



AFRICA LAUNCH | THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ENHANCING RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENTS IN AGRICULTURE FOR THE TRANSITION TOWARD MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

CONCEPT NOTE

A JOINT EVENT THE PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT, EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (EALA) AND ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS) PARLIAMENT

Virtual Meeting

Because of the sector's influence on people and development, investment in agriculture and food systems is key to supporting economic growth, reducing poverty and food insecurity, contributing to rural development, and creating job opportunities, especially for young people, women, and other vulnerable social groups. Additional investment in agriculture is required to reduce the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and support recovery efforts aimed at the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is important to note that not all kinds of investments are equally beneficial; some carry significant risks for all actors involved. For example, large-scale land acquisitions conducted without rigorous due diligence and meaningful consultations with all concerned stakeholders can affect rural communities and the environment negatively. Therefore, in order to generate sustainable benefits for all, it is essential to ensure not only more, but above all, *better* investments, investments that prioritize people's food security and nutrition, uphold decent work, secure land rights and resources, recognize participation in consultation, and protect the most vulnerable.

Developed from an international consensus, the *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS RAI)*, adopted by the Committee on World Food Security in 2014, serve as a framework to guide the actions of all stakeholders engaged in agriculture and food systems by defining principles that promote much-needed responsible investment, enhance livelihoods, and guard against and mitigate risks.

The adoption of the CFS RAI does not automatically translate into positive outcomes. Since they are voluntary and non-binding, they require transformation into domestic frameworks through the work of the members of parliament and parliamentary advisors to promote real change at the national and regional levels. The 2030 Agenda recognizes the "essential role of national



parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of commitments.”

Parliamentarians’ strategic position is fundamental, on the one hand, to promote the enhancement of responsible *public* investments into the agricultural sector, for instance for the provision of public goods and services, including infrastructure, energy, research, and development, especially in rural areas. They can also help develop the conditions to increase responsible *private* investments, made by smallholders, by youth-led and women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and by larger-scale agribusiness investors, while ensuring well-defined safeguards are in place to protect legitimate interests and prevent harm to the environment and communities. Finally, they can put in place actions that facilitate complementarity between different kinds of investments. Members of parliament and parliamentary advisors also play a key role in building public awareness about the challenges and opportunities related to responsible investment in agriculture and food systems, and in ensuring that investments do not jeopardize vulnerable groups.

Based on their experience working with parliamentarians, in 2020 the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Institute For Sustainable Development (IISD) joined forces to develop a practical handbook that provides a comprehensive, systematic overview of the role that parliamentarians can play in the creation of “enabling environments” in several areas related to investment in agriculture and food systems**, and includes guidance notes along with examples of legislation and good practices.

Objectives of the Online Event

FAO, IISD, the Pan-African Parliament, East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament will jointly organize an event on “the role of parliamentarians in enhancing responsible investments in agriculture for the transition towards more sustainable food systems in Africa” which will aim to:

- i. Raise awareness on the importance of Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems for the achievement of the SDGs.
- ii. Bring together parliamentarians from different parties and catalyze discussions on their concrete role in the enhancement of RAI within Africa.
- iii. Launch the *Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems: A Practical Handbook for Parliamentarians and Parliamentary advisors*.

Structure of the Event

The event will be organized online on December 15, 2020. It will last around 90 minutes and be structured into a series of alternating presentations and discussions in English and French (interpretation will be available).



Target Participants

The event will bring together members of the Pan-African Parliament, EALA, the ECOWAS Parliament, parliamentary advisors, and those who work with parliamentary alliances from FAO, IISD, and other organizations. Participation will be open to all interested, including parliamentarians and advisors from other regions.

Regional Background

The proposed event is in line with the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, an FAO initiative to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to eradicate poverty and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition. Enhanced investment would also help implement commitments under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, adopted in 2014 by the African Union (AU) member states with the goal of enhancing investment finance in agriculture, boosting production and productivity, and creating job opportunities for at least 30% of the youth in agricultural value chains.

The AU Members States also adopted the Guiding Principles on Large-Scale Land-Based Investments in Africa in 2014 to facilitate the implementation of the AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa and the CAADP by providing policy guidance to improve the governance of large-scale land-based agricultural investment and ensure that investments in land benefit member states, investors, and key stakeholders.

African parliamentarians started advocating for more, better, and equitable investment in agriculture in 2011 with a four-year continental campaign led by the Pan-African Parliament in collaboration with regional parliamentarians' bodies, the African Union Commission (AUC), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and IISD. The campaign was entitled Making Investment Work for Africa.¹ The focus of this first phase was on raising awareness about the impact of large-scale land-based investment. A second phase started in 2014, focusing on the need to strengthen the legal and policy framework for agriculture investment in developing countries to direct foreign investment in agriculture and food systems toward sustainable development outcomes that benefit rural poor populations. Led by IISD in collaboration with African parliamentarians, the initiative focuses on improving transparency and strengthening legal frameworks related to sustainable investment in agriculture and food systems while supporting the implementation of the CFS RAI.²

¹ <https://www.iisd.org/publications/making-investment-work-africa-what-role-parliamentarians>

² <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/meterial/PAP-IISD-African-Parliamentarians-Abidjan-Dec-2015-report-en.pdf>



With the support of IISD, EALA and the Secretariat of the East African Community developed the East African Community (EAC) Model Contract for Agribusiness Investment.³ Conceived as a vehicle for improving legal and policy frameworks within the region to promote sustainable and responsible investments, the model contract aims to create a regional benchmark based on international standards, principles, and best practices. It plays a role by requiring that the investor comply with existing laws and regulations or risk having the contract terminated.

In 2016, the 250 members of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) established the Pan-African Parliamentary Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security (PAPA-FSN) under a Memorandum of Understanding with the FAO. Within the agreement's framework, technical cooperation has been provided to parliamentarians in Africa, strengthening their capacities on gender and social policies, sustainable food systems, healthy diets, access to natural resources, and special sessions on responsible investments in agriculture. The need for both more and better investments was emphasized at these meetings, as stories about deforestation, soil degradation, forced evictions, and idle lands due to agricultural investments were shared by the MPs. At the national level, several training activities were developed in Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Madagascar. As a result, the last three countries formed national parliamentary alliances and have reaffirmed their unequivocal commitment to advance on these issues.

Consequently, at the end of 2019, a plenary session of the PAP approved the draft Model Law on Food Security and Nutrition in Africa and authorized regional consultations on it. The second consultation will be held in November 2020 and is led technically by FAO and in collaboration with NEPAD and AUC's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA). The final stage is to present the definitive version to the Specialized Technical Committee of the African Union in preparation for final adoption.

ECOWAS member countries have been tasked to enforce gender-friendly and inclusive agriculture laws to increase production and to improve the value chain to achieve Africa's Zero Hunger target by the year 2025. In order to foster inclusive and gender-equitable agricultural investment conducive to food and nutrition security as well as poverty reduction in the ECOWAS countries, in December 2018 the ECOWAS Parliament launched its first parliamentary network⁴ focusing on gender equality in land, agricultural investments, and food security. The network, supported by FAO, IISD and Oxfam, seeks to create a policy dialogue space and empowers ECOWAS parliamentarians with the knowledge and skills to advocate for gender-equitable agriculture investment and influence policy processes at the local national and regional level.

Finally, to address the issues of the pandemic and exchange knowledge and experiences, in June 2020 a crucial dialogue on Parliamentarians' response to the impacts of COVID-19 on gender

⁴ <https://www.iisd.org/articles/ecowas-food-security>



equality, food security and nutrition, was organized by FAO, IISD, and Oxfam with parliamentarians from Africa and other regions. The attendants highlighted the need for global action to fight the COVID-19 consequences and declared that they "will advocate for increased and better investment in agriculture and food systems, and rural women's rights to equal access and control productive resources, land, services, institutions, and economic opportunities."⁵

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/partnerships/news-archive/news-article/en/c/1304344/>