

ALLIANCE FOR A GREEN REVOLUTION IN AFRICA

STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Food security is critical for both human welfare and economic growth in Africa. About 70 percent of sub-Saharan Africans depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, primarily by raising staple food crops and a few livestock on farms of under two hectares (about 5 acres). The very low productivity of most of these small farms represents both a problem and an opportunity. With crop yields of less than one tonne per hectare, many farmers barely produce sufficient food to feed their family, generate no surplus, and therefore have no income with which to purchase yield enhancing inputs. Yet using only modest inputs and better agronomic practices, many of these farms have the potential to produce 3-4 times as much as they currently produce, including a marketable surplus.

Low farm productivity in Africa has many causes, including use of traditional crop varieties, increasingly depleted soils, shrinking plots of land, scarce and unreliable water supply, crop losses from pests and diseases, inequitable land-distribution patterns, inefficient and unfair markets, and poor agricultural and transportation infrastructures. Numerous initiatives aimed at addressing one or more of these problems have been launched in Africa and some have successfully raised crop productivity. Most successes, however, have lasted only a limited number of years or covered only a small geographic area. Large increases in staple crop production and wide scale marketing of surpluses have not been sustained in Africa as they have been in most other regions of the world.

In 2006 the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation joined forces to establish the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) as an African-based and African-led organization charged with sustainably increasing the productivity and profitability of small scale farms across Africa. AGRA drives innovation, funds demonstrations, and works with African governments, other partners, and African farmers to scale-up successes in smallholder farming.

AGRA's strategy is to transform today's rural poverty into tomorrow's prosperity through sustainably and significantly increasing the productivity of Africa's small scale farms. To catalyze such change, AGRA focuses on high-potential breadbasket areas and countries, and works to strengthen all components of the agricultural value chain, from farmers' fields to agricultural research organizations, and from Africa's new seed companies and food processors to regional markets. AGRA itself provides a platform for partnerships essential to catalyzing this change. AGRA's strategy recognizes the urgency of action now: before the next food crisis hits, and before Africa's ongoing soil depletion, increasing water scarcity, and global climate change raise even higher barriers to meaningful change. Now is the time to build on recent positive trends in African development and international commitments to food security.

The Rockefeller Foundation supports AGRA's work across the following four interrelated change levers.

CHANGE LEVERS

- **Improving access to more resilient seeds that produce higher and more stable yields.** Few farmers in sub-Saharan Africa have access to new, improved varieties of local crops capable of producing abundant harvests in what are often harsh conditions. To address this challenge, the initiative supports an across-the-board effort to improve the availability and variety of seeds that can produce higher and more stable yields under

local conditions. AGRA supports agro-ecology based crop breeding by national and local research programs; coordinates with international agricultural research centers to rapidly disseminate existing improved crop varieties; fosters the development of vibrant and competitive seed businesses; supports the development of national agro-dealer networks—village retailers who can get farm inputs to remote farmers; partners with African universities to train the next generation of African agricultural scientists; and advocates for regulatory frameworks that make high quality, affordable seed available to smallholder farmers.

- **Promoting soil health and productivity.** African farmers face numerous challenges related to soil fertility and productivity: most farms are rain-fed, often receiving too little or too much water; fertilizer is expensive, if available at all; labor is in short supply; and donors often shun subsidies that might help promote more effective crop management practices. Driven to meet the food demands of a growing population, African farmers have steadily abandoned traditional practices that restore soil nutrients, such as leaving fields fallow for several years between plantings. Without replacing lost nutrients, the soil gradually becomes incapable of supporting adequate crop growth. More than three-quarters of sub-Saharan Africa's arable land now has serious soil fertility problems. To improve the soil health of African farms, the initiative supports efforts to improve knowledge, application, and adoption of integrated soil fertility management practices (including combinations of farm yard manure, grain legumes, conservation agriculture, and agro-forestry) and water management; to increase economic and physical access to fertilizers for poor farmers; and to develop policies and incentives that encourage adoption of improved soil fertility management practices.
- **Building more efficient local, national, and regional agriculture markets.** Farmers will only have strong incentives to adopt yield enhancing advances if there are profitable output markets for their products. So as increases in farm productivity from improved seeds and soil nutrients are attained, it is critical to ensure that the resulting surpluses generate profits and income for farmers. To do this, AGRA invests in efforts to build more accessible markets for, and more profitable trading opportunities in, food staples. The initiative uses an integrated value chain approach that supports four key types of market interventions: (1) reducing transaction costs that erode farmers' returns (e.g. through setting up rural market places, commodity exchanges, and warehouse receipt systems); (2) increasing value addition of staple foods, thereby increasing incomes and improving nutrition (e.g. small milling or food processing operations); (3) promoting investments in non-food uses for staple crops, such as animal feeds and starches; and (4) improving the marketing and policy environment in ways that benefit small scale farmers.
- **Promoting improved policies and building partnerships.** AGRA engages national governments and donors to establish an enabling environment for triggering a Green Revolution in Africa. This work includes strengthening national policy institutions; advocating for improved seeds, fertilizers, and market policies at national and regional levels; and building national policy hubs to develop policies that will facilitate the suite of technological and institutional changes needed to achieve an African Green Revolution.

KEY OUTCOMES

Outcome Area 1 – Science, Knowledge and Technology

Technologies that rapidly increase agricultural productivity in ways that are sustainable and environmentally friendly are developed, disseminated and used by numerous small scale farmers in Africa.

Outcome Area 2 – Increased Farm Productivity and Profit

Staple crop productivity on small farms and access to markets improve in ten or more African countries, leading to greater food security, increased profits and increased farm family income.

Outcome Area 3 – Policy and Incentives

Policies, infrastructure and financial mechanisms are in place regionally and nationally to provide a supportive and sustainable environment for agricultural transformations. Smallholder farming is transformed through evidenced-based policies and incentives that pay particular attention to the needs of women farmers in increasing farmers' access to technologies, knowledge and other resources.

Outcome Area 4 – Networks and Alliances

Alliances and platforms are developed collaboratively with bilateral and multilateral partners, national governments, research organizations, farmers' organizations and others to effectively address the need for greater agricultural productivity, resource mobilization, and human resources to achieve food security and rural economic growth in ten or more African countries.

IMPACT – AGRA's vision of success

AGRA's vision is to contribute to a food-secure and prosperous Africa achieved through rapid, sustainable agricultural growth based on smallholder farmers who produce staple food crops. Farm families have increased income, improved food security and are empowered to reduce poverty in ways that are economically and environmentally sustainable. AGRA hopes to see market-oriented farmers, particularly women small scale farmers, operating profitably to create sufficient income to sustain their family's overall wellbeing.