



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

Experts canvass for more investment in Africa's rural areas

Addis Abba, Ethiopia (PANA) - The various Regional Economic Communities (REC) in Africa have to work towards removing trade barriers to enhance the free flow of goods and people within their areas, as a way to boost their economies, provide jobs and expand markets.

"If we truly want to integrate, we must ensure that impediments and obstacles are removed. Several protocols and treaties have been signed among members of the various regions, but the implementation of these has been quite problematic," said Dr. Adama Ekbeng Coulibaly, Chief of the Agriculture sector of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Speaking during the Rural Futures Strategic Briefing Meeting in Addis Abba, Ethiopia, Coulibaly said most of the development programmes embarked upon by national governments focused on the urban areas.

"If we hope to achieve rural transformation, it has to be inclusive. From the beginning we have to engage the farmers and the rural dwellers in formulating development policy."

"The implementation of treaties and protocols is crucial to providing employment opportunities. Without opening up the market, it will be difficult to generate income or wealth," Coulibaly added.

According to the participants it is estimated that 70% of the rural population in Africa derived their livelihoods from subsistence farming.

It is expected that Africa's population will double by 2050. This, they said, made it imperative for governments to step up food production, create more jobs and reduce poverty.

To address these problems, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Agency launched the Rural Futures programme in October last year.

The purpose of the initiative is to facilitate new thinking and broad agreement with respect to visions, strategies and plans for rural development and poverty reduction.

Many of the participants at the meeting said a top–bottom approach to rural transformation would not produce the desired objectives. The people need to be carried along, the various diversities in culture and traditions must be taken into consideration when formulating policy.

“It is like we still see development agendas from top-to-bottom. The causes of poverty differ from place to place. We are not looking at the root causes; it is when this is done that fighting poverty can be achieved,” said Olumide Taiwo, a participant from the United States-based Africa Growth Initiative Global Economy and Development.

Development experts from across Africa and beyond have stressed the need for leaders from across the continent not to concentrate on providing infrastructure in the urban areas to the neglect of people living in the rural areas.

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