



CONCEPT NOTE

Conference On:

Information for Meeting Africa's Agricultural Transformation and Food Security Goals (IMAAF5)

1 -3 October 2014

UNCC Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

A. Context and Motivation

The need for increased agricultural production and productivity to attain sustainable economic growth, food and nutrition security in Africa, under conditions of increasing variability within both the global economy and the natural environment (climate change), raises expectations regarding transformation in Africa's agriculture. The goal of agricultural transformation in Africa is, first and foremost, to enable production and availability of food for the population, provide livelihoods and raise income, create jobs and wealth for those involved in the sector and along the entire value chain.

African agriculture is predominantly a smallholder and agro-pastoral system and these categories should be at the centre of the transformation agenda. Moreover, due to demographic dynamics, the future farmers in Africa are going to be younger, better exposed to new technologies and ideas, better informed, and with modern needs and aspirations. In many African countries, sustained economic growth rates and the expansion of the middle class with consequent changes in food preferences, create new pressure on agriculture and markets, but also new and diverse opportunities for change.

The agricultural sector in many African countries is evolving rapidly, thanks to both regional and national policies and more pronounced interventions by private and external actors. But agricultural productivity and food security cannot be improved only by increasing the inputs and by technological innovation, without at the same time reducing the risks associated with weather and climate through appropriate risk management systems.

Accurate, objective and timely information is needed by all parties involved in agriculture and development for answering needs which go from early identification of risks to assessing the severity of emergencies, to better plan and monitor national /regional agriculture and trade policies and finally to reach improved food security and sustainable agriculture objectives.

Major efforts have been made and are currently ongoing for improving the quality and availability of statistical data to analysts and decision makers in dedicated Information systems. The growing amount and quality of information, as well as new methods for standardized and consensus based situation analysis directly facilitate evidence-based decision making for response and impact. New satellites are becoming available with higher spatial resolution sensors, with more frequent global coverage, and there is clear progress in making these data freely available to users. Similarly, geo-location and crowd sourcing, relying on smart phones, allows collection of important field information on crops, livelihood, livestock or market price in near-real time. What's more, cognizant to the lack in critical mass of statistics professionals in the sector, a global strategy is in place to help augment the profile of Africa's agricultural statistics human capital through impacting the demand and supply of agricultural statistics training across the continent. Those technical

advances and human capital development schemes provide a unique opportunity to adequately inform both long term policies and short term decision making procedures through a strong and sound information system generated by a network of data collection, processing and analysis systems at the national, regional and continental level.

The Conference fits firmly within the framework of increased expectations towards transformation of African agriculture and towards the use of better information for evidence-based decision making in facing emergency and development challenges. Moreover, in marking the ten years of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Africa's Heads of State and Government declared in July 2012 that 2014 will be the "Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa". In this light CAADP is seeing a re-visioning to usher in viable agriculture transformation that sees it delivering results and impact. A CAADP Results Framework 2013-2023 is at its finalization stage. It has been rationalized that a revamped CAADP Mutual Accountability Framework with a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation architecture be developed and used to facilitate CAADP-based Joint Sector Reviews. For this reason, "Data, Monitoring and Evaluation and Mutual Accountability" became one of the nine thematic areas discussed during the 10th CAADP Partnership Platform, which took place in Durban South Africa. The conference, will, therefore, be more situated to provide the necessary case for developing appropriate strategies that lead to the much envisioned agricultural transformation in Africa.

The conference will build on the series of CRAM (Crop and Rangeland Monitoring) workshops held in Nairobi in the years 2003, 2007 and 2011, which focused on remote sensing and agrometeorology-based early warning applications. This edition intends to broaden the scope, providing a more general forum to take stock of available agriculture and food security information systems and their usefulness for decision makers, and to set the scene for the emergence of a pan-African system essential to continental programs.

The Conference comes as one of the events under the auspices of the AU declaration on '2014 Year of Agriculture and Food Security' and "Marking the 10 Years of CAADP".

B. Objectives of the Conference

The overall goal of the conference is to motivate continent-wide production, exchange and storage of available evidence for informing Africa's agricultural transformation towards improved food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture.

Specifically, the conference aims at:

- i) Identifying key opportunities, challenges and solutions for satisfying the unmet need for strategic information and related capacities to inform the continent's agricultural transformation and hunger eradication goals.

- ii) Provide an overview of existing approaches, methods, technical resources and sources of data.
- iii) Gathering insights and taking stock of the various initiatives already developed related to information and high quality statistics generation in terms of: agriculture production monitoring; markets and trade; livelihoods including food security and nutrition monitoring; risk management systems.
- iv) Creating synergies and opportunities for collaboration among the various initiatives/institutions in order to facilitate integration among different information systems.

C. Expected Outcomes

The Conference has been envisaged to take inventory of current information sources and repositories, expertise and technologies and to provide recommendations for improving quality and availability of information systems for planning and decision towards sustainable agricultural transformation and a food and nutrition secure Africa.

The conference is expected to revise the information needs of policy makers and to critically assess the mix of expertise in the information gathering, processing and dissemination industry on the continent. It is also expected to bring together parties involved in improving, at the continental level, the availability and the capacity for providing of agriculture and food security-related information.

A half-day brainstorming session and thematic group work will be allowed to build consensus and to summarize the discussions on how the different information resources can provide best information for decision makers and for planning rural development and improved food security in Africa.

D. Structure and Format of the Conference

During the three-day, multi-session conference, a number of technical papers will be presented and discussed alongside exhibitions and side events to parade the wealth of information resources at the disposal of continental partners and stakeholders. The conference shall also showcase ongoing capacity development efforts that are geared towards the strengthening of African agricultural statistics human capital; which have direct impact for the process of evidence based decision making in the sector.

The Conference will be divided into structured sessions with each session focussing on a set of related presentations:

- **Session 1** will be a general session covering introduction and scope of the conference, formats, structure and expected outputs
- **Session 2** will present the case for the conference in terms of where and how available opportunities are missed, how the need of information is expressed and perceived in the CAADP Framework and the new Results Framework (2013-2023) and how improved information could contribute toward Africa's agricultural transformation and hunger eradication.
- **Session 3** will review available sources, resources, methods and use of information on food security, nutrition, livelihoods and sustainable rural development.
- **Session 4** will specifically address Market information systems for food prices and volatility monitoring
- **Session 5** will parade the wealth of resources, tools and technologies for monitoring climate and crops using remotely-sensed data and will explore the opportunities provided by the latest generation of satellites
- **Session 6** will examine current risk management systems, inputs and outputs in relation to data and methods requirements
- **Session 7** will focus on integrated analysis approaches for linking information to decision making and capacity development.
- **Session 8** will be thematic group work formulating the outputs of the conference in terms of recommendations, synthesis and opportunities to create synergies among the various initiatives/institutions.
- **Session 9** will be the closing ceremony

Sessions 1 to 3 will be covered on Day 1 of the conference; Sessions 4 to 6 will be parallel sessions (tbc) to be covered on Day 2; and Sessions 7, 8 and 9 will be accomplished on Day 3. Each session will be in form of 15-minute presentations followed by one hour break away discussion sessions. Due to the large thematic coverage of the conference, the presentations will be selected based on their coverage of horizontal aspects in each sector and on their capacity to address key opportunities, challenges and solutions. Tools for maximising the output and input of each break away session will be designed. Project related or highly specific presentations are welcomed as poster contributions.

E. Organisation

The conference will be organized and financed mainly by the JRC with the support of DG DEVCO, from the European Commission. It will be hosted by the UNECA at the United

Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa. UNECA is also a thematic partner. The Conference will be organised under the auspices of the African Union Commission (AUC) in close coordination with the agenda of the AU declared Year of Agriculture and Food Security in 2014.

Other collaborating and co-financing partners will include WFP, FAO, FEWS-NET and GEO. An Organising Committee is being formed of members of these institutions. Specification of roles and terms of reference for the Organising Committee will be made after this concept note has been agreed upon.

English-French interpretation will be provided

Updated information on conference organization will be made available on the following web site:

<http://mars.jrc.ec.europa.eu/mars/News-Events/IMAAFS>

Contacts: for any information about the conference please write to:

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