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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Agriculture and Land in EU-Africa relations

Dr Edward Lahiff

Introduction

Land, agriculture and natural resources have been at the heart of relations between Europe and Africa since ancient times. In the nineteenth century, European colonialism created an elaborate system of resource extraction, based on widespread dispossession and exploitation of the African population, the influence of which endures to the present day. Decolonisation in the latter half of the twentieth century saw the rise of technical assistance to newly independent states from the former colonial powers, although this largely focused on the continued production of primary commodities for export to Europe, supported by multilateral treaties such as the Lomé Convention and the Cotonou Agreement. Smallholder and subsistence farmers - the vast majority of producers on the continent - remained relative marginalised, characterised by basic technology, low productivity and continuing poverty. Domestic land policies, largely based on state control of land, tended to favour a small minority of larger-scale and commercially-oriented famers and companies, and to disregard the majority who lived with insecure and ill-defined tenure on land under various forms of communal or state tenure.

Only in the early years of the twenty-first century did policy makers and donors turn their attention to African smallholder farming as an important component of the domestic economy, against a background of sluggish economic growth rates, widespread unemployment, particularly in rural areas, and rising anxieties about food security and climate change (see, for example, Byerlee et al. 2008; and the collections edited by Adebajo and Whiteman 2012 and Carbone 2015).

This chapter provides an overview of the evolution of the relationship between the EU and African states in the interrelated areas of agriculture, land and food.

Trade in agricultural commodities

The Treaty of Rome created the European Development Fund (EDF), launched in 1959, as the EEC's main instrument for providing development aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and to overseas countries and territories. The first formal association of EEC and

developing countries was under the Yaounde I agreement (1963-69). The foundation of a comprehensive relationship on agriculture between Europe and Africa was further developed in the context of the Lomé Convention, which set out the principles and objectives of European cooperation with the wider ACP countries.

Among the provisions of the first Lomé agreement were non-reciprocal preferences for most exports from ACP countries to EEC, and a price stabilisation mechanism to compensate ACP countries for the shortfall in export earnings due to fluctuation in the prices of commodities (Carbone 2015a: 5). It provided for most ACP agricultural and mineral exports to enter the EEC free of duty. Separate trading protocols granted preferential access to European markets based on a quota system for bananas, sugar and beef. ACP countries in the Caribbean and elsewhere came to depend heavily on preferential trade into the European market. Moreover, the EEC committed significant funding for aid and investment in the ACP countries. Lomé II, signed in 1979, and Lomé III (1984), gradually shifted attention towards self-reliant development based on self-sufficiency and food security (Spero and Hart 2010). Lomé IV (1990) extended the financial provision to partner countries but also marked a new emphasis on the promotion of human rights, democracy and good governance; strengthening of the position of women; the protection of the environment; decentralized cooperation; diversification of ACP economies; the promotion of the private sector; and increasing regional cooperation (ACP 2019). Funding for aid and development also increased steadily over the lifetime of the Convention, reaching ECU 12 billion under Lomé IV. The importance and reach of the Convention also grew over time: some 70 ACP countries were party to Lomé IV, compared with 46 signatories of Lomé I. The preferential trading arrangements agreed under Lomé eventually succumbed to the pressures of the EU single market and opposition from the United States in the 1990s.

The Cotonou Agreement entered into force in 2003, and was subsequently revised in 2005 and 2010, and is set to expire in 2020 (European Commission 2019a). The Cotonou Agreement includes amongst its aims the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty while contributing to sustainable development and to the gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy. The principles of the Agreement include equality of partners, global participation by state and non-state actors, dialogue and regionalisation. The first round of the Agreement (2000-2007) was designed to establish a comprehensive partnership with

three distinct pillars: development cooperation; political cooperation; and economic and trade cooperation. The revised Cotonou Agreement (from 2010) added additional dimensions, such as food security, regional integration, state fragility and aid effectiveness (Hurt 2003). Carbone (2015a: 4) sees the transition from Lomé to Cotonou as part of the 'normalisation' of relations between EU and the countries of the global south, as trade preferences gave way to principles of free trade, aid became more conditional, and security moved up the political agenda. Elsewhere, Carbone (2015b: p121) argues that while Cotonou brought more aid from EU to the ACP, it also brought greater emphasis on conditionality, aid targeting for poverty reduction, and aid effectiveness; accompanied by greater coordination of aid activities amongst EU members and an increasingly important role for the European Commission, greatly influenced by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, led by the OECD, in 2005.

From Africa-EU Partnership to Africa-Europe Alliance

With the new millennium came a closer engagement between Africa and the EU, that went beyond traditional concerns with trade and aid, heralding a new level of political engagement, greatly boosted by the formation of the African Union and New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in 2001. Globally, the development climate was also being influenced at this time by the adoption of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, and the Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organisation in 2001 (Carbone 2015a: 6). This brought a renewed emphasis on the importance of agriculture, and trade in agricultural commodities, to the relationship between the EU and Africa.

A major milestone was the first Africa-EU Summit, held in Cairo in 2000, hosted jointly by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), as it still was, and the European Union - the first meeting of its kind between European and African leaders. The Cairo Declaration committed the partners to a new strategic partnership between Africa and Europe, in a spirit of equality, respect, alliance and cooperation (African Union 2019a). It also marked the beginning of what would become the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership (also the Africa-EU Partnership), designed to become the formal political channel through which the EU and the African Union (AU) would dialogue and organise their cooperative relations. Ultimately, the Africa-EU partnership would come to supports a range of projects across security, governance, higher education and economic integration.

The Cairo Declaration contained important commitments in the area of agriculture, and the wider agri-food sector. Section 10 highlighted the developmental aspects of the expanding trade relationship, agreeing to "co-operate so as to ensure that in the framework of multilateral trade negotiations special attention is paid to products, including processed agricultural products, which are of export interest to developing countries … " (OAU and EU 2000).

Food Security was given particular emphasis in Section 97 (Food Security): "*We recognise that economic performance and poverty eradication are strongly linked to food security in Africa, which includes issues such as agricultural development, fisheries, livestock, and forestry development".* Both the developmental and the food security dimensions were further captured in Section 99 of the agreement, which recognised the need to ensure that agricultural production is not excessively centred on traditional export commodities, and the need "to support overall food security and nutrition strategies adopted by Africa and to enhance co-operation in these areas."

In the wake of the Cairo Summit, the EU adopted a Strategy for Africa in 2005, combining elements of development and peace and security. The purpose of the Strategy, according to the EC, is "to give the EU a comprehensive, integrated and long-term framework for its relations with the African continent" (European Commission 2005). According to Carbone (2015a: 7), this did little more than reiterate existing commitments. It did, however, mark an important step towards the more elaborate Joint Africa-EU Strategy that would follow.

In what was a very substantial statement, the EU acknowledged that it was the biggest export market for African products, highlighting that approximately 85% of Africa's exports of cotton, fruit and vegetables are imported by the EU (European Commission 2005: 13). The Commission acknowledged the dependence of many African economies on a narrow range of exports, and their vulnerability to long-term price decline and fluctuations in the world prices of such commodities: long term decline in prices of sugar, cocoa coffee and cotton are cited. Unlocking growth, it argued, would require measures such as increases of crop yields and diversification into non-traditional agricultural exports such as horticulture. Specific attention is thus given to boosting the role of agriculture and fisheries as drivers of economic growth, and to the scope for enhanced regional integration.

Europe and Africa, it noted, are also bound by substantial and predictable aid flows: in 2003 the EU's development aid to Africa totalled €15 billion, compared to €5 billion in 1985, accounting for 60% of the total official development assistance going to Africa. In addition, in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU and its North African partner countries committed themselves to further liberalisation of trade in agriculture, processed agricultural and fisheries products and the liberalisation of trade in services, with the aim of concluding negotiations by the end of 2006.

The emerging Africa-EU partnership was further enhanced with the second EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon in 2007, which adopted the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, committing both partners to a closer relationship, across economic, social and political dimensions, with a strong emphasis on human rights, peace and development. According to the joint statement, "There is now a need for a new phase in the Africa-EU relationship, a new strategic partnership and a Joint Africa-EU Strategy as a political vision and roadmap for the future cooperation between the two continents in existing and new areas and arenas." (Africa-EU Partnership 2007). Carbone (2015a: 7) argues that the Joint Strategy marked an important advance on previous agreements, addressing both developmental issues on the African continent along with global issues of human rights, peace and security, and good governance. This was accompanied by a detailed action plan and eventually by eight Africa-EU Partnerships; none of these specifically addressed agriculture, but agriculture was referenced under the agreement on Trade and Regional Integration (see Babarinde and Wright 2013).

The Joint Africa-EU Strategy, as signed at Lisbon Summit in 2007, makes specific commitments in the area of Agriculture and Food Security (articles 72-74), covering agricultural development, institutional reform, and fisheries (Africa-EU Partnership 2007).

The 3rd Africa-EU Summit held in Tripoli in November 2010 recommitted the partners to seize together new opportunities for broader and mutually beneficial initiatives and particularly the determinacy to progress in the identified priority areas of cooperation and towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals in Africa (see African Union 2010).

Despite this close level of engagement and cooperation, throughout this period (e.g. 2005-2010) African states complained vociferously that the EU was continuing to use trade agreements in a selective manner that maximised benefits to the EU and continued to impose

unacceptable levels of political conditionality on governance, security and human rights. Matthews (2015: 203) argues that changes to EU policy in the first decade of the new century brought important benefits to African farmers, through reductions in the anti-competitive subsidies paid to European producers and preferential access to European markets through the Everything-but-Arms agreement in 2001 and the subsequent signing of EPAs. Set against this, however, is the continued competition on local markets from European producers of cereals and dairy products, in particular. The demise of commodity protocols, notably sugar, Matthew's (2015: 204) argues, can be seen as a form of development assistance, but brought with them the unintended consequence of supporting unsustainably high production costs among African producers, leaving them vulnerable in the more market-oriented environment of the new century. While trade prospects are generally positive, Matthews warns about risks to food security as African producers chase more remunerative export markets for high-value committees while continuing to rely heavily on imports of cereals and other foodstuffs. This will, Matthews argues, require continued commitment by African governments to meeting – and extending – its commitments to agricultural development under CAADP, with on-going support from the EU under the JAES and other special measures such as the EU Food Facility (Matthews 2015: 205).

By the occasion of the 4th EU-Africa in Brussels in 2014, food and agriculture were the subject of closer engagement, despite the rapidly-expanding range of political, security and development issues vying for attention. In the summit declaration, leaders highlighted the close nature of EU-Africa relations and the shared values of democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and good governance as well as the right to development. Agriculture was mentioned in the final Declaration, briefly in respect of economic development and climate change, and specifically committed the partners to work for the development of African agriculture through the CAADP, and noted the importance of reform of the CAP for "achieving progress as regards coherence with the objectives of agricultural development in Africa (European Council 2014, paragraph 31).

More importantly, perhaps, at the request of the EU-Africa Summit of 2014, an EU-Africa Expert Group was tasked, under the guidance of the HLPD (High Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation) to draft a Roadmap towards an EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA).

This Roadmap was adopted by the HLPD Senior Officials Meeting in Addis Ababa in April 2016 and is structured around four main pillars: (i) Sustainable intensification, (ii) Agriculture and food systems for nutrition, (iii) Expansion and improvement of agricultural markets and trade and (iv) Cross-cutting issues.

In addition, research funding of approximately EUR 150 million was earmarked for the period 2016-2020 to support the implementation of the partnership, through a mix of Horizon 2020 projects, created in response to targeted calls to Africa focusing on FNSSA, and allowing for synergies with emphasis on local multi-stakeholder action; and African Union Research Grants, supported by the EU Pan-African programme and managed directly by the African Union Commission, with a view to building a system of competitive research grants at Pan-African level.

In a follow-up to the Brussels summit, the AU-EU Contact Group on Agriculture, Food Security and Food Safety subsequently met in Brussels in April 2015 and issued a detailed set of recommendations for joint actions across the fields of agriculture, food, forestry and fisheries (see Africa-EU Partnership 2015).

The Malabo Declaration (Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods) was adopted by African Union Heads of State and Government in June 2014. It commits leaders to a set of actions intended to accelerate agricultural growth and transformation across the continent. The Declaration was a recommitment to the principles and values of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) adopted by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government through the Maputo Declaration in 2003 and designed to improve food security and nutrition and increase incomes in Africa's largely agriculture-based economies.

From 2016, the work of the AU-EU summits has been carried forward in the form of meetings of senior officials and minsters of agriculture. Under the EU Presidency of the Netherlands, a conference was held between the EU and the African Union, in Noordwijk, The Netherlands, in July 2016, which focused on advancing the cooperation between both continents in the field of agriculture. The conference concluded with a High-Level Agriculture Ministerial meeting from African and European Member States and both Commissioners, which built on the commitment of African leaders as expressed at the 2014 AU Summit in Malabo. The

meeting put particularly emphasis on the role of agricultural policy cooperation in food security and nutrition improvement.

A year later, in July 2017, ministers met again at the AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference 'Making Sustainable Agriculture a future for youth in Africa' in Rome, and, clearly influenced by the ongoing migration crisis, agreed on a common vision on "to generate sustainable and inclusive growth, supporting job creation in the agri-food sector and the rural economy for African youth, and ensuring a sustainable management of natural resources" (European Commission 2017a). Commissioner Phil Hogan told the conference of the need to foster responsible investment in African agriculture, to create an enabling environment for the private sector.

The fifth AU-EU Summit was held in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) in November 2017, under the theme of 'Investing in Youth for Accelerated Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development', echoing the ongoing concerns with employment and, increasingly, climate change (African Union 2017). Agriculture was mentioned only briefly in the context of economic development, with reference to job creation and sustainable development (para. 61) and with reference to support for CAADP (para. 67), particularly support for agribusiness and agro-value chains; promoting market access for smallholders; strengthen AU-EU agriculture business relations through the AU-EU Agribusiness platform; and support for training and education in sustainable agriculture and agri-food entrepreneurial activities.

Ahead of the 2017 Summit, a Study on the Joint Strategy was released by the Commission (EU 2016) Here, agriculture is largely dealt with under Section 2.4.2, "Agriculture, food security and food safety", just a single paragraph in a 54-page document. This references the recently agreed EU-Africa Research & Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) (signed in Addis Ababa in 2016), and the Pan-African Programme of the EU's Directorate of International Cooperation and Cooperation (see European Commission 2019a; and European Union and African Union 2018).

The LIVE2AFRICA programme is intended to make a significant contribution to the objectives of the 2025 Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation agenda adopted by the Head of States and Governments of the AU in Malabo in 2014. Live2Africa aims at "supporting the transformation of the African livestock sector for enhanced contribution to

environmentally sustainable, climate resilient, socioeconomic development and equitable growth". Its specific objective is to strengthen the systemic capacity of continental, regional and national Livestock Sector stakeholders for the economically, environmentally and socially sustainable transformation of the livestock sector. It was implemented with a total budget of €20 million, of which €19 million came from the European Commission (Africa Union 2019b; European Commission 2016).

In his State of the Union Address on 12 September 2018, President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, proposed to deepen the EU's economic and trade relationship with Africa through investment and job creation, in the form of a new Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Job (European Commission 2018a). The Alliance built on the commitments taken during the 2017 African Union–European Union Summit November in Abidjan, when the parties agreed to strengthen their partnership.

Of the six proposed action, none directly address agriculture, but it features indirectly within the broad areas of economic development and trade. In December, only three months after the launch of the Africa–Europe Alliance, a High-Level Forum Africa-Europe" was held in Vienna, jointly hosted by the EU and AU., CEOs of global companies, innovators, start-ups and various stakeholders. President Juncker reiterated Europe's ambition for a true and fair partnership among equals between Africa and Europe and presented the first results of the Africa–Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs.

As a direct outcome of the Alliance, a "Task Force Rural Africa" was established under the agriculture heading, with the specific objective to examine and provide advice on how to strengthen the partnership with Africa in food and farming, led jointly by DG Agriculture and Rural Development and DG international Cooperation and Development. The Task Force reported in March 2019, making four major recommendations: a territorial approach for income and job creation; sustainable land and natural resources management, and climate action; sustainable transformation of African agriculture; and the development of the African food industry and food markets (European Commission 2019b).

Following the Task Force's report, it was reported that the EU would commit to three specific actions: twinning and exchange programmes between African and European agricultural bodies; an AU-EU Agribusiness platform to link European and African businesses to help

identify challenges and opportunities for private investment and trade; and an innovation hubs to support 'agripreneurs' and the African agri-food sector to facilitate digitalisation and skills development. According to Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, "The Task Force report recognises the new reality of Africa and Europe as global partners on an equal footing. It demonstrates that farmers and the food industry should work hand in hand to take on new opportunities".

EU-AU foreign ministers met again in Brussels in January 2019. Chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Rwanda Richard Sezibera, the meeting brought together participants from the 28 EU Member States and from the 55 Members of the AU. While trade, investment and economic integration of the African continent featured prominently, little specific attention was given to agriculture, land or agri-food issues (Africa–EU Partnership 2019).

Agriculture and Food in EU Development Policy

The above account traces the recent history of food and agriculture within high-level Africa-EU relations, particularly in the areas of cooperation and trade. Some further, specific activities are, however, contained within the EU's Development Policy and related actions.

Since 2011, EU development policy has been under the Directorate General Development and Cooperation (DEVCO, or EuropeAid), which was formed in 2011 following the merger of the EuropeAid Cooperation Office (AIDCO) with the Directorate General for Development and Relations with ACP States. DEVCO has overall responsibility for the programming and implementation of the European Commission's external aid instruments financed by the European Union budget and the European Development Funds. DEVCO / EuropeAid was reformed in 2015, when the DG for International Cooperation and Development became a department of the European Commission, operating under the authority of the European Commissioner for International Cooperation & Development.

The EU is the world's largest aid donor. Its Development aid is financed directly by the EU budget (70%) and by the European Development Fund (EDF) (30%) made up of voluntary

contributions by EU Member States. The EU is currently implementing its 11th European Development Fund for the period 2014-2020, with an aid budget of €30.5 billion.

In 2006 the EU launched its European Consensus on Development, revised as the New European Consensus on Development in 2017 (European Commission 2017b). Carbone (2015b: 12) argues that the European Consensus on Development in 2005, accompanied by significant increases in aid volumes: "The novelty of the Consensus was that it committed the EU member states not only as participants in the supranational development policy but also as bilateral donors. In particular, the Consensus reiterated that the primary objective of EU development policy is policy reduction and reaffirmed the commitments made by all member states to delivering more and better aid." (Carbone 2015b: 131).

In 2007, the Committee of Development of the European Parliament published a Report on 'Advancing African Agriculture' (Committee on Development, 2007), describing the main current challenges facing agricultural production in Africa. Seven areas of cooperation were proposed, spanning agricultural development, trade, research, governance, natural resources, livestock disease and risk management. This was followed by the 2010 "EU Policy Framework to Assist Developing Countries in Addressing Food Security Challenges (FSPF)" (European Parliament 2010; Concord 2015).

In 2016, the European Parliament broadly supported the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa (NAFSN) launched in May 2012 under the auspices of the G8, which aimed to create the conditions that will allow the African countries involved - Burkina Faso, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania - to improve agricultural productivity and develop their agri-food sector by attracting more private investment in agriculture. Criticism, however, were levelled at the lack of clear commitment to shift to sustainable modes of agricultural production and to support farmers' seed systems, on the dangers associated with the emergence of a market for land rights, or on the regulation of contract farming; and that they are weak on nutrition as well as on the recognition of women's rights and gender empowerment (European Parliament 2016). The NAFSN has also been criticized by civil society voices for promoting the interests of transnational corporations rather than those of African small-scale food producers and local SMEs The NGO Concord highlighted the increased emphasis on private-sector led approaches to development within EU Development Policy: "The New Alliance is an alarming example of

the new wave of PPPs. Launched at the 2012 G8 Summit the New Alliance now covers 10 African countries and brings well over 180 companies to the table as investors, in addition to the G8 governments and the European Union as donors. This initiative "aims to accelerate responsible investment in African agriculture and lift 50 million out of poverty by 2022" through a partnership that "includes specific commitments from African leaders, private sector companies, donor partners" (Concord 2015: 4).

In 2017, EU External Action announced it was scaling-up its response to famine and drought affected countries in Horn of Africa with an additional €165 million. This was in addition to over €400 million that the EU allocated in 2016 to address the humanitarian crises in the region, and €200 million which the EU also approved in 2017 to support the new Government of Somalia to continue transitioning out of fragility and building a resilience society European Union External Action 2017). In 2018, EU Devco reported that European Union-funded interventions completed between 2013 and 2017 contributed to the introduction of sustainable land management practices on over three million hectares of agricultural and pastoral ecosystems, nearly four million people received rural advisory services and nearly a million people who have secure tenure of land (European Commission 2018b).

The reform of CAP from 2011 clearly set out the tensions between the desire of the EU to remain a major global producer of food, while balancing this with the desire3 and to support small farmers and agricultural enterprises in developing countries. The EU food and agriculture policies have been widely criticised by many in the NGO community, particularly for their negative impact on developing economies (or the inherent contradictions with EU development policy). For example, Concord (2009: 18) has highlighted the EU emphasis on competitiveness, and 'non-interventionism' which, even without subsidies or special treatment, promotes agri-food exports from the EU and puts developing country producers at a disadvantage. This in turns calls for vast imports of agri-food raw materials, such as soy bean and biofuels, the demand for which has negative impacts on small farmers, food markets and land availability in developing countries. The export of the EU's milk surplus to African countries is frequently cited as an example of a serious disruption of efforts to develop the local economy for this high value agri-food product. Concord (2015: 7) sums up its criticism of the EU approach to policy coherence for development (PCD) in the following terms: "The

EU's commitment to PCD and the right to food is jeopardized by its investment frameworks and by current trends in its development cooperation."

Africa-EU Land Policies

During the latter decades of the twentieth century, land and land reform were highly politicised issues, in the context of unresolved issues of dispossession, conflict and dualism dating from the colonial era. British involvement with land reform in Zimbabwe from 1980 was seen as problematic, and World Bank and other donor support for market-based land reform in South Africa from 1994 brought little progress. The sensitive matter of land tended, therefore, to be avoided by donors and external agencies.

With the new millennium, greater democracy in Africa brought with it a renewed pragmatism around land, leading to a modest degree of involvement by donors and development partners, amongst them the EU. Highlights in this regard were the establishment of the EU Task Force on Land Tenure in 2002, the adoption of the 2004 *EU Land Policy Guidelines* and the adoption of the *Voluntary Guidelines* of 2012.

The EU Task Force on Land Tenure (2002) was intended to form the basis for a common reference framework to support land policy and land reform processes and thereby contribute to greater co-ordination among EU donors and with bilateral and multilateral donors, to support interventions in land policy and administration in developing countries. In 2004, the European Council and Parliament endorsed the 2004 EU Land Policy Guidelines: Guidelines for support to land policy design and land policy reform processes in developing countries, based on growing international concern around so-called land grabbing in Africa and elsewhere (see European Commission 2004; and Access to Land 2019).

The Communication from the European Commission (2004) identifies rural land as an asset 'of the greatest importance' (p2), in both developed and developing countries, citing its relevance to income, employment and export earnings in developing countries, and its centrality to the fight against poverty Attention to land issues, the Communication argues, flows from the overall objective of EC development policy on poverty reduction, arguing that sustainable land policies are 'an essential element of rural development and food security' (p2). The policy guidelines are also justified in terms of requests from developing countries for support to land policy reforms.

The Communication outlines the various elements of an EU approach to support land policy implementation. A set of eight 'key principles' are set out (p8), including locally-specific solutions, firm political support from the state and wider civil society, in-depth dialogue with the state, long term commitment, gender-aware legislation and policy, promotion of public information and awareness, policy-relevant research, and specific attention to prevention of further marginalisation of women, poor people, ethnic minorities or indigenous people. The Communication also for enhanced engagement and coordination amongst Member States and the EC (p8-9), recommending a number of specific measures that include initiation of a common approach, integration of land policy reforms in to wider national development processes, collaboration with UN agencies such as FAO, IFAD and UNDP, and initiatives around applied research and development on the linkages between land reform and poverty, environment and wider processes of socio-economic development.

The Joint Africa-EU Strategy (EU and AU 2007), contains nothing on land reform, and only passing mentions of land management and land degradation in the context of climate change (Article 65). The Action Plan 2011-13, following the Summit theme of 'Investment, economic growth and job creation' – mentions (under MDG Partnerships), land policy and sustainable (Article 15) and the need to further align initiatives of EU and AU Member States behind the CAADP processes for food security and agriculture "and to foster the cooperation on accelerating the implementation of the African Land Policy Guidelines" (Article 16).

One specific example of a land-related project is Europe Aid's support for land governance worldwide. This project has a total cost of €240 million, and runs from January 2012 - December 2021, and is jointly implemented with non-governmental organisations, national governments, United Nations agencies and others. A leading role is played by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) working with eighteen African countries, with a specific budget of €60 million (European Commission 2019d). A common framework for implementation is provided by the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of national Food Security (FAO 2012) the AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa (African Union 2009), and the Framework and Guidelines for Land Policy in Africa (African Union, African Development Bank and Economic Commission for Africa 2010).

In a commentary on the 2004 Guidelines, the non-governmental network Concord (2015: 3) highlights the need to consider the traditional and informal land rights of villages, families and individuals; to respect the specific local social and institutional context; to institute participatory processes involving the competent public authorities and civil society actors. Furthermore, it criticises what it describes as the regressive role taken by countries such as Belgium and Germany in actively opposing legislation in Congo that protected local smallholders from dispossession by European investors – including threatening to withhold development funding unless the legislation was revised (Concord 2015: 5).

Potentially the most far-reaching initiative in the area of land are the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forestry and Fishery (VGGT), launched in 2012 (Windfuhr 2017). According to the FAO, the purpose of these Guidelines is "to serve as a reference and to provide guidance to improve the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests with the overarching goal of achieving food security for all and to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security" (FAO 2012). The EU is cooperating with other donors to promote the global debate and actions about responsible land governance particularly through the Global Donor Working Group on Land, created in 2013. It is also working with the Committee of World Food Security (CFS), the African Union and various G7/G8 initiatives, the EU contributed to the discussion and endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible (European Commission 2019d). The programme currently supports around forty governments for the reform of legislation or the improvement of land administrators' skills for guiding the registration of local land rights.

Conclusions

Agriculture, along with food and land, has been a recurring theme in African-EU relations over the past half-century, although the precise focus has changed considerably. In earlier decades, the emphasis was on production of food and fibre commodities for export, and the conditions that facilitated this trade. African agriculture suffered at this time due to the perception of the sector, at home and abroad, as being of secondary importance in terms of economic growth and development when compared to industrial and services sectors Over time, however, agriculture, including small-sale farming, has come to be seen as essential to broad-based and sustainable growth, to poverty alleviation, and to food security on the continent. Central to this shift has been the establishment of the African Union, and its various

development programmes, which have brought renewed energy to the challenges of agricultural development, including the greater inclusion of smallholders, a shift from production of primary commodities in favour of higher-value and more processed agri-food products, market deregulation and a greater emphasis on domestic and cross-border trade. The new millennium has also witnessed the rise of major new issues of mutual concern that intersect with agricultural policies, including peace and security, food security, land tenure, job creation – particularly in the context of the migration crisis – and, perhaps above all, climate change,

The evolution of EU trade policy bas broadly favoured African producers, but has been criticised by civil society organisations and some African governments as conferring even greater benefits on European consumers, continuing to protect key aspects of the European farm economy, and leading to unfair competition on African domestic markets, notably for dairy and grain products. Apart from trade, the EU engages with the agriculture and related sectors in Africa under a range of headings, including bilateral and multilateral programmes of support to agriculture, development aid, food security, land tenure reform and poverty reduction – as shown in this paper. While the EU itself provides voluminous documentation on funding, programme objectives and the likes, there is rather less on programme outcomes, and very little independent scholarship, at country or continent level, critically evaluating the impact of this multifaceted engagement. It is, therefore, difficult to make a definitive assessment of the impact of African-EU partnership in this important area. What we can say with confidence is that food and agriculture remain of critical importance to the African continent, and to the livelihoods of millions of the poorest, mainly rural, people on the continent. Progressive trade policies and aid programmes can be of great assistance, but it is likely to be the policies developed by African governments themselves, individually and collectively, that make the greatest difference. In the era of multiple global challenges, from poverty to climate change, Africa and the EU will continue to depend on each other in order to meet their common objectives.

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