

# The Big Picture: A Holistic View of Agricultural Development

By Paul Guenette

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**T**he surest route to food security, particularly for sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, lies in sustainable agricultural development. Achieving this is no small feat. It requires an integrated approach in a supportive policy environment, with well-designed development programs and the active involvement of food industry stakeholders, not least the farmers themselves.

Programs that have addressed these elements in isolation have yielded disappointing results. To achieve lasting food security, the development community must be prepared to look at the relationships between and among these elements and address them as a whole.

» **Policy Environment:** The economic policy environment within a country or region must be supportive of well-functioning food systems that can supply growing urban centers with food from rural areas. Economic incentives must be aligned to motivate producers, transporters, processors and markets to efficiently produce and move food from surplus to deficit areas. The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development is the Africa-owned and -led initiative to boost agricultural productivity in Africa. One of the objectives of CAADP Pillar 2: Market Access is to create a regulatory and policy framework that would facilitate regional economic spaces to spur the expansion of regional trade and cross-country investments. CAADP Pillar 3: Food Supply and Hunger seeks to improve domestic production and marketing, facilitate regional trade in food staples, and build household productivity.

» **Programs:** Donor funding for improved agricultural productivity in support of food security is poised to grow after decades of decline. To address this priority, agricultural programs must appropriately integrate food security into their activities. In the past, implementing organizations have “followed the market” and found themselves carrying out either food security or agricultural productivity programs. The need now is to integrate these two types of programs.



Implementing organizations and consortia that succeed in such synthesis will be best equipped to successfully implement a new generation of food security-oriented agricultural development programs.

» **Stakeholders:** Programs that link farmers to markets require the full engagement of food industry stakeholders. Donor-funded programs can act as a catalyst, leveraging complementary industry resources such as input supply companies, transporters, processors and wholesalers. But effective implementation will only happen through a consultative process that involves industry stakeholders in diagnosing and addressing the obstacles to industry efficiency and competitiveness.

» **Farmers:** Changing the behavior of large numbers of rural-based small farmers is necessary to achieve a critical mass of the behavioral reforms necessary for increased productivity and subsequent food security. Grouping producers into farmer-based organizations allows programs to reach large numbers of farmers with technology transfer and market information to improve agricultural practices. Involving medium- and large-scale farmers as well as smallholders makes possible food industry innovations such as warehouse receipt and advocacy programs.

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