

: Part 3 - Partnerships are key

 By [Rudi Massyn](#)

25 Jul 2014

In the first two instalments of our series on climate change and agriculture we explored the effects of climate change in African and global agriculture and identified what farmers are doing to mitigate these challenges.

As we now know, countries in Africa are largely more susceptible to climate change because of their dependence on rainfed agriculture, stagnant economic development and ailing infrastructure. In the final edition of our series, we investigate foreign intervention into African agriculture and how aid can assist farmers mitigate the effects of climate change.

Investing in Africa

For decades, countries across the world have developed foreign aid programmes that assist poorer countries to become more self-sufficient, improve infrastructure development to build better transportation systems and storage facilities as well as introduce more sustainable farming practices. However, it is imperative that climate change mitigation and adaptation measures are also incorporated into agricultural development strategies.



The International Food Policy Research Institute state that added investments to increase agricultural productivity can compensate for many of the adverse effects of climate change and that Sub-Saharan Africa needs 40% of the estimated 7bn USD per year in additional global agricultural investments, the majority of that for rural roads.

Making a difference

There is no doubt that in order for international development programmes to succeed there needs to be buy-in from government and private sector.

Turning the spotlight towards Rwanda, a unique agricultural country with volatile weather conditions, mountainous terrain and the majority of the country's citizens working as subsistence farmers cultivating land of an average 0.7ha, it is a wonder Rwandan farmers are becoming increasingly more food secure. A lot of Rwanda's success can be attributed to Agnes Kalibata, the Rwandan Agriculture Minister. In a few short years she has turned the country's agricultural landscape into a working success.

Part of Kalibata's impressive road to success is that she established key relationships with foreign aid agencies like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Nepad to introduce revolutionary programmes, changing the face of agriculture in Rwanda.



The effects of climate change on a country reliant on rainfed irrigation and hillside farms can be devastating. It has been recorded that there have been production losses of up to 50%. A few years ago Kalibata was one of the first to sign up to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and committed 10% of Rwanda's national budget to agriculture. She focused on irrigation programs in areas that would increase food security and introduced the innovative terracing program. Almost two-thirds of Rwanda is not farmable because of the terrain so they started to cut terraces, which slows erosion and increases the water-holding capacity. The terracing programme has reduced erosion by 70-90% and added 20% more land to the agricultural landscape.

A key partnership with the USAID ensured Kalibata had the support she needed. USAID is committed to advancing agriculture in developing countries as well as mitigating the effects of climate change and have developed a global climate change and development strategy. This strategy has three objectives: adaptation; integration; and mitigation. These objectives aim to help countries and communities prepare for and adapt to climate change by building the resilience of people, places and livelihoods to climate change.

One of the USAID's projects in Rwanda, the Land Husbandry, Water Harvesting, and Hillside Irrigation Project (LWH), is a "two-phased program designed by the World Bank and the Government of Rwanda to implement improved land-husbandry and increased productivity in 101 pilot watersheds covering 30 250 hectares of land of which 12 000 hectares will be irrigated".

Results of the project include yields of maize, beans and Irish potatoes reaching 30%, 167% and 219%, respectively above their national average yields as well as farmers in project-supported cooperatives have commercialised up to 74% which is above the project target of 70%.

Opposite view

Not all are in favour of foreign intervention, and some working groups in Africa are saying Africa is becoming too reliant on foreign aid and therefore not doing enough to introduce their own developmental plans to ensure economic sustainability. Much of this debate revolves around foreign assistance related to food aid and it is necessary to make the distinction between food assistance and programmes designed to increase food security and introduce infrastructure that assists small scale farmers facing poverty to become food secure and gain access to markets.



Africa requires a long-term commitment from aid organisations to ensure true development. There needs to be a focus on knowledge and capacity development for better planning, coordination, and implementation of climate change activities.

The culmination of these funds aim to create awareness and capacity building for African institutions as well instigate the development of national, provincial and municipal policies and plans that support efforts at strengthening adaptation and resilience to the effects of climate change and promoting environmental sustainability.

By harnessing the benefits of these global funds and development programmes countries are able to retell their story and become more food secure as work at adapting and mitigating the effects of climate change on their agricultural industries.

See [Climate changing the face of agriculture]: Part 1 - [An African perspective](#); and [Climate changing the face of agriculture]: Part 2 - [Farmers fight against climate change](#)

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