

# RURAL FUTURES

*New thinking and action for development*



NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency  
Agence de Planification et de Coordination du NEPAD

Responding to the renewed emphasis given to economic transformation by the African Heads of State and the African Union, Rural Futures creates space for Africa to re-think development in order to advance important policy reforms and innovative actions to mobilize the rural sector in the transformation of African economies.

Despite tangible economic progress over the past 20 years, this is particularly urgent as Africa needs to lift over 400 million people out of poverty while employing the additional 215 million young men and women expected to join the labor force over the next decade. With 70 percent of Africans that still will continue to rely on the rural sector for their livelihoods this sector must be recognized as a critical component to the development agenda.

Frequently, the response to these economic and social challenges across Africa have been sectoral or technical, unconnected one to another, and missing the opportunity for synergy in decision-making, practice and investment. Rural Futures intends to change this situation.

## The Rural Futures Programme

Africa's political and economic leaders are coalescing behind a forceful new economic transformation agenda. In support of this agenda, Rural Futures was launched as a new programme by the NEPAD Agency and the African Union Commission in October 2010. Its ambition is to advance a more integrated and transformative development model while establishing a programmatic platform to promote rural transformation. The programme's multi-sectoral approach connects poverty reduction, agriculture and climate change goals to the broader ambition of African leaders for structural change and economic transformation.

The programme builds on and leverages the contribution of existing national, regional and continental developments such as:

- The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) led by the NEPAD Agency, Regional Economic Communities and the African Union;
- Tangible progress by African leaders toward regional economic integration and investments in infrastructure development;
- Ongoing democratization processes, and national efforts to improve political governance and transparency;
- Significant strides made by African leadership towards shifting the paradigm of development cooperation within the framework of the Paris and Accra principles on aid effectiveness.

Rural Futures is unique in its commitment to rural transformation

It understands that rural transformation is a key vehicle for creating employment and improving livelihoods for Africa's growing population. At the same time, it recognizes the rural sector and agriculture as the keys to economic growth, structural change and for safeguarding environmental assets for the next generation.

## Pathways to Change

Rural Futures is particularly concerned with building a common and integrated development vision and interrelating actions to connect institutional frameworks, public policy, investments and market opportunities to:

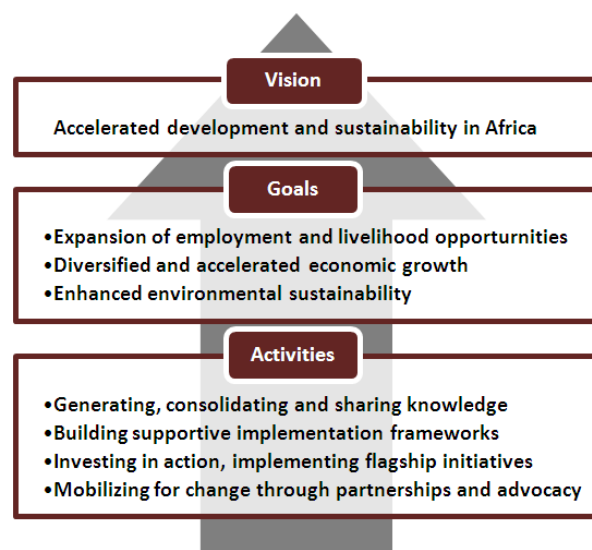
- Raising productivity of the rural economy, looking beyond the agricultural sector to complementary opportunities for creating and diversifying employment and livelihoods – serving as a bridge to a more integrated rural/urban service-oriented economy;
- Adding value to rural and agricultural investments, identifying and supporting opportunities associated with markets (rural – urban linkages) and value chain addition to on-farm and rural non-farm economic activity - supporting shift from agriculture to off-farm business, manufacturing and services related activities;
- Confronting globalization and the competitive challenge, intensifying regional economic and political integration while at the same time strengthening Africa's position in global policy processes - building competitiveness at local, national and regional levels;
- Enhancing environmental sustainability, mitigating tensions and promoting synergies and innovative measures to safeguard ecosystem services and reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcity - addressing climate change and moving towards a green economic development pathway.

## Building Blocks for Action

Building on the rich social, cultural and political heterogeneity and ecological diversity across the continent, the ambition of the programme is large and long-term. Working with, and drawing on expertise from regional institutions, governments, civil society, communities, the private sector, and global development and environmental organizations alike, it will create space for strategic thinking, policy design and action to advance the rural sector as a more effective engine for development. As such it will identify, develop and support implementation of public policies, practices, institutional frameworks and partnerships necessary at local, national, regional, continental and global levels. With the ambition to advance integrated public policies, practices and investments for development and sustainability, important initial programme components include:

- 1) Building the knowledge base and broad consensus and vision around a rural transformation agenda as an African-led, integrated development strategy for transformation:
  - ➔ Consolidating knowledge, analyzing and sharing best practices - focusing on building consensus and identifying areas of synergy and action around rural transformation as a first step toward structural change, development and sustainability.
- 2) Strengthening and creating the institutional and policy architecture to advance rural transformation and integrated development:
  - ➔ Organizing and creating space for development dialog and effective decision making through leadership platforms, regional technical roundtables, national policy taskforces and local level consultative forums.
- 3) Investing in action and implementing flagship initiatives in support of rural transformation and structural change:
  - ➔ Promoting innovative integrated approaches with potential to serve as models for rural transformation, implementing strategic flagship initiatives and encouraging broad scale multiplication of best practices.
- 4) Mobilizing for change and broad based long term support to advance rural transformation:
  - ➔ Building new partnerships and supporting mechanisms for inclusive and integrated decision-making, by establishing national, regional, continental and global platforms for aligning policy, practices and investments over time.

## Rural Futures Theory of Change



The aspiration of the Rural Futures Programme goes beyond current models of agricultural and rural development to encompass broader economic, political and environmental factors and relationships. Recognizing the importance of the process, the Rural Futures Programme will build on voices from the community to the African Union, from national governments to global institutions, and from civil society, public and private sectors alike.

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