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Gaëtan Vanloqueren, Gisele Henriques, Mamadou Goïta and audience

G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition 'in the dock'

(europAfrica/Misereor/CIDSE/CCFD)

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Setting the scene: Why this event, and why now?

The event 'G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition *in the dock*', co-organised by Europafrica, CIDSE, Misereor and CCFD, took place on 4th June in Mundo B in Brussels. Ahead of the G8 Summit in Northern Ireland on 17–18 June – during which food and nutrition security was to be a major theme of the summit, with the G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition and the Global Land Transparency Initiative having been ear-marked as major points on the agenda – the main objective of the Brussels workshop, which brought together some 45 participants, primarily from civil society but also from the European institutions, academia, and media outlets, was to present the perspectives of civil society and African farmers' organisations on both the G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (G8 NA), and on the type of investments they consider necessary and appropriate for African agriculture. These voices were considered particularly welcome given the G8's lack of consultation among African civil society organisations (CSOs) and social movements during the elaboration and implementation of the initiative thus far. The panel, which also featured a number of European CSOs who have been accompanying the role of their respective national governments in the G8 NA over recent months, comprised the following actors:

- Gisele Henriques – CIDSE
- Nora McKeon – Europafrica¹
- Mamadou Goita – Institute for Research and Promotion of Alternatives in Development (IRPAD-Afrique) and formerly at the West African Network of Farmers' Organisations (ROPPA)
- Steven Muchiri – Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF)
- Patrice Abessolo – Plateforme sous-Régionale des Organisations Paysannes de l'Afrique Centrale (PROPAC)
- Gaëtan Vanloqueren – Advisor to UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Food
- Benjamin Luig – Misereor
- Natasa Ioannou – Friends of the Earth Europe
- Patrick Mulvaney – Chair of UK Food Group/Practical Action

¹ Europafrica is a coalition of three major African food producers organisations EAFF in East Africa, PROPAC in Central Africa, ROPPA in West Africa and their closest partners, some European NGOs. They work together to contest a global food regime which serve the interests of agro food corporations and financial speculators more than consumers and sustainable family farmers producers. Fostering a multitude of sustainable people centered, territorially rooted food systems in Europe and Africa.

The G8 NA: A brief overview

The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, a partnership between the G8, a number of African governments, transnational corporations and some national companies, places a strong emphasis on accelerating Africa's agricultural growth through so-called 'responsible' domestic and foreign private-sector investments in African agriculture. The initiative was launched in 2012 in the US, and, in June 2013, currently features six African countries: Mozambique, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire, although possible extensions of the initiative into Nigeria, Senegal, Benin and Malawi are also foreseen. It currently proposes a series of policy reforms in the areas of (i) land, (ii) seeds and (iii) agricultural inputs and the public sector.

The African context

Most of the food consumed in Africa is produced by family farmers and reaches consumers without ever passing through formal value chain or supermarkets. As indicated by a World Bank report on Agribusiness in Africa, released in January 2013, Africa is currently being purported by many as 'the last frontier' in the global agrifood market, particularly in light of growing food demand due to a growing population and urbanisation. The big challenge ahead is the question of how to feed this growing demand, with initiatives such as the G8 NA promoting agrifood corporations, rather than African family farmers, as the solution for the fight against hunger. Civil society and social movements strongly believe that African smallholder farmers – who are working on smallholder farms representing some 80% of farms in the region and which produce as much as 90% of agricultural output in Africa², yet who in many cases are struggling to meet their own food security needs – must be protected, and, crucially, empowered to feed themselves and their families, and not just global markets. Our feeling is that the new alliance represents a general trend in agricultural policies which is driven by a growth-oriented agricultural development model, based on green revolution techniques proven to be harmful for poor and marginalised communities. This approach risks serving primarily as a vehicle for market access by multinational companies in Africa, paving the way for such actors to extend their reach into African markets and exert control over African resources.

Voices from Africa: Why the G8 NA isn't working

Throughout the course of the workshop, presentations made by panelists and responses from the floor served to shed the light on a plethora of problems and challenges pertaining to the G8 NA. Some of the key challenges discussed are summarised below:

Working at cross-purposes and undermining policy coherence and legitimacy

Through the launch of this initiative, the G8 is adding to a seemingly burgeoning group of agricultural investment initiatives targeting African agriculture specifically. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the New Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the Rockefeller Foundation and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), among others, have all **launched initiatives which are not only very similar in scope and approach**, but also **tightly linked to the G8 NA**, particularly regarding their reform of seed systems and their corporate-led approach.

Such initiatives are working in contrast with and **undermining pre-existing national and regional initiatives** being conducted in Africa, which strive for policy coherence and to channel resources in support of small-scale and family agriculture, such as ECOWASS in West Africa, which is working to implement, with

² Source: <http://www.asfg.org.uk/the-challenge/the-challenge>

the involvement of farmers' organisations, the regional agricultural policy ECOWAP³. These ongoing African initiatives involve numerous actors and stakeholders spanning African countries, farmers' organisations, government representatives, regional private sector actors, and agricultural chambers. However, they are being disregarded by the New Alliance, which is deciding in a unilateral, non-consultative and non-transparent way (African smallholders have never been consulted about G8 NA policies prior to implementation) about which African countries should be targeted for investment being driven by the international private sector.

Promoting a model which favours profits over people

In pushing international corporate-led investment and by-passing pre-existing regional policy initiatives as outlined above, what the G8 NA is promoting is not merely increased investment in Africa, but rather a whole **other model of production**, completely in contrast with the model being autonomously promoted by the region at political level. The impacts of the model being encouraged by the G8 NA have proven to be and will continue to be detrimental to African smallholders: private sector and agribusiness investments have already provoked resource concentration, contributing to the erosion of resources and to the unfavourable transformation of consumption models in the region.

In signing up to this approach being pushed by the G8 NA, African states are essentially acting as **market brokers, selling the land** (without prior consultation or consent from the respective land-owners), and allowing private enterprises, instead of farmers, to produce food. Public policies are being piloted by private sector enterprises or their foundations, who are in turn **become falsely legitimised to speak in the name of civil society** on the future of the agriculture.

A lust for land... and a gateway for GMOs

It must be noted that the G8 NA has thus far targeted countries with particularly weak land tenure, governance, and environmental policies in East Africa, thereby aggravating an already dire **land grabbing** scenario in the region: thus far some 6 million hectares of African land – roughly equivalent to the size of Kenya – have been grabbed by foreign actors, hailing primarily from Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the US. A lack of information at local level and the problem of land titling are also key factors within this land crisis. In grabbing African land for investment in crops which are **oriented towards export**, the G8 NA is, in effect, opening the doors for the extension of **genetically modified organisms (GMOs)** in Africa, and for **destroying forests and ecosystems**. In response to such threats, regional farmer networks are in the process of forming a pan-African organisation, in a bid to strive for food security in Africa. It is African farmers – and not multinational corporations – who have been producing food on this land for hundreds of years, and a battle against initiatives such as the G8 NA must be fought to ensure that these farmers are given opportunities and the right conditions to continue to produce food here in years to come.

EU Member States: Hesitant, back-tracking and failing to step up to the plate

Intelligence from recent lobby meetings requested by European CSOs of EU government officials indicates that the role of and motivation for most of the European governments engaged in the G8 NA can be explained by the following:

1. With Official Development Assistance (**ODA**) becoming increasingly **directed towards the rural sector**, there is increasing pressure on African governments to accept these initiatives. Consequently,

³ ECOWAP is considered to be particularly innovative for its development of tools to create commercial links in the region (which aim at establishing regional markets based on local products, thus maximising complementarities among countries) as well as for its identification of particularly sensitive products, for the overall protection of this regional market. Moreover, the Programme for Regional Investment in Agriculture (PRIA) works to ensure coherence among different instruments introduced by the Program for national investment (PNIA).

G8 governments – EU Member States among them – are acting like brokers, outlining the kind of reforms being demanded by big investors, and then setting the ground rules & conditions in terms of (i) the implementation of policy frameworks and (ii) stipulating investment in infrastructure (growth corridors) as a condition.

2. The G8 NA was strongly driven by the Obama Administration; many EU governments were against or skeptical about the initiative from the outset, but it seems they either didn't really expect it to ever take off the ground, or they simply **reacted too late**. Responses vary between EU MS, with current lines of argument ranging from a belief that since the G8 NA is here, the focus should now be on making it 'more sustainable and accountable' (UK); or conceding that there are major problems with the G8 NA, but nevertheless being less outspokenly against the initiative than several months ago (France); to a call for the G8 NA *not* to be enlarged further, but ultimately staying on board in terms of supporting the initiative (Italy); to outright support of the initiative, as is the case for Germany (who are also launching their own complementary initiatives, via the German Food Partnership).
3. EU governments appear to be impressed by the **efficiency and apparent success of the NA**: the Cooperation Frameworks agreed in the six New Alliance partner countries include a total of 97 government policy commitments to be implemented to different deadlines over a three-year period.⁴ It should be acknowledged that **European CSOs are also very late** in discussing the G8. There was however a letter from ROPPA to the African Union against the G8 NA, presented before the 2012 summit. Subsequently, a whole range of [CSO statements condemning the initiative](#)⁵ have been release.

The EU CSO perspective: Gaps, challenges, and a need to (re)act – together

Thanks to the lessons garnered from field experience with partners on the ground in Africa, as well as their work carried out at the EU level with like-minded colleagues and towards government officials, several European civil society organisations have recounted similar challenges to those outlined above in relation with the G8 NA. The problem of the G8 NA **conflicting with pre-existing policy frameworks** does not only apply to regional and national policy instruments and initiatives agreed upon in Africa, but also to those frameworks agreed upon at the European and farther-reaching multilateral level, such as the 2010 **EU Food Security Policy framework**, and, critically, with the decisions taken by the **World Committee on Food Security (CFS)**. As the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform dealing with food security and nutrition, the CFS is the legitimate policy-making organ which should guide international efforts to ensure policy coherence and avoid fragmentation in all decisions regarding food security and nutrition policy. The G8 NA has **no democratic legitimacy to take decisions influencing the right to food**, and by trying to do so is **trespassing on the CFS mandate**.

Also of grave concern to European CSOs is the initiative's focus on '**land transparency**' as opposed to **human rights and the right to land**. The converging land, food, and economic crises not only force us to open up a debate about the need for an alternative paradigm discourse, but also unveil a disturbing governance vacuum on food issues. In the CFS, CSOs, in alliance with some like-minded governments, fought for – and won – fundamental reforms in terms of CSO participation in shaping key policy decisions. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security were adopted in 2011, and negotiation of the 'rai principles' are also underway. As civil society we cannot allow such political landmarks to be undermined by illegitimate policy-making spaces such as those being purported by the G8 NA and others.

⁴ Source: *New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition 2013 Progress Report Summary*, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/205885/New_Alliance_progress_report_May_2013.pdf

⁵ *G8 New Alliance: Open letters of concern & other resources*, http://www.cidse.org/content/sectors/just-food/agricultural-investment/g8-na_letters-of-concern.html

Besides policy fragmentation and the non-transparent, non-consultative process behind the G8 NA, European CSOs also echo the concerns raised by African civil society regarding **the type of investment and model of agriculture** being pushed by the G8 NA and related initiatives, believing that a key problem with the G8 NA is the corporate focus on land projects, with **multi-national corporations essentially trying to set the agenda for African agriculture**. The G8 NA operates under the assumption that agricultural investment should be **large-scale, foreign investment**, only be possible via corporate control. One problem therein is that smallholder farmers will not be equipped to adopt the technologies promoted. In addition, the utilisation of land purchased by corporations for, to cite just one example, the expansion of palm oil plantations in Nigeria and Uganda, is **violating national laws, displacing local communities, causing conflict locally due to the number of jobs being given to migrants instead of local people, destroying natural areas and vegetation, and further marginalising certain vulnerable social groups, particularly women**. The **lack of transparency in land deals** and the **absence of environment impact assessment** are particularly worrying. In this regard, some European CSOs are demanding that G8 States undertake and respect their own extraterritorial obligations, freeze their existing agreements and sign no further new agreements.

Agroecology as a beacon of hope for a new agricultural paradigm?

Some food for thought on concrete next steps was provided by Advisor to UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Food, Gaëtan Vanloqueren, who – being well versed in arguments from both sides of the food policy fence, including common civil society gripes and policy-maker demands and expectations – suggested that whilst the paradigm of the green revolution supported by trade organisations and the prominent role of the private sector in development cooperation has certainly strengthened over recent years, there is still, he believes, great signs of hope for the **agroecology vision**. In this regard Gaëtan strongly encouraged civil society and social movements to consider two key issues pertinent to the current debate:

1. Resistance to the trends that CSOs oppose (such as the corporate-led, non-transparent investment initiative being promoted by the G8) must be complemented and strengthened by the offering of **solid alternatives**, as well as **convincing analysis** and **strong examples** of the beneficial impacts of agroecology **at country or regional/district level**.
2. Better **documentation** and **economic arguments in favour of alternatives to the current model**, contrasting investments in chemical inputs with investments in agro forestry programmes, should also be made accessible.

By investing efforts in these two points above, CSOs can strive to convince policy makers as to why investment in agroecology should be seen as a successful choice, and one which can win election votes. CSOs should aim to further strengthen their case by bringing statistics to the table –highlighting the benefits posed by agroecology in terms of, for example, job creation, community seed banks, and increased access to land tenure – in a bid to demonstrate and influence the media and the political debate in the long term.

Derailing the G8 NA train: Next steps towards the type of agricultural investment we want

What is clear from the views shared by African and European colleagues alike, and indeed the message we need to start pushing is that ‘Businesses as usual are not an option!’ Whilst we as civil society and social movements are well aware of the dangers implied by the G8 Summit’s promotion of ‘nutrition for growth, led by business and science’, there is a severe **lack of public awareness** concerning the possibilities of this initiative opening the floodgates for GMOs across Africa. Whilst media outlets across the globe are, for the most part, full of praise for the G8 NA and its apparent easy fixes for food insecurity and hunger in Africa, it is vital that we as civil society get to work on a **strong and convincing counter narrative**, in solidarity and

in support of those who know how to produce good food, locally and sustainably. We need to **redefine and redirect the focus on agriculture**, moving firmly **away from the current trend of serving markets, towards serving communities** instead. Actors engaged in the G8 NA and its sister initiatives must be made aware that when it comes to investment in agriculture, ‘any old investment’ will not suffice! **Small-scale agriculture** must be **funded in a participative** way which ensures the **protection of small-scale food producers**. Funding opportunities should first and foremost **help farmers to control their production**, and should facilitate their **access to means of production** and to **placing their own products on the market**, adding value to what they produce. On land issues specifically, there is also a strong need for international advocacy and collaboration with CSOs regarding the lack of information and the challenges regarding land titling. Essentially, then, whilst the G8 NA may be seen by some as a train already in motion, we as civil society, through a unified front, harnessing our knowledge, energy and commitment at local, regional, national and international levels, must act in unison and in harmony **to continue challenging the G8 NA and its inherent dangers**, and to inform relevant decision makers and the wider public about the type of agriculture and agricultural investment we want, whereby **people, as opposed to profits, are placed at the centre of policy making**, with smallholders from Africa and beyond being empowered to live a life of dignity, free from poverty and hunger.



Mamadou Goïta, Nora McKeon



Benjamin Luig