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**The 11th CAADP Partnership Platform: much positive talk, but little walk**

The 11th CAADP PP was marked by much positive “talk”, with proactive participation of over 400 stakeholders from Africa and beyond. However, argues ECDPM’s Francesco Rampa, it was somehow a lost opportunity.

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The 11th Partnership Platform (PP) of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) took place two weeks ago in Johannesburg, South Africa. Expectations were high: it was the first PP since the African Union (AU) Heads of State Malabo Declaration. The theme this year –“Walking the Talk: Delivering on Malabo Commitments”– reflected the objective to shape how the Malabo ambitions and new specific commitments will be translated into action, results and impact.

The three-day event was marked by much positive “talk”, with proactive participation of over 400 stakeholders from the African continent and beyond, a good sequencing of high-level plenaries and more technical breakout sessions as well as a strong spirit of partnership throughout the discussions. However, as the aspiration was to “walk” such talk, i.e. to make operational decisions on what should be done differently to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of CAADP efforts, I think the PP was somehow a lost opportunity.

We could have achieved much more in Johannesburg in terms of operationalizing the Malabo Declaration, since there was no detailed discussion on the two important documents prepared before the PP, the ‘Malabo Implementation Strategy & Roadmap’ and the ‘CAADP Programme of Work’. As a consequence there was no clear decision on who is going to do what after Johannesburg. The only available official outcome document so far, a press statement, captures the 11th PP results in this way: “The meeting served as an important platform to take stock of existing capacity and commitments, as well as gaps in the continent’s capabilities to attain the goals and targets as set in the Malabo Declaration“. But there was no decision on how to fill those gaps with new partnerships or resources and how to better divide tasks among all stakeholders contributing to the implementation of CAADP.

In my analysis before the PP, for instance, I stressed that with Malabo the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have in principle a stronger role in overall CAADP implementation but that there was no clarity yet on their exact new role nor on what their needs are to be able to play such a strong part in the future of CAADP; and that there is no actual differentiation between RECs NEPAD and AUC in the actions envisaged in the ‘Implementation Roadmap’ and ‘Programme of Work’.

All this was not clarified at the PP. Uncertainty remains for example on what exact activities should be undertaken to achieve the Malabo targets related to trade and regional value chains, who should lead such work and whether there is going to be any task force or working group at continental level aimed at facilitating the achievement of those targets. And the same ambiguity remains in other thematic areas, in terms of short and medium term milestones and exact responsibilities of different stakeholders.

This is a pity since the quality of the participation and the proposals made during the panels and breakout sessions in Johannesburg was very high and it would be a waste not to turn those good ideas into action. It was suggested for instance that the “new-generation” national CAADP compacts should be more detailed about using trade for food security and better linkage to the regional CAADP compacts and investment plans. Others emphasized that “tripling intra-African agricultural trade” will require a massive strengthening of capacities: i) organisational capacity, including that from the intermediary private sector organisations, and especially cross-border traders associations; ii) production and trade capacities, particularly of smallholder and women farmers to improve the quality and post-harvest handling of food produce and iii) technical capacities, starting from trade and investment data collection and analysis. A ‘Regional Integration Awareness Strategy’ was also recommended, targeting especially consumers and supermarket chains to inform and engage them around the needs and benefits of more effective regional food markets.

The vagueness of the results at the 11th PP seems to have affected all stakeholder groups, not only African governmental institutions. A new “CAADP Non-State Actors Coalition” was launched but no details were given on its roles and responsibilities for CAADP implementation. And the donors were also generic in their offers of support to the Malabo implementation. With the expiration of the current CAADP multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) at the end of 2015, some of the Lead Institutions, including RECs, will have no earmarked funding to assist African countries to better implement their CAADP. This was stressed a few times in Johannesburg…but donors gave no concrete answers about the development of a second MDTF or an alternative support mechanism (which is worrying as the MDTF provided one umbrella for various assistance channels, thus facilitating coordination between all institutions supporting CAADP implementation).

Similar concerns about the lack of clarity on the implementation steps to achieve the Malabo targets were voiced by a number of participants during the PP, including the private sector representatives.

For our little part, ECDPM will continue supporting the AUC, NEPAD, RECs, donors, regional farmer organisations as well as other non-state-actor partnerships around “strategic action area 1b” of the ‘Malabo Implementation Roadmap’: “markets infrastructure, regional trade and integration, and value chains development”. In a separate upcoming article, we will specify in more detail the approach and modalities of our work in such area.

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From <http://ecdpm.org/talking-points/11th-caadp-partnership-platform-much-positive-talk-little-walk/>