

Montpellier Summary

Preamble

The Montpellier launch of the Montpellier Panel Report, 'Africa and Europe: Partnerships for Agricultural Development' took place on November 30 at the Agropolis Foundation. Mr Henri Carsalade, Chair Board of Trustees, Agropolis Foundation and Montpellier Panel Member, introduced the discussion, which also heard from other panel members, Dr Ramadjita Tabo, Deputy Executive Director, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, Dr David Radcliffe, Senior Policy Advisor, Agricultural Research for Development, Directorate-General, Development and Relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific States, European Commission and Dr Yvonne Pinto, Acting Deputy Investigator, Agriculture for Impact, who represented Professor Sir Gordon Conway.

The discussion was introduced by Dr. **Anne-Lucie Wack**, Director of the Agropolis Foundation and **Professor Bernard Hubert**, President of Agropolis International. They highlighted the long history of collaboration between France and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in technical cooperation on food security and agriculture. Professor Hubert referred to Montpellier as the international centre for agricultural research and issues, a strength that will only increase in 2011 as the headquarters of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) will be located in Montpellier from January. France will also preside over the G8 in 2011. As a result the strong partnerships forged between Montpellier and the South will only grow stronger.

Henri Carsalade discussed the history of Sir Gordon Conway's relationship with the foundation, and with Mr Carsalade, that led to both the creation of Sir Gordon's book, 'A Doubly Green Revolution', and the inception of the Montpellier Panel itself, which was created immediately prior to the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD) in March 2010. The Panel was created, explained Mr Carsalade, as a result of several factors. The severe impact of the 2007/2008 Food Price spike on developing countries, notably in Sub-Saharan Africa was a considerable impetus to a re-evaluation of European donor support to the continent. This was further reinforced by the G8 commitments in L'Aquila, which featured a significant European response, and new US initiatives such as the 'Feed the Future' programme. Increased successes on the ground, notably the CAADP commitments, further demonstrated a renewed recognition and commitment to agricultural development by African countries.

The Montpellier Panel report is primarily focussed on trying to influence European policymakers, demanding action to seize the unique opportunity for African – European partnerships. Agriculture is the largest sector contributing to African GDP. Wider concerns such as malnutrition, poverty and wider underdevelopment are 'rooted in African farms'. There is a huge potential in Africa, M. Carsalade continued, that demands an approach to stimulate agricultural development, by seizing this proven potential that is found across the continent.

Dr Ramadjita Tabo was pleased to return to Montpellier with a ‘living document’ that was begun during his last visit at the 2010 GCARD event. He discussed several aspects and successes of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). FARA is an ‘apex organisation’, he explained, that coordinates research within the African continent in addition to establishing a platform on which various partners can come together to discuss issues of concern with regard to agriculture and food security. He was hopeful that FARA can put in place many of the suggestions featured in the Montpellier Report. He reiterated the importance of the agricultural sector that m. Carsalade highlighted, but noted that despite the importance of the sector, there are many challenges that need to be overcome, notably issues, such as the lack of biotechnology and the economic and policy factors that surround low productivity. To tackle many of these problems, there is a need to increase investment in agricultural research and development, as even a modest growth in agriculture has a considerable and wide reaching ‘multiplier effect’. Several technologies that could contribute include soil and water conservation, and ‘microdosing’ of fertiliser technologies, but Dr Tabo noted the need to scale up, what remain, localised solutions.

Despite these problems, Dr Tabo remains certain that now is the time to build on these positive trends in African development. There has been an average growth of 5% in some African economies during the past decade, coupled with a rise in private sector involvement across the continent and increased emphasis on the importance of agriculture by international financial institutions as well as a further commitment by African countries. This is a unique opportunity that must be seized. He cited the importance of the CAADP commitments, which demand an increase of 10% in country’s agriculture budgets, as proof of the importance of demonstrating commitment to the ‘outside world’. There are four ‘pillars’ of the CAADP process: Extending the area, sustainable land management and reliable water control systems; market access and infrastructure; increasing food supply and reducing hunger; and agricultural research and development, including dissemination of successful technologies. FARA plays the lead role on the final pillar, which links the other three into a coherent strategy for growth.

There exists even further success in Africa, continued Dr Tabo. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) has been leading the effort for a uniquely African Green Revolution that ‘puts the smallholder first’. Africa features 23 million small farms, those comprising less than two hectares, which supply 90% of the continent’s food production. To date, through continued partnerships, 125 new crop varieties have been successfully distributed across these smallholder fields, 9,200 new agri-enterprises have been established and the successful cultivation of the NERICA variety of rice is spreading across Africa. Finally, cassava production in Nigeria has even overtaken that of Brazil. Successes such as these offer the ‘light at the end of the tunnel, and there is potential to achieve a Green Revolution if investment and support is sustained’. AGRA is also leading an innovative finance programme, providing loan-guaranteed funds to small farmers to access inputs and invest in their farm businesses. Africa needs continued support to achieve nutrition security, Dr Tabo concluded, and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has strengthened these successes through supporting initiatives for nutrition security.

Dr David Radcliffe reiterated the opportunity present in Africa as a result of the CAADP process, describing it as a helpful sign of economic progress and the increased commitment of African governments. Europe has a comparative advantage, he explained, in assisting Africa grasp this opportunity. As the biggest aid donor to Africa, with unparalleled experience in agricultural development, success in managing its own agriculture – through the Common Agricultural Policy and its current reform and lessons - , in addition to being Africa’s largest trading partner, Europe is in a unique position to offer significant assistance.

Dr Radcliffe discussed several successful initiatives employed by the European Union (EU) that are already assisting African agricultural development. The EU’s Food Facility, a short-to-medium response running over three years, has already disbursed much of the EU’s L’Aquila donor commitments. The European Commission’s (EC) Food Security Thematic programme, which is moving into its second phase, deals with issues of research and extension, as well as development policies especially related to country fragility. The Commission has led policy initiatives that enable countries deal with the four pillars of food security challenges: availability, access, nutrition and crisis prevention and management. Running throughout this, there is a particular emphasis on smallholder systems, on ecological efficiency and on excluded actors such as women. Dr Radcliffe highlighted two aspects raised in the Montpellier Panel Report. The first was ecological resilience and the second was the relationship between climate change and food security.

Agriculture depends on the sustainable use of natural resources, and Africa is well placed to learn lessons from the Asian Green Revolution in regards to what worked, what did not, and what was less sustainable than it might be. We are now better placed to utilise initiatives that use land and water resources in a more sustainable fashion, and hence can view agricultural intensification not solely through a productivity lens. In addition to scaling up successes to enable them to become ‘dominant paradigms’ in African agricultural development, we must also look at the policies and institutions that enable this scaling-up, Dr Radcliffe explained. In addition to finding and applying technologies that are appropriate to the agricultural conditions of the farmers, we must also enable strategies that are appropriate to the socio-economic conditions of these actors. Situations whereby many African farmers do not have statutory rights to the land that they farm, a condition that notably disadvantages women, demonstrate the need for a development of secure rights to land use. Furthermore, there must also be improved access to inputs and services, through the encouragement of agro-dealers and ‘innovation platforms’ that bring together farmers, researchers and the private sector to identify appropriate technologies. Finally, microfinance, both in terms of credit and insurance, access to rural advisory services and new models of extension (including farmer colleges, and the role of information technology) offer considerable assistance for agricultural development. The issue of incentives is also important. We must look at incentives to promote environmental services, that will only become increasingly central as water and land become more scarce. There must be discussion over the ‘right’ incentives to encourage sustainable usage of these resources.

With regards to climate change, Dr Radcliffe cited this as the ‘overarching threat to food security globally’, and particularly noted the unfair impact it imposes on Africa. Despite Africa being one of the smallest contributors to climate change, it represents its greatest victim, a major instance of ‘social injustice’. However, Europe is able to support Africa, in terms of better prediction of climate impacts and of adaptation to the more serious aspects of climate change. Agriculture remains a major emitter of greenhouse gases, and this will only increase with growth in food production. Therefore, we must look closely at greater efficiency, technologies to control carbon and the need to consider the incentives to encourage these developments. Smallholder farmers must be well-placed to benefit from these market mechanisms, and the international community must be mindful of elites grabbing the opportunities created by this emerging market.

Ultimately, Dr Radcliffe concluded, Africa and Europe remain committed to promoting sustainable agricultural intensification and to tackling the interface between agriculture and climate change. We need to continue to work together, he reiterated, and Europe must continue to support African policies and initiatives in this respect. To enable future success, we must look at climate-smart agriculture, and the possibilities afforded by an ‘Evergreen’ agricultural revolution.

Dr Yvonne Pinto highlighted the panel report’s focus on three issues: Price volatility, Child under-nutrition and Going to scale. She noted the developments and opportunities in Africa, and that there now exists an opportunity to implement significant change. Currently Europe provides 60% of overseas aid and is the largest agricultural trade partner. It is also the largest supporter of the CGIAR, reflecting the priorities of European governments and the European Union. It is critical to make the most of this opportunity. She reiterated the optimism of the previous speakers, citing the Committee for Food Security, established to tackle hunger and food supply, and the US ‘Feed the Future’ initiative’s \$3.5 billion pledge towards agriculture. However, there are still areas which require attention. The 2010 food prices are almost comparable to their levels during the food price spike in 2008, and an OECD and FAO report predicts further rises in food prices over the next decade by a factor of 40%. The poor in the developing world are paying higher prices for basic commodities and the use of national or regional grain reserves offers one solution. She mentioned a report the previous day in a Tanzanian newspaper, on the East African Farmer’s Federation and the East African Commission secretariat having discussions into the modalities of establishing an East African grain reserve. It was remarkable to think that farmers were driving this discussion.

The other issue is child under-nutrition. The amount of children underweight has declined from 27% to 24% over the past 20 years, a small decrease in such a large timeframe. The ‘1,000 Days’ initiative, focussing on child nutrition prior to the age of two, after which the effects of undernutrition are irreversible, offers significant options. We need well-nourished and well-informed mothers during pregnancy, good healthcare, clean water and preventative healthcare to be able to combat undernutrition, she noted, in addition to building opportunities for self-sufficiency.

Dr Pinto concluded by discussing the challenges surrounding 'scaling-up'. There are a promising number of successful initiatives across Africa, and donors have the opportunity to facilitate the role of the private sector as well as help support cooperatives, governments and developing initiatives that build on farmer-to-farmer mechanisms to scale up. Africa needs sustainable scaling up through involvement of the private sector, she noted. There have been successes, for example, The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)'s investment in developing 9,500 agro dealers to make seed available through sale to smallholders. These demonstrate the potential of public-private partnerships to provide access to seed for farmers within distance of 10Km from their farms.

Discussants:

The discussion focussed on the main aims of the report: Sustaining momentum, Reducing price volatility, Tackling chronic hunger and the Challenges to scaling-up.

Professor Bernard Hubert, President of Agropolis International, began the Discussant presentations by focussing on the role of human activity. He highlighted the importance of research, noting how it is costly in terms of both time and value, but halting it prematurely results in unsuccessful implementation. More research is needed to take into account specific situations and contexts. Implementation feedback is valuable. Innovation is beneficial, but can also have detrimental effects that further research can highlight. Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen research capacity on the ground; the development of agriculture relies on strong partners. Thus there is a need to explore new pathways through cooperation with local teams, who add both diversity and cultural significance to the 'big ideas' of nutritional value and energy promoted by donors.

Professor Hubert concluded his presentation by relating the three main conclusions of his hosting of the GCARD Panel to those found in the Montpellier Panel Report. Firstly, we must change the research partnerships, through exploring new pathways including the consideration of new ideas. Secondly, there must be a focus on smallholder farmers, but we must be mindful that increasing productivity can have detrimental effects in excluding other smallholder farmers. Therefore we need to ensure productivity is increased without marginalisation. Finally, he concluded, we must look beyond the agricultural sector. Issues of food security are not just confined to the agricultural sector which is integrated into many different networks.

Jean Louis Pham, Project Leader, Agropolis Resource Centre for Crop Conservation, Adaptation and Diversity (ARCAD), summarised the Montpellier Panel Report as a 'fight against uncertainty', both uncertainty in Europe and in Africa. There is uncertainty, he explained, in financial support to agricultural research, where there is a commitment by African leaders that Europe must support, and there is an uncertainty on the ground in Africa where food supply is a significant problem. This reiterates the importance of Europe in strengthening donor funding. Speaking as a 'European Citizen', Mr Pham discussed how the lack of confidence in Europe, by its own citizens, is a considerable

constraint in Europe playing a strong role in the world arena, a role demanded by the conclusions of the Montpellier Report.

Mr Pham reiterated the discussion of Montpellier Panellist Dr Radcliffe, who explained the lessons to be learnt from past agricultural development outside of Africa, but noted the importance of utilising African potential. The diversity of African experience, practice and cultural diversity explains the considerable resilience of the African agricultural system. Europe and Africa must work together to both promote research and sustain conservation, and to develop mechanisms that enable the exchange of resources and knowledge for future development. Mr Pham concluded by noting the importance of technological, notably bio-technological, platforms to enable growth and development. However, these must also be accompanied by an increase in knowledge and skill in the scientists surrounding these platforms who will be increasingly called upon to analyse data from multi-disciplinary projects. Europe has an invaluable role in developing capacity in Africa to enable this. Mr Pham summed up his remarks by applying a Nigerian proverb: “One hand does not catch a buffalo, so we need many hands to capture the buffalo of agricultural development”.

Didier Pillot, President of Agrinatura, focussed on three issues raised by the Montpellier Panel. Firstly, he highlighted the political situation with regards to the new opportunities and commitments in both Africa and Europe, notably the gap between rhetoric and action on the ground. Despite this, Mr Pillot believes that the most important factor is what happens at the political level in Africa itself. This political process is neither recognised or measured, and sections of Africa lag behind the rest of the continent. However, he continued, African commitments are progressing in real terms, and a more positive situation has led to ‘real progress’ as the CAADP process has become recognised as a key strength of African agricultural development.

Secondly, he noted the important role of research and higher education in attaining the CAADP commitments. Both elements are crucial, as mentioned by Professor Hubert. Mr Pillot discussed further the role of capacity building, which is not just education alone. He reiterated the significant effort that is necessary to produce skills and competencies. This effort is multi-level, and the lower-level is crucial; it is ‘not just about PhDs’. Universities, and capacity building institutions in general, suffered greatly during the period of Structural Adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s, and remain in a terrible state. Despite some progress in their development, Mr Pillot is concerned that the same countries are always seen as paradigms, and a local effort is needed to counter this. Capacity building in Africa, he explained, needs to reform itself. There is a need for institutional reform in terms of governance, and there must become more opportunities outside of universities, through non-academic, professional and vocational training.

Finally, Mr Pillot concluded with a third point, a concern regarding the role of Francophone-Western Africa in this landscape of development. He remains anxious when seeing the distance between the capacities in the most advanced African economies compared to those in the least advanced category. The momentum towards growth and higher productivity widens this gulf, he explained. Many of the mechanisms put in place

for agricultural support and capacity building are competitive systems, which creates a risk that the same stakeholders and actors succeed every time, and the institutions which require the most development, struggle to compete with the strongest institutions.

Kodjo Tomekpe, Cirad and former-Director of CARBAP-Cameroon, made several comments on the content of the Montpellier Panel Report. He began by noting the importance of African commitments, which demonstrate a strong shift on the continent. However, he highlighted that these commitments are a focus on feeding populations, and that productivity is not the only factor. Furthermore, coordination between local, national, regional and international interventions is crucial to make the most of these commitments, and African leadership is required to enable this coordination and alignment. Mr Tomekpe noted that NEPAD was not mentioned in the Montpellier Panel Report, and questioned whether they should also play a role. He further discussed the introduction of non-European donor funding and investment, and is hopeful that it can stimulate the emergence of small and medium sized farms for food production.

In concluding his remarks, Mr Tomekpe recognised the importance of African governments, and sub-regional and regional bodies, in making investment to reduce the risk for agricultural actors. It remains a ‘high risk’ job, he explained, and this dissuades many African citizens from considering it as a valid career, and further encourages them to eschew a rural lifestyle in favour of urban residence. Research, he concluded, at the national level, through institutions such as the CGIAR, but also at the national level, are making progress in this regard, but there is a need for regional ‘based’ institutions that work closely with farmers and provide scientific support.

Jacques Wery, Executive Secretary, European Society of Agronomy, saw the Montpellier Report as a very interesting document, and raised two initial comments. Firstly, he highlighted the importance of agricultural and food policies at the national and regional levels in Africa in order to sustain innovation in agricultural systems. Secondly, he noted how agricultural extension systems in Africa remain a weak link between national and international research and African farmers. When innovation is linked to inputs, such as fertiliser and seeds, the private sector takes a dominant role in an efficient way. However, Mr Wery continued, when innovation is based on knowledge, complexity and agroecology, it does not work in an efficient way. Both these situations are found today in Europe, and demonstrate how it is a matter of policy and research, and an organisation of research projects.

Mr Wery cited three issues he had with the Montpellier Panel Report. Firstly, scaling and diversity should become more interlinked. We need to look into what definitely does not work and take it from there, he explained, and further incorporate specific methodologies such as integrated assessments to understand successes. We should also exploit more diversity of soils. Secondly, he highlighted the importance of agronomy. The Montpellier Report leaves the impression that there are two streams, one is the intensification of production with inputs, and the other is through the intensification of the ecological process. These are seen as separate in the Report, but the two ways should be combined instead of as an either/or proposal.

Finally, he concluded, there must be more coordinated efforts in both economy and agronomy, and further multi-disciplinary approaches, as there is a scope for developing and combining the knowledge and farming techniques accrued to date. In this regard, we can utilise knowledge from European donors, and combine it with local knowledge in order to adapt successful strategies to local constraints. This is an important consideration for research and extension.

Vicki Wilde, Director, African Women in Agricultural Research for Development (AWARD), spoke as an implementer of the capacity-building programme 'AWARD', which is delivering research and development to support poor, local women. Currently, AWARD is active in 11 countries, reaching 80 African research institutions, and is trying to boost the income of African women. In the 80s and 90s, there was a 68% decline in agricultural education. Currently, many women only get to the stage of achieving a Bachelors degree. Thus there is a gap between those with PhDs, who are on the verge of retirement, and current research scientists who do not possess further postgraduate education.

There is a strong investment in capacity building, but it will take a significant time for capacity to catch up. These statistics represent a wider knowledge gap: less than one in four scientists are women and less than one in seven is in a management role. Agriculture, where women own only 1% of the land, get less than 5% of rural credit and less than 10% of agricultural investment has not shifted for 30 years for women as they have had no 'voice', no leadership or influence throughout this period. Furthermore, agriculture is also seen as an unpopular career choice and the perception of agriculture as a valid career option needs to be recognised and promoted. Demonstrating how agriculture is inextricably linked with climate change, child undernutrition and other 'cutting-edge' issues, could attract many to see the agricultural sector as a valid career choice.

Ms Wilde discussed how capacity building only focuses on PhDs, Masters and postgraduate education, but there is a need to focus on those with just Bachelors degrees, which is a sector that AWARD attempts to fill. Furthermore, there is a need to broaden the disciplinary scope of agricultural development, and there must be a recognition that ecological resilience, child nutrition and other issues are not just problems that can be solved by the agricultural sector. We need to embrace a wide range of issues, in order to strengthen capacity in all of them.

Finally, Ms Wilde concluded by explaining the need to not just emphasise the capacity-building process, but also to add an emphasis on the development of 'soft skills'. Building successful female research and development teams is essential. African women coming from a culture where the general consideration is that 'a good woman is a quiet woman', require mentors and leadership skills. Both inside and outside of Africa, influential leaders need to find ways for African women to have a voice so they are left in a stronger position.

A Student from Niger stated that in her country, more NGOs are trying to fight against malnutrition. However, there is no link or coordination between these organisations and the government. In addition, there is a significant lack of education. Farmers need more training and need to be made more aware of the technologies available. Climate change also needs addressing, and considering a wider variety of crops that can adapt to these problems is important. Furthermore, Africans need to be more applied and interested in the development of their respective countries, but overall there is hope for progress.

Sir Gordon Conway was able to speak at the very end of the meeting. Sir Gordon sees the panel report as a policy changing document. He remarked that it could sometimes be a key sentence that would make a Minister change his or her mind about a certain issue. In order to seize such opportunities, the Panel Members are also thinking about creating a number of 2 page policy briefings on various topics.

He concluded by discussing the RUFORUM meeting in Kampala which took place in mid-November, where the Report had its African launch. The meeting was a highly-successful opportunity to bring together agricultural, educational and financial Ministers with higher education institutions. Ministers were present throughout the Conference which showed a good level of commitment. It was important to keep an eye on the CAADP process to ensure the monies going into education are being directed specifically into agricultural education.