the organizing partners including Laila Lokosang from the African Union, Dr. Stephan Karingi from UNECA and representing the European Commission, the Head of the European Union Delegation to the African Union, Gary Quince.

More than 100 technical presentations were provided in the areas described below and each presentation session was followed by an open discussion. On the last day the participants split in 3 groups proposing strategies for promoting continent-wide production, exchange and

efficient use of evidence to inform agricultural transformation, in line with the 3 specific objectives of the conference:

- 1.) Review (inventory) approaches, methods, technologies and sources of data
- 2.) Assess (Evaluate) current information, statistics, and risk management initiatives
- 3.) Facilitate integration between information systems, review capacity building activities

The proposed strategies were then ranked by all participants according to their expected priority level, cost efficiency, scalability and ease of implementation.

Conference conclusions will become available before the end of October 2014.