

Why African agriculture needs to leapfrog

Abstract for a presentation at the “Revolution in Food and Biomass Production” conference

Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest per capita income and the highest population growth of any region in the world. Only by promoting economic development and creating new prospects for its peoples can the continent escape the dual trap of poverty and high fertility rates.

African agriculture, which is characterised mainly by smallholdings, has a key role to play here. Although African farmers are currently unable to feed their own populations, they have the chance to benefit from experiences and innovations from elsewhere and to avoid undesirable developments.

To leapfrog, meaning to skip certain stages of technological development, in this case would entail achieving higher yields by using resources as well as new technologies intelligently and efficiently. If the countries of Africa succeed in linking farmers to markets, processing more raw materials in the places where they are grown and reinvesting the gains in added value, it will be possible for them to initiate the structural changes necessary in rural areas to turn agriculture into a driver of development.

We have collected some practical examples from different fields which show how this can happen.

Sabine Sütterlin
Berlin-Institut für Bevölkerung und Entwicklung
Schillerstraße 59
10627 Berlin
Tel. 033208-22 51 60
Mobil 0151-16 66 49 49
suetterlin@berlin-institut.org
www.berlin-institut.org