

Policy Note

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Lagging Agricultural Development in Africa and the Way Forward: Progress and Challenges for the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)

Shinjiro Amameishi*

Summary

- Agricultural development has been subject to significant delays in Africa. Although a target of annual agriculture sector growth is 6%, it has consistently stagnated at around 2-3%. And the undernourished population has increased since 2014. This policy note analyses the progress of the CAADP, a flagship program promoted by the African Union (AU), at the continental, regional economic communities (RECs) and national levels. Drawing on Amameishi (2024), it discusses challenges in CAADP that hinder agricultural development in Africa and proposes measures to accelerate its progress.
- The analysis finds that although many documents and frameworks necessary for promoting CAADP have been prepared, effective actions on respective development issues have not yet been adequately implemented. In other words, insufficient priority has been placed on the implementation stage, contributing to the stagnation of agricultural development.
- In order to get agricultural development on track as planned, it is necessary to (a) strengthen political leadership to focus on achieving results and promote actions necessary for the implementation stage, (b) clarify the targets to be achieved, and (c) build the capacity for implementation to achieve results.
- In recent years, various challenges have emerged in the agricultural sector in Africa, such as climate change and fragility caused by regional conflicts. At the forthcoming Ninth Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD 9), to be held in 2025, it is strongly hoped that agricultural development will be included as an urgent priority issue. AU, African governments and development agencies are required to give the highest priority to implementing measures for future agricultural development and food security in Africa.

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official positions of either JICA or the JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development.

* Executive Senior Research Fellow, JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development.

1. Delayed agricultural sector development in Africa

In Africa, the agricultural sector is a critical industry, accounting for 48.4% of total employment (2020). The share of the agricultural sector in total GDP has gradually increased, reaching 16.2% in 2020 (Table 1). Africa's key challenge is poverty eradication through the creation of good jobs for the growing working-age population, in particular in agriculture and related activities in rural areas (Ahlers and Kohli 2017). Therefore, the agricultural sector will play a pivotal role in Africa's healthy development.

In the 2000s, the African continent entered a new stage of economic growth, and in line with this, development advanced in the education and health sectors (UN 2015). In contrast, agricultural sector development has lagged behind. The AU launched Challenges for “the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme” (CAADP) in 2003 to strengthen agricultural development and food security, but it has fallen far short of achieving the expected results. CAADP has set a target of achieving 6% annual agriculture sector growth, but the rate has consistently stagnated at around 2–3%.¹ While CAADP has targeted ending hunger by 2025, the undernourished population has consistently increased since 2014, reaching 20.2% of the total population in 2021² (FAO 2023). Agricultural sector development has remained largely stagnant over the past two decades, despite the critical challenges facing Africa.

2. Overview of CAADP and its progress

(1) What is CAADP?

CAADP was designed to promote interventions that best respond to the widely recognized crisis situation of African agriculture (AU and NEPAD 2003). The share of people with inadequate diets declined between 1970 and 1980, particularly in East Asia (including present South-East Asia). These areas enjoyed rapid economic growth and the successful introduction of “Green Revolution Technology” (World Bank 1986). On the other hand, Africa had the highest proportion of hungry people in the world, and hunger and malnutrition were pressing issues, leading to the launch of CAADP in 2003. Subsequently, in 2014, the AU reaffirmed the policy of continuing to promote CAADP and set a new direction to focus on growth and transformation of the agricultural sector (AUC 2014).

Since 2014, CAADP has had the following seven commitments.

- 1) Recommitment to the Principles and Values of the CAADP Process
- 2) Enhancing Investment Financing in Agriculture
- 3) Ending Hunger by 2025
- 4) Halving Poverty through Agriculture by 2025
- 5) Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services
- 6) Enhancing Resilience to Climate Variability
- 7) Enhancing Mutual Accountability for Actions and Results

In order to promote CAADP, Regional Agriculture Investment Plans (RAIPs) and National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs) are supposed to be formulated at the RECs and country levels, respectively.³ The AU has been conducting the CAADP Biennial Reviews since 2018, which score and assess progress across the African continent, as well as by country, according to the above seven commitments.

Progress and efforts to promote CAADP at the continental, REC and country levels are analyzed through reviewing relevant literature. The major findings are as follows.

(2) Continental level

CAADP targets are to achieve at least 10% allocation for the agricultural sector in the national budget. However, the actual figure remains very low, at 2.46% in 2015 and 2.55% in 2020. This is less than one-fifth of the budget for education and half of the budget for health (Table 2). It is clear that governments of African countries have not given sufficient priority to agriculture sector development, despite its importance.

In each of the four CAADP Biennial Reviews conducted so far, the African continent as a whole was rated “Not on track.”⁴ In the 4th Review (2024), the overall continent score was only 4.56/10 against the “On track” criterion (9.29/10). There has also been unsatisfactory progress at the country level, with 17 countries on track in the 1st CAADP Biennial Review (2018), 4 countries in the 2nd Review (2020), just 1 country (Rwanda) in the 3rd Review (2022), and all countries “Not on track” in the 4th Review (2024) (Tables 3 and 4). Looking at each of the seven commitments, the higher scores in the 4th Review (2024) were for 1) Recommitment to the Principles and Values of the CAADP Process (7.66/10) and 7) Enhancing Mutual Accountability for Actions and Results (7.02/10). Both Commitments 1 and 7 measure the development of documents and plans, as well as the establishment and promotion of dialogue and monitoring frameworks. In contrast, Commitments 2–6, which address respective development issues in the agriculture sector, are rated low, in particular Commitments 2–5, with scores stagnating between 2.23 and 3.15/10 (Table 3).

(3) REC level

Of the eight RECs under the AU, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the East African Community (EAC) are the most advanced in promoting the CAADP framework. In particular, ECOWAS has shown strong leadership as a regional organization, with all member states having developed NAIPs and submitting country reports at the 4th review. ECOWAS has developed the necessary documents and plans and established a CAADP promotion system. The system includes dialogues, consultations and coordination at both high and working levels and establishing the M&E system (AU and AUDA-NEPAD, 2020a; 2020b). However, scores of Commitment 2–5 among ECOWAS member states remain low. A major challenge is to strengthen efforts on respective development issues at the implementation stage.

The status of CAADP promotion in the RECs varies widely and some organizations have not made sufficient progress. This is due to the unclear division of roles between the AUC and the RECs, and the overlapping membership of countries in several RECs.⁵ Consequently, it becomes difficult to coordinate policies and programs at regional and continental levels (AUC 2019). African leaders are often not held accountable failing to abide by their official agreements. Agricultural policies implemented through the CAADP and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)⁶ remain dependent on the goodwill of governments or foreign countries to provide funding. Multi-source financing of agricultural projects suffers from fragmented approaches by donors and a focus on particularities rather than on developing a structural response to creating agriculture and rural development policies (Blizkovsky, Grega, and Verter 2018).

(4) Country level

This policy note analyzes country-level CAADP promotion in Nigeria and Kenya, core countries in Central and West, and East Africa, respectively. Both achieved the same score (4th Review: 6.28/10), which is above the continental average (4th Review: 4.56/10). It also looks at Rwanda, which has scored the highest in all four previous CAADP Biennial Reviews (4th Review: 8.07/10).

In both Nigeria and Kenya, necessary documents and plans have been developed and processes have been conducted to promote CAADP, but the results of specific development issues in the agriculture sector have not yet been realized in either country. The main reasons for the delayed achievement of expected results in each country have been identified. In Nigeria, the priority of the agriculture sector has declined due to oil-focused economic policies (Nwankwo et al. 2024; Nwozor and Olanrewaju 2020; Amuda 2023), and in Kenya, the devolution policies⁷ introduced in 2013 have not worked as intended (Simiyu 2015; Chelule, Munyua, and Kibbett 2019). In both countries, scores of Commitments 2, 3 and 5, which address specific development issues, are rated low and necessary efforts have not been made at the implementation stage.

On the other hand, in Rwanda, there are very strong implementation incentives working downwards from the Cabinet to achieve agreed commitments. In 2006, an organizational performance contract called "Imihigo" was introduced by the central government to encourage the implementation of the development programs. It measures tangible and accurate targets, as well as identifying areas of strengths and weakness to learn from for future improvement (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda 2022). There is some criticism of centralized efforts, e.g., the government has not been flexible in adapting learnings from policy mistakes and the government and businesses have not been able to sustain effective reciprocal relationships (Behuria 2018). However, Rwanda is highly regarded as a leading country for CAADP promotion, not only because of its outstanding political leadership in formulating policy but also in its implementation and pursuit of results and the strong implementation incentives that have been put in place. It differs significantly from other African countries.

3. Policy recommendations

Through this analysis, it is evident that the main causes behind the significant delay in agricultural development in Africa are: (1) despite the importance placed on agricultural development, efforts are focused primarily on the planning stage and not on the implementation stage; and (2) if strong political leadership is exercised to pursue tangible results, the necessary measures can be steadily conducted at the implementation stage and agricultural development will further move forward. The pursuit of results is essential to ensuring that Africa's agricultural development can overcome these barriers and delays and get back on track.

This policy note provides the following recommendations for the future CAADP promotion to pursue visible results:

For African policy makers and practitioners (Continental, RECs and Country Levels)

- Strengthen *political leadership* and place the *highest priority on agricultural sector development and food security*, despite the many other development issues faced by Africa.
- Pay *particular attention to the implementation stage* and formulate highly effective results-oriented plans with *clearly defined targets to be achieved*.
- Based on the plans, *secure the necessary government budget*—currently at an extremely low level—and make serious efforts to *secure further funding from development agencies and the private sector*.
- *Steadily implement the plans*, conduct monitoring and reviews of progress, and *flexibly revise the plans* based on the results to continuously implement highly effective measures. This process will *strengthen the implementation capacity* to pursue results.

For Development agencies

- Development agencies should deeply recognize the importance of CAADP and the promotion of agricultural development and food security *under African ownership*. Their assistance should be implemented not through donor-specific isolated approaches but *directly in line with the CAADP programme*.
- Development agencies should provide support not only for the issues that can expect results in the short term but also for issues that need to be addressed in *a medium- to long-term perspective*, such as organizational and individual *capacity development* and structural reform.

Table 1: Comparison of Shares of Agriculture in Total GDP and Employment in Africa and Asia

	Africa		Asia	
	2000	2020	2000	2020
Share of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Value Added in Total GDP	14.5%	16.2%	10.1%	7.4%
Share of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Employment in Total Employment	58.2%	48.4%	48.7%	29.2%

Source: Prepared by the author based on data from FAO (2022) Statistical Yearbook World Food and Agriculture 2022

Table 2: Agriculture, Education and Health Budgets as a Percentage of National Budgets in Africa

	2001	2005	2010	2015	2020
Agriculture	3.06%	3.08%	2.57%	2.46%	2.55%
Education	15.74%	18.03%	17.55%	16.66%	14.34%
Health	6.66%	7.03%	6.47%	6.44%	7.23%

Sources: Prepared by the author based on data from FAO STAT (Agriculture), Our World in Data (Education) and WHO Global Health Observatory data repository (Health)

Table 3: Trends in CAADP Progress across the African Continent

Malabo Commitments	1 st Report (2017) (2018)	2 nd Report (2015–2018) (2020)	3 rd Report (2015–2021) (2022)	4 th Report (2015–2023) (2024)
Score	3.6	4.03	4.32	4.56
Progress	Not on track	Not on track	Not on track	Not on track
1. Recommitment to CAADP Process	5.53 (On track)	7.29 (Not on track)	7.28 (Not on track)	7.66 (Not on track)
2. Investment Finance in Agriculture	3.54 (Not on track)	3.46 (Not on track)	3.15 (Not on track)	3.15 (Not on track)
3. Ending Hunger	1.82 (Not on track)	2.20 (Not on track)	2.71 (Not on track)	2.90 (Not on track)
4. Eradicating Poverty through Agriculture	2.67 (On track)	1.81 (Not on track)	2.69 (Not on track)	3.04 (Not on track)
5. Intra-African Trade in Agriculture Commodities and services	2.45 (On track)	2.87 (Not on track)	2.44 (Not on track)	2.23 (Not on track)
6. Resilience to Climate Variability	3.86 (Not on track)	4.59 (Not on track)	5.71 (Not on track)	5.91 (Not on track)
7. Mutual Accountability for Actions and Results	5.35 (On track)	5.98 (Not on track)	6.26 (Not on track)	7.02 (Not on track)

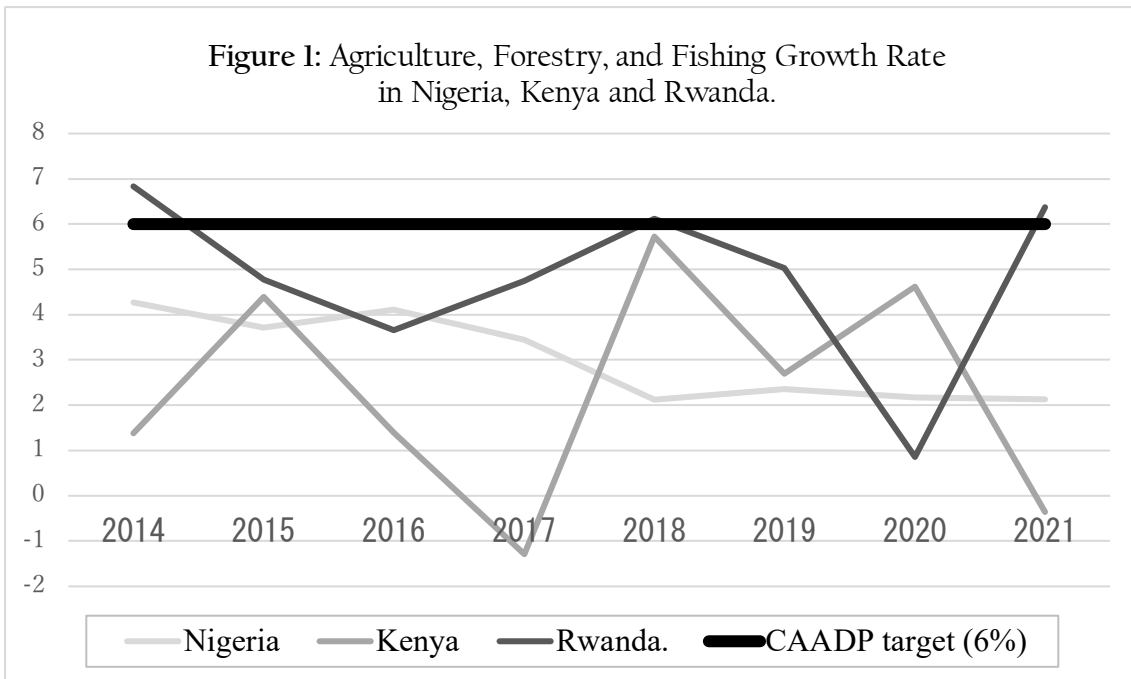
Source: Prepared by the author based on data from AU (2018, 2020), AU and AUDA-NEPAD (2022, 2024)

Table 4: CAADP Progress and Achievements (from the last four CAADP Biennial Review Reports)

	1 st Report (2017) (2018)	2 nd Report(2015~2018) (2020)	3 rd Report (2015~2021) (2022)	4 th Report (2015~2023) (2024)
No. of Countries	47	49	51	49
Benchmark (Minimum Score of On track)	3.96/10	6.66/10	7.28/10	9.29/10
Average Score	3.6/10(Not on track)	4.03/10(Not on track)	4.32/10(Not on track)	4.56/10(Not on track)
No. of On-track Countries	17	4	1	0
Country with Highest Score	Rwanda(6.09/10)	Rwanda(7.24/10)	Rwanda(7.43/10)	Rwanda(8.07/10)
No. of Countries Allocating at least 10% of National Expenditure on Agriculture	10	4	4	3
No of Countries Achieving 6% Growth Rate of Agriculture	18	3	21	11
Recommendations and Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Commitments Are Not on track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 7 Commitments Are Not on track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 7 Commitments Are Not on track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 7 Commitments Are Not on track
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action is needed for African leaders to take greater responsibility to demonstrate increased ownership and collective leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger political leadership and commitment and the requisite capacity at all levels are required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger political leadership and commitment and the requisite capacity at all levels are required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger political leadership and commitment and the requisite capacity at all levels are required.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 pandemic could partly explain low performance of agriculture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collective and individual actions are needed to accelerate agricultural growth and transformation through CAADP.
Remarks	There are 23 Categories in 7 Commitments.	The number of categories increased to 24.	No change in number of categories (24)	The number of categories increased to 28.

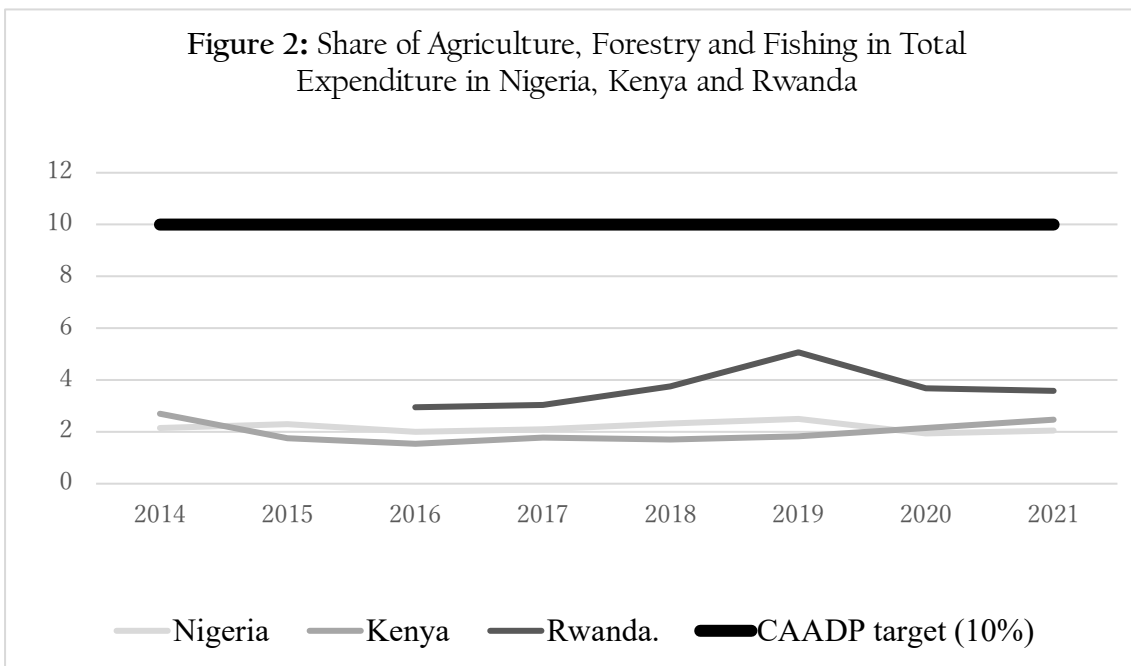
Source: Prepared by the author based on data from AU (2018, 2020), AU and AUDA-NEPAD (2022, 2024)

Figure 1: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Growth Rate in Nigeria, Kenya and Rwanda.



Source: Prepared by the author based on data from the World Bank's World Development Indicators

Figure 2: Share of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing in Total Expenditure in Nigeria, Kenya and Rwanda



Source: Prepared by the author based on data from FAO Stat

*No data available for Rwanda in 2014 and 2015

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- ¹ The agricultural sector in Africa grew at 3.5%/year between 2008 and 2014, 3.0%/year from 2014 to 2019, and only 2.4%/year between 2019 and 2020 (AKADEMIYA 2063 and IFPRI 2021).
 - ² In Asia, which has the second highest proportion of undernourished people after Africa, the percentage of the undernourished population was only 9.1% in 2021 (FAO 2022).
 - ³ Some regional organizations and countries have not progressed RAIP or NAIP formulation. Only 42 of the AU Member States have developed NAIP (AKADEMIYA 2063 and IFPRI 2023).
 - ⁴ The benchmarks to measure countries as being “On track” differ per biennial review and per Commitment.
 - ⁵ According to Blizkovsky et al (2018), there are 1, 16 and 33 countries that are members of four, three and two RECs, respectively.
 - ⁶ NEPAD is currently the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD).
 - ⁷ Devolution is the transfer of power and functions from central government to local (county) governments.

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Contact:

**JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for
Peace and Development**

10-5 Ichigaya Honmura-cho Shinjuku-ku Tokyo 162-8433,
JAPAN

TEL: +81-3-3269-2357 FAX: 81-3-3269-2054

URL: <https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/ja/index.html>

