

The new Africa Strategy from the German government: rural development is key

The German federal government adopted a new Africa Strategy in June 2011, with which it intends to open a “new chapter” in cooperation with the continent. At the unveiling of the strategy in Berlin, Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said that the aim was a “self-assured partnership on equal terms”, as it was high time to recognise Africa as a continent of opportunity. In an increasing number of African states, he said, responsible governments were taking power following democratic elections and peaceful handovers, and were being kept in check by an active civil society. High growth rates, in some states in double figures, were proof of economic progress.

Hans-Jürgen Beerfeltz, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), sees the strategy as a historic step, since the whole government is finally united and will in future achieve even closer agreement on issues of African policy. He believes that the effectiveness of cooperation with Africa will increase significantly and that German economic and agricultural policy will mesh more tightly with African agricultural policy as a result. The governing parties had agreed on the development of the strategy paper in their 2009 coalition contract.

■ Six key areas

In its Africa Strategy the federal government is concentrating on six key

For the federal government, rural development is one of the keys to poverty alleviation, food security and stability.



Photo: J. Boethling

areas in which it hopes to strengthen cooperation: peace and security, good governance, industry (including agriculture), climate and environment, energy and resources, and development, education and research.

The main aim in **climate and environment policy** is to foster the conservation and restoration of habitats which represent important carbon sinks. At its heart is the conservation of the African forests and the implementation of integrative, sustainable forest management reconciling economic and ecological demands and generating additional income for the population. Furthermore, Germany will continue to support adaptation to the impacts of climate change in Africa. This includes sustainable forms of land management, conversion to crisis-proof water supplies, the development of environmentally sound technologies and the

provision of improved data on climate change impacts.

The federal government sees **rural development** as one of the keys to poverty alleviation, food security and stability. That is why the development of rural areas and an increase in investment in sustainable agriculture are important goals for the Afro-German partnership. In its strategy paper the government declares that it will increase its support for development-oriented integration of African countries in global agricultural trade at the same time as guaranteeing local food security. Germany says that it will continue to respect the commitments to food security entered into at the G8 summit in L’Aquila in 2009 and will tailor its assistance programmes to fit in with the African Union’s (AU) draft Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). (wi/bmz/AA)

In brief

■ Seed-testing network for Africa

A pan-African network of seed testing laboratories has been established by the African Union and the African

Seed Network, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reported in April 2011. The goal is to speed up the harmonisation of a

continent-wide seed market in traditional and non-traditional crops. The Nairobi-based Forum for Africa Seed Testing (FAST) will fast track the imple-

mentation of laws to streamline the sector and promote seed testing and quality control, including the drafting of seed testing protocols for major crops for both public and private companies. It will help to increase exchanges of germplasm, the genetic component of an organism which is held in seed collections, as well as other technical innovations among seed laboratories in Africa.

FAO underscores that FAST now provides, for the first time, a regulatory framework for a number of important African food crops. These include, for instance, black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), a medicinal plant also used as a vegetable in Ethiopia and other East African countries especially during the lean season and *Cleome gynandra*, or African cabbage. Important food security grains such as fonio, a crop widely eaten in the Sahel region of West Africa, will also benefit from FAST. (FAO/ile)

■ Support for diaspora investment in agriculture

The Diaspora Investment in Agriculture (DIA) initiative is a new partnership between the United States Department of State and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The initiative aims to seek to create

ways to help international migrants to invest in agriculture and rural development in their home countries, IFAD reported in May 2011. It plans to create opportunities for diaspora investors to stimulate the agricultural sector in developing countries, particularly post-conflict nations and fragile states. The DIA aims to encourage migrants to invest their savings in enterprises that will help strengthen the agricultural sector in their home countries, link farmers with emerging markets, create jobs in rural areas, and contribute to food security. (IFAD/ile)

■ Climate change: global losses of maize and wheat

Climate change is already having an effect on worldwide production of the staple foods maize and wheat: on a global scale warming has caused harvests to fall by between three and five percent over the last 30 years. This is the finding of a study by American researchers published in the journal *Science*. For the studies the scientists compared data on worldwide food production with weather data for the years 1980–2008. They used simulative models to calculate how high the yields would have been during that period

if temperature and precipitation had remained constant instead of altering as a result of climate change.

The researchers found that a number of major producer countries had experienced significant losses as a consequence of drought and warming. The shortfalls correspond to a global net loss of 3.8 percent for maize and 5.5 percent for wheat by comparison with the yields that would have been achieved without the climate trends of the years 1980 to 2008. By contrast, yields of soya beans and rice were virtually unaffected by the climatic changes during the period studied. Yields did fall in some countries, but on a global scale these losses were balanced by increases in other regions. In the case of rice it was largely regions at higher latitudes that benefited from the tendency for the climate to become milder.

One of the countries most severely affected by falling yields was Russia, where the wheat harvest fell by almost 15 percent. China was particularly affected by a climate-induced fall in maize yields. For the USA the researchers have not as yet identified any significant warming or a noticeable fall in yields. (NPO, *Science/AAAS*)

FAO: no respite on the food market

High and volatile prices for agricultural commodities will probably persist into 2012, according to the most recent *Food Outlook* from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), published in June 2011. The reasons cited are a sharp drop in reserves and only slight increases in production of the most important crops. Although there are positive yield forecasts for countries such as the Russian Federation and Ukraine, unfavourable weather conditions in northern Europe and the USA could result in falling maize and wheat yields. The FAO is assuming global production levels of 2,315 million tonnes of grain, 3.5 percent more than in 2010.

Rice yields are estimated at 463 million tonnes, which would represent a 2 percent rise. At the end of the current growing season global grain stores are expected to amount to around 494 million tonnes. However, as demand for grain has also risen, the record harvest of 2011 will be scarcely enough to meet requirements. The Russian Federation's announcement that it will lift its export ban in July 2011 could ease the pressure a little. Oilseed supplies are not expected to be able to meet the growing demand, so that the FAO is anticipating a further fall in global stocks. Meat production will not exceed 294 million tonnes, owing to high fodder

prices and outbreaks of disease. High import demand and limited export availability will also lead to high meat prices in the coming months.

In total international imports will reach a record sum of 1.29 billion US dollars, a fifth more than in 2010. The low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs) and least developed countries (LDCs) will be hardest hit by this, because they will have to pay 27 to 30 percent more for food imports than in the previous year. Spending on imported food could make up around 18 percent of total import costs for vulnerable countries – the global average is 7 percent. (FAO/sri)

Eschborn Dialogue 2011:

“The green economy” – (how) does it work?

When the international community of states gathers in June 2012 at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, in Brazil, the concept of the “green economy” will be an overarching theme. The term describes economic activity that is at once ecologically sustainable, profitable and socially inclusive. This is an issue that was also addressed by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in June 2011 at this year’s Eschborn Dialogue, where the topic was: “Responsible economic action – sustainable development: New ways forward for national economies?”

■ The economic model of the future?

The concept of the green economy appears at first glance to be one on which everyone can agree. At the opening event, however, Cornelia Richter, Director General of GIZ’s Planning and Development Department, debunked some “myths” about the green economy: the belief that sustainable development automatically leads to a win-win situation; the assumption that qualitative growth can solve the dilemma of the limits of growth; confidence in the regulatory power of the market and the assumption that bringing about the green economy is simply an issue of good will. It is particularly important, she said, to be clear about the values on which a future green economy is to be built, because these values vary widely between different cultures. This is one of the reasons why developing, emerging and industrialised countries choose to pursue different approaches and strategies.

According to Björn Stigson, President of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Switzerland,

the priority in the majority of developing and emerging countries is to raise living standards. A country such as China will therefore not be interested in discussing, for example, the phase-out of nuclear energy. Nevertheless, said Jochen Flasbarth, President of the Federal Environment Agency, Germany, the industrialised countries must act as role models. In addition they must develop a wide range of good, appropriate technologies to help developing countries take the first steps towards a green economy. Hans-Peter Replik, Chairman of the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE), pointed out that a one-sided focus on climate change, of the sort that has dominated the discussion so far, does not go far enough. He emphasised the importance of issues such as education, social standards, governance etc. in bringing in a green economy.

■ Assured harvests – now and in 2050

One of the subsequent discussion fora focused on sustainable agriculture – one of the pillars for providing adequate food, as well as work and income, for the expected world population of 9 billion people in 2050. Here, too, a new economic model is needed to meet the challenges of the future, as Albert Engel, Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Division at GIZ, explained. A growing world population makes higher yields necessary, but at the same time there is a fall in the per-capita availability of farmland. According to Engel, the ecological footprint of agriculture is already large; 70 percent of the water available worldwide is used for agricultural production.

What sustainable agriculture might look like was outlined from very different perspectives by Professor Harald

von Witzke of the Humboldt University, Berlin, and Professor Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food at the UN. Von Witzke’s starting point is the assumption that agricultural yields will rise by only seven percent between 2000 and 2020, while demand will increase by 30 percent in the same period. He called for a third Green Revolution involving the use of modern agricultural methods and for more innovation. Significantly more investment in agricultural research is needed to bring this about. Von Witzke sees food security, now and in 2050, being put at risk by rapidly rising consumption, growing expectations of food safety, increasing competition for land for biofuel production as well as ever-scarcer water resources and further climate warming. He pointed out that the EU is already the largest net importer of food and needs a total area of 35 million hectares for these imports, making the EU the largest “virtual land grabber”.

For Olivier de Schutter there is not just a food crisis but three crises that the world must confront: a poverty crisis, an environmental crisis and a nutrition crisis. All three crises are being accelerated by climate change and increasing warming. According to de Schutter, small farmers are the hardest-hit victims of the crises, because they are deprived of the ability to produce. The small-scale agriculture of today is not viable. De Schutter called for an agro-ecological approach. This requires far more investment, especially in small-scale farming. Farmers’ innovative power must be promoted. In this scenario the international development agencies have the important task of providing knowledge, technology and capacity-building services for these small and medium-sized farms because, de Schutter said, agro-ecology is knowledge-intensive. He used examples such as mixed farming and agroforestry to

show that yield increases of up to 75 percent are possible with only limited use of fertilisers and pesticides.

In the subsequent discussion a consensus emerged among participants that the challenges posed by a secure food supply for 2050 no longer leave

time for discussion of principles. Instead of sticking to “black and white positions” it is now time to find “common tones of grey”. Even representatives of conventional farming therefore supported a change of policy: it was agreed that integrated approaches must be developed jointly to boost productiv-

ity while at the same time maintaining soil fertility, saving water and conserving the environment. To achieve this, said Volker Koch-Achelpöhler, Director General of the German Crop Protection, Pest Control and Fertiliser Association, “walls of prejudice” on both sides must be torn down. (wi/sri)

Year of Forests 2011: new guidelines for sustainable forest use

By 2050 the world risks a global loss of 230 million hectares of forest, according to the first part of the Living Forests Report, presented in April 2011, which the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is producing to coincide with the International Year of Forests declared by the United Nations. The WWF believes that in future politics and industry should work together in order to halt net deforestation and forest degradation by 2020. This means preventing monotonous species-poor forests as well as the loss of complete areas of forest. To counter these dangers, the sustainable use of forests should be promoted.

■ A focus on forest governance ...

How better management of forests as a resource could look in the future has been demonstrated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank in their new guidance framework «Framework for Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance» (PROFOR), published in May 2011. This contains a comprehensive checklist which countries can use to identify and address problems in governance of forest resources. It can also be used to help ensure that efforts to reduce emissions from forests in developing countries are properly managed.

The new guidance frameworks on forest governance and implementation of REDD+ are to help mitigate the global loss of forested areas.

PROFOR looks at three key components or “pillars” of forest governance:

1. policy, legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks
2. planning and decision-making processes
3. implementation, enforcement and compliance.

It then grades performance in six areas: accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, fairness, participation and transparency.

■ ... and REDD+

A similar document focusing on the provision of information on governance issues related specifically to REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) was presented at the same time by the

UN REDD Programme and Chatham House. Like the forest governance framework, it provides guidance for use by countries looking to ensure and show that REDD+ activities are effectively implemented and governance safeguards addressed.

The document states that, although the implementation of REDD+ presents a huge challenge for countries where institutional capacities are weak, it also creates new incentives and opens up the possibility for increased support for tackling governance issues. Pilot projects based on the two frameworks are planned in order to test and strengthen them. (WWF/FAO/ile)

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