



African Economic Conference

**Concept Note
and
Call for Papers**

AFRICAN ECONOMIC CONFERENCE 2016

**“Feeding Africa: Towards Agro-Allied
Industrialization for Inclusive Growth”**

Abuja, Nigeria

December 5-7, 2016

1. Introduction

1.1 The theme for the 2016 African Economic Conference (AEC) is “**Feeding Africa: Towards Agro-Allied Industrialization for Inclusive Growth**”. This theme is timely and in line with the current African and international development agenda. Ending poverty and overcoming hunger and food insecurity permanently come first and second, respectively, in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) endorsed in September 2015 by UN member States. This commitment is also stressed by the African Union Agenda 2063 that recognizes the right of all Africans to be well-nourished and lead healthy and productive lives. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), as well as the June 2014 Malabo declaration, highlight that a structural transformation of African agriculture is central to growth and poverty eradication on the continent. Consistent with these goals, agriculture and industrialization are at the heart of the work by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and their vision and long-term strategy for a prospered and inclusive Africa.

1.2 Global experiences suggest that the attainment of food security requires high and sustained growth, underpinned by enhanced agriculture productivity and a sustainable structural change that includes the broader engagement of people. In particular, African countries need to revisit their agricultural policies and practices, while paving the way for an agro-allied industrial development. The AEC will bring together policy-makers, researchers and development practitioners from Africa and from around the world to make strategic contributions for accelerating agro-allied industrial development. The Conference will provide an opportunity to assess the impact of current growth strategies in Africa; focusing on the agricultural and industrial sector. In addition, the conference will discuss successes, lessons learned and identify remaining gaps, challenges and emerging issues on the topic. It will encompass in-depth presentations of policy-oriented research by both established academics and emerging researchers from the continent and beyond who will debate and recommend policy options on how to accelerate Africa’s agricultural and industrial transformation.

2. Challenges and opportunities of the theme

2.1 Despite the overall macroeconomic growth and improved governance enjoyed broadly across the continent, Africa still has the highest rates of both poverty and hunger in the world. Out of about 795 million people suffering from chronic undernourishment globally, 230 million live in Africa; resulting in the highest prevalence of undernourishment worldwide, at around 20%.¹ Even in abundant regions, food shortages can happen according to the period of the year, mostly due to poor conservation techniques or post-harvest losses. In Sub-Saharan Africa, up to 150 kgs of food produced per person is lost every year; and depending on the crop, between 15% and 35% of food may be lost before it even leaves the field.

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http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm#Number_of_hungry_people_in_the_world

- 2.2 How can Africa feed Africa, and the rest of the world? A partial response appears straightforward: Africa needs to increase food production away from subsistence production and weak productivity. There is little justification that Africa, which has about 2/3 of all the arable land left in the world, is unable to feed herself; spending around US\$ 35 billion per year on food imports, putting additional strain on scarce foreign exchange reserves. In addition to increasing food supplies, Africa needs to better manage and integrate the entire food chain from the farm to storage, transport, processing and marketing. In the current policy and research environment, there is significant momentum behind developing and promoting the agricultural sector as a catalyst to industrialization. Developing an industrial agri-businesses would raise productivity in the sector and ultimately support economic growth and structural transformation by enabling the labor force to move from the agriculture sector into manufacturing and services.
- 2.3 A comprehensive transformation of the agriculture sector in Africa towards agro-allied industrialization requires investments in technology and innovation in order to improve the productivity of land and especially labor (e.g. new tools, improved seed, water control, fertilizers) including innovation in the commercialization of agriculture products. Farmers should be given incentives to adopt new technologies by making them affordable, to raise their productivity and expand their output. Land reforms would not only increase production scale but also enhance security of tenure and thus encourage investment, as well as adequate insurance and financial instruments suited to the agricultural production cycle that would support the adoption of technological innovations and expand the use of intermediate inputs, agricultural extension services, and appropriate pricing mechanisms.
- 2.4 More globally, structural transformation requires that industry be leveraged in the agriculture sector. Further efforts are necessary to encourage the development of large commercial farmers and to connect them with small-scale farmers through mutually beneficial contract farming (out-grower schemes) such as to support larger agriculture production in an inclusive way. Agribusiness initiatives will constantly seek value addition to agriculture products to be better connected with regional and global agriculture value chains. To enter into contract with agribusiness farmers and get the guarantee to supply leading firms, smaller-scale farmers will also get the incentives to meet required production standards within the value chain. Ultimately, an agro-allied industrialization will enhance the efficiency and value addition in the agriculture sector by connecting farmers to markets. In the form of skills and capital to produce in larger quantity while meeting higher quality standards, it will facilitate commercialization of Africa's agriculture through more effective integration in agriculture value chains.
- 2.5 Providing adequate institutional and business environment as well as supporting trade finance are also key in encouraging private sector participation and investment in the agro-business industry and raising the comparative advantage of exporters in this sector. Ultimately, agro-allied industrialization is expected to reduce the export of raw material and diversify national economies in Africa. Developing competitive trade services through the provision of infrastructure and financing will support large-scale farmers in their marketing and export activities.

2.6 Developing an agro-allied industrialization in Africa requires to advance an inclusive growth agenda given that half of the labor force in the continent works in the agriculture sector in rural areas, of which 80 percent are smallholder farmers and a significant share are female workers. Land reform, better tailored and more accessible financing and insurance schemes are necessary for small-scale farmers not only to raise productivity but also to provide the most vulnerable with mitigation measures and enhance their resilience to the growing risks related to climate, market and political shocks. Land access based on customary rights, in particular, disadvantage women and favor unequal distribution of the arable land. There remains significant research and policy gaps regarding the pathways that would lead to such transformations with the view to alleviate high poverty rates in rural spaces, smooth transitory income, and enable food insecure households to meet their food and nutritional needs as well as link smallholder farmers to larger agro-business firms. It is also important to recognize the key role played by women through gender-specific policies as a core strategy. In this regard, adequate policies are needed to overcome multiple market failures and imperfections and to improve an inclusive access to modern inputs, labor, land, finance, and other agricultural factors of production and markets in order to enable a dual structural transformation of agriculture and industry.

2.7 Last but not least, Africa must endorse a green agriculture to industrialize in a sustainable way, in order to avoid long run stagnation in crop production and rising cost of inputs. Governments need to establish a sound regulatory and institutional framework to take advantage of technology in promoting a green agriculture. Information and communication technology, for instance, increasingly support in a green and sustainable way the diffusion of market information, production knowledge and geographical information among the various stakeholders in the agriculture sector. Developing skills in biotechnology would also improve yields and make them more resistant to weather shocks while ensuring health and environmental safety. Besides to larger scale agriculture production, further efforts should be devoted to the improvement of water management in such a way as to intensify irrigation to reduce Africa's dependence on rain-fed agriculture while strengthening resilience to climate change.

3. Objectives of the AEC series

3.1 The African Economic Conference is now the leading forum for the discussion of Africa's burning issues of the day. The specific objectives of the African Economic Conference series are to:

- Promote knowledge management as an important driver of policy dialogue, good policy planning and implementation;
- Foster dialogue that promotes the exchange of ideas and innovative thinking among researchers, development practitioners and African policymakers;
- Encourage and enhance research on economic and policy issues related to the development of African economies;
- Provide an opportunity for young African researchers, Africans in the Diaspora, regional and sub-regional organizations to disseminate their research findings as well as share information with African policymakers on the work they do in the region.

3.2 Since its inception in 2006, the AEC series has fostered dialogue and the exchange of knowledge on a variety of issues and challenges that Africa is facing (see Box 1).

Box 1. Past themes of the African Economic Conference

- AEC 2006 - Accelerating Africa's Development Five Years into the 21st Century.
- AEC 2007 - Opportunities and Challenges of Development for Africa in the Global Arena
- AEC 2008 - Globalization, Institutions and Economic Development of Africa
- AEC 2009 - Fostering Development in an Era of Financial and Economic Crises
- AEC 2010 - Setting the Agenda for Africa's Economic Recovery and Long Term Growth
- AEC 2011 - Green Economy and Structural Transformation in Africa
- AEC 2012 - Fostering Inclusive and Sustainable Development in Africa in an Age of Global Economic Uncertainty
- AEC 2013 - Regional Integration in Africa
- AEC 2014 - Knowledge and Innovation for Africa's Transformation
- AEC 2015 - Addressing Poverty and Inequality in the Post 2015 Development Agenda

4. Format of the African Economic Conference 2016

4.1 Jointly organized by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Economic Conference 2016 will take place in **Abuja (Nigeria) from December 5 to 7, 2016**. The 2016 Conference will be the eleventh edition of the AEC series.

4.2 The African Economic Conference 2016 will offer a unique avenue for researchers, policymakers and development practitioners from Africa and elsewhere to debate and build knowledge on agro-led structural transformation in Africa. The debates would focus on tracking progress on performance, identifying gaps, challenges and emerging issues, as well as recommending timely corrective policy actions in these priority areas. By providing up-to-date information, undertaking comparative analyses and discussing success stories and lessons learned, the AEC 2016 would make a strategic contribution to Africa's sustainable transformation process.

4.3 The Conference will comprise a number of **plenary sessions**, which will feature presentations and discussions by prominent academics, policy makers, private sector actors, opinion leaders and representatives from development organizations. The **breakout sessions** will allow for more in-depth and technical analyses of salient issues related to the thematic focus of the Conference.

4.5 Under the broader theme of "Feeding Africa: Towards Agro-Allied Industrialization for Inclusive Growth", the key discussion topics suggested below will enable a broad range of discussions on the current state of and prospects of Africa's agricultural transformation and will generate valuable insights for improved policy making:

- Accelerating agricultural productivity: technology and innovation, assets, access to finance;
- Strengthening regional value chains; trade, competitiveness, regional integration;
- Promoting inclusive agro allied industrialisation: infrastructure, human capital, policies, investment, institutions;
- Fostering inclusiveness and reducing inequality: women, youth, urban, rural, eliminating enclaves, access to land, financial inclusion;
- Reducing risks and building resilience: environment and climate change, insurance, conflict (land, water).

4.6 As is the tradition, a distinguished panel will assess the papers presented and award a prize to the author whose paper has been deemed as the **best Conference paper**. The winner will be announced at the closing ceremony.

5. Submission Guidelines and Time Frame

5.1 Authors must follow the instructions on the AEC 2016 website (www.afdb.org/aec), (www.uneca.org/aec2016), (www.undp/aec/2016) to submit papers. Priority will be given to the submission of full papers. We also encourage the submission of policy-oriented papers with strong empirical work.

5.2 Participants and experts submitting papers for the Conference must adhere to the key deadline dates as stated in Table 1:

Table 1: Annotated Time Frame

Annotation	Deadline Date
Start of paper submissions	20 June 2016
Deadline for paper submissions	15 August 2016
Notification of final acceptance	24 October 2016
Last day for registration for presenters	4 November 2016
Closing of flight bookings	14 November 2016
Conference dates	December 5-7 2016

5.3 Papers will be blind-reviewed by the co-organizing institutions and those accepted for presentation shall be original quality work not previously published.

5.4 Young African female and male researchers are especially encouraged to submit their articles. One of the objectives of the AEC series is to provide young African researchers with the opportunity not only to share their work with a broader audience, but also to expand their networks.

6. Expected Outputs

6.1 The outputs of the Conference are expected to include:

- A Conference Report: a summary of key findings as well as key policy recommendations distilled from conference papers and keynote speeches;
- Conference Proceedings: a **special issue** of the *African Development Review* containing the most innovative articles of policy and operational relevance, as well as a **proceedings book** that publishes selected papers. This double publication finds

a useful application in policy-making for political leaders and in defining strategic priorities for development practitioners.

7. Sponsorship

7.1 Authors will be requested to indicate whether they require support to cover expenses (travel, accommodation and daily subsistence allowance) associated with their participation at the Conference. Only one author per paper accepted for presentation will be eligible for sponsorship. Support is reserved mainly for presenters and young researchers from Africa.



African Development Bank Group



Economic Commission for Africa



United Nations Development Programme