

Book Review

Agribusiness for Africa's Prosperity, by Kande K. Yumkella, Patrick M. Kormawa, Torben M. Roepstorff and Anthony M. Hawkins, (eds), 2010, 345 pp.

Africa is no longer a land of poverty. To make optimistic claims about Africa's prosperity through agribusiness development, one should go to the peak of the Egyptian Pyramids to look at the continent's great development potential from Alexandria to Cape Town. Tapping Africa's agricultural resource potential alone can unlock the real frontier of economic growth and development in Africa. This indeed is the key message of the book.

The book comprises 11 essays under three parts. Part A focuses on the retrospect and prospects of African agribusiness in a global setting. The new global realities governing agribusiness are well articulated. Drawing on lessons learned from best practices in agribusiness development it is argued that institutional direction and policy response are critical to replicating best practices.

Part B provides an analytical exposition, with practical insights, of seven core pillars of agribusiness development in Africa: agricultural productivity; value chains; local, regional, and international demand; technological efforts and innovation capabilities; effective and innovative financing; private sector participation; and infrastructure and energy access. Related issues and options are presented citing relevant case studies.

Part C presents an agenda for action toward fostering agribusiness as a potential and sustainable source of wealth creation. The contours and tenets of the policy agenda combine a unique blend of vision and action, suggesting a number of policy interventions for better methods of converting commodities into products through efficient processing, improved design and better marketing.

The book is indeed a scholarly input to conceptualizing, formulating, implementing, monitoring and auditing policy instruments which can rekindle new sources of dynamic growth of the agribusiness sector. Africa's struggle to achieve rapid economic transformation is apt to be won or lost in the countryside. The wealth of ideas contained in the book constitutes a set of simple, doable and practical solutions to addressing the critical issue of agribusiness in order for it to serve as a dynamic force in propelling the wheels of African prosperity.

The book certainly fulfills a knowledge vacuum in relation to the interlinkages of production, agribusiness, and markets. It also provides a timely contribution to the renewed focus on developing agriculture and related activities in the policy and development agenda. A programme framework contained in Chapter 11 is truly practical, but should not be taken as a set of settled conclusions for an action plan. Rather, it should be considered as an open-ended agenda for including additional interventions which stem from lessons learned from the practical implementation of suggested programmes contained therein. A collective response by UNIDO, FAO, IFAD, and ECA to promote agribusiness in Africa, as suggested by the book, will certainly enable new ideas as potential sources of wealth creation.

Jebamalai Vinanchiarachi
Faculty of Economics and Administration
University of Malaya
Email: vinanchiarachi@yahoo.com