

Agro-industrial transformation as a driver for employment generation, food security, and rural development in Africa

A session organized by the Program of Accompanying Research on Agricultural Innovation (PARI) at the Center for Development Research (ZEF) of the University of Bonn at the 6th African Conference of Agricultural Economists

Sep 23 - 26, 2019 | 90-120 minutes | Sheraton Abuja Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria

Providing adequate and nutritious food, creating jobs and improving the quality of informal employment, reducing poverty, and transforming the rural areas continue to be daunting challenges in many African economies. Traditionally, agriculture has been a major employer. The sector is critical to many of Africa's biggest development goals and is back at the top of Africa's development agenda, enjoying the support of governments and attracting investments from private sectors. Farming alone currently accounts for about 60 percent of total employment in sub-Saharan Africa, while the share of jobs across the food system is potentially much larger. The African agricultural sector is dominated by smallholder farmers with limited interaction with both product and input markets.

Proper agricultural transformation must be viewed beyond production at the farm to the broader food system. Such a transformation must, thus, be accompanied by post-farm investments, driven by innovations and new skills. As such, the profile of the agricultural labor force changes. The farm workforce becomes more wage-oriented and less domestic. At the same time, while employment in agriculture shrinks, the broader food system expands and the scope for agriculture-related jobs shifts beyond the farm, upstream, in agricultural service activities and downstream, in the food value chains.

The rapid technological and digital revolution (information and communications technology, artificial intelligence, machine learning) is further shaping these transformations in new and unprecedented ways. Technology will certainly continue to be a significant factor in this process. As the demand for low-cost labor-saving technologies rises, the need for people with qualifications, not just in agriculture but also in management of big data, robotics, drones, electronics, IT, engineering related to agriculture, as well as the specialists across the agricultural production systems and people with good business and marketing skills will also increase.

Agricultural stakeholders (farmers, researchers, practitioners, policy makers etc.) need to establish stronger linkages and share ideas and expertise to better tackle challenges impeding the growth of Africa's agricultural sector.

In this session, a panel consisting of researchers from ZEF and young agricultural economic scientists from around Africa will offer insights from their research. Each of them will bring

their own priorities to the discussion, while demystifying some commonly held views in this area.

Format: In order to stimulate a lively debate, the session will be organized as a moderated panel discussion to give the researchers an opportunity to challenge each other and be queried by the audience. The panellists will be encouraged to make minimal use of PowerPoint presentations so as to leave sufficient time for an interactive and dynamic debate. The focus will be on identifying evidence-based strategies for an agro-industrial transformation in Africa.

The target audience: The session is aimed at academics who are undertaking research related to agricultural innovations and technologies, migration, youth employment, human capital and skill development, value and supply chain management, food and nutrition security, and poverty reduction as well as practitioners engaged in related policies and programs.

Tentative Program

I envisioned a 90 -120 min session. Besides the setting of scene about PARI research, short key messages from ZEF/PARI researchers and from selected candidates. Followed by a longer time for discussions and closing remarks.

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	Opening
5 mins	Chair/facilitator
5 mins	Setting the scene: Introduction into Program of Accompanying Agricultural Research for Innovation (PARI) Prof. Dr. Joachim von Braun (Director ZEF)? <i>Dr. Heike Baumüller?</i>
	Statements from the Panelists' (4-5 mins each)
30 mins	Tbc 6-8 panelists? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 from ZEF (1 per research cluster (Mechanization, ICT, Youth/Employment)) - 2 from Country partners/FARA - 3 from selected students
	Questions and Discussions from Audience
60 mins	Questions, comments and discussions amongst the panelist and from the audience directed to the Panel
	Closing remarks
5 mins	Closing remarks and key take home messages (Facilitator)