



Official Participant

Report Template for EU Events at EXPO

Event Title :	Agribusiness investments in partnership with farmers' organisations in ACP countries	Date:	14-15 October
Event Organiser:	A3/E5		
Event Target Group:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institutional partners: African Union, EIB, ACP Secretariat, UNIDO, CTA, COLEACP• Stakeholders: farmers organisations from ACP and EU, European agribusiness investors and associations, NGOs (OxFam, ActionAid etc)• Young farmers from ACP countries and the EU (CEJA)		
Rapporteur:	Dorian Filote		

Event Concept

The conference "Agribusiness investments in partnership with farmers' organisations in ACP countries" was organised by the European Commission (DG AGRI and DEVCO) in partnership with the African Union Commission, the ACP Secretariat, the Pan African Farmers' Organization (PAFO), the European Investment Bank, UNIDO, the COLEACP and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA). CTA in addition provided advice and support for the conceptualisation of the conference as a whole as well as its follow up.

Debates were centred on three main themes: facilitating trade and market access for agricultural products; investing in value added agro-food chains; and financing to facilitate agribusiness investments in ACP countries.

Participants were invited to discuss the best ways to promote investments that seize the opportunities offered by regional and international trade and how to best tackle the challenges ahead.

Expected Outcomes

The aim of the event was to engage stakeholders and partners to work on a common vision for agribusiness investments in ACP countries in partnership with farmers' organisations.

Main Conclusions

The highly successful two-day event was attended by over 160 participants representing agribusinesses and farmers' organisations from EU and ACP countries, international organisations, development agencies and NGOs.

Broad areas of agreement:

- There is a common understanding that **private sector investment in agriculture is essential to secure rural economic development**, while governments and public sectors must promote a stable, socially responsible and inclusive business environment. The AU and Caribbean and Pacific groups demand no less than a rural and agricultural transformation implying massive changes to the rural economy and ways of doing business, and sees the business community as a key player in that change. Debates included the AU's Malabo Declaration (2014), the EU Trade for All Communication (adopted the first day of the Conference on 14/10/2015) opportunities offered by the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), and new policy initiatives such as the EDF *Agri-Fi* programme, the impact fund from the EIB, and projects from UNIDO and national funding bodies.

- **Concerns about inclusiveness must be addressed**– reaching small-holders, responsible investment, and respecting land rights. By insisting on an investment model in partnership with farmers' organisations (FOs), these issues can be addressed provided the FOs have the necessary capacity and bargaining power. It was noted that (responsible) large-scale farming and agribusinesses also generate rural employment and boost family income, notably putting money in the hands of women workers.
- There was wide support for **deepening relations on agribusiness investment with farmers' organisations between "like-minded" organisations** – referring to those seeking a business- and export-oriented agriculture. These include the African Union Commission (DREA department), the ACP secretariat, the EIB, UNIDO who are driving a private sector agenda and many other organisations participating. The regional farmers' organisations across the ACP are concerned to participate in developments and open structured dialogues with the Commission particularly on the implementation of EPA/Agriculture. A key role is evident for CTA in general policy development and knowledge sharing.
- There is a need to **continue capacity building support for regional/sectoral farmers' organisations in ACP countries** via technical assistance programmes. ACP farmers' representatives called for the continuation of an EU-ACP partnership approach, focused on:
 - strengthening the FOs capacity to lobby/advocate for local policies environments enabling for agricultural and trade investments;
 - increasing their skills to promote entrepreneurship, to work on value chains and value addition, to promote agribusiness investments, and access to regional and international markets.

In this respect, organisations such as the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the Europe-African-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP) have a key role in offering **vocational training** for farmers aiming at export markets, extension services and knowledge transfer programmes, institutional capacity building for FOs and networking opportunities, agribusiness investments opportunities etc. They can also function as knowledge banks, good practices multipliers and repositories of institutional and technical memory

What follow-up actions emerged from this event?

The conference was an excellent tool to identify possible next steps:

- Set up **structures for consultation of ACP farmers and agribusinesses with the EU and other institutions**, providing a stakeholder forum, based on fairness, respect and equality
- Develop inclusive and innovative multi-stakeholders processes aiming to increase farmer's participation in agribusiness, enhance better governance, equity and transparency in value chains
- Increase **coordination between like-minded EU-ACP-UN organisations, institutions and multipliers** to harmonize promotion of agribusiness investments in partnership with farmers' organisations
- Development of **commodity and export strategies**, something the ACP group is doing
- **Build FOs capacity to support their members to access market** and make the most of trading opportunities, especially in relation to the EPAs via technical assistance programmes as by CTA, COLEACP and other multipliers
- Identify successful examples of agribusiness investment in partnership with farmers' organisations,

create knowledge banks and facilitate sharing of best practice

- Increase **access to loans and financing for private investments**, through innovative instruments like the EIB's impact fund and the EU's new Agri-FI initiative from the EU
- **Reach out to EU agribusinesses** and EU farmers' organisation, persuade and lead them to play a major role in responsible investments in ACP agricultural development
- Focus on targeted research and innovation for agricultural sector, to enhance productivity but also value adding