Transforming Africa’s Agriculture for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development

Tim Turner
Group Chief Risk Officer
Allow me to extend our special appreciation to you for honouring our invitation to attend this important event and exchange views on how to give greater prominence to agriculture as a priority sector for promoting Africa’s sustainable development, creating more job opportunities especially for youth and women, fostering a more inclusive growth path and increasing the continent’s competitiveness.

This meeting is very timely for a number of reasons:

Firstly, the year 2014 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Family Farming. This is aimed at repositioning the sector and identifying gaps and opportunities for more equitable food production.

Secondly, the African Union recently declared 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security. This is an attempt to secure a recommitment to agriculture and to implement policies and strategies highlighted following the 10-year implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Meanwhile the deficit of agriculture and rural development investment in Africa is estimated to range between USD 20 billion and 40 billion annually.
Lastly, the world will soon take stock of progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Norman Borlaug, the embodiment of the human quest for a hunger-free world and father of the green revolution, once said, “Man can and must prevent the tragedy of famine in the future instead of merely trying with pious regret to salvage the human wreckage of the famine, as he has so often done in the past.”

Africa can indeed feed Africa, but Africa’s agriculture sector continues to perform below its potential. This not only undermines the livelihoods of millions of Africans, but also challenges the continent’s growth prospects.

You would agree that it will be impossible for Africa to achieve food security and move up the agricultural value chain without access to reliable infrastructure that will help to boost productivity, reduce post-harvest losses and promote market access.

If Africa’s farmers increased their productivity and substituted imports with their own produce, this could provide a powerful impetus to reducing poverty, enhancing food and nutrition security, and supporting a more inclusive pattern of growth. Therefore, to unlock agriculture’s potential, farmers and businesses must be empowered through good policies, increased public-private investments, improved technology and stronger public-private partnerships.
The theme of this event, “Transforming Africa’s Agriculture for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development”, is vital food for thought for each of us, one which clearly captivates the minds of many people today. But the issue is not simply that of discussions, but one pertaining to what is being done.

As we strive to better serve Africa by operationalizing our Ten-Year Strategy, our main preoccupation hereafter is to work together with our partners to promptly implement the outcomes arising from all the matters raised here today, including Youth Employment, Agriculture as a Business, Agricultural Infrastructure and Integrated Value Chains, Policy Reforms, Agricultural Market Access, Agricultural Research and Technology, Climate Change, Investing in Women, etc.

Together, we should continue to find answers to the question: What is it that we shall do more of, or what shall we do differently to ensure that the majority of Africans fully realize the long-term benefits of agricultural transformation and growth?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past fifty years, Bank investments in agriculture have contributed to building rural infrastructure, promoting policy reforms, and training and capacity building. We are aspiring for even greater selectivity and more robust results in our agricultural investments.

Let me conclude by assuring you that the African Development Bank Group will continue to play its part alongside its partners to meaningfully help Africa deal with the prevailing and future agricultural and food security challenges.
I thank our invited guests and speakers, whose resounding deliveries today have added to the awareness of Bank staff to issues pertaining to food security, wealth creation and involvement of women and youth in agriculture through flagship initiatives.

I thank the Executive Directors and Staff both here at headquarters and the field offices for making themselves available to join us in today’s events. We enjoin you to continue to be champions of agriculture and food security, no matter your primary roles in the Bank. We will soon be sharing with you the concept notes for our planned flagship initiatives both for women and youth. We count on your continued support.

Thanks a lot.