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STATEMENT BY The EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA SMALL SCALE FARMERS FORUM ON THE AU YEAR OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY 2014

1. Background

The Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF) with membership in 15 African countries, applauds the AU for declaring 2014 as the Year of Agriculture. Indeed, African agriculture is in need of support, investment and technological innovations that can spur agricultural productivity. We recall and appreciate the decision of the African Heads of State and Governments of the African Union (AU) who endorsed a Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa popularly known as the Maputo Declaration in 2003 and also adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) framework. The overall goal and key component of the Declaration is that African countries will allocate and increase spending on agriculture to at least 10% of their annual budgets by 2008. According to the Declaration such increase in budgetary allocations to agriculture was to give life to the CAADP with the goal of helping African countries reach a higher path of economic growth through agriculture-led development, which eliminates hunger, reduces poverty, food insecurity and enables the expansion of exports. The same instrument was considered essential to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of halving poverty and hunger by 2015. We note with concern that most of the initiatives are flawed from the North, including AGRA and the G8's "New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa" as well as other foreign funded initiatives. The fundamental question is who is driving these investments, and who is set to benefit from them?. These investments are premised on the current global crisis with financial, economic, food energy and ecological dimensions.

ESAFF members reaffirm the strategic importance of the agriculture sector to the economies of the African states. In most African countries, agriculture is the largest sector in terms of its share in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs an average of 60% of the labour force and provides significant annual earnings to the economy. According to a report by Actionaid 2013, despite spending increases in agriculture by some African countries, African governments still allocate an average of only 5% of their national budget to agriculture. It is generally observed that annual allocations to agriculture in these non-responsive countries are insufficient to galvanize growth and development impact intended through CAADP.

ESAFF notes with concern that, only seven out of the 49 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have consistently reached the 10% target. ESAFF calls upon the AU to consider effecting sanction measures and mechanisms that would compel member states to comply with the minimum 10% budgetary allocation to agriculture with the objective of reducing and eventually eliminating poverty in the continent. The failure to allocate adequate budgetary support is holding back food production and food security in Africa, where 223 million people (a quarter of the population) live in hunger (FAO, 2012). This is against the fact that the majority of the populace in Africa live in rural areas and depends on agriculture for their livelihood. The resulting budget deficits in agriculture budget allocations further draws down the sector and compels the African economies to be more dependent on food imports to the detriment of the local producers, smallholder farmers and the overall economy. We smallholder farmers along with our dependents constitute the largest socio-economic group and produce most of the continent's food.

2. Agriculture Policy Reforms

Agriculture policy reforms should be demand driven, gender sensitive and targeted towards meeting expressed needs of farmers, especially smallholder farmers, pastoralists and fisher folks whilst addressing food security and sovereignty requirements, promoting sub-regional trade, as well as agriculture economic growth and stability of land management. This has to be approached within the context of inter-ministerial coordination that facilitates integrated management of the various components of agriculture that include water, land, natural resources, livestock and fisheries management among others. There is need to initiate a process of defining and developing a policy framework on sustainable agriculture, address the effects of patented agriculture technologies which creates farmer dependency as a result of prohibitive costs. Agriculture research, marketing, technology development, crop productivity and extension policy reforms should encourage active participation and inclusion of smallholder farmers and their organizations within the framework of bottom up approach. This will enhance ownership and control of the means of production which are sustainable in terms of addressing diversified farming systems that are location specific.

The other key issues relates to addressing the effects of climate change on crop production and land grabbing within the continent and their collective effects on food security. Smallholder farmers are decisive actors in the collective global responses to food security and nutrition in the context of climate change. Our knowledge of agro-ecosystems, seed management and resilience are critical to identifying challenges and building appropriate local to continental responses and must be supported by appropriate climate change related policies. Despite the increasing acknowledgement of smallholder farmer's roles and knowledge and studies on farmers adaptation strategies, our participation in decision-making and policy interventions related to climate change remains limited and marginalized. Robust and strategic measures to address climate change should be mainstreamed and integrated into CAADP policy reform agenda and this should include views of smallholder farmers.

3. Climate Change Adaptation

Resources must be directed towards building climate change adaptation strategies at local level. Agro-ecology is the most important, reliable set of practices to protect yields in the face of climate change and should be supported significantly with public finance. Developed countries and related development partners should support adaptation financing through grants not loans. Technologies for harnessing water need to be developed and financially supported to enhance food production.

The approach should be to work with local food producers and help smallholder producers to conserve, store and further develop our own varieties and breeds to address the threat of increasing floods, drought and storms. Smallholder farmers who constitute the majority of food producers in Africa require financial support to conserve through community seed- banks of our climate adaptive crop varieties and there is need to develop new policies centered on the real needs of smallholder farmers with consistent financial support mechanisms.

4. Agriculture Financing Targeting Smallholder Farmers

African own funding to agriculture is the key in making agriculture a source of improved livelihood, prosperity and wealth creation. Africans should ensure internal resources are used to spur long term and sustainable agriculture development.

There is need to create mechanisms that will facilitate easy access to credit facilities, micro-finance and grants including inputs support to smallholder famers at low interest rates to enable farmers to invest in future crop production and expand crop diversification. In addition, farmer capacity building in the different facets of agriculture is critical towards implementing successful agriculture development programs. Increasing budgetary allocation to the sector should be undertaken in

conjunction with increased capacity building to utilize effectively the resources. There is need to target women and youth as they constitute the majority of farmers. The other measures should include:

- Supporting smallholder farmers by developing and ensuring easy access to climate smart seeds
- Promoting organic fertilizers which improves soil fertility with long-term residual effect
- Increasing infrastructure development such as roads so that smallholder farmers can transport produce to the markets
- Restoring extension services to support smallholder farmers food production efforts
- Recognizing smallholder producers as investors in our own rights
- Promoting farming as business approach (agri-business) and agriculture development with supportive policy and financial mechanisms
- Supporting product value- addition initiatives and market linkages through the value chain
- Providing entrepreneurship-ecosystem support by venture-friendly markets for products and availability of appropriate finance
- Developing financial agricultural support packages that include criteria to clearly show direct, demonstrable and measurable benefits to smallholder farmers. Furthermore, specific criteria targeting women farmers and reporting mechanism with gender disaggregated data should also be included.
- Supporting access to land by women and youth farmers including access to credit and micro-finance institutions.
- Supporting agricultural mechanization, irrigation and farm implements
- Availing the use of IT integration into agriculture by smallholder farmers
- Providing technical and financial support to establish climate smart agriculture initiatives
- Coordinating agriculture investment in public, private sector and development partners and provide incentives for supporting smallholder farming sector
- Supporting access to appropriate technology and knowledge management by smallholder farmers that has the potential to increase agriculture production
- Establishing community seed-banks as a strategy to facilitate easy access to good quality seeds, plant genetic resources conservation and sustainable use, ownership and control of the means of production by smallholder farmers
- Financially supporting farmers rights to conserve, use, replant, market and return seeds of smallholder farmers choice that is adaptive to their ecological conditions

5. Agriculture Investment

ESAFF reaffirms the need to develop national agriculture investment policy frameworks based on agro industrialization and strong agro financing mechanism as a cornerstone of creating robust agriculture sector. Conducive environment for financial institutions should develop and offer appropriate financial products for the smallholder farming community to enhance food production. Such a policy framework should look at all levels of policy intervention, support and enhancement in order to address agricultural finance strengthening. There is need to strengthen farmer's organizations so that the production end of agricultural value-chains becomes an effective influence on organizational finance policy making. The police framework should be buttressed by legislation designed to foster innovation and to remove barriers to financing the business of agriculture, support value-chain/commodity approach, with clustering of smallholder farmers to facilitate economies of scale in input purchase, value-addition, marketing and information sharing within the smallholder farming sector.

ESAFF recognizes the need for governments support in such areas as: crop and livestock research and extension, water for irrigated crops and livestock farming, infrastructure for crop insurance, rural

energy supply, and communications and roads network development. Agro processing industries in Africa that are integrated to the agriculture sector is the key in ensuring growth and increase the share of the agriculture sector in national GDP

6. Ecological Concerns

Ecological concerns about the Green Revolution technologies have been raised at the global arena, especially, on loss of biodiversity when commercial hybrids and GM seed are introduced and dominate (especially maize as a staple crop in Africa, and the introduction of soya as the basis of bio-fuels and commercial intercropping approaches), soil degradation and water pollution caused by wasteful water use in irrigation. The industrial model of agriculture production threatens the viability of eco-systems and contributes massively to climate change. Nothing less than a systems change towards ecological agriculture, based on principles that creates healthy soils and cultivate biological diversity, and which prioritize farmers and traditional knowledge is needed in the face of climate change.

The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), initiated by World Bank and FAO, sponsored by UN agencies and approved by 58 governments, contains some of the most complete and authoritative sets of policy options to strengthen the productivity and resilience of the worlds food and agriculture systems, while prioritizing social equity and sustainability. We call upon the AU to endorse the recommendations of the IAASTD, and for African governments and international organizations, including the FAO and World Bank, to commit to the implementation of the IAASTD findings.

7. Conclusion

Differentiated strategies are required, so that local and informal markets, proven low input and ecologically sustainable agricultural techniques including intercropping, on-farm compost production, mixed farming systems (livestock, crops and trees), on-farm quality seed production and use, and intermediate processing and storage technologies are recognized and vigorously supported. ESAFF applauds the AU for fostering the implementation of the Maputo Declaration and calls upon member states to commit themselves further by increasing funding to agriculture beyond the minimum 10% annual budgetary support to the sector. These commitments should result with facilitating access to credit for smallholder farmers by increasing their availability, farmers awareness of such programmes.

The policy makers should resist land grabbing tendencies from the north despite the incentives involved as this will prioritize production of crops to feed cars instead of food security to human-beings. This will lead to misappropriation of high potential land suited to food crops production to producing crops for bio-fuels.

ESAFF recognizes the need to put concerted efforts towards development of efficient combination of organic and inorganic fertilizers for improving and realizing greater yields by smallholder farmers. The aspects of restoration of effective and efficient agricultural extension services to the smallholder farmers are also noted as essential. Investments to agriculture and provision of financial support to the smallholder farming sector is the cornerstone which should be underpinned by supportive policies, monitoring mechanisms, gender disaggregated data, market linkages, product development, value-addition and value-chain strategies designed to enhance food production. There is need for governments to build capacity of smallholder farmers to develop strategic climate change adaptive farming practices that include crop diversification.

**Signed by ESAFF Chairman,
Moses Shaha (Kenya)**