

Concept Note:

“Follow up of the 2006 Abuja Declaration on Fertilizers for an African Green Revolution”

Wednesday 6 April 2016

I. Executive Summary

This event is convened by the African Union in partnership with the African Development Bank and FAO. It aims at revisiting the commitment made by the African Ministers of Agriculture in the 2006 Abuja Declaration on Fertilizers for an African Green Revolution. The original pledge was to increase fertilizer use from 8 kg/hectare to 50kg/per hectare by 2015, the year which happened to coincide with the International Year of Soils. In effect, the somewhat strong accent on fertilizers in the original Abuja declaration needs to be replaced by a more holistic approach of sustainable soil management in order to ensure that soil systems are in optimum condition, can perform their multiple natural functions and contribute to the efficient use of any fertilizers applied. The occasion is therefore most opportune not only to renew the commitment, but to broaden its scope to sustainable soil management in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and to invite countries to assess progress or lack thereof since the declaration was adopted ten years ago. The African Fertilisers Financing Mechanism (AFFM) will also be launched during the side event, thereby facilitating greater engagement with all concerned partners

II. Background

1. Agriculture is the backbone of the African economy with the sector accounting for about 20% of the region's GDP, 60% of its labour force, 20% of its total merchandise exports, while being the main source of income for 90% of the region's rural population.
2. It is in recognition of the key role of agriculture in ending hunger and eradicating poverty that African Leaders adopted the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) which calls for an average agricultural growth rate of 6% per year..
3. However, Africa is still largely food insecure despite the specific interventions required to turn the tide, as identified during several Food Security related summits . Of particular importance to this side event is the 2006 African Fertilizer Summit held in Abuja, Nigeria, during which African leaders pledged to boost the production and availability of fertilizers, and develop an Africa Fertilizer Financing Mechanism (AFFM). The target enshrined in the Abuja declaration was to achieve at least a six-fold increase in fertilizer use and boost the then annual average fertilizer use of 8 kg/ha to at least 50 kg/ha by 2015, recognizing that no region in the world has been able to expand agriculture (and eliminate hunger) without increasing fertilizer use. Considering that this target was set to 2015, which coincided with the International Year of Soils, it is important and timely for African leaders to assess progress or lack thereof in implementation of the Declaration and decide on further actions to be undertaken in the post-2015 period.
4. In order to achieve the above called for increase in fertilizer use, key aspects were among others: farmers' access to fertilizer, fertilizer costs, national and regional fertilizer production, and adequate extension services. Progress, however, has been slow and patchy and a number of barriers were encountered along the way. Most importantly, overall strategies need to encompass not only fertilization but more holistically sustainable soils management, within broader economic and physical contexts.

III. The challenge: African Soil Productivity Crisis

5. Soil fertility depletion on smallholder farms is a major root cause for insufficient or declining per capita food production in Africa, meaning that less nutrients are applied than are removed from the soil. Although Africa has 13% of the world's arable land and contains 12% of the world's population, its fertilizer consumption is the lowest in the world. In 2002 it accounted for only 3% (4 million tons) of the world fertilizer consumption, compared to 9% (13 million tons) and 54% (77 million tons) in Latin America, and Asia and the Pacific, respectively. Moreover, almost 70% of Africa's fertilizer consumption is concentrated in North Africa, with Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) accounting for a mere 1% of world fertilizer consumption (1.38 million tons).

6. More recent data (as of March 2015) from Africa Fertilizer, a joint initiative from IFDC, FAO, IFA and the African Union to facilitate the exchange of information about soil fertility, fertilizers and good agricultural practices, shows that average fertilizer use in Africa was 11 kg/ha in 2014, equivalent to 10% of the world average. While the trend has been positive since 2006, there was clearly still a long way to go to reach the 50 kg/ha target set in the Abuja Declaration. During the period 2006 to 2011, the land under cultivation increased by 5.3% in 14 countries⁽¹⁾, while nutrient use increased during this period in all but 5 countries.

IV. A need for reviewing progress and taking bold actions

7. The barriers identified in implementing the Abuja Declaration at national and regional levels included: financial constraints impeding the functionality of the AFFM; insufficient number of agro-dealers; ineffective fertilizer laws; uncondusive investment policy environments; undeveloped market infrastructure; imposition of taxes and tariffs, limited access to finance and subsidies; and inadequate agricultural research and development and extension services.

8. These barriers clearly need to be overcome requiring: (i) stimulating fertilizer demand and supply towards increased soil nutrient replenishment under a sound sustainable soil management approach; (ii) improving crop management skills and re-orienting extension messages to match farmers' needs, taking into consideration the diverse agro-ecological zones and cropping systems; (iii) enhancing output-market linkages; (iv) combining organic and inorganic inputs; (v) fertilizer recommendations taking full account of the type of soils, crop requirements and local knowledge and practices for efficient use; (vi) investing in agricultural research so that fertilizers and the methods of fertilizer application match well with soil characteristics, plant physiology, environmental conditions and social context, and that improvements to fertilizers and their application are produced using all this information (vii) collecting up-to-date, reliable data and information on levels of soil degradation and fertilizer needs.

9. In effect, the somewhat strong accent on fertilizers in the original Abuja declaration needs to be replaced by a more holistic approach of sustainable soil management in order to ensure that soil systems

¹ Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia

are in optimum condition, can perform their multiple natural functions and contribute to the efficient use of any fertilizers applied.

10. It may be useful to recall in this connection that soils have a key natural function to regulate water and nutrient cycling. . Healthy soils which are high in organic matter content, are well aerated and have good structure can increase the efficiency of fertilizer use within the root zone of plants where nutrients are taken up. In a nutshell, an Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) Framework is recommended to optimize the agronomic efficiency of fertilizer and organic inputs in crop production.

Objectives of the Side event

11. Noting that 2015 was the initial target set out in the Abuja Declaration (thus now superseded) and building on the opportunity of increased awareness on the importance of soils generated during the celebration of the International Year of Soils (2015), also taking into account the overarching Sustainable Development Goals and Revised World Soil Charter also adopted last year, the opportunity of the side event could be used to review progress - and worrisome lack thereof - in fertilizer use in Africa, and shift the prime fertilizer focus of the commitment to more systematic Sustainable Soil Management.

12. More specifically, the side event could set the stage for follow up actions, as follows :

- 1) A comprehensive review of successes, lessons learned, challenges and new opportunities, to feed into post 2015 strategies.
- 2) Review selected national programmes and projects that are making significant progress in contributing to the attainment of national food and nutrition security objectives. This would serve mutual experience sharing within the region. Dissemination of information about and exposure of national teams to successes elsewhere would facilitate adaptation, replication and out/up-scaling.
- 3) Update the Abuja Declaration by widening its scope towards sustainable soil management to be successfully in place throughout Africa by 2030 (in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and other efforts such as that of the African Soil Partnership). This should also contribute to the realisation of the AU Malabo Declaration on Agricultural Transformation as well as the post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Details of the Event

- The Side event will be held during the 29th African Regional Conference of the FAO in Abidjan, Côte d' Ivoire on the 6th April 2016, from 11:00am to 12:00pm .
- Chairperson: H.E Mrs Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, AUC Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture / or Representative
- Facilitator: Prof Victor Chude, resource person during the 2006 Abuja Conference

Opening Statement	Chairperson FAO Director-General Jose Graziano da Silva	11:00 - 11:05
Presentation	Dr. Amit Roy	11:05 – 11:25
Discussion	Facilitator / All participants	11:25 – 11:45
Launch of AFFM	TBD	11:45 – 11:55
Closure	Chairperson	11:55 – 12:00

Organizing institutions

- The organization of this side event is led by the African Union Commission with the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and the African Development Bank.

Expected outcomes of the side event:

Outcome 1: Commitment to update the Abuja declaration in the context of sustainable soil management as promoted by the Revised World Soil Charter and the African Soil Partnership;

Outcome 2: Commitment to fast track the operationalization of the African Fertilizers Financing Mechanism (AFFM);

Outcome 3: Call to mobilize partners to assist countries in the achievement of the updated Abuja Declaration and the Sustainable Development Goals.