

AEC 2016 Plenary session 2:

Building a Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture in Africa (AfDB)

Guidelines for Panel Discussion

Introduction:

Agriculture remains vital for Africa's economy, contributing to around 15 percent of its GDP on average. The sector employs 60 percent of the African labor force, 47 percent of which are women, and is the main source of income for Africa's rural population. However, this sector is not performing to its fullest potential due to low productivity and limited value addition of the agricultural production. The poor performance of agriculture undermines food security, with Africa recording the highest incidence of undernourishment in the World; prevents labor from moving out of that sector into manufacturing and services thereby hindering Africa's structural transformation and economic development; and results in significant imports of agricultural products, putting additional strain on scarce foreign exchange reserves.

80 percent of the farmers in Africa still are smallholders, cultivating low-yield staple food crops on small plots with a minimal use of inputs and depending on rainwater rather than irrigation, thereby subjecting production to the vagaries of the weather. The continent therefore need to become more resilient to climate change by reducing its dependence on rain fed agriculture and relying more extensively on irrigation. Africa could exploit its numerous river systems and significant groundwater resources that remain largely untapped, not only to enhance agriculture production but also to secure rural livelihoods. It is also imperative that the continent learn from the mitigated success of the green revolution in Asia subsequent to the misuse of agrochemicals. Indeed, in the long run, Asia faced adverse environmental consequences, including on water supply, soil quality and greenhouse gas emissions, leading to stagnation in crop production and rising cost of agricultural inputs and, ultimately, leaving a large number of smallholder Asian farmers indebted, landless and poor.

Key questions to be addressed by the panel:

The potential ways to unlock Africa's agriculture sector in a resilient and sustainable way raises a number of vital questions panelists should address:

1. More needs to be done to increase agriculture productivity in Africa. But is it possible to enhance agriculture competitiveness without damaging the environment? Any best practice, lesson learnt or success story that you could share on this?
2. African governments committed in the June 2014 Malabo Declaration that 30 percent of the continent's farm, pastoral and fisher households will be resilient to climate risks by 2025 and launched the Africa Climate-Smart Agriculture Alliance to this end. What progress has been achieved so far in this regard and how to further mainstream agriculture resilience to climate change and risk management in policies, strategies and investment plans?
3. Taking into consideration the variety of soils across the continent and acknowledging the fact that African countries need tailored approaches, what environment-friendly, technological innovation African governments could support to enhance sustainable

agriculture production and mitigate environmental risks, including in areas like infrastructure, irrigation, research and development as well as knowledge sharing?

4. Farmers’ access to insurance is still very limited across Africa despite the pressing adverse effects of climate change on its agriculture sector. Could you provide an overview of the current situation across Africa and share any best practices, success stories on the continent and policy recommendations on how to develop further sustainable insurance mechanisms well designed to cope with farmers’ vulnerable income?

Format:

The Plenary Session of the Conference will last **1.5 hours** and will be addressed by a maximum of 5 panelists. A short keynote address (7-10 minutes) will precede the panel discussion. The Moderator of the session will introduce each panelist and provide a contextual briefing with guiding questions to focus the interventions of the panelists.

After the panelists’ interventions, the Moderator will invite succinct interventions from the participants and then permit panelists to wrap-up with responses to matters arising.

The Moderator will allot time following these guidelines:

Roles and Activities

Moderator – Introductions and Briefing	6 minutes
Moderator - Transition between panelists	2 minutes
Panelists – Each panelist presents (7 mins/10 mins)	30 minutes
Moderator (Summary of panelists’ interventions)	5 minutes
Open Discussion	25 minutes
Response by Panelists (5 minutes each)	20 minutes
Moderator Closing Remarks	2 minutes
Total	1.5 hours

The Moderator should ensure that these time limits are respected and not exceeded as it is important for the smooth progression of the Conference agenda. Finally, Moderators should ensure that the key issues of the sessions are captured by the rapporteurs.