

Live up to the Promise: Insure Kenyan Farmers and Promote Irrigation!

The recent national budget slashed 3.5 billion shillings from initial allocation to agriculture, moving Kenya further away from its Maputo commitment to dedicate 10% of its budget to this sector. Honouring this commitment would be a good start for the new government to live up to its promise of uplifting agriculture and linking farmers to markets. Priority should be given to strong agriculture insurance and irrigation systems.

Climate change has already had devastating effects on agriculture in Kenya especially by increasing food insecurity. This can be seen both in crop failures due to drought and flooding as well as in the livestock sub-sector where production has been affected. This has undermined the potential for agriculture to contribute towards improving the livelihoods of farmers while at the same time producing enough, affordable and easily available food to not only feed the Kenyan population.

Live up to the promise

The 3.5 billion shillings slashed from initial allocation to the current 38.07 billion shillings (representing only 4 percent of the National Budget) to agriculture hinders the sector from fully realizing the promise the new government came with: uplifting agriculture, promoting food security and linking farmers to markets.



Raising awareness about irrigation usage would be key to reduce Kenya's over reliance on rain-fed agriculture.

To live up to this promise, the government should take expeditious measures to invest in the sector and honour its Maputo (2003) commitment to dedicate 10 per cent of the national budget to agriculture. This should be done in priority through supporting the implementation of irrigation infrastructure and developing insurance systems across the country.

Why promote irrigation?

Farmers in Kenya have over the years relied on rain-fed agriculture. Climate change has however rendered this reliance on rain unsustainable, reduced agricultural productivity and has even increased the risks. The collapse of some irrigations schemes like

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» In 2013, the share of the national budget allocated to agriculture is 4%, far from the 10% committed at Maputo in 2003.

» To live up to its promise to uplift agriculture, the new Kenyan government should honour its Maputo commitment by increasing funding to irrigation and insurance mechanisms for farmers.

» Close to 8 billion shillings are already set aside to expand irrigation in the 2013-2014 budget (2013/14). This is a good opportunity for Kenyan agriculture to reduce over-reliance on rains, which has been contributing to food insecurity.

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Ahero also created shortages of rice which were covered by imports. This does not only hinder farmers from gaining from agricultural trade but it also increases the import bill. Irrigation schemes should be developed or redevelop in order to increase productivity and promote food security.

Why promote agricultural insurance system?

Agriculture is now more uncertain than it was decades ago because of climate change. A farmer cannot know whether their efforts would turn out to be a success as crop failures are common occurrences resulting from droughts and floods.

Agricultural insurance is one mechanism that can address this challenge. It promotes the sector by shielding farmers from the risks associated with crop failures. This would even enhance the ability of farmers to secure agricultural financing since it would substantially reduce the risks associated with farming hence attracting financial institutions to offer credit to farmers.

What are we calling for?

❶ A Joint secretariat of the three relevant ministries

Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and Trade and Industry should establish a joint secretariat in order to promote agricultural insurance and development of irrigation infrastructure. Such a Secretariat would continuously discuss, address issues of insurance system and irrigation infrastructure and would promote policy and practice coherence to holistically deal with the challenges of food insecurity, climate change and Trade.

❷ Raising awareness about irrigation usage

The National Irrigation Board and stakeholders should collaborate in raising awareness about irrigation usage, in order to reduce Kenya's over reliance on rain-fed agriculture. The 700 million shillings to construct irrigation infrastructure as well as 8 billion shillings, set aside to expand irrigation in the recent budget (2013/14) is welcome, but there is need to ensure efficiency through timely disbursements such that the much needed irrigation schemes i.e. Bura, Hola, South West Kano, Ahero, Mwea and Pekerra are up and running.

❸ Allocate agriculture 10% of national budget

There is an urgent need to increase funding to the agricultural sector to meet the Maputo Declaration of 10 percent of the National Budget. This would support the institution of an insurance mechanism for agriculture to support farmers in case of crop failure. In addition,

part of it should be directed at increasing the application of irrigation technologies/water harvesting in order to support small-scale farmers and those in other vulnerable areas. Failure to increase funding to the agriculture sector as well as promote agricultural insurance and irrigation would undermine farmers' livelihoods and hinder the achievement of Vision 2030.

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN !

"Live to the Promise: uplift Agriculture, Insure Farmers and Promote Irrigation!" is a national campaign led by Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) Nairobi to promote stronger agricultural insurance and irrigation systems in Kenya.

You want to act? Till September 2014, the campaign will organise actions where your participation is needed! For more information, contact the campaign coordinator:

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USEFUL RESOURCES

African Union (2003). Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security

The Maputo Declaration of 2003 contains important decisions made African Union Heads of State regarding agriculture. Prominent among them is the "commitment to the allocation of at least 10 percent of national budgetary resources to agriculture and rural development policy implementation within five years"...

► <http://bit.ly/TuZDub>

Otieon, G., Mungai, O., Ogalo, V. (2013). Climate, Food, Trade: Where is the Policy Nexus? - Kenya

This research study outlines elements of a more coherent policy framework at the interface of climate change, food security and trade in Kenya...

► <http://bit.ly/14JfyZi>