

# AGRA update

Alliance  
for a Green Revolution  
in Africa

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*Lifting millions out of poverty and hunger by increasing the productivity and profitability of small-scale farms in Africa*



## Ushering in a New Era for Africa's Farmers

Message from **Kofi A. Annan**,  
Chairman of the Board of AGRA

The world has woken up to a food crisis that is suddenly acute, but that has plagued Africa for the last 30 years as per capita food production has declined. Africa's food crisis is the result of decades of neglect of agriculture and of misguided policies by both African nations and international actors. While immediate food aid is essential, equally essential are medium- and long-term solutions to end Africa's widespread poverty and hunger. These solutions begin in farmers' fields and extend across the agricultural value chain. AGRA is dedicated to achieving an African Green Revolution—one which chiefly benefits resource-poor smallholder farmers and which is sustainable economically and environmentally.

Over the past year, AGRA has been working on the ground with farmers, the majority of whom are women, to get them the resources they need to increase yield. Working as well with agricultural scientists, the private sector, civil society organizations, African governments, and international partners, we aim to double or triple the yield of smallscale farmers.

Today, their farm productivity is just one-quarter the global average. Our work is based on partnerships, and this year has seen the launch of ambitious partnerships in Africa and globally. In Tanzania, Kenya, and Malawi we are working urgently with public-and private-sector partners to establish national networks of agro-dealers to get high quality seeds and fertilizers to farmers who otherwise have access to neither.

Our programs and policy go hand-in-hand, and one aspect of this effort is improving access to finance. Smallholder farmers and rural businesswomen and men need affordable credit to move beyond subsistence agriculture and agricultural enterprises that struggle to survive. We have partnered with private banks and the governments of Kenya and Tanzania to launch innovative financing programs that will get loans to millions of smallholder farmers and others across the agricultural value chain. At the same time, the governments in Kenya and Malawi are working through agro-dealers to make subsidized fertilizers and seeds available to the poorest farmers.

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# AGRA Launches New Partnerships

## Seeding Africa's Breadbaskets

**Rome, Italy. 4 June 2008.** The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) joined forces with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the World Food Programme to focus all partners' efforts in Africa toward intensifying agricultural production in the continent's highest potential breadbaskets. The partnership will bring unprecedented coordination to boost small-scale farm production, creating multiple green revolutions for many of Africa's most important food crops.

## Boosting Smallholder Rice Production in Africa

**Yokohama, Japan, 29 May 2008.** AGRA joined with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to launch the Africa Rice Development Initiative, a US\$57 million undertaking aimed at doubling Africa's rice harvest within the next ten years. Partners in this comprehensive effort will also include The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Africa Rice Center (WARDA) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

Find out more: [www.agra-alliance.org](http://www.agra-alliance.org).

## Global Partnerships

Our global partnerships include an unprecedented four-way collaboration, announced in June 2008, among AGRA, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. These four organizations will collaborate to rapidly scale up agricultural productivity in high-potential target areas of a dozen African nations.

We will coordinate joint activities to accelerate food production, improve markets and raise incomes. This past May, AGRA also partnered with the Japan International Cooperation Agency to launch the Coalition for Africa Rice Development. Its program will dramatically increase rice production in Africa, which now imports 40 percent of its food. Its Enhanced Africa Rice Development Initiative is part of AGRA's work on staple food crops. These include many crops that are indigenous in Africa and have been neglected by modern agricultural science.



*MOU signed between AGRA, the FAO, IFAD, WFP at the FAO High-Level Conference on World Food Security.*

AGRA aims to breed some 1,000 resilient, high-yielding varieties of staple and indigenous crops. In addition to our work with rice, the last year has seen the delivery of new varieties of maize, sorghum, bean and cassava to farmers. At the same time, we are building seed distribution systems through supporting independent African seed companies, and working with governments to speed the lengthy approval process for new varieties.

AGRA's work seeks to transform the agricultural value chain and bring farmers to the market and the market to farmers. This requires improving financing, infrastructure, transport, agricultural education and value-adding businesses. It requires advocating for policies that benefit smallholder farmers. And it requires safeguarding the environment at every step along the way.

Our efforts are part of an emerging trend that recognizes the essential role of agricultural development in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and replacing poverty with prosperity. This trend was signaled five years ago, when

the African Union's New Partnership for African Development rallied around a Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program. CAADP set the goal of dedicating 10 percent of national budgets to agriculture and boosting productivity by 6 percent per annum.

AGRA strongly supports this goal and is working with many African governments, including in Mozambique, Malawi, Kenya, Uganda and Ghana to seek new rural paths to prosperity. AGRA

is partnering as well with the African Development Bank, which has committed US\$4.8 billion to agriculture and food aid, including resources to bolster the development of infrastructure and to increase farmers' access to fertilizers—an essential farm input, the import price of which has more than tripled for many African countries.

Internationally, the tide is also turning. The World Bank Development Report of 2008 noted that "agricultural growth does four times more for the incomes of the extremely poor than growth in other sectors."

After decades of neglect, some nations and multilateral organizations are increasing support for agricultural development. Some are beginning to re-evaluate past policies, such as structural adjustment, which required African governments to abandon public sector support of farmers as a condition of aid. The United States and the United Kingdom are now boosting aid for African agricultural development; Canada has revised its food aid policy to buy food produced in the countries receiving the aid; and the United States is considering a similar change. Furthermore, major international donor organizations are focusing increasingly on agriculture as an engine of economic development. These include the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, who jointly founded AGRA in 2006.

In the nearly two years since its founding, AGRA has travelled a rapid road—as reported by AGRA President Dr. A. Namanga Ngong'i (see article page 3). While we cannot predict when the global food crisis will end, we can transform Africa's ability to feed itself, and to provide food for export to other regions. Today, AGRA and its partners stand poised to catalyze that transformation. African smallholder farmers, in the tens of millions, will be part of the solution to the global food crisis.

# AGRA: A Year of Growth

## Message from **Dr. A. Namanga Ngongi**, President of AGRA

**F**rom Dakar to Nairobi, world leaders are working to stave off what has become a global food crisis. While there are many reasons for the current global food crisis, its underlying cause in Africa is that the continent relies too heavily on imports and it does not produce enough to feed itself. Africa has been in a somewhat chronic food crisis for decades, with millions of people facing silent hunger.

The challenge now is to find a way ahead that produces greater supplies of food. Africa can chart its own plans for the future. Using the largely untapped indigenous knowledge of the continent's farmers, scientists, and policymakers, we have an opportunity for Africa to develop its own unique solutions to these problems. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is doing just that.

AGRA was formed with a vision of bringing about a dramatic transformation in smallholder agriculture in Africa. Initiated through the visionary leadership of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation, AGRA is rapidly evolving and building its programs and organizational base. We are providing farmers with support, while putting in place comprehensive long-term solutions that will ultimately transform the face of agriculture in Africa.

We began with developing improved seeds for maize, rice, finger millet, sorghum, cassava and other staples through AGRA's Program for Africa's Seed Systems (see page 8). More recently we've launched the Soil Health Program to restore the fertility of Africa's degraded soils, as well as several financial services projects in Malawi, Kenya, and Tanzania that will provide loans for smallholder farmers in Africa and the small traders who serve them. This is a monumental achievement for smallholder farmers in these countries.

### AGRA's Growth

Starting in a borrowed office with just a few staff in Nairobi, AGRA today has 35 staff spread across offices in Nairobi and Accra. We have recently hired Directors for our Soil Health and Markets Access Programs, which brings our total number of programs to four. We are expanding our geographical reach through several new partnerships with governments, farmers groups, private institutions, and international organizations, beyond the original thirteen African countries.

As I look back over my first six months as President of AGRA, I am proud to note a number of our accomplishments. In the last six months, the AGRA seed production program, known as the Program for African Seed Systems (PASS), has contributed at least 500 tons of new clean seed for production in Africa, particularly maize seed. To ensure that new varieties no longer sit on the shelves, we are investing



in seed companies to multiply and deliver seed to farmers across Africa. By the end of this year, we hope that several thousand tons of new seed for food staples would have

been produced for the use of farmers in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Nigeria and Uganda.

We are supporting Africa's next generation of plant breeders and crop scientists through partnerships with universities in South Africa, Ghana and Kenya. In April, we celebrated the graduation of eight new PhD students at the African Centre for Crop Improvement (ACCI), hosted by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa. Earlier this year, we launched the West African Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI) at the University of Ghana-Legon. At WACCI, we are funding the training of 40 PhD students in the next five years. Every year, we hope to add to the number of participating universities, identifying at least ten more sites for this initiative.

A new area of AGRA's work that has great potential for transforming agriculture involves providing financial services and loans for smallholder farmers and agro-dealers. In Tanzania, we provided a US\$1 million cash guarantee to leverage US\$5 million in loans from the National Microfinance Bank for farmers in Tanzania. More recently in Kenya, AGRA and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) each contributed US\$2.5 million to a joint program with Equity Bank and the Government of Kenya, which aims to avail US\$50 million in financing to smallholder farmers in Kenya. This is a major achievement.

We would like to thank the President of the Republic of Kenya, H.E. Mwai Kibaki, and Prime Minister Raila Odinga for joining us for the signing ceremony for this historic agreement. Wide-scale adoption of these types of financing programs would considerably reduce the financing gap in African agriculture. In Malawi, we've worked with the government on a program to provide the poorest farmers with government subsidized seed and fertilizer delivered through agro-dealers. The result has been phenomenal.

Farmers in Malawi have experienced record maize harvests and participation of the private sector is growing. This wonderful achievement can serve as a model for other African countries.



**Dr. Ngongi discussing best maize variety with Mrs. Kyende in Kenya.**

These recent achievements give us a great deal of optimism as we march forward in our effort to trigger a smallholder led green revolution in Africa. There is still much work to do and we know that it will not be easy. Day in and day out, African farmers struggle to make the most of their farms, with little or no support. AGRA is here to give them support and I hope others will join us in this effort.



# Policies for an African Green Revolution

**A**gricultural technologies are essential for an African Green Revolution. But alone they are not enough. Technologies need to be accessible and affordable for farmers.

Equally critical are incentive systems that will make agricultural investments profitable for farmers. AGRA believes that what is needed is a “policy-induced” process of change that will bring about the green revolution. AGRA’s work therefore combines policy advocacy with large-scale promotion of best farming practices, appropriate technologies, and the strengthening of markets to provide comprehensive and pro-poor solutions for small-scale farmers.



*Dr. Akin A. Adesina (right) signs Kilimo Biashara Loan Partnership*

## Pro-poor policies must be in place as we address the current food crisis

The current food crisis has galvanized attention because of riots in urban centers. But Africa has been experiencing a hunger crisis for three decades—a silent food crisis—as millions of poor farmers are unable to produce enough to feed themselves. Decades of neglect of smallholder farmers, arising from inappropriate

policies, have deepened productivity and poverty traps in Africa. Structural adjustment programs, while achieving some positive results, unfortunately left millions of farmers in a precarious situation. The disbanding of government support institutions have left a huge void—with millions of African farmers now unable to access technologies, markets and finance.

The current food crisis provides an opportunity for African governments to turn a ‘crisis’ into an ‘opportunity’. The rising price of food provides incentives for domestic production and import substitution efforts. Prices for fertilizers have increased by over 600 percent on the global market since 2007.

African farmers urgently need support to enable them to access improved seeds and fertilizers, so that they can rapidly raise their crop yields. What are needed now are bold pro-poor policies that will allow millions of farmers to produce surpluses for the market—in the short-, medium- and long-terms.

## AGRA is taking policy action now

AGRA is using an action-driven policy approach to pilot new models of supporting poor farmers. We are working with national governments and commercial banks to implement new models for unlocking productivity and poverty traps.

For example, lack of access to affordable credit limits investments in new agricultural technologies. Despite the rapid growth of the financial sector in Africa, commercial banks rarely lend to agriculture, especially smallholder farmers and small rural businesses that supply them with farm inputs and services. Yet, ironically, there exists excess liquidity in commercial banks across Africa that can be leveraged into smallholder agriculture, as well as the agricultural input and output value chains that serve farmers.

AGRA is developing innovative financing tools that share the risk of lending with commercial banks, while working with governments to broaden access to farm inputs for poor farmers. AGRA recently launched two ambitious initiatives, one in Kenya and one in Tanzania, that will finally get millions of farmers the financing they need to purchase supplies and increase farm productivity.

### In Kenya, the Kilimo Biashara Loan Partnership for Kenyan Farmers

will provide 2.5 million smallholder farmers and 15,000 small agricultural enterprises with the financing they need to break out of poverty and build viable businesses. Along with Equity Bank Limited, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the Kenya Ministry of Agriculture, AGRA signed an agreement for a loan facility of US\$50 million. Equity Bank’s loan facility will operate against a US\$5 million “cash guarantee fund” from AGRA and IFAD. This fund would reduce Equity Bank’s risk of lending. As part of the program, the Ministry of Agriculture plans to provide well-targeted and market-friendly subsidies for Kenya’s most vulnerable farmers.

### In Tanzania, AGRA and the National Microfinance Bank (NMB) of Tanzania

signed an agreement to release US\$6.1 million to improve financing for Tanzania’s network of rural agro-dealers. The NMB is providing a total of US\$5 million for loans to be made available to agro-dealers in five pilot districts. This was made possible because of a loan guarantee of US\$1.1 million provided by AGRA and the Financial Sector Deepening Trust (FSDT). If successful, the pilot will be scaled up nationally by NMB and partners. The program will lead to greater uptake of improved seeds, fertilizers, and other complementary farm inputs, as well as higher farm productivity and food security for farmers.

AGRA will work with national governments on land policies that ensure land rights, especially for women, who form the majority of the farming population; policies that reduce vulnerability of farmers, including the development of crop insurance and social protection policies; policies that can stimulate processing and value addition to staple food crops and expand local and regional markets; policies that will enable the vulnerable to participate in the green revolution; and policies that will promote greater investment in much needed rural infrastructure.

AGRA will build the capacity of policy analysts in Africa to develop “home grown” agricultural policies that are appropriate for their countries. We will forge close partnerships with national governments, NEPAD-CAADP, Regional Economic Communities, African Development Bank, Economic Commission for Africa, World Bank, and other bilateral and multi-lateral donors, to implement agricultural sector policies that will deliver an equitable and sustainable green revolution for Africa.

**By Dr. Akin A. Adesina**  
Vice President for Policy and Partnerships

# A Farmer's View

## Mrs. Bernadette Mwikali Kioko, Ukambani, Kenya

**T**he rolling hills outside the market town of Machakos are remarkably green at this time of year,

following soaking rains. But Bernadette Mwikali Kioko still keeps an anxious eye on the clear blue sky for signs of moisture-bearing clouds. This southeastern region of Kenya, known as Ukambani, lies in a borderline area where rainfall has grown increasingly erratic, making life for the small-scale farmers of maize and beans ever more precarious.

"Maize is our staple food, and we have not identified any other source of income from plants to sell, so we continue planting maize," says Mrs. Kioko, a 67-year-old retired registered nurse who farms 15 acres with her husband John.

In addition to maize, beans, cassava, millet and sweet potatoes, the Kiokos and other farmers in the area have tried growing coffee and macadamia nuts. But when the market goes down or the rains fail, they pulled up one crop and planted another in an attempt to beat the odds. In the end, the process proved too laborious to be worthwhile.

Among the toughest challenges she faces are having affordable transportation to get her produce to market, safe storage from an assortment of pests, and a regular supply of water. Mrs. Kioko has a power pump to get water from the river, but rising fuel costs often makes it too expensive to run.

Says Mrs. Kioko: "Farmers sell their maize cheaper and sooner so they don't have to store it and worry about pests," one of the worst of which is the larger grain borer, known here as "Osama." Despite the difficulties, Mrs. Kioko loves farming, and especially her Friesian milk cow Kawembe. She belongs to a women's group whose 32 members help each other improve their farming methods. One of their goals is to see that each member has installed a tank for harvesting rainwater. Bernadette Kioko already has two, in addition to a well.

She uses a mix of seeds that include her own, and improved seed from the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) through its Katumani research station. But Mrs. Kioko also thinks that an African green revolution should promote the training of more agricultural extension agents and support frequent farm visits "to provide more education on methodology." And she would welcome organized visits to the farms of colleagues who have been particularly successful. "Learning alone doesn't work well; it's better to go to see successful farmers and learn from them," she says.



*Bernadette Kioko with her cow.*

# Food Crisis Facts

**T**hree-quarters of the world's poorest people—the 1.1 billion who live on less than US\$1 a day—live in rural areas, and most rely on agriculture to feed themselves and their families, yet many cannot grow enough to eat or sell. In Africa, 200 million people are chronically hungry; 33 million children under the age of five are malnourished.

The underlying cause of the food crisis in Africa is the fact that the continent does not produce enough to feed itself—the result of decades of neglect of agriculture at national and international levels.

- ♦ The percentage of official development assistance that went to agriculture fell from over 16 percent in 1980, to under 4 percent in 2004.
- ♦ Agriculture accounts for only 4 percent of public spending in agriculture-based developing countries, and there has been a steady erosion of investment in agricultural research that benefits poor farmers.
- ♦ The current average post-harvest crop losses in Africa are 40 percent. A reduction of 10 percent of these losses would result in 5 million additional tons of cereals per year.
- ♦ Cereal yield in Africa is one-quarter the global average.
- ♦ World cereal production declined by 2 percent from 2.05 billion tons to 2.01 billion tons between 2005/06 and 2006/07. In Africa, per capita food production has been declining over the past several decades.
- ♦ According to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, achieving an African Green Revolution will require investments of US\$10 billion a year.

To end the food crisis in Africa, Africa needs a sustainable Green Revolution that enables smallholder farmers to significantly boost their yields and incomes. AGRA is working to provide millions of small farmers with tools and opportunities they need to do so. In less than two years, we have committed US\$330 million to improved seed production, soil health, agricultural education, agro-dealer networks and improved access to financing for farmers and small businesses. We are looking for partners, large and small, to make history together across Africa.



*A 75 year old farmer in Western Kenya struggles to uproot the striga weed from her farm in Western Kenya*



# Malawi Morning

It is the rainy season, but there is no rain. Last year's stores of food are running out and cash is short as the long leaves of unripened maize plants turn crisp and brown in the sun.

The sun is rising as Carrie Osborne, director of Funwe Farm Ltd, sales manager Eddie Chilongo, and communications manager Justice Sumaili set out on a two-day road trip across southern Malawi. The trip has some historic significance for the start-up seed farm.

Last year, Funwe Farm Ltd sold 50,000 bags of improved maize seed, each weighing four kilograms and costing 400 Kwacha (about US\$3), payable either with cash or a government voucher meant to assist the poorest farmers. One bag of the high-yielding, drought resistant seed can produce eight 50 kg sacks of food maize—twice the yield of local unimproved varieties—and enough to feed six people for a year.



*Building capacity of agro-dealers across Africa (Malawi agro-dealer).*

As a result of those sales, a network of 29 rural agro-dealers, and the voucher program, the Funwe harvest is now poised to feed an additional 150,000 people for six months.

Today's trip aims to visit as many of the Funwe agro-dealers as possible, both to square the farm's records with those of the individual outlets, and to pay the agro-dealers their commissions. By the end of the trip, the total paid in commissions could top 1.5 million Malawian Kwacha (US\$10,000) — a stunning amount.

Last year, when the government announced its voucher scheme — weeks before the start of the planting season — Funwe scrambled to build an agro-dealer network of rural farm supply shops across a region encompassing one million

people. The network would be the backbone of a concerted effort to get farmers seeds and fertilizer to improve their yield.

About 100 farmers grow the high quality maize seed that Funwe sells. In an effort to encourage diversification, they also grow seeds for improved varieties of soya, cassava, groundnuts, cowpeas, pigeon peas and sorghum; raise a herd of livestock; run a small jatropha plantation; and have begun a bee-keeping operation.

It's all good news for a country that is one of the world's poorest. Only 3 percent of the adult population earns enough to pay national income taxes. Improved seed such as Funwe's makes a huge difference in a family's food security or a farmer's ability to earn a profit.

## **"I want to assist."**

We meet the first agro-dealer of the day, Harry Brightone, at a bank parking lot in Mangochi. Harry used his income to buy a car, allowing him to distribute seed to four outlets. The route took him half a day and covered some 30 kilometers. By the start of the growing season, he had sold 2,000 bags of seed.

"I want to assist. That is why I spend my money on fuel. In other areas there is drought. But in my area, because the farmers got the seeds early, they are going to survive," he says. Although proud, Harry is also irked. He was expecting a larger commission. Eddie explains that the commission was lowered when the government lowered the price of its subsidized seed. A notification went out in the mail, but Harry never received it. Later, Carrie says that the incident underscores an important point: the need for the government to set up its voucher plan early, and clearly, in order for it to operate efficiently.

Our next stop is at the Upali Imani Wholesalers. The shop owner Robert Jailos expects to bring in a good harvest: 60 sacks of maize from his two hectares of land, most of it planted with Funwe seed.

Robert leads us through his village, over long rutted roads, until we see green in an ocean of brown leaves: a field of maize taller than the rest. Every plant grown from the high-yielding Funwe seed has big cobs jutting off each strong stalk. As Robert shows off his field, his family gathers, many of his 14 sons and daughters. They are smiling.

By the end of a 13-hour day, the farm staff have spoken with just five agro-dealers. Almost everyone has misplaced some delivery notes and receipts, and the record-keeping of one agro-dealer is nearly indecipherable. Another lost 28 bags of seed to rats. A third cannot find the receipts for the bags that he sold for cash. Nearly all seed was sold for vouchers. On the whole, though, everything is in order.

The agro-dealers' biggest complaint: that they did not have enough seed. "I sell out, and still there is demand."

**By Bee Wuethrich, for AGRA**

# Celebrating Harvest in Tanzania

**J**ust five years ago, Mustafa Kanungila was among the three million unemployed Tanzanian youth. Today, he is a proud owner of an agro-dealer shop.

Thanks to the Agro-dealer Strengthening Program supported by AGRA, Mustafa and his colleagues plan to set up more shops in Ifakara region of Tanzania in the course of this year. The AGRA-supported programs have offered these agro-dealers business management training and now access to affordable credit.

## Unemployment Among Youth

Mustafa, 28, graduated from high school in the year 2000, but his family could not afford to raise school fees to sponsor him for postsecondary education. His main preoccupation, like that of many youths in the Ifakara area of Tanzania, was to do menial jobs. When lucky, they got extended contracts at Kilombero Sugar Factory about 100 kilometres away. In Tanzania, unemployment is real. Of those in employment, agriculture offers the bulk of the opportunity at 81 percent, followed by the informal sector at 8.8 percent, and the private sector at 4.5 percent. Unemployment is more severe among persons below 34 years of age. With savings from their employment at the sugar factor, Mustafa joined with a few colleagues to start a maize growing project on a 4 hectare farm.

The first harvest was low but they got enough to sell and reinvest in the farm. Then, while buying hybrid maize seeds at an agro-dealer, they learned that their farm could produce more if they used farm inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides.

"We pressured ourselves to commit more money and bought some inputs." The harvests were better, they quadrupled.

## Seeing a Business Opportunity

When this happened, Mustafa says they realized other farmers faced the same dilemma. "We saw a business opportunity!" says an excited Mustafa, who mans the agro-dealer shop which they set up in 2003. They started by buying small quantities of inputs at retail price to sell to farmers around the village, adding on a small profit margin. Shortly after, they established a better business relationship with an agrodealer who linked them to a wholesaler.

As the business grew, they set up a better shop and bought a rice milling machine to tap in more money. Then last year, the situation changed for better. They joined the AGRA-supported CNFA programme that helps agro-dealers increase their capacity to meet extension services and inputs needs for farmers. The CNFA programme is supported by AGRA through a US\$13.1 million in grants to create an all-inclusive Agro-dealer Support Program in Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania.

## Growing Agro-dealer Business

Mustafa and his business partners have already gone through a series of training on better business practices. The training included book keeping, stock control, and other aspects of small business management to ensure its sustainability.



*The majority of farmers across Africa are women.*

Mustafa is all smiles as he tells me how they have developed a proposal to secure credit to enable them get more stocks from their suppliers on credit. They hope the loan will come from a new financing program launched by AGRA and Tanzania's National Microfinance Bank (see Policies for an African Green Revolution).

"If this goes well, it will be very, very important for us," he says. The group plans to expand on the agro-dealer business. Then, they have applied for an additional 10-hectare farm from the government. They plan to grow more maize using the knowledge they have already gained.

"We are also keen to set up satellite shops in other villages. We are identifying young people who we can sell to the farmers," said Mustafa.

**By Stella Kihara,**

AGRA Communications Consultant

## AGRA at Work in West Africa

**T**he Accra, Ghana, office started in September 2007 with assumption of duty by three program officers working across five PASS countries: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. This first year has been mainly focused on understanding and interacting with all stakeholders in the value chain of the principal crop in each country (farmers, seed and input suppliers, grain marketers, breeders and other actors) and recruitment of five support staff. From October 2007 to February 2008, the Program Officers in West Africa visited the five countries in the region. During the field visits, they met with policy makers, scientists, private sector actors, and other seed-related partners to discuss key constraints and opportunities in the agricultural sector in each country. This has led to the development, review, and approval of grant proposals in: key breeding programs (10); seed production/dissemination (4); and agro-dealer development (2) across the region.





*Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI) scientists discuss improved sorghum varieties with AGRA staff.*



*Mozambique woman shows off improved cassava variety.*



*AGRA supports private seed companies across Africa.*

## Program for Africa's Seed Systems (PASS)

**A**GRA's Program for Africa's Seed Systems is a new venture in African agriculture whose mission is to increase income, improve food security, and reduce poverty by promoting the development of a seed system that delivers new crop technology to farmers in an efficient, equitable, and sustainable manner.

PASS prioritizes getting funds to key individuals and agencies working directly with Africa's farmers on developing new crop varieties, producing new seeds, and developing new delivery systems for getting critical inputs to smallholder farmers.

PASS is funding the development of new varieties of beans, cassava, cowpea, maize, rice, sweet potato and sorghum in 12 countries. Our crop development uses conventional breeding, and relies upon close collaboration between plant breeders and farmers. It pays special attention to conserving the great diversity of Africa's crop varieties and cropping systems, and in many cases makes use of this biodiversity in developing new, higher-yielding varieties.

Circulating widely and working with front-line practitioners across a 13-country program area, in 2007, PASS Program Officers developed 43 grants totaling US\$36,801,778, all aimed at improving crop yields under Africa's challenging farming conditions. Grants made by PASS in 2007 will train 80 new African plant breeders to the PhD level and increase yields of eight important food crops in six African countries.

Already, PASS-funded activities have produced over 400 MT of improved seed and trained over 400 village-level distributors of seed in professional business practices. Equally important, PASS activities have communicated an exciting message to a generation of agriculturalists working in both the public and private sectors in Africa



*Dr. Joe DeVries, director PASS and Jane Ininda compare bean varieties at local market.*

that now is the time to bring forward new ideas for increasing food production—which until now have remained only dreams.

In its first year of operation, PASS has breathed new life into Africa's hopes for a green revolution based on increased harvests among its millions of hard-working small-scale farmers. PASS works along a value chain that begins with newly-trained African crop scientists, continues with funds for breeding new crop varieties, and achieves impact in the lives of farmers through a vigorous campaign of seed production and supply of agricultural inputs at village level.

PASS makes carefully targeted grants along a "value chain" of interdependent activities which includes:

**"Education for African Crop Improvement" (EACI)**, which targets funds for education and training, especially MSc and PhD fellowships for plant breeders and other crop scientists;

**"Fund for Improvement and Adoption of African Crops" (FIAAC)**, which makes targeted grants to individual breeders and their support teams to develop and popularize improved crop varieties of Africa's major food crops;

**"Seed Production for Africa" (SEPA)**, which provides grant support and equity investments for the emergence of private, African seed companies and other seed dissemination activities;

**"Agro-dealer Development Program" (ADP)**, which provides training and credit to establish and support the growth of private, village-based agrodealers who are a primary conduit of seeds, and other agricultural inputs plus knowledge directly to smallholder farmers to increase their productivity and incomes. It builds and develops networks of certified agro-dealers to enhance the quality, volume and range of seeds sold. This will result in a significant increase in adoption of improved crop varieties.

### Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa was launched in September 2006 with initial funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. AGRA is listening to and learning from all partners and stakeholders.

Please visit us online or call us with your feedback.

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