



Opportunity for food security in Africa?

The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN)

SUMMARY *With the number of under-nourished people on the African continent still rising, the G8's recent New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN) initiative is attracting more and more African states. Bringing together governments from both the North and the South, multinational firms and international agencies, it aims to boost investment in African agriculture so as to increase food security. Improved commercial seeds, use of inorganic fertilisers, infrastructure development and land-administration reforms are among the key elements of the project, based on using public-private partnerships.*

After its first year of implementation, NAFSN proponents praise its market-oriented reforms and investments in the six founding African countries. In contrast, both African and global NGOs remain sceptical, pointing to a number of negative repercussions mainly on small-holders, who have been restricted from using traditional methods of seed exchange and land access. NGOs also claim there has been limited impact on food security, since non-food investments have prevailed. Some observers see the NAFSN as primarily serving the interest of multinational corporations seeking to find new markets for commercial seeds and fertilisers, as well as tangible assets in which to invest in the era of global crisis.



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Food security

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (Source: [FAO](#))

There are three pillars of food security:

Food availability: sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis.

Food access: having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.

Food use: appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation. (Source: [WHO](#))

Food insecurity: Africa's fate?

Under-nourishment,¹ according to FAO estimates, afflicts [842](#) million people, 12% of the world's population. The problem is even more severe in Africa, where 23% (226 million, of whom 222 in Sub-Saharan Africa) are affected. Indeed, Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region of the world in which the number of people² suffering food insecurity is expected to continue to grow in the next decade, even if the proportion will drop due to a concurrent rise in the region's population. The situation is expected to remain worst in Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Eritrea, and Lesotho, where 100% are "food insecure".³ North Africa is

much less troubled by food insecurity, with less than 3% (4 million) of its population under-nourished. However, political turmoil has seen the situation [deteriorating](#). This trend risks being reinforced by a [possible slowdown](#) of income from oil exports, vital when tourism is affected, to sustain food imports and subsidies. Indeed, [North African](#) countries are highly dependent on food imports, and thus vulnerable to fluctuations in international food prices, as experienced during recent food crises in 2007 and 2011.

The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN)

The NAFSN was launched at the May 2012 G8 summit in Camp David, on the initiative of US President Barack Obama. It is based on the assumption that the dynamic power of markets can reduce poverty, and aims at lifting up to 50 million people out of poverty in ten years. The NAFSN provides a comprehensive framework for governments, the private sector and international donors to focus their efforts on agricultural development. It has two key principles:⁴

- Public-private partnership (PPP);
- Country ownership, which implies that donors align themselves with partner countries' own development priorities, in this case Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) investment plans.

Planning meetings with the private sector, civil society, donors and local governments are held in order to establish country priorities, improve coordination and prepare [cooperation frameworks](#) for each individual country. Those plans set out fairly detailed commitments for policy reforms and investments, with specific timetables for donors, governments and private firms. The documents reaffirm all parties' commitment to the FAO's [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests](#) (2012).

In fact, the novelty of the alliance resides in

the unprecedented involvement of private, mostly multinational corporations, side by side with governments and international organisations. Since the 2012 inaugural summit, 45 firms (including Monsanto, Syngenta, Cargill, Diageo, Unilever, Yara and DuPont) have declared their intention to invest more than US\$3 billion in African agriculture. On the African side the Alliance is [expanding](#): in 2013, Benin, Malawi, Nigeria and [Senegal](#) joined the "founding" members, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Tanzania.

A leadership council drives forward and tracks implementation, and reports to the G8 and African Union on progress achieved.

The EU has [expressed](#) its full support for NAFSN, stressing that it is well matched with its own policy. In the Commission's 2011 communication, [Agenda for change](#), food security and agriculture are defined as priority sectors for EU aid. It also states that the EU should search for new ways of engaging with the private sector, and catalyse public-private partnerships.

A net of international initiatives

The 2009 G8 summit in L'Aquila was the moment when the G8 took up the issue of food security. A Joint Declaration on Global Food Security, referred to as the "L'Aquila Food Security Initiative" (AFSI), was adopted by the G8 and 19 other countries, together with several international organisations. This moved the issue of food security higher up on the international agenda. Moreover, donors committed more than US\$20 billion over three years, to help farmers in poor countries boost productivity.

In June 2013, before the G8's Lough Erne summit, the ['Nutrition for Growth: Beating Hunger through Business and Science'](#) high-level meeting [brought](#) together G8 leaders with several African governments as well as major private donors and international institutions. This illustrates the growing trend, of which NAFSN is the new flagship, of seeing

the open market as the basis for agricultural growth, and thus for the improvement of food security in developing countries.

The G8 initiative is however only one of many, with other international institutions also active in the food security field.

UN level

In the United Nations system, [several bodies](#) deal with the issue of food security, however for two of them it is their *raison d'être*:

[World Food Programme](#) (WFP): WFP focuses on humanitarian assistance, with two-thirds of its budget used for this purpose.

[Food and Agriculture Organisation](#) (FAO): FAO offers policy advice, both at country and global level, and coordinates the negotiation of relevant international standards and treaties.⁵

Two bodies have been established in the UN framework to coordinate and facilitate the work of UN and external actors in this field:

The [UN High-level Task Force on Food Security](#) was established in 2008, following the 2007 food-price crisis. Chaired by the UN Secretary-General, it gathers together 21 heads of specialised UN agencies, funds and programmes, international financial institutions and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to ensure coordination amongst them in the fight against food insecurity.

The FAO [Committee on World Food Security](#) (CFS) is an intergovernmental forum, also open to civil society and other private groups, which seeks to facilitate cooperation between governments, international organisations, the private sector and civil society organisations. It reviews and follows up on policies and formulates non-binding recommendations, such as the above-mentioned [Voluntary Guidelines on land tenure](#).

Regional schemes

Through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), adopted at the African Union summit in July 2003, African leaders committed themselves

to invest 10% of GDP in agriculture development. This has not, in most cases, been done.

The [Grow Africa](#) partnership, convened jointly by the CAADP, New Partnership for Africa Development ([NEPAD](#)) and the World Economic Forum is aimed at accelerating investment for sustainable growth in African agriculture. Up to now, eight African countries have been participating in this partnership at government level, along with local businesses, farmers' associations and civil society together with international organisations.

The Grow Africa partnership is the regional implementation of a broader project, New Vision for Agriculture (2010), initiated by the World Economic Forum and led by 29 global corporations.⁶ It advocates a market-based approach to increasing productivity and economic opportunities in the agricultural sector, so contributing to food security, while also respecting environmental sustainability.

One instrument supported by the World Economic Forum is the creation of "Agricultural growth corridors projects". These aim to establish favourable conditions for industrial agriculture, led by private companies, on millions of hectares of dedicated agricultural land. So far, several corridors have been set up, covering millions of hectares, principally in Southern Tanzania and Mozambique.

Grow Africa and New Vision for Agriculture are actively cooperating with G8 efforts to improve food security.

EU policy

It is estimated that all EU policy instruments combined provide €800 million per year for food security in developing countries.⁷ The Court of Auditors' – overall positive – [report](#)⁸ on the efficiency of EU aid for food security in Sub-Saharan Africa estimates EU aid from 2002 to 2010 amounted to €3.2 billion.

Those resources are channelled through several policy instruments. The primary ones are two geographical tools:

The 9th and [10th European Development Fund](#) (EDF, for ACP countries) had [allocated](#) €1.9 billion for rural development, agriculture and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2008-10. For 47 other countries from Latin America, Asia, and the Gulf region, the [Development Cooperation Instrument](#) (DCI) co-finances action in this field.

The [Food Security Thematic Programme](#) (FSTP) complements the EU's geographical instruments by addressing the global, continental and regional dimensions of food security. It aims to ensure the transition from relief to development, as well as assisting countries in particularly fragile situations. In Africa, in particular, the FSTP contributes to the implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. In its second phase, 2011-13, it has three strategic priorities:

- Research, technology transfer and innovation, to enhance food security;
- Strengthened governance approaches for food security;
- Addressing food security for the poor and vulnerable in fragile situations.

There are also specific EU instruments in the development field, to cope with **unexpected food crises** resulting from market fluctuation and/or natural disasters:

The [EU Food Facility](#) (2008-11), set up as a response to the 2007 food and financial crisis, has contributed €1 billion to 179 contracts and agreements covering 232 projects in 49 countries.

The [Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience \(SHARE\)](#) initiative was launched in 2011, to improve the ability of farming and pastoral communities in the Horn of Africa to cope with recurrent crises resulting from drought. SHARE is providing €207 million for 2012-13. To coordinate and prepare international and regional actors' responses in case of new droughts, the EU proposed the [AGIR-Sahel initiative](#) in 2012.

Parliament's view on food security in developing countries was expressed in its [resolution of 5 July 2011](#) on increasing the impact of EU development policy. MEPs stressed that food security should be a major focus of EU development policy; which should promote "sustainable, local and small-scale and organic" agricultural production. The EP also expressed concern about land grabs, in particular in Africa, of farmland by foreign investors, backed by African governments. The EP called for an end to land grabbing, the unsustainable use of land and water, for securing the property rights of small-holders and indigenous farmers, and ending seed monopolies and dependency on specialised pesticides.

NGO scepticism

The majority of NGOs, both international and African, are sceptical about the NAFSN initiative. One African [NGO](#) has even qualified the NAFSN, and its predecessor, Alliance for Green revolution in Africa (AGRA), as a "new wave of colonialism".

In fact, such private-sector involvement in shaping agricultural development in Africa, in line with corporate interests, precedes NAFSN. Since the 1990s, several, mainly private philanthropic foundations have worked with multinationals to support a so-called "green revolution in Africa", based on **technological-package input** to agriculture, combining improved seeds, chemical pesticides and inorganic fertilisers.⁹

Some [think-tanks](#) see the focus on PPP in development policy as a major setback in the fight against food insecurity, stressing that private companies involved obey **profit-seeking business logic**, and not internationally agreed standards, such as the [Rome principles](#) on food security. According to them, the involvement of private commercial players serves mainly to **open African markets** to multinationals and increase their control over the continent's resources, in particular arable

land (60% of the world's uncultivated arable land is in Africa).¹⁰ It may be noted that the NAFSN's cooperation frameworks include as a condition the ceasing of distribution of free and unimproved seeds to farmers. This is seen as a first step to replacing those traditional seeds with improved patented seeds. It is observed at global level that declining rates of saving and replanting seeds go hand in hand with growing dependency on commercial seeds. These have to be purchased on an annual basis from a declining number of suppliers. Today's market is dominated by three multinational corporations (Monsanto, DuPont and Syngenta), which are increasingly consolidating in the form of pharmaceutical/chemical/seed oligopolies.¹¹

[NGOs](#) also consider that recent development strategies are based on the incorrect assumption that food insecurity can be eliminated simply through a rise in agricultural productivity, ignoring the political and structural dimensions of the problem.

In the long term, NAFSN's implementation, favouring **high input-intensive monoculture** could have a number of **environmental and social repercussions** such as:

- land grabs and rise of land ownership concentration;
- soil erosion and water misuse;
- high dependence on price fluctuation of new export oriented production;
- loss in African biodiversity, in particular as far as seeds are concerned.

Progress made in the implementation of NAFSN is to be measured using the World Bank's [Doing business indicator](#). This is criticised for favouring deregulation and not establishing a real link with improvement in overall wellbeing of the local population.

African [civil society organisations](#) worry about the consequences for **African food sovereignty** if agricultural development were to be based mainly on foreign investment. In March 2013, [Tanzanian farmers](#) expressed deep concern about

preserving their independence from the commercial seed sector, in the perspective of a planned legal reform **severely restricting farmers** from engaging in customary practices of freely sharing, exchanging and selling seeds. According to a [Mozambique](#) student organisation, the NAFSN-led policy prioritises large-scale projects at the expense of domestic investment and the interests of most farmers and rural communities. They call on their government to stop legal reforms in the areas of land, seed and fertilisers, and to focus on food sovereignty and the rural population's aspirations to self-sustaining development.

First assessments and perspectives

[US official sources](#) give a very positive evaluation of NAFSN's first-year achievements. Major market-oriented reforms were engaged in six founding African countries. On the donor side, enabling actions were set up such as [Agriculture Fast Track Fund](#), [Open Data for Agriculture](#) and [Technology platform](#).

According to the May 2013 [annual report](#) from Grow Africa (which was asked in early 2012 to act on behalf of NAFSN to help in generating companies' commitment), there was, in 2012, a **historic shift in the quality and quantity of private-sector engagement**. Some 71 companies have announced over US\$3.5 billion of investment, with 40% already entering the operational phase. Even if Grow Africa admits that it is too early to evaluate NAFSN's impact on small-holder farmers, it stresses that US\$60 million was directly invested in actions that help to involve them in commercial activities. Furthermore, 800 000 small-holders were reached through training, service provision or sourcing.

The Institute of Development Studies [analysis](#) stresses that more than half the investment projects focus on **non-food crops**, and half of the investments targeting foods with high levels of protein or micro-nutrients (e.g. fruit, vegetables, cashews, pulses, milk and poultry) aim to sell for export.

An FAO analyst [concludes](#) that if the NAFSN does not reframe its agenda in order to invest in small-holder farmers and secure their land and resource rights, it will not solve the problem of hunger and malnutrition. Based on experience from Tanzania, he says that the initial implementation has led to corporate large-scale monoculture. This is turning small famers into wage workers or forcing them to migrate to cities, because they cannot compete with multinationals.

A Nigerian NGO [statement](#) recommends developing and structuring consultations with NGOs and local farmers, seen as insufficient in the current NAFSN framework.

From a broader perspective, the private-public nexus, the basis of the NAFSN concept, can be seen as an illustration of a general trend emerging in modern international relations of **transnational corporate-driven governance**. With failures in UN-based multilateralism, powerful private actors, largely independent of any governmental structures, step in to promote their interests and secure their access to natural resources. The growing involvement of multinational

corporations in policy agenda-setting, coupled with an overall concentration of corporate power, has become a serious **issue for democratic accountability**. In recent years, there has been a rise in the number of fora and clubs where this new form of governance takes shape and reaches out to incorporate governments and international organisations.¹²

In the context of recent food, fuel and financial crises, African farmland has become an increasingly interesting target for international investors, seeking more tangible assets to address growing demands for biofuels and food.¹³

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<http://www.library.ep.ec>
<http://libraryeuroparl.wordpress.com>

Endnotes

- ¹ This indicator used by FAO is more [complex](#), although defined solely in terms of dietary energy availability and its distribution in the population: [Under-nourishment around the world in 2013](#), The state of food security in the world, 2013/ FAO.
- ² This indicator used by the US Department of Agriculture means per capita food consumption lower than 2 100 calories per day.
- ³ [International Food Security Assessment 2012-2022](#)/ US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, July 2012.
- ⁴ [The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition: Pushing the frontier of enlightened capitalism](#)/ White JM, German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2013.
- ⁵ [Global Food Security](#)/ House of Commons, International Development Committee, 21 May 2013, p. 11.
- ⁶ AGCO Corporation, AP Møller-Maersk, BASF, Bayer CropScience, Bunge Limited, Cargill Incorporated, CF Industries Holdings, The Coca-Cola Company, Diageo, DuPont, General Mills, Heineken, METRO Group, Mondelez International, Monsanto Company, The Mosaic Company, Nestlé, Novozymes, PepsiCo., Rabobank International, Royal DSM, SABMiller, Sinar Mas Agribusiness & Food, Swiss Reinsurance Company, Syngenta International, Unilever, Wal-Mart Stores, Yara International.
- ⁷ [Feed the world? The challenges of global food security](#)/ Caputi C, EU Institute for Security Studies, June 2013, p.4.
- ⁸ In its [resolution on Special Report No 1/2012](#) (2011 discharge): 'Effectiveness of European Union development aid for food security in sub-Saharan Africa', the EP endorsed the Court of Auditors' overall positive evaluation of EU actions in this area.
- ⁹ [Unmasking the New Green Revolution in Africa: Motives, Players and Dynamics](#)/ Dano EC, Church Development Service, Third World Network, African Centre for Biosafety, 2007.
- ¹⁰ [The roles and opportunities for the private sector in Africa's agro-food industry](#)/ UNDP African Facility for Inclusive Markets, 2012, p. 12.
- ¹¹ [Visualising consolidation in the global seed industry: 1996-2008](#)/ Howard PH, Sustainability 2009.
- ¹² [Privatising the governance of "Green Growth"](#)/ Alexander N, Fuht L, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, November 2012.
- ¹³ [Land grabbing in Africa and the new politics of food](#)/ Hall R, Policy Brief 41, June 2011.