



Thematic area 4: Accelerating economic growth: Trends, Youth, Policy Practice and Futures

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The 2000 decade has been referred to as a period of African renaissance that was marked by the recovery of several sectors of the continent’s economy. According to the OECD, Africa’s GDP grew at a rate of 4.6 % annually, between 2000-2016. Even after the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa’s economy has remained resilient, growing by 6.9% in 2021 after a contraction of 1.6% in 2020. It accelerated to 4.1% from 2022 to 2023 according to the African Development Bank. The Bank’s economic outlook further warns of headwinds facing Africa’s growing economies, many of which have a direct impact on the agriculture sector. The risks include soaring food and energy prices, tightening global financial conditions, and the associated increase in domestic debt service costs as well as Climate change with its damaging impact on the domestic food supply¹. This calls for bold policy actions to help African economies mitigate such major risks. Agriculture accounts for up to 42% of the GDP and remains one of the major sources of livelihood, for the vast majority of people on the continent and contributes about 65-80% of the labour force in various countries.

The sector has more than 33 million smallholders accounting for about 80% of all the farms on the continent. The sector has the potential to alleviate poverty,² However, many smallholder farmers are sliding into greater vulnerability because of several factors including poor value chain functionality, and weak & incoherent policies. Coherence in policies is a key enabler to support inclusive and sustainable development on the continent³, as it (i) ensures integration; (ii) foster alignment across local, national and international actions; and (iii) overcome fragmented or siloed policy actions⁴. In addition, the dynamics of small farming by youth in the continent have remained poorly understood and captured by the economic models that predict income and growth multipliers from yield growth in agriculture.

The 19th RUFORUM AGM provides the opportunity for academia and development practitioners to deliberate on their research findings and the policy implications among others. Extended abstracts are invited to cover the following:

1. Smallholder agriculture: feeding and growing Africa? Case studies across the continent

Despite their small operational scale, smallholder farmers produce food for a substantial proportion of the world's population. Overall, they have a high crop diversity that favors good nutrition and market diversification. They are also environmental stewards who adopt practices such as mulching,

¹ www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/africas-economic-growth-outpace-global-forecast-2023-2024-african-development-bank-biannual-report-58293

² <https://blogs.worldbank.org/jobs/five-new-insights-how-agriculture-can-help-reduce-poverty>

³ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/POST-2015%20PCD.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.unssc.org/news-and-insights/blog/why-policy-coherence-essential-achieving-2030-agenda>





intercropping, and agroforestry, which are essential for mitigating the risk of drought in the short term and developing productive, sustainable, and resilient food systems over the long term. Three of the biggest challenges that smallholder farmers face include: are access to finance and quality inputs, climate change and market access. Increasing the productivity of small farms and reducing hunger and poverty through asset-based financing and agriculture training services is a practical way among other for addressing some of the vulnerabilities experienced by smallholders.

2. Enhancing value chain functionality; methods, approaches, and inclusive policy design: Experiences for VCA4D

Agriculture, driven by science and innovations should reshape the functioning of the agricultural value chains by unlocking productivity and substantially improve food, fiber and energy production for food, nutrition security, employment and wealth creation. There is need to broaden value chains activities scope beyond agricultural production, processing or marketing. The Value Chain Analysis for Development (VCA4D) approach was designed to support decision-making processes for agricultural investments. This is an integrated approach developed to address the weaknesses in development programming and entails a comprehensive methodology that combines economic, social, and environmental indicators to assess a value chain's economic performance, inclusiveness, and sustainability.

3. Policy coherence for economic growth and sustainable development on the continent

Policy implications informed by evidence improve prospects for faster and justifiable growth and poverty reduction and at the same time have the broad public support to ensure sustainability. There is a strong recognition among policy makers that the rapid transformation of agri-food value chains in Africa and other developing countries has important implications for economic growth and poverty reduction. There is therefore need for a better understanding of what value chain transformation entails and the policy options that can be adopted to support VCA4D development⁵. Moreover, the intersection between small holding and VCA4D cannot be over emphasised and coherence in policies that support adoption and operationalisation is paramount.

⁵ Johan Swinnen and Rob Kuijpers, 2020. Inclusive Value Chains to Accelerate Poverty Reduction in Africa. World Bank Group. Issue 37. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/33397/Inclusive-Value-Chains-to-Accelerate-Poverty-Reduction-in-Africa.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Co-organized

