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To feed the growing and (more demanding) population is not only a major challenge; it is a huge business opportunity for farmers. But then we need a new generation of farmers. Present day knowledge and practices are not good for the future. Farming is to become much more sophisticated and knowledge intensive. New skills, new ambitions, new mindset. Not all people who currently live in the countryside are to become farmer-entrepreneurs. Some just want to put food on their table, others may produce some surplus now and then, by accident; and still others want to produce for the market and be an agro-entrepreneur. Be aware of this categorization, and then decide what you want to do, objectives, instruments, etc.

Farmers organizations are operating in the third sphere. We need farmers entrepreneurs, people that are ready and willing to invest in their business and future, and able to profit from the huge opportunities that come with Africa's rise.

One major problem is the fragmentation of the farmers, both organizationally and geographically. Scale, efficiency, access, power. Aggregation needed to gain access to markets, make use of the new opportunities. A new generation of farmers organizations, based on and working towards enhancing the economic potential of farmer entrepreneurs, consolidating power for policy change.

PPP's are okay but farmers always on the end; we should take the initiatives ourselves, the initiative should come from us, we should take the lead and check out business deals.

(from a recent article by Mr Shunga:)

Global demand for food is soon projected to surpass population growth. In the next 40 years, the world is expected to consume more food than was produced in the last 500. This growth will be driven by a combination of factors, including population growth, urbanisation, rising per capita incomes and increasing demand for protein. Africa has been touted as the region offering the best prospects for meeting this rising global demand for food. But can Africa rise to the challenge, especially when it is currently struggling to feed itself? For Africa to feed the world, a radical shift in the current agricultural development paradigm will be needed.

Agriculture is an important part of Africa's development agenda, and expectations on what it can deliver – jobs, economic growth and industrialisation – are very high. In fact, the sector is largely being seen as the panacea for Africa's development and its future, making it a key focus for global development efforts.

However, Africa is unlikely to emerge as a leader in food production if it continues on the current agricultural development trajectory. The dominant agricultural development paradigm is largely centered on household food security within the context of poverty alleviation. Whilst this is indeed a noble objective, putting food on the table and poverty alleviation represents a low level of ambition. This is especially so when agriculture has so much to offer households, African nations and the world at large.

There are several other shortcomings inherent in the current approach. It is overly politically sensitive and treats everyone who resides in rural areas as a farmer in an effort to be "inclusive". This has led to development support being pitched at the "lowest common denominator" in terms of targeting. In fact, smallholder farmers are often synonymous with the poor. Furthermore, lack of differentiation of smallholders often results in inappropriate instruments being deployed. For instance, development support has often ended with those that could be better served by the market, and vice versa.

This approach has also seen smallholder farmers being relegated to feeding themselves whilst the large scale agriculture is feeding the world. The development interventions have tended to be short-

term and project based, and with an operational rather than strategic focus. In an attempt to reach everyone, they have lacked in strategic focus and the efforts have been too fragmented to make meaningful impact. Overall, the nature and magnitude of the resources has been too small relative to the size of the problem. As a result, not much has changed and there is a growing sentiment that current development efforts are in fact helping to manage poverty rather than lift nations out of it.

A higher level of ambition that is outward-looking and opportunity-driven will be required if African agriculture is to fulfill its potential. Feeding the world requires a transformative development agenda with a strong growth orientation, centred on enterprise development. Feeding the world means deliberately and consciously producing beyond the immediate household and national requirements and complying with the demands of the market. Participating in the global marketplace also requires an enterprise development approach to farming, and improving competitiveness. The success of such an approach will also be measured by the extent to which it results in more prosperous farmers investing in the growth of their enterprise.

A new paradigm should preach the gospel of growth and prosperity as a key driver of poverty alleviation, and smallholder agriculture should be its key focus. The prospects for growth in this sector are enormous, partly due to the very low starting point in terms of productivity. However, it should be acknowledged that not everyone in rural areas is a farmer, and smallholder farmers are not homogenous. It is important therefore to differentiate among smallholder farmers, and target support towards that segment which has an enterprise development orientation. This is not to say that those whose ambition is no more than putting food on the table should be neglected. Rather, these should be targets for welfare-related programs.

Several other elements will need to be re-aligned with this new paradigm. For example, a transformative agenda will require a much longer term perspective and more strategic approach to planning and programming. Planning should ideally be done for a generation and beyond, implemented in 10 year blocks. Resources are always going to be limited, and this underscores the importance of targeting strategic areas of high impact. In terms of financing arrangements, patient capital will be needed under the principle “for as cheap as possible and for as long as possible”. Global food systems are complex and demanding. Thus, feeding the world implies competences that go beyond practical mastery in producing a good crop. It will require knowledge and skills for processing wide-ranging data and information. While the sector is already in desperate need of new skills and energies to deal with the complexities of modern agriculture, a declining number of young people with the required academic grounding are joining the sector, leaving it in the hands of an ageing population without the requisite energies and technical competencies, hence the observation that “agriculture is a generation away from extinction”. A new generation of farmers will be needed to drive this higher level of ambition.

Young peoples’ lack of interest in farming has been attributed to negative perceptions of the sector. In order to address this, some have suggested that agriculture needs a ‘makeover’ to be seen as attractive to the young, perhaps by increasing the focus on technology. But these are rather superficial solutions. It’s much more than an image or perception issue: the reality is that it’s no fun to be a farmer. Rather than a makeover, major surgery is needed to improve this deep-seated reality. Africa will certainly not be able to feed the world if it continues to regard agriculture as a second best choice, an occupation of last resort when all else fails, or a sector for banishment when one misbehaves in class or at home. Smallholder farmers are often depicted as a poor and toiling lot—often in ragged attire, holding the famed back-breaking hoe and tending to a few sparsely populated and poorly crops. Such images, which are a favorite with development workers and fundraisers, do not help the situation and seem to romanticise poverty.

Africa needs to take pride in farming and make it more rewarding, profitable and competitive. Only then can attitudes change, and only then will the primary and tertiary educational systems become breeding grounds for farmers of the future.

Finally, the ever-increasing complexity of global food systems and its demands on primary production and related matters also require a new generation of farmers' organisations that are able to support producers in navigating the technical, logistical, legal and other demands that come with supplying global markets. New forms and efficient models for organising farmers, in order to achieve scale economies so vital for global competitiveness, will need to be developed. ICTs offer good prospects in this regard.

For Africa to feed the world, an outward-looking and opportunity-driven agricultural transformation agenda which puts global demand and enterprise promotion at its core must be developed. A much longer-term planning horizon, with bigger and more strategic investments will be required.

Moreover, there is a need to invest in a new generation of farmers and farmers' organisations and more effectively engage with other sectors key to its success like socio-economic stability, fair trading arrangements, investment in infrastructure, leapfrogging technology, transport and logistics, partnerships with agribusiness, managing climate change and establishment of local processing capacity.