

**SUMMARY RECORD**  
**OECD GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURE**  
**OECD, Paris, 16-17 May 2006**  
**Constraints to Development of Sub-Saharan Agriculture**

The main objectives of this Global Forum on Agriculture were to (a) identify and evaluate the importance of the main constraints to the development of Sub-Saharan African agriculture; (b) obtain early feedback on new and complimentary analytical work (i.e. *FAO Agricultural Policy Indicators project* (API), *OECD/IFAD/France Support to African Agriculture Project* (SAAP), *DAC Pro-Poor Growth through Agriculture* framework paper); and (c) promote dialogue between different policy communities (agriculture and development experts) and between OECD member countries and African stakeholders.

The meeting was chaired by Neil Fraser of the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Some 130 delegates from 31 OECD and non-member economies and 16 international organisations participated in the event. Two African Agricultural Ministers, from Ghana and Cameroon, were active participants. OECD Secretariat participation included AGR, DCD, DEV and SWAC. This broad stakeholder representation and the very animated discussion over two days was perhaps the most important outcome of the Forum. Summary papers and PowerPoint presentations are available on the dedicated website: [www.oecd.org/agr/meet/apnme](http://www.oecd.org/agr/meet/apnme) (login: meetings; password: apnme). Funding for the Forum was largely provided by the World Bank.

The Forum was organised into four main sessions:

**Stocktaking** - The main message here was that performance and potential are highly variable across African countries. It is difficult to generalise. However, there have been gains in both agricultural productivity and area cultivated. There is still a large gap between potential and actual production, and there are growing environmental problems suggesting much of this progress may not be sustainable. Clearly, at the current rates of growth these countries will fall short of the MDGs for poverty reduction and hunger alleviation, particularly given the continued rise in population. Reforms are needed to increase production and food availability per head. Existing science and technology can go a long way towards addressing these production problems but greater efforts on research and extension as well as attention to broader economic, social and political conditions are required to take full advantage of the natural and human resources available.

**Constraints** - Forum participants listed both external (OECD agriculture and trade policies, food aid, regulatory barriers, donor approaches) and internal constraints as factors potentially limiting agricultural development. Internal constraints were seen as the most restrictive with natural, economic and institutional factors all important. Considerable emphasis was placed on the need for "political will" for reform. Some argued that there were no agricultural policies in West/Central Africa as donors control the direction of reform through development aid but that this is changing. Others felt that agricultural policies were not sufficiently targeted at the poor; that in fact some contributed to the marginalisation of the poor.

Many participants noted the limited voice of producers and other civil society stakeholders in policy formulation. Empowerment of these groups was seen as fundamental to local acceptance of national and regional policies. The strong desire for "made in Africa" agricultural policy consistent with national objectives was noted by many African participants. A lack of information and analysis was seen as a severe limitation to effective decision-making. The first and most important challenge is to identify a short list of constraints to agricultural sector performance that can potentially be addressed through better domestic and international policy.

**Analysis** - New policy analyses underway in the OECD/IFAD/France (SAAP) and FAO (API) projects stressed that agricultural policies, development aid and institutional constraints needed to be examined together. The objective of these co-ordinated efforts is to provide some quantitative measures of policy distortions and policy reforms. The FAO project is a model for what is hoped to be an ongoing benchmarking programme for a wide range of developing countries. Close co-operation with the African governments (pilot country studies: Cameroon, Ghana, Mali) has been incorporated from the start into the analytical, capacity building and policy dialogue elements of the OECD/IFAD/France project. Preliminary analysis, at least for the pilot countries, questions the typical characterisation of African agriculture as a sector suffering primarily from a lack of productivity gains, declining input usage and high trade barriers. However, it was the commonly held view that productivity and input usage are well below the levels of other developing countries. The importance of institutional barriers was highlighted (e.g. social and cultural norms, property rights, capital flows, research and extension). These barriers lead to malfunctioning markets and ineffective policies.

The DAC *Pro-Poor Growth through Agriculture* framework paper was also presented and was well received. The fact that the entire OECD donor community has signed on to a strategy that sees agriculture as the heart of pro-poor growth was not lost on this group of agriculture development experts. It was stressed again that donors would need the political will of the African governments to implement such a strategy. In this context, the importance of linkages with the NEPAD/CAADP initiatives was noted.

**Implementation** - A panel of African Agriculture Ministers and high level development officials provided views on the types of information and policy advice required for effective decision-making and how the process of policy development and implementation should be managed (e.g. garnering political will, ensuring stakeholder buy-in, linkages to regional strategies, monitoring and evaluation of reform). These policy-makers again stressed the need for solid information and economic analysis on which to base decisions. There was a consensus that agricultural policy evaluation and impact analysis should be undertaken in the context of broader economic and social objectives (e.g. rural development, poverty reduction). The distributional effects of reform were of particular importance for these countries where so many live on or below the poverty threshold. Representatives of the African pilot country studies all agreed that the policy dialogue element of the SAAP should be open to the broadest possible range of stakeholders.

Finally, Forum participants were encouraged to follow the progress of the OECD/IFAD/France *Support to African Agriculture Project*. A brochure on the project analysis, capacity building and policy dialogue activities will be widely distributed in the coming weeks. In-country roundtables (2 per pilot country) are planned to discuss the analytical results and resulting policy messages. An AGR/DCD regional event in Senegal in October 2006 will expand the policy dialogue. An OECD Global Forum on Agriculture in May 2007 will evaluate the progress to date and examine options for a potential second phase.