

African Leaders urged to invest more in agriculture

Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, AUC Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, this week joined Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta and president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, at a presidential panel on transforming African agriculture, during the official opening ceremony of the Alliance for a Green Revolution Forum 2016, in Nairobi, Republic of Kenya.



Image by 123RF

The panelists discussed ways to transform agriculture in Africa and covered a myriad of topics including technology advancement for farmers, empowering women and youth, private sector engagement and participation in agriculture, and building capacity for all stakeholders in the agriculture value chain, among others.

Kenyatta called on African leaders to urgently address the challenges hindering agriculture advancement, to fight food insecurity and create employment. "Let us streamline our national plans and strategies and align them to the AU Malabo Declaration and have specific timelines to achieve the set goals," he said.

Kenyatta further called for a greater push for accountability by creating a continental agricultural performance scorecard.

He also committed USD 200million over the next five years to support the Kenyan agricultural sector. "Today, I commit to set aside \$200 million to benefit especially 150,000 young farmers and entrepreneurs to access markets, adopt mechanization; improve agriculture value addition and agro-processing in the country."

Kagame said African countries should view the agriculture sector not only as a sector in their economies but as the backbone of their economies and agent for transformation, emphasising that it is cardinal to enhance the involvement of the entire value chain, especially the private sector.

“We need to move from what we know needs to be done to doing something... we need to just go ahead and do it.”

Citing the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), the AU 2014 Malabo Declaration and Africa’s Agenda 2063, Peace said the AUC empowers countries to have credible plans to transform agriculture and to ensure that commitments and decisions made by AU leaders are actualised.

Peace strongly emphasised however, that for decisions and commitments to be implemented, there is need for active involvement by the African leadership, country ownership of projects and structured designs that adhere to specific country needs.

“Implementation is at country level, and leadership is key,” she said. “Countries where the leadership has been involved in implementation of CAADP and Malabo are doing better in transformation of agriculture.”

The panel discussion and subsequent official opening of the AGRF 2016 was also attended by Tanzania’s former president Jakaya Kikwete, former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, and AGRA president, Dr Agnes Kalibata.

The AGRF 2016, under the theme, “seize the moment” has brought African leaders together to advance policies and secure investments that will ensure a better life for millions of Africa’s farmers and families.

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