

African leaders told to Do Agric at AU Summit

ONE.org's Do Agric petition, which calls on African leaders to recommit to spending at least 10% of national budgets on effective agriculture investments, has gathered more than two million signatures of support from African citizens across the continent.



At the 23rd African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, the petition was hand delivered to a number of heads of state, including presidents Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, YayiBoni of Benin, John Mahama of Ghana, Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger, and Macky Sall of Senegal. As well as to Vice-President Guy Scott of Zambia, Prime Ministers Moussa Mara of Mali, Brigi Rafini of Niger, Minister for Agriculture of Nigeria Adesina Akinwumi, Minister for Agriculture and Food Security of Burkina Faso Mahana Zougrana, Nigeria's Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and South Africa's Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Senzeni Zokwana.

Do Agric, It Pays

ONE.org officially launched its 'Do Agric, It Pays' campaign on 20 January 2014 along the margins of the 22nd Ordinary Session of the AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in support of the 2014 AU Year of Agriculture. The campaign encourages African governments to keep their 2003 Maputo promise to invest at least 10% of national budgets in agriculture, and makes a case for better strategic policies and transparent public investments that will better support smallholder farmers, especially women, and lift millions of Africans out of poverty.

Receiving the petition on 10 June in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, President Jakaya Kikwete said, "I will champion this cause at the AU Summit. I will present this petition to the other Heads of State. We as African governments cannot succeed in taking agriculture forward unless we modernise it, instead of our people continuing to use the hand-held hoe and other farming implements from pre-biblical times."

Ghana's President John Mahama accepted the petition in Accra, Ghana on June 20. He hailed the initiative and reiterated Ghana's commitment to improving the lives of smallholder farmers, adding that "your campaign is preaching to the converted as we in Ghana are already stepping up the policies and investments in agriculture."

In April, D'banj and 18 artists representing 11 different countries came together to record the single 'Cocoa na Chocolate' in support of the Do Agric campaign. Addressing African leaders on behalf of the artists, D'banj said, "We came together because we know Africa is rising. Yet the farmers who produce most of our food still struggle to survive. 70% of Africans are employed in agriculture. This week's AU Summit in Malabo is a historic opportunity for you to change the lives of millions of Africans and create a better future for our youth through better agricultural investment."

Ahead of the summit, Dr Siphon Moyo, ONE.org's Executive Director for Africa, said, "It is time for our leaders to step up and Do Agric at this year's summit during the AU Year of Agriculture. Millions of smallholder farmers are counting on you including the over two million African citizens who have signed the Do Agric petition and the 400 million who live on less than a dollar a day."

This week, ONE.org and 120 partner organisations from across the continent released an open letter addressed to AU Heads of State reminding them of their 2003 promise to end hunger and extreme poverty for millions of Africans by 2024. The partner organizations also laid out 10 joint policy recommendations to accelerate economic development on the continent through an African-led agricultural transformation agenda steered by the AU's own CAADP (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme).

Djibo Bagna, President of Pan African Farmers Forum (PAFFO), one of the leading partners of the Do Agric campaign, said, "The small holders farmers know it: Africa future is in their hands. They are ready to take their responsibility of feeding Africa, ensuring food and nutrition security for all African citizens, growing jobs and boosting the continental growth but only if African heads of State and Government take theirs as well. So I am asking you: Are you ready?"

According to the recommendations, AU members should:

1. Adopt a target-based timeline towards reaching the AU 2003 promise to dedicate a minimum of 10% of the annual budget for agriculture and create a mechanism for monitoring progress.
2. Commit to making investments that increase the support for small-scale producers, which include investments in hard infrastructure, technologies, research, extension services, information services and end post-harvest losses.
3. Commit to implementing quality focused agriculture budgets and services that are clear and transparent to farmers and citizens.
4. Adopt measures to eliminate the gender and youth gap with respect to access to finance, land, technology, and training and extension services as well as markets access.
5. Adopt guiding principles on Large Scale Land Based Investments that will strengthen land governance and security of tenure rights for small-scale producers and curb land grabs through the implementation of AU 'Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa'.
6. Adopt a mechanism for mutual accountability and joint sector reviews to account for progress in ending hunger within the CAADP result framework.
7. Adopt measures to reduce barriers to domestic and intra-regional trade.
8. Adopt measures to integrate sustainability and climate resilience measures into national agriculture investment plans.
9. Adopt mechanisms for preventing, managing and monitoring the recurrent food and nutrition crisis.
10. Adopt measures to ensure policy making under CAADP is inclusive, effective, transparent, mutually accountable, and participatory.

If measures to support the 10 recommendations are adopted, partner organisations expect the following benefits for Africa by 2025:

- Boosted yields for smallholder farmers and a reduced food import bill, which currently stands at about \$25bn annually.
- Increased food availability for the 265 million Africans who are under-nourished.
- Increased intra-Africa trade benefits, estimated to reach \$2tn by 2030.
- Increased incomes for farming families through reduced post-harvest loss which is today at \$48bn a year.
- Increased food production and agro-processing can provide millions of jobs for African youth.

Dr Moyo concluded, "There are real agriculture success stories across the continent for countries to build upon, from Burkina Faso to Ethiopia. If the continent is going to go from what until now has been termed 'jobless growth' to inclusive growth, then now is the time for our leaders to commit to a big push toward implementing effective agricultural policies, scale up public investment in agriculture and catalyse private sector participation in agriculture development."

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