

CFS41 Side-Event Report

Smallholders' Access to Inputs in Africa

Friday October 17, 2014

8.00-9.30

Iran Room - FAO Headquarters

Chair: H.E. Mohammed Sheriff: ambassador of Liberia and Chair of the Africa Group

Speakers:

- Charles Ogang: Ugandan Farmers' Federation (President) and World Farmers' organization, (Uganda)
- Stephanie Hanson: Senior Vice President, Policy and Partnerships, One Acre Fund (USA)
- Nega Wubeneh: Senior Director, Systems Programs, Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (Ethiopia)
- Michael Michener: Director of Sustainability Policy, CropLife International (USA)
- Wafaa El Khoury: Senior Technical Advisor on Agronomy, IFAD

This CFS41 side-event shifted the focus of the debate away from the well-known challenges and focussed on a call for action with key policy recommendations directed at African leaders. It was built on the campaign "Smallholders Access to Fertilizers in Africa" advocated for by eight organizations involved in African agricultural development. The campaign video, launched at the African Green Revolution Forum, was also presented during the event.

This event was attended by over 50 people from more than 20 countries. Representatives of the FAO, Fertecon, ACOS, Farming First, WFO, Yara International, WFO, including the members of the EU, Netherlands, Mozambique, Zimbabwe delegation were also present.

The importance of smallholder farmers to inputs in Africa was highlighted by the Chair, H.E. Mohammed Sheriff: ambassador of Liberia and Chair of the Africa Group, in his opening remarks. Charles Ogang, Ugandan Farmers' Federation (President), in his talk explained why quality inputs are the key for development of smallholder agriculture in Africa. Stephanie Hanson, Senior Vice President, Policy and Partnerships, One Acre Fund, emphasized the fact that small-holder farmers are business people. Nega Wubeneh: Senior Director, Systems Programs, Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency, talked about soil mapping and the ways soil mapping is helping farmers in Ethiopia get the right fertiliser. He also underlined that private sector investment is needed in blending and manufacturing fertilizer to suit local conditions. Michael Michener: Director of Sustainability Policy, CropLife International, then stressed the importance of commercial access to inputs in Africa. He then described the barriers to commercial access (affordability, availability, access to information, risk and uncertainty, and the overall commercial context) and then talked about the ways these barriers can be addressed by giving specific policy recommendations. Wafaa El Khoury: Senior Technical Advisor on Agronomy, IFAD, in her very interesting speech emphasized importance of credit access, inputs and advisory services.

The presentations were followed by a discussion with audience members who were very interested in the issues regarding soil mapping, soil management, the cost of fertilisers and microfinance in Africa. Nega Wubeneh highlighted the fact that they are already conducting a lot of activities related to soil management and microfinance investments. Charles Ogang mentioned that the use of fertilisers is still very low in Uganda and that this issue needs to be addressed promptly. The audience was also interested in what could be the wisest and most important investments in Africa. All the panelists agreed that it is infrastructure, though Wafaa El Khoury also mentioned that investments in human capacities would be considered very significant now.