

INVESTING IN AGRICULTURE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND FOOD SECURITY

Note to Editors

The 13th African Union (AU) Heads of States and government has been convened in Sirte, Libya under the theme '*Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security*'. The summit taking place between 24th June and 3rd July in Sirte, Libya comes after the AU commitments they made at the 2003 AU Summit in Maputo to allocate a minimum of 10% of national budgets for agriculture, and more for rural development. If attained it would have been a significant increase from the current average of 4-5%. Only seven countries have since reached this modest target. Most African governments are averaging only about 4.5%.

In Kenya last year, President Kibaki promised that the government would increase allocation to agriculture to 10%. However this is not what is in the 2009/10 budget. Instead of the anticipated Sh86 billion, the sector ended up with Sh13.6 billion, representing only 1.5 per cent of the total budget. The decision is raising concern about the ability of the economy to recover from the post-election violence.

African civil society participation and engagement in every summit of the Africa Union (AU) has seen them maintain significant influence in addressing decision makers on behalf of citizens of the continent. However, unlike previous summits African civil society seeking to participate in Libya has experienced difficulty accessing the summit location and their presence and engagement at the summit is expected to be low.

In order to ensure the active involvement of African citizens in driving the AU agenda, five regional civil society organizations ACORD International, Actionaid International, African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Oxfam GB and World Vision have come together to broaden societal dialogue on investing in African Agriculture.

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