

Private Sector Mechanism Position Paper

September 2013

INVESTING IN SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE FOR FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

Food security is closely connected to economic growth and social progress in developing countries. The food security agenda should focus on agriculture and empowering smallholder farmers to be successful food producers. It is the backbone of the economy in many developing countries and farmers represent a disproportionate part of the world's poor and hungry.

An important pathway to achieving food security is to enable smallholder farmers to break the subsistence cycle and become small scale entrepreneurs.

The primacy of food availability in the face of a growing population demands an increase in productive capacity in farming around the world and a reduction in pre- and post-harvest losses and food waste.

A farmer-centered approach is needed, ensuring they have access to the things they need to produce a crop – such as the best-adapted seed technologies, land, water, knowledge, inputs and credit. Rural infrastructure needs to be in place to allow for market access and farmers to sell their products.

Farmer organisations and cooperatives have a vital contribution to make to the development of agriculture and rural communities. Unless small-scale farmers are organized, they will remain politically powerless and economically disadvantaged.

Education is needed to improve market-oriented education and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth originating from smallholder families that prepares the next generation of workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs across the food and agricultural industry.

Better extension services in rural communities that are systematic and participatory are essential to improving production, income and quality of life, particularly for smallholders. Extension services disseminate practical information related to agriculture, including correct use of improved seeds, fertilisers, tools, tillage practices, water management, livestock management and welfare, marketing techniques, and basic business skills to address poverty such as literacy and numeracy.

Training programmes should specifically involve women farmers in developing countries as essential 'gatekeepers' for household nutrition and welfare.

Improve smallholder farmers' access to markets through investments in transport and storage infrastructure, refrigerated storage as well as information access.

All forms of private enterprise – domestic markets, foreign investment and international trade – require an operating environment conducive to growth and development, including: peace and stability, the rule of law, good governance with accountability and transparency, the absence of corruption, adequate infrastructure, an educated workforce, clear property rights and enforceable contracts.

Overall, smallholder farmers need improved access to markets, the adaptation and adoption of appropriate technologies, institutional innovations and improved access to natural, financial, social and human capital.