

PREFACE

Since the beginning of the new millennium, African governments, donors and the private sector have all stepped up their efforts to revitalise the agricultural sector by mobilising additional resources and putting new business initiatives to work. Through the approval of NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in 2003, African leaders agreed to governmental responsibility for providing technical and financial support to the agricultural sector and the development of the agro-based private sector. In addition, trade issues have been increasingly seen as intrinsic to agricultural development strategies.

Governments and business actors agree on the need for better co-ordination of each other's strategies and interventions in the agricultural sector. This places public-private dialogue at the centre stage of Africa's agricultural development process. More emphasis should therefore be placed on policies in favour of market expansion and improved regulatory conditions to underpin private-sector development and redefine the roles of government, donors and business.

Africa is facing new challenges daily caused by market transformations on a global scale. Technological advances, changes in food consumption patterns, the demands of private retail companies and stricter quality and health standards imposed by OECD importing countries have been at the root of some of this change. Meanwhile, African agro-food companies are faced with rising demand for food in Africa due to rapid urbanisation and increased industrial activity. In addition, China and India have provided new outlets for African agricultural exports but have also increased competitive pressures.

To address these challenges, a change of perspective is needed to promote commercial agriculture and the development of rural non-farm activities. More emphasis should be placed on policies that raise agricultural productivity and expand market opportunities at the international, regional and national levels. Private investment in appropriate technology and scientific expertise to support the agricultural sector in Africa requires adequate policies and regulations.

This edition of *Business for Development: Promoting Commercial Agriculture in Africa* looks at recent trends in trade and aid in African agriculture, including an overview of the corporate landscape of the agro-food sector, and takes stock of donor activities aimed at supporting commercial agriculture in the continent. This new publication will make a substantial contribution to what we know and need to do to support private-sector development in Africa.

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