

# What role can Africa play in contributing to global food security?

With over 800 million people worldwide suffering from hunger and more than two billion affected by malnutrition, food insecurity remains a real threat to global development. President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Akinwumi Adesina believes Africa does not need aid but disciplined investments. According to Adesina, the time has come to view investment and development opportunities in Africa through a totally different lens.



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Addressing a crowd of global agriculture experts at the FAO headquarters in Rome, Adesina said that "the future of food in the world will depend on what Africa does with agriculture."

The African Development Bank envisions a food secure continent which uses advanced technologies, creatively adapts to climate change, and develops a whole new generation of what Adesina describes as 'agripreneurs' – empowered youth and women who he expects to take agriculture to the next level.

By 2050, an additional 38 million Africans will be hungry. The paradox of lack in the midst of plenty and Africa's growing youth bulge are some of the reasons why Adesina's sense of urgency is resonating with numerous government, the private sector, and multilateral leaders during recent European and Asian trips.

Africa continues to import what it should be producing, spending \$35bn on food imports each year, a figure that is expected to rise to \$110bn in 2025 if present trends continue.

Adesina joined Rockefeller Foundation President Raj Shah, Unilever CEO Paul Polman, and 2018 World Food Prize nominees Lawrence Haddad and David Navarro, among other prominent global academic, development, and agriculture experts at Wageningen University and Research, in the Netherlands, to make the case for urgent collective action by state and non-state players to accelerate Africa's agricultural growth and transformation.

Africa receives only 2% of the \$100bn annual revenues from chocolates globally. Adesina shared that "adding value to what nations produce, is the secret to their wealth. Producing chocolate instead of simply exporting cocoa beans does not require rocket science."

## **Mobilising support to female entrepreneurs**

To expand opportunities for youth, women, and private sector players, Adesina is on a global mission to promote and seek support for the bank's Affirmative Finance for Women in Africa (AFAWA) programme which aims to mobilise \$3bn to support women entrepreneurs who historically lack access to finance, land, and land titles; a \$300m Enable Youth programme to develop the next generation of agribusiness and commercial farmers for Africa; and a new global investment marketplace, the African Investment Forum, which will be held in Johannesburg on 7-9 November 2018.

In separate meetings with Sigrid A.M. Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, in the Hague; Peter van Mierlo, CEO of the Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank (FMO), key private sector players, and members of the Dutch Foreign Affairs Advisory Council, Adesina said Africa and its partners must seize unprecedented opportunities for innovative partnerships and increased development impact.

Mierlo believes, "a huge benefit for Africa is that it can skip development cycles that often almost all developed countries had to go through, by deploying new technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics in agriculture."

In a continent where more than 640 million are without electricity, Adesina says the private sector is key to Africa's development in Africa's energy and agriculture sectors. "If Africa is going to turn the tide of irregular migration, this is critical. There are three ways in which we can collaborate: either through the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility, Africa 50 - a private equity institution which has raised more than \$850m from 22 countries, and the new Africa Investment Forum."

Speaking to a High-level Roundtable of Dutch Business Leaders at the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), informed key private sector leaders that "governance structures and business regulatory environments are changing in Africa. Indeed, several African countries have already made significant progress in improving their general business and investment environments. Africa is doing better than some of the Asian countries. In the energy sector, the African Development Bank is investing \$12bn over the next five years, with the goal of leveraging \$40-50bn; and an additional \$24bn, over ten years, in agriculture to implement its Feed Africa Strategy."

## **Agriculture steadily taking center-stage**

The strategy is already bearing fruit with the establishment of Staple Crop Processing Zones in several African countries, including Ethiopia, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Mozambique, with a plan to reach 15 countries in a few years.

Strategically located in and around rural farming communities, Adesina says: These agriculture zones will form the nucleus of a new wave of agro-industries and greenfield ventures, attracting agripreneurs, biotechnology firms, intellectual and

capital investments. They will also ensure that foods are processed and packaged right where they are produced, rather than in urban centres far removed from centres of production."

Adesina believes the bank's policies and investments will help turn rural areas from zones of economic misery into zones of economic prosperity.

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