

It is farmers that will nourish the soils Africa Fertilizer Summit (AFS) Farmers' Declaration

Today, African farmers' organisations are gathered to participate in the Africa Fertilizer Summit. We wish to voice our support for this conference, but also express some critical issues that should also be considered.

This Summit brings together key stakeholders in agriculture, African heads of state, African ministers, presidents and heads of international donor organizations, private-sector firms, senior policy makers, and farmers. This Summit will discuss the food challenges of Africa and its soil and fertilizer crisis. The purpose of the Summit is to increase the awareness of the role that fertilizer can play in stimulating sustainable pro-poor productivity growth in African agriculture and to discuss approaches for rapidly increasing efficient fertilizer use by African smallholder farmers. It will map out regional and national strategies within the framework of agricultural sector development plans and financing mechanisms. This Summit's slogan is: "*Nourish the soil, feed the continent*".

We acknowledge the importance of this Fertilizer Summit and the involvement of key stakeholders. We know that there is a need for increased use of inputs for African agriculture to achieve national economic development and to reduce poverty. We support measures to improve supply side constraints, including the need for more regional integration and trade, and the harmonisation of rules and regulations to reduce the cost of agricultural inputs.

Whilst fertilizers are an important input, we feel that the Summit is giving more attention to addressing supply side constraints and less to demand side constraints affecting small and medium scale farmers. Some of the demand side issues that are not adequately addressed are:

- The development of well functioning agricultural output markets.
- Access to agricultural services (research, extension, soil sampling, credit facilities and others).
- Adequate infrastructural development to facilitate the movement of inputs, outputs and information for small and medium scale farmers.
- High cost of inputs.

Although we acknowledge that this is a fertilizer Summit, we do feel that the focus of the Summit should be more on soil fertility management, combining both organic and chemical fertilizers to achieve agricultural intensification to assure the livelihoods of the farmers of today and future generations and to protect the environment.

Farmers are perceived as beneficiaries and target groups and not as actors that are increasingly organised. It is not a lack of knowledge of farmers in the first place that is an obstacle for development in agriculture. The reason behind apparent 'unawareness' is that farmers do not have the incentive to invest in their soils.

Finally, we think that an appeal for a 'African Green Revolution' is not right; series of 'rainbow evolutions' are needed, adapted to the circumstances and the conditions of various regions of Africa and the farmers of Africa.

What farmers would like:

- *More and better focussed* research for agriculture is needed. Research should be linked to the operational needs of the farmers and the farmer organisations.
- First of all small and medium scale farmers would like to become involved in policy formulation right from conceptualisation to implementation.
- Small and medium scale farming should be promoted to harness and strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit of small and medium scale farming.
- Fertilizer use should be seen within the context of integrated soil fertility management, of which the use of fertiliser is part but not the only part.
- Appropriate packaging and distribution.
- Reduce undisclosed interests.
- Development of African capacity to produce fertilizers.
- Farmers should have special credits and/or systems of financing fertiliser use.
- Farmers and farmer organisations should be supported to play their roles as partners in agricultural development, amongst others through capacity building and organisational support.
- Appropriate and accessible agri-services (research, extension, credit ...) should be developed.

What farmers would like to contribute:

- Organisation of the commercialisation and transformation of agricultural products, to the benefit of consumers and governments.
- Participation in interactive processes of policy development in the field of agricultural production.
- Articulation of demand for inputs such as fertilizers which will create economies of scale and as a consequence create the conditions for the private sector to do business in rural areas.
- Participation in adaptive research and farmer-to-farmer extension programmes to improve the relation between research, production and marketing within the agricultural sector.
- Setting-up of saving and credit cooperatives to facilitate access of poor farmers to agricultural inputs.

We hope that our contribution to this Summit will pave the way for more attention and investment in the agricultural sector of African countries. Because only in that way we will be able to fight hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

Abuja, June 2006.