1. Linkages between agriculture and social protection

Since 2004, African Union (AU) member states have identified social protection as a key strategy for enhancing social development and inclusive growth. AU member states have committed themselves to the Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action to strengthen social protection schemes, and increase their coverage and effectiveness for everyone, especially the poorest, most vulnerable and excluded persons (African Union 2008). Further commitments include the 2006 Livingstone and Yaoundé Calls for Action on social protection and recommendations of the 2008 regional meetings on Investing in Social Protection in Africa. These commitments led to the development of a social policy framework for Africa (African Union 2008). After decades of relative neglect, agriculture has also resurfaced in the policy agendas of many African governments and international agencies. Agricultural growth is now vigorously promoted across sub-Saharan Africa as an indispensable strategy for stimulating economic growth, rural livelihoods, food security and poverty reduction (Sabates-Wheeler, et al. 2009). A challenge, more recently also recognized within the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, is to enable smallholders to contribute to and benefit from agricultural growth.

Despite the growing attention to agriculture and social protection and the fact that a large part of beneficiaries of social protection programmes are households with agricultural-based livelihoods, little attention in policy discourse literature has been paid to the linkages between these sectors. Conceptually – and as shown by increasing empirical evidence - there is a two way relationship between social protection and agriculture. On one hand, poor rural households, who mostly rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, are severely constrained by low productivity, lack of resources, imperfect and thin markets, and the repeated exposure to covariate and idiosyncratic risks. For those same households, social protection can help alleviate critical credit, savings and liquidity constraints and provide greater certainty thus enabling households to manage risks and engage in more profitable livelihood and agricultural activities.

On the other hand, it is unlikely that social protection alone can sustainably lift households out of poverty, hence the need for complementary agricultural programmes. Agricultural policies and programmes can be used to complement social protection since they potentially reduce risks and

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vulnerability by increasing output, income and household welfare. Moreover, agricultural policies can mediate the productive impacts of social protection by influencing expected returns to investments in agriculture (Tirivayi et al. 2013). For instance, a land tenure policy that generates insecurity in access to land may dampen incentives of recipients of a cash transfer to invest part of the transfer in agricultural practices that bring returns in the longer-term.

The limited attention dedicated to the linkages between agriculture and social protection is attributed to insufficient awareness of the linkages between the sectors and on how to address these linkages within policy and programming. The proposed workshop is intended to develop participants’ understanding of the linkages between agriculture and social protection, provide evidence on these linkages, and to explore practical country experiences in ensuring coherence and exploiting complementarities. Ongoing efforts to develop guidance material on how to strengthen coherence between these sectors in policy and programming is intended to provide practitioners with a practical resource they can use in their daily work to strengthen coherence between agriculture and social protection and fill the related knowledge gap.

2. Efforts at strengthening coherence between agriculture and social protection

Recent shifts, principally lead by UNICEF and the World Bank, towards a systems approach to social protection provide an impetus for strengthening coordination between agriculture and social protection (UNICEF and World Bank, 2013). Further, the 39th Session of the Committee on World Food Security urged member states to strengthen coordination between agriculture and social protection (CFS, 2013). Similarly, at the regional level in Africa the 2006 Livingstone Call for Action on Social Protection and the 2010 Yaoundé Tripartite Declaration for the Implementation of Social Protection, the Renewed Partnership for a Unified Approach to End Hunger in Africa and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) initiative call for synergies between social protection and productive sectors, including agriculture.

There are already some country experiences to draw from for understanding how to go about strengthening coherence between agriculture and social protection. In Africa this includes the well-known cases of Ethiopia’s Food Security Programme and Rwanda’s Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme. Other cases in the region include Zambia where the combination of Public Welfare Assistance, Food Security Packs, Fertiliser Support (Holmes and Slater, 2008) point to the potential of planning for mutually reinforcing and carefully sequenced interventions in order to bring into economic activity even those poorest and labour constrained households conventionally considered to lack productive capacities - and Mozambique where, as part of a pilot, a public-works safety nets programme is being linked with an asset transfer during the lean season. Brazil’s National System and Policy for Food and Nutrition Security, proposed changes in Mexico’s “Oportunidades” Programme and the non-governmental initiative called Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR) in Bangladesh are examples of initiatives in other regions that combine social protection with agriculture.
Improving coherence between agriculture and social protection requires deepening the understanding among staff in Ministries of Agriculture, Social Welfare, Finance and other relevant government agencies as well as among development partners of how greater coherence can contribute to development priorities. Moreover, it is essential to broaden the understanding of the practical issues related to strengthening coherence between social protection and agriculture policies and programmes. Accordingly, since March 2014, a group of agencies, including the African Institute for Health and Development, Africa Platform for Social Protection, African Union, FAO, Ford Foundation, NEPAD, UNICEF, the World Bank, and World Food Programme are working together through a Technical Reference Group. The purpose of this collaboration is to: (i) increase the awareness of the strategic nexus between agriculture and social protection (ii) identify options to maximize linkages at country level and (iii) support the assessment and operationalization of options for strengthening coherence.

3. **Regional consultative workshop 2014**

In September 2013 a regional consultative workshop was held in Accra. It included participation of government officials from ministries of agriculture, social welfare and finance from eight sub-Saharan African countries, the African Institute for Health and Development (AIHD), the African Union (AU), New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, and civil society. The workshop sensitized participants on the impacts of cash transfer programmes on agriculture and included presentations of programmes that combine agricultural and social protection interventions, such as Ethiopia’s Food Security Programme and Rwanda’s Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme.

As a follow-up to the sensitization process begun at the 2013 workshop, a second workshop will be held in November 2014. The objectives of the 2014 workshop are to increase participants’ understanding on:

- Two-way relationship between social protection and agriculture including potential synergies and trade-offs between these domains
- Rationale for considering social protection and agricultural/rural development as complementary approaches to reducing poverty and food insecurity
- Context specific challenges and opportunities for establishing and strengthening coherence between agriculture and social protection
- Practical entry points across policy, programme design and implementation to maximize coherence between social protection and agriculture

These will be achieved through discussions on:

- Conceptual framework outlining different pathways through which agriculture and social protection can be integrated
- Evidence on the impacts of different social protection instruments (e.g. cash transfers, public works, school feeding etc.) on agriculture and on the impacts of agricultural interventions on social protection outcomes
- Different models of interventions that link agriculture and social protection

The workshop will be held in Cape Town, on 25 and 26 November 2014 and will gather 50 to 55 participants including mid-level policy advisors from ministries of agriculture, social welfare and finance low and middle income African countries, representatives of civil society, development agencies and subject experts.