

Towards food security in Africa Are international private-public initiatives paving the way?

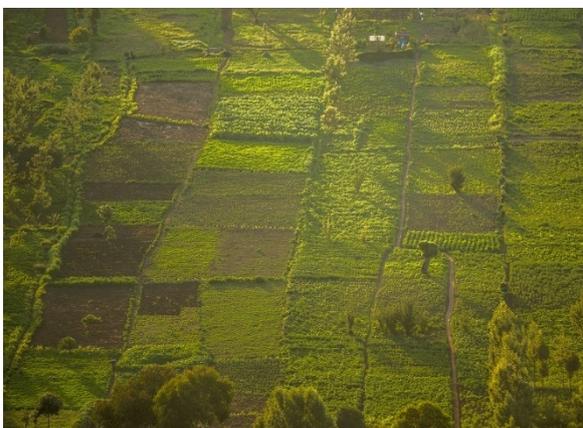
SUMMARY

The rise in global hunger in recent years undermines the perspective of 'zero hunger by 2030' set out in the United Nations Agenda 2030. Africa is particularly affected, with more than a quarter of its population living in a situation of severe food insecurity, and its agriculture suffering from major hindrances to production.

Launched in 2012, the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN) is one of the international initiatives that have both raised high expectations and opened up controversy. 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, underpinned by the use of public-private partnerships.

After its first years of implementation, NAFSN proponents praise its market-oriented reforms and investments in the African countries involved. By contrast, its critics say that while paying lip service to smallholders, it serves the interests of corporate farming with no proven impact on food security. In 2016, the European Parliament voiced its concerns, pointing at a number of negative repercussions mainly on smallholders, and calling for a deep revamp of the NAFSN and the European Union (EU) support for agro-ecology based on small-scale farming.

This briefing is a follow-up of an [EP Library Briefing](#) from October 2013.



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Glossary

Food availability: sufficient quantities of food on a consistent basis, from production or trade.

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

Undernourishment: chronic food deprivation (hunger), with food consumption being insufficient to provide the dietary energy for normal, active, healthy life.

Malnutrition: an abnormal physiological condition caused by inadequate, unbalanced or excessive consumption of macronutrients and/or micronutrients.

Food insecurity: limited access to safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life, due to lack of money, unavailability of food, insufficient purchasing power or inappropriate distribution.

Famine: is declared by UN agencies when at least 20 % of households in an area face extreme food shortages with a limited ability to cope; acute malnutrition rates exceed 30 %; and the death rate exceeds two persons per day per 10 000 persons.

Sources: Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), Integrated food security phase classification ([IPC](#)), World Health Organization ([WHO](#)).

Food insecurity: Africa's fate?

Chronic undernourishment, on the rise since 2014, afflicts [815 million](#) people, 11 % of the world's population (2016). The problem is worst in Africa, where 243 million are affected; 27 % of the African population survives in a situation of severe food insecurity. The situation is deteriorating, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, due mainly to a protracted security crisis and climate-related shocks. As of September 2017, eight countries in the greater Horn of Africa are in a [grave food security situation](#) (Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Yemen) while famine has been declared by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in parts of South Sudan – the first formal declaration of famine since 2011.

As Africa's population continues to grow rapidly, including the rural population, which by 2050 will account for [60 % more people](#), more pressure will be put on African food systems, already suffering from several handicaps. Limited access to land and insecurity of tenure, low productivity, high post-harvest losses, lack of irrigation, high transport costs, and problems in accessing financing are among the main constraints facing African farmers.

A net of international private-public initiatives

Since the 2007-2008 food crisis, characterised by a sharp increase in basic food prices, several private and public [initiatives](#) have been launched or reinforced to address food insecurity, using research, financing and coordination.

G8 (now G7) initiatives

The 2009 G8 summit in L'Aquila (Italy) 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 summit in Lough Erne (United Kingdom), the '[Nutrition for Growth](#)' 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 seeing private-sector involvement as the basis for agricultural growth and food security in developing countries.

Main United Nations bodies dealing with the issue of food security

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

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

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

The [UN high-level task force on food security](#) established in 2008, is chaired by the UN Secretary-General. It gathers heads of specialised UN agencies, funds and programmes, international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization (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 [voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests](#).

Regional schemes

Through the [Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme \(CAADP\)](#), adopted at the African Union (AU) summit in July 2003, African leaders committed to investing 10 % of gross domestic product (GDP) in agriculture development, in order to achieve 6 % annual growth in agricultural GDP. Up to March 2015, 41 AU member states had signed more than 33 national and regional CAADP compacts including formal medium-term investments plans for agriculture and food security.

The [Grow Africa partnership](#), convened jointly by the CAADP, [New Partnership for Africa's Development \(NEPAD\)](#) and the World Economic Forum, aims at accelerating investment for sustainable market-led growth in African agriculture. To date, 12 African countries have participated in the partnership at government level, along with more than 200 companies, farmers' associations and civil society as well as 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 around 30 global corporations.¹ It advocates a market-based approach to increasing productivity and economic opportunities in the agricultural sector, thereby contributing to food security as well as respecting environmental sustainability. Grow Africa and New Vision for Agriculture are actively cooperating with G8 efforts in this field.

New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN)

The [NAFSN](#) was launched at the May 2012 G8 summit at Camp David, on the initiative of US President Barack Obama. The European Union (EU) has expressed its full [support](#) for NAFSN, participating actively in its preparation.

The NAFSN approach 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.² It has two key principles: first, public-private partnership (PPP); second, country ownership, which implies that donors align themselves with partner countries' own development priorities, in this case CAADP investment plans. In fact, the novelty of the alliance is found in the

unprecedented involvement of the private sector, mostly multinational corporations, side by side with governments and international organisations. Since the 2012 inaugural summit, 200 firms (including Monsanto, Syngenta, Cargill, Diageo, Unilever, Yara and DuPont) have [declared](#) their intention to invest more than US\$10 billion in African agriculture, of which 1.8 billion had been realised by 2015. On the African side, the alliance has expanded quickly: in 2013, Benin, Malawi, Nigeria and Senegal joined the founding members, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Tanzania. The [cooperation frameworks](#) for each individual country were prepared in collaboration with the private sector, civil society, donors and local governments. Those plans set out fairly detailed commitments for policy reforms and investments, with specific timetables for donors, governments and private firms. The governments have committed themselves to address the longstanding constraints on agricultural investment in areas such as land and water rights, regulation of the production and distribution of pesticides, fertilisers and improved seed; infrastructure and tax reforms. A leadership council drives forward and tracks implementation, and [reports](#) to the G7 and African Union on progress achieved.

In June 2016 it was [reported](#) that the EU is providing €1.2 billion in support for the NAFSN. Additional money is allocated by G7 countries, including four EU Member States. The EU acts as leading donor, coordinating NAFSN partner action in Cote d'Ivoire and Malawi, France for Burkina Faso and Senegal, Germany for Benin, and the UK for Nigeria.

Agricultural growth corridors

The creation of 'Agricultural growth corridors' project is at the centre of this approach. Such corridors aim to establish favourable conditions for industrial agriculture, led by private companies or in PPP frameworks, 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.

EU policy

Framework

The [EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges](#) (2010) constitutes the framework for EU policy in this field. It has a strong focus on the right to food, and is built around four pillars: 1) increasing availability of food; 2) improving access to food; 3) improving nutritional adequacy of food intake; and 4) enhancing crisis prevention and management. Furthermore the framework identifies four priorities:

1. Improve smallholder resilience and rural livelihoods: this includes ecologically efficient productivity increases for small-scale producers and improvement of business environment for responsible private investment;
2. Support effective governance, i.e. notably supporting the CAADP, the CFS, and the elaboration of African guidelines for responsible large-scale investment in farm land;
3. Support regional agriculture and food security policies, which covers the reinforcement of national and regional early warning systems;
4. Strengthen assistance mechanisms for vulnerable population groups, including the 'support for developing countries' safety-net mechanism and income-generating activities for vulnerable groups.

The framework was followed by the 2013 implementation plan, [Boosting food and nutrition security through EU action](#), which mandates biennial reporting ([2014](#), [2016](#)) from the EU and its Member States on the implementation of common commitments.

As noted by the NGO confederation [CONCORD](#), there has been some evolution in consecutive policy papers over the years, giving more prominence to PPPs, value chains

in agribusiness and agricultural intensification, and leaving less space for the original commitments on empowering smallholder producers.

The growing focus on the private sector in EU development policy

Since 2013, the role of the [private sector in development cooperation](#) has been increasingly recognised in Commission communications. In its July 2013 [communication](#) on financing the post-2015 development agenda, 'Beyond 2015: towards a comprehensive and integrated approach to financing poverty eradication and sustainable development', the Commission presented its new approach to development financing, in which all available resources (public domestic, public international, and private) should be considered as a whole. In this framework, new forms of public cooperation with the private sector, recognised as a key driver of growth, should direct private investment to promote financial investments that fulfil environmental, social and economic objectives. The 2014 [communication](#), 'involving the private sector in generating jobs and growth in developing countries', envisages action to be taken to support the development of the private sector in developing countries, on one hand; and to increase the European private sector contribution to financing development cooperation, on the other. The Commission thus proposed action to create a better business climate to attract foreign investment, to promote corporate social responsibility, and to promote public-private partnership.

The [European consensus on development](#) (June 2017) reaffirms the commitment to fight under-nutrition and malnutrition, recognising them as a 'major obstacle to development' and 'lifelong burden'. The main actions planned include support for diversified local and regional food production; enhancing the resilience of the most vulnerable; support for smallholders by improving equitable access to land; and responsible and inclusive public and private investment in sustainable agriculture and related infrastructure.

Implementation

In addition to food assistance provided under EU humanitarian policy (amounting to [€750 million in 2016](#)), several EU development policy instruments address the issue of food insecurity. It is estimated that all EU policy instruments combined provide [€800 million](#) per year for food security in developing countries. Data from 2016 point at US\$721 million from the overall official development aid (ODA) spent in the agricultural sector by the EU and its Member States. It is [estimated](#) that 13 % of EU ODA for Africa during the 2014-2020 period is destined for sustainable agriculture and food security. Africa also remains the largest beneficiary of the EU and its Member States' food and nutrition security ODA: 45 % or €1 663 million in [2014](#). Accordingly to the Court of Auditors' [2012 report](#), EU aid from 2002-2010 for Sub-Saharan Africa food security amounted to €3.2 billion.

Those resources are channelled through several policy instruments, in particular:

- The European Development Fund (EDF) is the main instrument for providing EU aid for development cooperation to the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The 9th and 10th European Development Fund (EDF, for ACP countries) allocated €1.9 billion for rural development, agriculture and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 2008-2010 period.
- Food security is one of the priorities of the 'Global public good and challenges' thematic programme that complements the EU budget's geographical instruments under the Development Cooperation Instrument, by addressing the global, continental and regional dimensions of food security. Out of €4 915 million [allocated](#) to this thematic programme for 2014-2020, €1 425 million has been earmarked for food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture.

The EU has also created ad hoc instruments to cope with unexpected food crises resulting from market fluctuation and/or natural disasters such as the [EU food facility](#) (2009-2011) and the [Supporting Horn of Africa resilience \(SHARE\)](#) initiative.

Assessments of the NAFSN approach

Since the launch of the NAFSN, the majority of international and African NGOs have been sceptical, questioning the agricultural model private companies advocate for Africa. The approach has been called a 'new form of colonialism' by some [analysts](#), because African governments receive investment conditional on deep reforms serving the interest of multinational corporations seeking new markets for commercial seeds and fertilisers.

Internal NAFSN assessment

The 2014-2015, NAFSN country-specific [progress reports](#) take stock of fulfilment of the commitments of private sector, governments and donors. The overall result shows that the reforms committed to by African governments, although in progress, need more time to establish a business-conducive environment (33 % of policy commitments have been completed). As for G8 donors' commitments in support of policy reforms in the agricultural sector, 50 % of the original pledged funding has been disbursed, but the situation varies considerably across recipient countries, with the highest disbursement of US\$1.2 billion in Ethiopia, and lowest, of US\$7 million, in Benin. Concerning private firms' commitments, 80 % of investments were still on track or facing minor implementation problems. The main problems reported by companies are limited access to finance, lack of availability of agriculture inputs, insufficient infrastructure and lack of skilled workers.

External voices

The independent evaluations largely question the NAFSN's impact on food security and note, as in the [Senegal case study](#), the sense of disappointment from stakeholders initially engaged at results, so far, below expectations. Among the main points highlighted are:

- Agricultural investment focus on non-food or export crops

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

- Limited involvement of farmers' associations

In the case of the southern agricultural growth corridor (SAGCOT) initiative – the Tanzanian showcase for NAFSN – of 53 mostly private partners engaged, only four represent farmers' associations, and most have strong links with agribusiness, while the largest independent network of smallholders, MVIWATA, is excluded.³

- Increased land grabbing

In [Tanzania](#) for example, there are documented cases of smallholders being put under strong pressure by government/agribusiness investors to surrender their rights to land.

- Growing use of pesticide

A [study](#) from the field shows that intensification of agriculture, coupled with increased availability of pesticides and low levels of awareness of the harmful effects of pesticides, carries huge environmental and health risks.

- Restriction on seed availability

All countries, except Benin, have committed to reform seed laws in order to protect the intellectual property of companies. This undermines, in some cases, the rights of small

producers to continue traditional exchange and selling of seeds, forcing local farmers to use commercial varieties that cannot be replanted but must be purchased every year ([Malawi](#) is a well-documented example).

Towards private setting of the public agenda?

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, 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 the policy agenda-setting of international fora, coupled with an overall concentration of corporate power, has become a serious issue for democratic accountability. Thus the growing role and financial weight of the private sector in development cooperation, while seen as necessary to answer the huge challenges humanity is facing to achieve the sustainable development goals ([SDGs](#)), raises fears of instrumentalisation of development cooperation policy for the interests of the most powerful private players.⁴

The European Parliament's position

On private sector in development

Concerning the private sector's role in development, in its [resolution](#) of 14 April 2016, the Parliament welcomed a stronger role in development cooperation for the (properly regulated) private sector. Parliament stressed that ODA must remain a key means for eradicating poverty in developing countries, and that it cannot be replaced by private funding. It also highlighted that, despite high potential of PPP in agriculture, there are inherent risks to cope with. PPPs in the agricultural sector involving EU money should include comprehensive measures to protect smallholder farmers. Parliament insisted again in [October 2016](#) on the essential role of the private sector in improving food security, in particular by investing in sustainable agriculture. However, it recalled that land-grabbing resulting from large-scale land acquisition, and privatisation of seeds through intellectual property clauses are the new threats to food security in developing countries, which the EU must help to address.

On NAFSN

In its [resolution of 7 June 2016](#), the European Parliament questioned the NAFSN approach's main assumption that corporate large-scale agriculture automatically improves food security, noting that paradoxically agreements under NAFSN do not contain any concrete indicator on hunger and malnutrition. Parliament noted that export-oriented agriculture promoted in this framework is usually unrelated to local economies, and thus has a questionable impact on poverty reduction. Parliament also acknowledged the negative effects that policy reforms undertaken in the framework of NAFSN implementation can bring.

The European Parliament has called upon the Member States, the Commission, G7 and the African states to reform the NAFSN, in order to support family farmers, who should be involved at all stages of decision-making. Parliament also called for respect for all international standards, including [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) and the [OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises](#), full transparency of all letters of intent from companies, and their fair contribution to the tax base of participating countries. It is crucial for the European Parliament that the rights of local people to their own resources (water, land, minerals) and their rights to produce, exchange and sell

seeds freely and to maintain local seed banks, are fully respected. An independent accountability mechanisms is proposed, including an appeal mechanism for local people who considered their rights affected.

On ways to address food insecurity

The position was confirmed in the European Parliament [resolution of 5 October 2016 on the next steps towards attaining global goals and EU commitments on nutrition and food security in the world](#): a fundamental shift from conventional export-oriented monoculture towards agro-ecology based on small-scale farming is the way for countries to feed themselves while addressing climate and poverty challenges.

Responding to its critics, the NAFSN convened in October 2016 a non-state actors' consultative meeting which resulted in the [Entebbe accord with non-state actors](#). A series of rather vague engagements include: 1) ensure that the private sector is inclusive of the interests of smallholders along the value chain; 2) investments must also provide opportunities for women, youth and the marginal poor; 3) promote agro-ecological practices and innovations and integrate the environmental dimension in its approach; 4) monitoring should be broadened to capture data on the impact of investments in smallholders; and 5) transparency should be increased and all investment-related documents accessible for all stakeholders.

Main references

[The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa](#), Policy Department for External Policies, European Parliament, 2015.

Gagné, M., [Is Private Investment in Agriculture the Solution? An Evaluation of the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Senegal](#), Food Security Policy Group (FSPG), March 2017.

Endnotes

¹ Among the participating firms are: 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, and Yara International.

² J.M. White, [The new alliance for food security and nutrition: Pushing the frontier of enlightened capitalism](#), German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2013.

³ M. Bergius, [Expanding the corporate food regime in Africa through agricultural growth corridors: The case of Tanzania](#), International Institute of Social Studies, Colloquium Paper No. 27, February 2016 (see especially pp.7-8).

⁴ N. McKeon, [The new alliance for food security and nutrition – A coup for corporate capital](#), May 2014; N. Alexander and L. Fuhr,, [Privatising the governance of 'Green Growth'](#), Heinrich Böll Foundation North America, November 2012.

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epers@ep.europa.eu

<http://www.epers.ep.parl.union.eu> (intranet)

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