

CANADA SHOULD BE A GLOBAL LEADER IN RESILIENT, EQUITABLE AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS



Photo credit Olivia Acland

In Ghana, changes in rainfall are threatening farm production and family livelihoods. Yet some farmers have learned about the risks of climate change and adapted their farming practices accordingly. They have successfully diversified their revenue streams, and through climate resilient production methods, have actually increased their yields.

The association of poultry farmers in Niougoula, Mali, started and run by women, encouraged other women to start poultry businesses. In addition to the extra money they are earning, the women involved have increased their self-confidence, and now play a bigger role in family decision-making.

In Sierra Leone, investment in agriculture led to higher yields, more crop diversity and increased farm income. As a result, childhood malnutrition has dropped dramatically, and there are more jobs for local youth.

These positive changes in West Africa have all come about through investments made by Global Affairs Canada in agrifood systems. Canadian organizations and the Canadian government are doing similar work around the world.

Such investments are showing progress on some of the biggest problems in developing countries – poverty, undernourishment, gender inequality and climate change. Yet in recent years these investments have fallen, from a peak of \$771 million in 2009/10 to less than \$300 million in each of the past two years.

RECOMMENDATION:

In keeping with the 2019 mandate letter for the Minister of International Development,¹ Canada should increase investments in agriculture to at least \$400 million/year, as part of a growing aid budget, and expand its support for agrifood systems that are inclusive, empower women, are resilient to shocks (such as climate change and COVID-19) and remunerative for rural communities. Half of such investment should be channelled through Canadian civil society organizations, which have expertise in this type of programming, and which can build understanding among the Canadian public.



¹ <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2019/12/13/minister-international-development-mandate-letter>

² The Food Security Policy Group is a coalition of civil society organizations advocating that Canada promote equitable and sustainable agrifood systems in the Global South. See <https://ccic.ca/what-we-do/canadian-food-security-policy-group/>

Agriculture and Canada's development goals

A new research report, *Leaders in the Field*,³ from the Food Security Policy Group, demonstrates unequivocally that agricultural development is integral to these development goals. Done right, investing in agriculture can have transformative impacts on equality, health, the environment and the wider economy.

In the world's poorest countries, two-thirds of people are rural, four-fifths of women depend on farming for their livelihood, and agriculture is getting riskier because of climate change. At the same time, millions of young people are entering the job market every year. It is impossible to tackle poverty, gender equality, climate resilience and the need for employment without a focus on agriculture, and specifically creating opportunities for women within agrifood systems.

The research report combines macro-level analysis of Canada's spending on agricultural development over the past 10 years with a deep dive into six agricultural projects in West Africa. All were multi-year projects, implemented by Canadian civil society organizations and supported by Global Affairs Canada.

West Africa was chosen because the region suffers from high rates of poverty, food insecurity and climate disruption, and because Global Affairs has invested extensively in agriculture there.

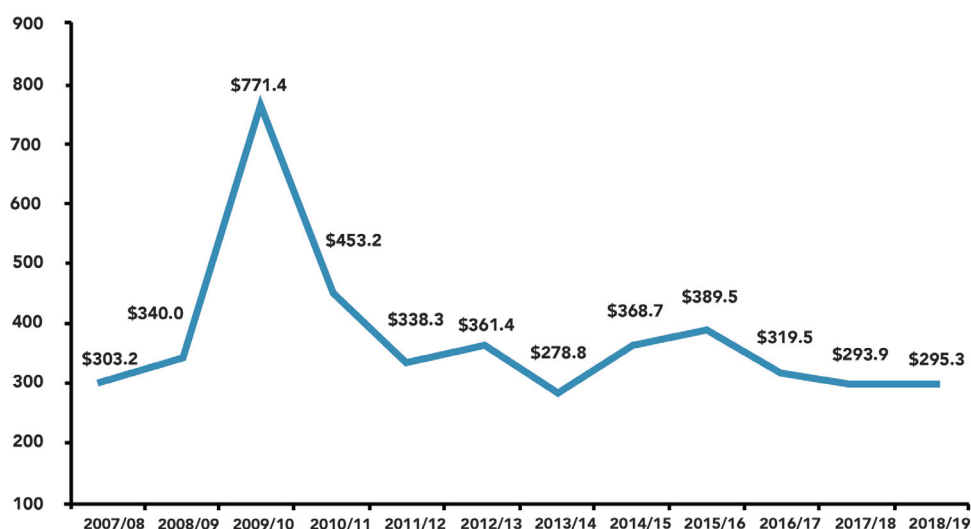


In Mali, Ramata Diarra, a 31-year-old mother of five, joined with other women to form a farmers' association, which then applied for a farm loan to grow onions. Within a few years, Ramata was able to buy a motorcycle for the farm business and start building a house. She's taken courses in finances, leadership and communication, and is now a confident local leader.

Photo credit Développement international Desjardins

Trend in the Value of Agricultural Disbursements, All Departments, 2007/08 to 2018/19

Millions of 2018 Dollars ©AidWatch Canada, April 2020



Canada's food security legacy

For countries around the world, including Canada, agriculture has been the foundation for national development, and the pathway out of poverty for millions.

Canada also has a proud history of investing in global food security. In 2009 Canada was one of the first and largest contributors to respond to the global food crisis. But investment has fallen dramatically since then.



A few years ago, Hannah Anafo was struggling to grow enough food for her family, as rising temperatures and erratic rainfall increased the risks of farming. Now this Ghanaian woman supports her children by working with others to raise fish in a local reservoir. Aquaculture provides protein in the diet, diversifies rural incomes, and has raised women's status in the community.

Photo credit Ernest Kodjo Ayikpah

Agriculture supply chains deliver value

Food production was key to all these projects, but they went far beyond that to address agrifood systems, including farm inputs, financial training, livestock health, food processing, marketing, gender relations and watershed management. While the results included increased production of crops and livestock, they didn't stop there. Increased family income helped to keep kids in school and improved diets led to better health. There were more jobs in rural areas – not only on the farms, but also in related activities like food processing.

Women are gaining power

These projects worked with women, individually and in groups, on their farms and in the broader community. The projects strengthened women's voices in the home and the community by giving them greater control over assets like farming capital and livestock. Women gained more autonomy to make decisions, and attained more leadership roles. There was a reduction in gender-based violence. Men and boys learned new social norms and found that gender equality was an improvement for all.

Adapting to a changing climate

With climate change threatening food security across Africa, there is a need to better understand what's coming, and how to adapt. These projects included early warning systems and training on climate risks. Farmers are putting in place climate-smart techniques to reduce those risks and using other innovations to improve environmental health.

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), introduced in 2017, has six action areas, including:

- Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls
- Environment and climate action
- Growth that works for everyone

COVID-19 and food security

This research report was nearing completion when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. It quickly became obvious that the pandemic would impact food security as well as health, disrupting food supply chains and depriving millions of people of the income they needed to buy food. Though the research didn't set out to address the impacts of COVID-19, the findings are even more relevant now. The sudden COVID-19 shock, like escalating climate shocks, illustrates the need for more resilient food systems. Canada should be a global leader, helping the world to build back better, by putting in place agrifood systems that are resilient to shocks.



Photo credit Olivia Acland

Fudiah Fullah of Sierra Leone says that goats improved her relationship with her husband, and her ability to care for her children. Through her membership in a savings group, she received a few goats and learned to care for them. Now she's making income from selling goats and using the money to run a market stall. She's grateful that she can feed her children, and that she and her husband no longer quarrel over money.

The number of hungry people in the world has increased by 60 million over the past five years, and now stands at 690 million.⁴

Climate change is one of the key drivers behind the recent increase in global hunger and one of the leading causes of severe food crises.⁵

Women have much less access to land, livestock and other farming resources than men⁶ and much less control over household income.⁷

Through its international development programs, Canada seeks to build climate resilience, promote gender equality and reduce poverty. On top of that, we all need to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no better way to achieve all these goals than by increasing investments in inclusive and resilient agri-food systems. To prevent backsliding in other important areas of development, this must come as part of a growing aid budget.

What you can do as a Member of Parliament:

We invite you to show your support for Canadian investments in Official Development Assistance and global food security.

- Write a letter of support or speak directly to the Minister of International Development/Critic/Shadow Minister and/or the Prime Minister/Party Leader.
- Share social media messages about the value of Canada's aid programs
- Profile successes from Canada's global food security work in your newsletter to constituents

⁴FAO, 2020. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World. <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en>

⁵FAO, 2018. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World. <http://www.fao.org/3/I9553EN/i9553en.pdf>

⁶<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>
⁷<https://ourworldindata.org/economic-inequality-by-gender>