AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL AND FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights issues related to the development of the agriculture sector, food security concerns, factors undermining the agricultural growth and development and policy implementation challenges in the EAC region. What is clear from the paper is that, there is a big potential for agriculture transformation, growth and development to attain both food security and poverty reduction objectives when the right policies are applied. The paper notes that all EAC member states have lowest private and public sector investments. Moreover, the region’s sector FDI attraction are comparatively low leading to low productivity, transformation, limited growth of the sector and weak linkages with other sectors. The region also faces too much market interference and regulations that is manifested by the foods security and poverty reduction dilemma as provided by the Tanzanian case. This is happening amid member states committing themselves to many regional and international agreements that they will liberalize their markets and allocate more resources to the agricultural sector. The starting point to solve the agricultural development and food security challenges is to allow the market forces to work with very minimal prudential regulations so that small scale farmers and investors get their returns from investments in the sector. This will create incentives for more players to involve in this sector that is currently regarded as very risky. The public sector should invest more in the sector by allocating more financial resources as agreed in the Maputo declaration and CADP initiatives while the private sector needs to be encouraged to invest in the sector. EAC governments need to create the best investment climate that promotes the market rather undermines it by too many regulations such as fixing export bans that does not solve any of the intended objectives. Another argument put forward in this paper is that with ‘good political will and leadership’ the observed challenges will be solved in the short and a long run horizon. Political will is instrumental because most of the decisions for resources allocation and policy implementation lies in the hands of politicians who make key decisions in all the EAC countries.

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