



2021/2178(INI)

6.4.2022

OPINION

of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

for the Committee on International Trade

on the future of EU-Africa trade relations
(2021/2178(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Luke Ming Flanagan

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Underlines that Africa is and will remain a key partner of the EU, in particular when it comes to tackling common challenges relating to sustainable agriculture and food security; points out that the EU is committed to supporting and promoting the global transition to sustainable agri-food systems in line with the objectives of the farm to fork strategy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to seeking to develop alliances on sustainable food systems with all its partners;
2. Underlines that the joint communication entitled ‘Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa’ rightly declares that the EU and Africa must address the challenges of nutrition and food security by boosting safe and sustainable agri-food systems in order to step up efforts to meet the SDG of ‘Zero Hunger in 2030’, which aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, and on which progress has slowed in recent years; agrees with the strategy’s assertion that an EU-Africa partnership on agriculture would support joint action to mitigate climate change, increase local production yields and address environment and biodiversity concerns, including by setting sanitary and phytosanitary standards and protecting natural resources;
3. Expresses its grave concern over the impact of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on the supply of certain agricultural food products, mainly cereals, to African countries, in view of the significant dependence of many of these states on these imports, a dependence which amounts to up to 50 per cent of cereal supplies in the North African countries; warns of the very negative impact that the increase in food prices caused by the war may have in less-developed countries, notably in developing and least-developed partner countries that were already facing acute malnutrition before this new crisis; calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue strengthening support for these countries in order to avoid scarcity in vulnerable regions and in order to build resilience in their food supply chains in the medium to long term via the Commission’s humanitarian-development policy nexus approach; highlights, furthermore, the disruption which the armed conflict is causing to African exports to Russia of certain products, such as citrus fruits, coffee and tea; calls on the Commission to closely monitor the evolution of the impact of the war, especially on food supplies to the poorest countries of the African continent, in order to protect the food balance of the most deprived populations;
4. Recalls that with EU agri-food exports to Africa valued at EUR 17.6 billion and imports from Africa valued at EUR 16.5 billion in 2020, African countries are important destinations for EU exports and the EU remains the biggest export market for agricultural and food products from Africa;
5. Points out that most African countries, in particular least-developed countries (LDCs) that are ‘everything but arms’ beneficiaries under the EU’s Generalised Scheme of

Preferences and African signatories to EPAs, enjoy duty-free and quota-free access to EU markets; draws attention, in this context, to the need for the EU to ensure that any unfair or anti-competitive practices are averted, especially those related to the import of agri-food products;

6. Highlights that technical support and training should be offered to ensure that actors in Africa have the opportunity and know-how to meet EU standards; calls on the Commission, in this regard, to ensure a just transition towards compliance in African states with their commitments to environmental, labour and climate standards and to maintaining high safety and quality standards; takes the view that EU support for the AfCFTA should focus on the development of regulatory frameworks to prevent a 'race to the bottom' of social and environmental norms;
7. Emphasises that EPAs need to support the various regional trade communities in Africa and the further development of the AfCFTA, and also contribute to the building of resilient and sustainable regional value chains to boost and diversify intra-African trade; calls, furthermore, for the consistent inclusion and implementation of chapters aligned with development needs and policies and the SDGs; notes that only 17 % of African trade flows take place between African countries and stresses that the development of EPAs can play a role in regional economic integration and increasing intra-regional trade flows in agriculture as a means of strengthening resilience and developing the potential of local and regional value chains;
8. Stresses that by 2050, the population of Africa will have doubled, from some 1.2 billion people to some 2.4 billion, and that by the same year, 50 % of the global population under 25 years of age will be in Africa; points out, in this connection, that an exponential increase in the population coupled with a growing middle class will necessitate a proportional increase in food supplies, and believes, therefore, that the agri-food sector should open up economic and employment opportunities for young Africans, whose participation will also be essential to ensuring generational replacement and transforming the agri-food system;
9. Draws attention to the need for imports from Africa, and especially agri-food products, to meet EU health, safety and quality standards, including those relating to the use of hormones, antibiotics and genetically modified organisms;
10. Believes that better trade opportunities alone will not guarantee food security in developing countries; notes that LDCs often have difficulties in profiting from preferential access to EU markets owing to poor price transmission between international and domestic markets and a lack of infrastructure and recurring economic instability; advocates EU investment to support the development of African countries; stresses that the agricultural sector provides a lot of employment opportunities in Africa and has a significant impact on incomes, especially in rural areas; points out, in this connection, that Africa is the continent where hunger is growing the most, with 21 % of the population going hungry, according to UN High Commissioner for Refugees figures, and stresses that Africa is a long way from achieving the goal of zero hunger (SDG 2) by 2030; recalls that the end of malnutrition in all its forms and SDG 2 should be considered priorities for the new partnership, with particular attention paid to people in the most vulnerable situations;

11. Calls on the Commission to enable OACPS countries, including through the provision of technical and financial support, to protect their infant industries, support small-scale farming and meet EU and international sustainability standards for exporting agricultural products;
12. Underlines the need for sustainable and innovative policies that enable African states to ‘leapfrog’ older and more polluting technologies and agricultural practices with the goal of achieving an ecological and social transition to sustainable agri-food practices; points out the central importance of the agricultural and food sectors in the economy and in providing decent and sustainable job opportunities in rural areas on the many smallholdings and family farms in Africa through measures to enhance resilience, the sustainable modernisation of agricultural practices and improved product quality and diversification, placing a sustainable agricultural sector at the heart of EU-Africa relations; points out, furthermore, that the African continent is facing the challenge of needing to increase farm yields and productivity, along with the proportion of expenditure on capital goods, to speed up food production and processing processes in a sustainable way;
13. Points out that the EU and Africa share the objective of transforming the way we produce, distribute and consume our food; believes, therefore, that cooperation between the EU and its African partners must focus on the central issue of food supplies, through tailored programmes for cooperation between EU and African farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises, targeted investments in sustainable agricultural development, modern transport networks and appropriate storage infrastructure that provides African farmers with the means to make farming resistant to climatic-related challenges, while improving productivity and increasing the income of smallholders, who form the backbone of African agriculture; underlines, in this regard, the great potential of public-private partnerships and microfinancing to further empower local farmers; welcomes the new EU trade strategy, which will promote sustainable trade and investment links both between the continents and within Africa itself, including in the field of agriculture;
14. Underlines the importance of research and innovation in encouraging farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices and productive dryland agro-ecosystems and food systems; calls, in this regard, for a stronger reliance on the contributions of African traditional knowledge to the just transition, especially regarding agricultural practices, fisheries and forest protection, thereby empowering the African people and local communities;
15. Underlines that trade respecting fair conditions should be the baseline for EU exports and imports of food and other agricultural products; stresses, at the same time, the need to ensure that agricultural exports do not contradict the goal of establishing a more resilient food sector in Africa;
16. Believes that the EU should increase its support for the development of environmentally and economically sustainable agriculture in African countries, with a particular emphasis on the preservation of family farms and diversification of production; is concerned about the increasing expansion of highly industrialised farms based on monocultures, which deepen social inequalities and increase soil erosion;

17. Believes that the EU can contribute to significantly reducing Africa's current dependence on imports of food, seeds, fertilisers and pesticides through financial and technical support, policy dialogue, knowledge exchange and new technologies and by promoting African innovation;
18. Stresses the need to help African countries to reduce the use of pesticides banned in the EU through the development of alternative systems for pest control; highlights the inconsistency of the EU in allowing exports to African and other non-EU countries of pesticides that are not permitted in the EU single market; calls for the swift ending of this inconsistency, as it completely contradicts the spirit of the European Green Deal;
19. Emphasises that breeding techniques and genomic techniques must be an important part of strengthening food production in Africa, for instance to produce crops that are more resistant to extreme weather conditions or to increase the nutritional value of certain food products; calls on the Commission to contribute to this through research and shared knowledge and these good practices; underlines that such outcomes can strengthen local communities, which can in turn boost trade between the EU and Africa;
20. Calls on the Commission to promote sustainable development by negotiating EPAs combining the interests of EU and African producers, by fostering development through the promotion of good and sustainable agricultural practices, by encouraging regional integration, by creating opportunities for trade and investment, by improving economic governance and by reducing poverty; calls for the EU's partnership with Africa on agri-food products to be strengthened with a view to agreeing on a comprehensive continent-to-continent free trade agreement in the long term;
21. Welcomes, in the context of the SDGs, the already launched and growing initiatives of cooperatives and other agri-food enterprises and foundations in the EU to make agricultural production in Africa more sustainable and to modernise it in a responsible manner; recommends using knowledge-sharing as a tool;
22. Stresses the importance of confronting the problem of imports of genetically modified products, toxic products with substances exceeding EU limits and products that fail to comply with the EU's green transition and livestock welfare standards;
23. Stresses that the EU-Africa relationship must move beyond the donor-recipient relationship; believes that the EU and Africa should cooperate as equals, building a genuine, equal and fair partnership and empowering African nations to attain the SDGs; welcomes the proposal of the Task Force Rural Africa for the establishment of an EU-Africa twinning programme linking agricultural bodies of the Member States with those of partner countries in Africa so best practices can be shared between committed and comparable partners;
24. Calls for the EU-Africa partnership to prioritise safeguarding the right of African countries to food sovereignty and increasing their food security and capacity to meet the nutritional needs of their populations; stresses that this will require greater commitments from both sides to form a closer and more effective partnership based on mutual interests, strategic priorities, structured and effective cooperation and clear long-term goals;

25. Recalls that EU-Africa trade relations and initiatives, like the one on cocoa, must rely on transparent and reliable monitoring and accountability and civil society participation to ensure a bottom-up approach; calls for the multi-stakeholder approach to be ensured via specific mechanisms to involve civil society in the development of strategies and sectoral policies; recalls that resetting the partnership would mean the African Union and the EU could resume work to address difficult issues that was derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as governance, civic space, healthcare, education and poverty reduction;
26. Highlights that the agreement between the EU and the OACPS initialled in April 2021 lacks mechanisms to enforce due diligence on environmental standards, human rights and the principle of free prior and informed consent, which are even more vital given the agreement's commitments to facilitate international investment agreements; stresses that the EU should take into account the different levels of development and ensure that its trade agreements are consistent with the regional economic integration priorities of the partners;
27. Stresses that the process of regional integration began in Africa with the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area and should serve as a driver to tackle unfair trade practices affecting the primary sector and to ensure reciprocity, whereby products imported into the EU meet the same environmental, health and animal welfare standards as those produced in the EU; welcomes, in this regard, the priority to apply 'mirror clauses';
28. Insists that EPAs are intended to go beyond boosting trade and are meant to enhance African countries' ability to leverage trade opportunities for sustainable development and poverty reduction; emphasises that the AfCFTA should aim for integration that benefits all African populations, including the most marginalised, to reduce inequalities regardless of developmental differences between countries; stresses that all currently negotiated and future EPAs should include ambitious provisions on a binding and enforceable trade and sustainable development chapter aligned with the Paris Agreement; stresses, furthermore, the importance of including the objective of combating forced labour and child labour in trade and sustainable development chapters of EU trade agreements, given how prevalent these forms of labour are in the agricultural sector;
29. Notes that in order to make the EPAs more attractive, additional elements need to be covered by the agreements, such as capacity building, encouraging women to participate in the economy, including in agriculture, and investing in opportunities for young people in African countries;
30. Advocates for stronger policy coherence at EU level in the context of agri-food trade, given the global implications of the common agricultural policy and agricultural trade on progress towards the achievement of the SDGs; calls for the EU to take into account the conclusions of the Task Force Rural Africa on the need for investment in African food chains, with a focus on value-added commodities; calls on the EU and the Member States to actively work with African partners to create synergies between the EU-Africa strategy and European Green Deal policies, in particular the external dimension of the farm to fork strategy;

31. Notes that Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union requires consistency between EU policies in support of development policy; calls for all EU trade instruments directed at OACPS countries to be aligned with the policy coherence for development principle; considers that EU support or trade partnerships must not result in certain models or technologies being imposed, which are often ill-adapted to other countries' agriculture models, economies and crops, but must instead be based on collaboration, notably in terms of training and exchanges of knowledge and giving farmers ownership, independence and the right of initiative;
32. Calls on the Commission to push strongly for the recognition of the regionalisation principle, especially in South Africa in relation to avian influenza, and for compliance with all internationally agreed rules on avian influenza; stresses that no embargoes should be imposed on entire Member States, but only on the affected regions within the EU; emphasises, moreover, that embargoes should be lifted within the normal period agreed within the World Organisation for Animal Health, i.e. 28 days since the last outbreak in that country;
33. Calls on the EU and its Member States to make a commitment to support African countries in implementing ambitious and just climate action; calls for the EU to guarantee that financing under the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument champions a human-rights-based approach that makes local communities and indigenous peoples central to climate, environmental and development efforts, starting with civil society and community consultation;
34. Recalls that Africa is home to exceptional biodiversity; expresses its deep concern about the overexploitation of natural resources and the impact of reduced biodiversity on resilience levels; is particularly concerned about the fact that the pace of deforestation is increasing in Africa, notably in the Congo Basin, which in 2020 was second only to Brazil in terms of primary forest loss, as well as in Cameroon, and about the smuggling of rare wildlife species; points out that African rainforest destruction leads to irreversible biodiversity and carbon sink losses, as well as losses of the homes and ways of life of indigenous communities; recalls that forests contribute significantly to reaching climate targets, protecting biodiversity and preventing desertification and extreme soil erosion; highlights the fact that water is at risk of becoming a scarce resource and that greater importance should therefore be accorded to water supplies; stresses that desertification and locust swarms have exacerbated the already difficult food security situation in Africa and that the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic and logistics problems have shone a spotlight on the potential for local and regional markets to address vulnerabilities and shortcomings in the global food system;
35. Takes the view that African countries need strong support in managing natural resources and ecosystems in order to further develop an innovative, climate-resistant agricultural sector; reiterates that EU companies must take responsibility for their value chains and urges the EU to live up to its commitments and urgently present an ambitious legislative proposal on mandatory human rights, social rights and environmental due diligence obligations for all companies operating in the EU single market;
36. Calls for the link between public health and biodiversity to be taken into account, in line with the 'one health' approach, and welcomes the announcement of the NaturAfrica

initiative, which aims to protect wildlife and ecosystems, and the review of the action plan against wildlife trafficking; stresses that the EU's NaturAfrica initiative should be developed in consultation with all stakeholders, with particular attention paid to the rights of local communities, indigenous peoples and women; underlines that it should support African governments and local populations in tackling major drivers of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation in a holistic and systematic way, including by offering support for well-managed protected area networks; considers that the EU should contribute to the completion of the Great Green Wall in the Sahel region, which will significantly contribute to halting further desertification and will thereby safeguard incomes from agriculture;

37. Recalls the fact that agroecology's capacity to reconcile the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability has been recognised in landmark reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, as well as the International Assessment of Agricultural Science & Technology for Development led by the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization; calls on the EU and Africa to play a leading role in the conclusion of an ambitious global agreement at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;
38. Stresses the need for the EU-Africa partnership to ensure the protection and promotion of the right of local communities to access and control natural resources such as land and water; deplores the fact that land-grabbing is rife in Africa; is concerned by the scale of land acquisition by foreign investors in Africa, which is concentrated in the countries with the weakest governance structures and could represent a threat to food sovereignty and access to land and water; stresses the importance of launching an inclusive process with the aim of guaranteeing the effective participation of civil society organisations and local communities in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and actions related to land-grabbing; calls for the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security to be observed in all projects that promote the protection of land rights, including those related to trade, and also for measures to ensure that projects do not endanger the land rights of small-scale farmers, particularly women; urges the EU and Africa, furthermore, to recognise indigenous people's rights to customary ownership and control of their lands and natural resources under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and International Labour Organization Convention No 169, and to comply with the principle of free, prior and informed consent;
39. Regrets the lack of recognition of the strategic importance of rangelands, which cover about 43 % of the African land surface and are therefore important carbon sinks; emphasises the importance of supporting small farms and pastoralism and other traditional/local food systems in order to strengthen their resilience and boost their contribution to food security, sustainable resource management and biodiversity conservation; notes that, for example, grazing rights and community pastures are traditional land use rights based on common law and not on securitised property rights; calls on the Commission to develop, together with local communities and local stakeholders, a strategy to optimise their potential through sustainable grazing management such as that practised by pastoralists; calls for the social tensions between

settled agricultural populations and nomadic pastoral communities to be addressed, notably in regions with overlapping ethno-religious conflicts;

40. Considers that the EU-Africa partnership should, in particular, support female and youth entrepreneurship in rural and urban areas, including through small producer organisations, and believes that doing so it is essential to support equal access to economic and productive resources such as financial services and markets and to safeguard land rights;
41. Emphasises the essential role of rural African women in agricultural and rural economies across the African continent, in particular with regard to food security; recalls that almost half of agricultural work in Africa is done by women; calls for the development of exchanges between African and EU female entrepreneurs by means of platforms that enable networking, experience-sharing and the running of common projects; encourages the advancement of inheritance rights for women and girls and calls on the EU to support partner countries in this area, particularly regarding their recognition of women's full entitlement to land rights;
42. Underlines that the use of pesticides in intensive agriculture in Africa can have an impact on the health of workers who have very little access to training on plant protection and healthcare, in addition to causing environmental damage; calls for education and training in sustainable plant protection approaches and alternatives to pesticides and for the minimisation of exposure to hazardous substances; denounces the double standards applied by the EU regarding pesticides by allowing the export of hazardous substances that are banned in the EU to African countries and other non-EU countries; asks, therefore, for the current EU rules to be modified in order to eliminate this legal incoherence, in line with the Rotterdam Convention of 1998 and the European Green Deal.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	31.3.2022
Result of final vote	+: 38 -: 1 0: 7
Members present for the final vote	Mazaly Aguilar, Clara Aguilera, Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Álvaro Amaro, Attila Ara-Kovács, Carmen Avram, Adrian-Dragoș Benea, Benoît Biteau, Mara Bizzotto, Daniel Buda, Isabel Carvalhais, Asger Christensen, Angelo Ciocca, Dacian Cioloș, Ivan David, Paolo De Castro, Jérémy Decerle, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, Luke Ming Flanagan, Dino Giarrusso, Martin Häusling, Martin Hlaváček, Elsi Katainen, Camilla Laureti, Gilles Lebreton, Julie Lechanteux, Norbert Lins, Chris MacManus, Colm Markey, Marlene Mortler, Ulrike Müller, Bronis Ropė, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa, Simone Schmiedtbauer, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Marc Tarabella, Veronika Vrecionová, Sarah Wiener
Substitutes present for the final vote	Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, Anja Hazekamp, Tonino Picula, Michaela Šojdrová, Tom Vandenkendelaere

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

38	+
ECR	Mazaly Aguilar, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Veronika Vrecionová
ID	Gilles Lebreton, Julie Lechanteux
NI	Dino Giarrusso
PPE	Álvaro Amaro, Daniel Buda, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, Norbert Lins, Colm Markey, Marlene Mortler, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa, Simone Schmiedtbauer, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Michaela Šojdrová, Tom Vandenkendelaere
Renew	Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Asger Christensen, Dacian Cioloș, Jérémy Decerle, Martin Hlaváček, Elsi Katainen, Ulrike Müller
S&D	Clara Aguilera, Attila Ara-Kovács, Carmen Avram, Adrian-Dragoș Benea, Isabel Carvalhais, Paolo De Castro, Camilla Laureti, Tonino Picula, Marc Tarabella
The Left	Luke Ming Flanagan, Anja Hazekamp, Chris MacManus

1	-
ID	Ivan David

7	0
ID	Mara Bizzotto, Angelo Ciocca
Verts/ALE	Benoît Biteau, Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, Martin Häusling, Bronis Ropé, Sarah Wiener

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention