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Narrative

The Africa Green Revolution Forum (AGRF):

That was the place to be from October 25 to 28, 2012, at Ngordoto Lodge in Arusha

What an event! It recorded 1500+ participants, quite a number above the 600 that attended the first one in Ghana in 2010. The participation was highly diverse: farmers, policy makers, scientists, private sector and NGOs. Oh, the media was there in a BIG way. The level of excitement and anticipation was high. Networking was continuous. There was high level participation with the President of Tanzania His Excellency Jakaya Kikwete who stayed a whole day for the opening ceremony and for the Awards Gala Dinner. The Chairman of AGRA, Mr. Kofi Annan (a household name in Africa and beyond) was the main host of the conference, together with the CEO of the Yara Company, a major sponsor of the conference.

Organizations were represented by their CEOs, many of whom stayed throughout the conference. I did not attend the first Forum in Ghana but those who were there expressed great satisfaction as to the achievements so far, and it was clear that momentum had been gained in a big way. The theme this time pointed to readiness to take off and all of us were to make suggestions regarding tangible follow-up actions. Africa is clearly on the precipice of the Green Revolution.

The President of Tanzania talked eloquently and passionately, and expressed his country's commitment to meet the Maputo Declaration of 2003, where sub-Saharan African countries pledged to commit minimum 10% of their country's GDP to agriculture (research and programs).

Aside from the main conference, there were plenty of opportunities to explore new frontiers.

Personally, I truly enjoyed this Forum. Two young women, Dr Agnes Kalibata (Rwanda's Agriculture Minister) and Dr. Eleni Gebre-Medhin, (Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange) were joint recipients of the 2012 Yara Prize. Dr Ngongi Namanga received the AGRF Lifetime Award. Dr Ngongi was the founding President of AGRA (Alliance for Green Revolution for Africa) and nurtured it through teething problems for 5 years. He has passed the button to Ms Jane Karuku, whose experience from the corporate world is also already evident as she runs with the organization. We are all ready to continue working with Ms Karuku, to realize Africa's most crucial dream of achieving a well fed, fully nourished and active population. The sense of urgency is huge.

The discussions were intense on: soils, examples of working projects; political will, policies and governance; communication and media; and seeds, fertilizer, markets and sustainability. The discussion needs to continue on post-harvest issues, consumer concerns and nutrition. Women continue to be significant as a major stakeholder in smallholder farming in Africa and this theme needs more time. The Youth too, need to feature more prominently. They were vocal and significant during the Forum but expressed a desire to see more. The innovations being applied by this group needs to be highlighted.

Value Chain: what exactly does it mean? Everyone is talking about it. Yet, we do not have enough expertise to cover this aspect especially post crop production. Let me share some important quotes of the Forum:

President of Tanzania

- His Excellency Jakaya Kikwete....**"for Africa, agriculture was our past and agriculture is our future"**

Dr. Akin Adesina

- Federal Minister for Agriculture, Nigeria....**"Africa is not a poor continent... we may have many poor people, but Africa is the most resourceful continent on the globe"**.

I was there, and participated in a panel discussion, and so were other SAA personnel and representatives. It is now time to work, as we shall be expected to report on achievements at the next AGRF and if you did not attend this 2012 one, be on the look-out for the announcement of the 2013 one.

Ruth Oniang'o

Editor-in-Chief, AJFAND



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