

## COMMENTARY



*Victoria Ndanyi*

### **FOLLOW UP ON DAVID BATHRICK COMMENTARY “NEW ERA” INCLUSIVE AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR AFRICA**

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Agriculture is a main socio-economic activity and the driver of economy for most African countries as it contributes to more than half of employment directly and indirectly especially in rural areas. Agriculture in small and medium countries (SMC) in Africa is characterized by low incomes, high cost of inputs, diminishing yields, post-harvest losses as high as 40% and risks associated with climate change effects such as floods and droughts which result in massive losses both at the farm and storage levels. These are compounded by factors like dynamic political environment, poor governance of resources and elusive peace in most regions. The resilience of the rural African farmer is therefore outstretched by these factors beyond their control which render them most vulnerable to poverty inclinations. Inclusive Agricultural and Rural Development (AR&D) programs must therefore adopt a multifaceted approach and be designed to withstand the pressure from political, social and economic impediments for sustainability. Good governance of resources and political will from both the donor and recipient governments are critical to the success of these programs. Recipient governments must endeavor to provide enabling legal and regulatory policy frameworks for implementation while donor partners should be able to put in place monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for continuous tracking to ensure accountability. AR&D programs should also be designed to address weak linkages along the food value chains because it is more sustainable to reduce postharvest losses than increase production to compensate for post-production losses. Elusive peace in some African regions is exacerbated by political instability, tribal and ethnic clashes resulting in disruption of normal livelihood activities. Well designed and executed programs will remain a dream at anytime in the absence of peace. Peace is paramount to the existence of development programs.

Technological advancement in agriculture must take into consideration the indigenous technical knowledge (ITK) that has been practiced by communities for decades due to diversity of unique challenges. Total replacement or sudden overhaul of ITK may usually result in resistance and/or low adoption. AR&D programs should be developed with the involvement of the implementing communities. Rural areas are typical of lack or poor infrastructure which impedes movement and marketing of agricultural commodities. Physical infrastructure must therefore be provided/ improved by recipient governments to facilitate quick movement of produce to destinations within required time. Finally, the beneficiary communities should be proactive and strategically positioned for the new era AR&D. Farming (agriculture) by African farmers must be elevated to commercial status and not a hobby or social activity.

## VICTORIA BIO

Miss Victoria Claire M. Ndanyi is a Chief Agricultural Officer (CAO) with the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Fisheries, Kenya deployed in Ongata Rongai division (now ward) of Kajiado North sub-County since January 2012. Her responsibilities involve; Harmonization of extension approaches and methodologies of various projects/programmes in liaison with all agriculture stakeholders in the division, provision and improvement of administrative links between the sub-county Headquarters and the field services, Secretary/executive officer to the Sub-District Agricultural Committee (Sub-DAC) which is involved in policy formulation at the grass root levels, promote consultative fora with various stakeholders and collaborators within the Division, organize field days, demonstrations and tours, Identify staff and farmer training needs, Collection and dissemination of agricultural information within the division, Monitor and Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of agricultural extension services, prepare and implement performance contracts, work plans and budgets and preparation of periodic reports. Prior to this she worked still within the same ministry as a Training Coordinator and deputy principal at an Agricultural Training centre (ATC), formerly known as Farmers Training Centre (FTC) from April 2006 to December 2011. As the head of training, she was involved in and spearheaded drawing up training programmes including development of training curriculum for the centre, Organization and supervision of courses, Training needs assessment, preparation of training projections/plans and training budgets, management of information resource centre and compilation of progress Reports. She has attended while on duty some short courses on Agricultural Policy Analysis in Africa (UN – IDEP, Dakar – Senegal) and Training Methods and Skills for Managers (Ni-msme, Hyderabad – India).

Miss Victoria is currently pursuing her Msc. Degree in Food Science and Technology at the University of Nairobi, having done Bsc. in Home science and Technology at Maseno University. She is an executive member of the Food Science and Technology Platform of Kenya (FoSTeP-K) since 2014. This is a registered association of professionals in Food Science and Technology, Nutrition and related disciplines, whose main objective is to provide a platform for interaction that facilitates the attainment of Food and Nutrition Security and Safety through intellectual networking, capacity building, policy advocacy as well as provision of mentorship for young professionals. Through FoSTeP-K, she managed to participate (July 2015 in Chicago, IL USA) in the global annual international leadership development programme (LEAD360) under IFT aimed at supporting and developing emerging Food Science Professionals from around the world.

Besides, Victoria is a junior reviewer of research articles with the African Journal of Food Agriculture, Nutrition and Development (AJFAND). She regularly participates in public food related exhibitions and has passion for postharvest management for Food Security, Safety and Nutrition. She is regularly invited by some local Community and Faith based organizations (e.g. Beacon of Hope, Catholic Church) to train youth and women community members on food and nutrition security and value addition/agroprocessing. She likes to empower people and would wish to bridge the information gap between researchers and the consumers.