



Dr. Steve Wiggins, A research fellow of Overseas Development Institute, during the launch of the "One Billion Hungry" book by Sir Gordon Conway



AGRA Board Vice Chair Mr. Strive Masiyiwa (Second from left) with facilitators of the Seed2Feed Summit held in Netherlands



AGRA Vice President for Programs, Dr. Segenet Kelemu (left) with a representatives from Sygenta Foundation at AGRA offices



Soil and crop course students at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi Ghana



AGRA Board members during a courtesy call to the Queen of Netherlands

Global Development Targets: Turning the Wheel Around



By Richard Mkandawire

As we approach 2015, there is an increased sense of urgency amongst African heads of states to live up to the promises they set in delivery of Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). Latest statistics show that many African countries will not have attained the MDG goal number one which calls for reduction of extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

When 189 member states of the United Nations and more than 23 international organizations met in 2000, they set out targets to meet. However, amongst the eight goals that were set, reduction of abject poverty was clearly seen as the goal most African countries would struggle to achieve.

Nonetheless, there is an emerging trend of change in the continent in spite of many challenges Africa continues to face. Cote d'Ivoire's return to peace has surprised many. Moreover, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia and Ethiopia have exhibited amazingly strong economic growth. Indeed, Africa is emerging as a continent of opportunities- currently hosting some of the fastest growing economies in the world.

Although many countries in the continent are economically and politically soaring, this wealth has failed to trickle down to the rural poor. One of the reasons for this challenge is the fact that African governments have for decades mortgaged policy planning and implementation to outsiders.

The tide is now changing. The hope for the future growth of the agricultural sector in Africa has been rekindled by a new crop of leaders who recognizing that enhanced agricultural performance is key to moving towards broad



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based poverty reduction efforts in Africa.

The African leaders – through the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program' (CAADP) – have collectively committed themselves to defining a new agricultural agenda for the continent. The efforts of these leaders are supported by organizations that share a similar vision in the potential of the African continent and are keen to progress Africa's agricultural landscape in the realization that a boost in this sector, will vastly

improve the lives of the rural poor.

One such organization is the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP) which is emerging as a 'game changer,' working with public and private sector entities to boost agriculture. AFAP's focus is on CAADP Pillar 2 which seeks to counter market access challenges faced by the smallholder farmers.

I am delighted that for the first time, donors are beginning to listen and respond to African defined agricultural priorities after close to two decades of neglect.

The challenge of ending extreme hunger and poverty remains glaring. For many poor people, opportunities in extricating them from extreme poverty and hunger remain a mirage, an illusion and a distant echo rather than a reality. Africa's development destiny and its commitment to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger can only come as a result of strong partnerships between the public, private and developmental organizations within the continent. We must do everything in our power to turn the wheel around.

The Writer is the Vice-President of the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP)

