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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Africa-wide Conference to Discuss Strategies to Boost Agricultural Development**

**Addis Ababa**—Close to 100 policymakers, researchers, and representatives from farmers' organizations, donor and development agencies, and the private sector are convening for an Africa-wide conference to improve agricultural and rural development across the continent. The event, "Exploring New Opportunities and Strategic Alternatives to Inform African Agricultural Development, Planning, and Policy," is organized by the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS). Facilitated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), ReSAKSS supports implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

“Agricultural development can be a powerful source of economic growth and a key element in the fight against poverty, hunger, and malnutrition,” said Professor Richard Mkandawire, head of CAADP at NEPAD. “This is especially true for Sub-Saharan Africa, where agriculture is the primary source of income, employment, and export earnings. Yet mobilizing resources for agriculture, a challenge in itself, is not sufficient. African policymakers must determine priorities, identify appropriate levels and areas of investment, allocate resources efficiently, and create comprehensive development strategies.”

To help achieve these goals, ReSAKSS provides analysis, data, and tools to promote evidence-based decision making, fill gaps in knowledge, and support implementation of CAADP.

“Using these resources, African policymakers can take into account the potential impacts of a given strategy, continuously measure progress, and share experiences across countries,” said Ousmane Badiane, director for Africa at IFPRI.

Recognizing the crucial role of agriculture in fostering growth and poverty reduction on the continent, African leaders launched CAADP in 2003 and agreed to commit at least ten percent of their national budgets to agriculture and achieve at least six percent annual growth in that sector.

“This conference comes at a critical time,” said Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, chief executive officer of the NEPAD Secretariat. “The CAADP agenda reflects a fundamental shift in the way Africa’s leadership looks at agriculture and its potential contribution to ending poverty and hunger and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. From the G8 Summit in L’Aquila to the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, CAADP has received international support and recognition for its role in putting agriculture at the center of the African development agenda. In addition, countries are starting to follow through on their CAADP commitments, but we continue to face challenges related to implementation,” he added.

The major aim of this conference, which runs from November 23-24 at the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa, is to assess countries’ progress in implementing CAADP, discuss what needs to be done in the future, and share experiences and success stories. To date, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Niger, and Senegal have surpassed the target of committing ten percent of their budget to agriculture, and most countries have made significant progress towards this goal. More than 20 countries have achieved agricultural growth rates of six percent or more.

“As African governments work to increase agricultural spending and boost agricultural productivity, they face a dearth of information about which types of public investments contribute the most to development goals,” said Dr. Shenggen Fan, director of Development Strategy and Governance and incoming director general at IFPRI. “By filling this gap, ReSAKSS supports policymakers who have to make tough decisions about how, when, and where to allocate scarce resources.”

Conference participants will discuss such issues as:

- how to promote economic growth, poverty reduction, and adaptation to climate change through land and water management;
- how to improve smallholders’ access to markets and the modernization of marketing systems;
- social protection programs for vulnerable populations in the face of challenges such as the food and financial crises, climate change, and burgeoning population; and
- the best methods for using agriculture research to have on-the-ground impact, improve the lives of poor people, and spur economic growth and development in African countries.

The G-20 recently committed an additional \$22 billion for agriculture, and when global leaders met in Rome last week for the World Summit on Food Security, improving agriculture—including increased investments for agricultural infrastructure, inputs, and research—was high on the agenda.

“ReSAKSS is determined to ensure that agriculture and food security remain on the global agenda well into the future,” said Dr. Babatunde Omilola, ReSAKSS coordinator. “We are strongly committed to supporting the African Union, the NEPAD Secretariat, Regional Economic Communities, and their member countries, as well as their partners, to ensure that CAADP implementation is guided by cutting-edge agricultural and economic research—with the ultimate goal of reducing poverty and hunger, and improving the lives of all Africans throughout the continent.”

*ReSAKSS is facilitated by IFPRI in close collaboration with the African Union Commission and NEPAD, Africa-based centers of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and leading Regional Economic Communities: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Please visit <http://www.resakss.org/>.*

*The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural*

*Research, an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations. Please visit our website at [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)*

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