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**Development in Africa, a feasible challenge**

*A conference dedicated to prospects for the Sub-saharan Africa economies enlivened the second day of the Agrilevante international exposition of technologies for agriculture underway at the Bari trade fair. Authoritative representatives from international institutions dealt with farming models and the most suitable mechanization for the countries in this region and cooperation programs. A specific survey conducted by Nomisma provided a map of the features and potential of eleven key countries.*

Sub-saharan Africa is ranked at the bottom of the world economic and social conditions atlas. The GDP of the entire area is below that of Italy and accounts for only 2% of global pro-capita GDP at $3,400 annually, well down compared to world average of $15,000 and incomparable for that of the United States at $52,000. Moreover, the level of malnutrition of the Sub-saharan Africa population is reported at 22.7%. Sub-saharan agriculture is substantial, accounting for 18% of GDP compared to 1.1% in the U.S. and 1.5% in Europe, but productivity is extremely low and lacks efficiency. Data on Total Factor Productivity, TFP, disclosed that average Sub-saharan Africa growth in the 2001-2013 period came to a mere 0.6%, well below the example of the Asian area at plus 2.6%. The delay of development of this African region is obvious and this is the gap which draws special interest in the region as regards investments and development programs. The production and agro-food systems must of course evolve to close the gulf between them and other economies, a process which could be set in motion in a relatively short time.

This is a consideration which surfaced in the theme of the conference staged at Agrilevante in Bari this morning, *Agricultural Economy and Political Stability: A Challenge for Africa and the Mediterranean*. The assembly, organized by FederUnacoma and the Puglia Region, was moderated by Attilio Romita, an Italian public radio and TV, RAI, journalist. Taking part were Leonardo Di Gioia, the Puglia Region commissioner for agriculture, Stefano Baldi and Denis Pantini from Nomisma, Luigi Bodria from the Club of Bologna, Joseph Kienzle from UN FAO, Maroun El Moujabber from CHIEAM Bari, Giuseppe Mistretta representing the Italian Foreigh Ministry for International Cooperation and Alessandro Malavolti, the president of FederUnacoma, the Italian Agricultural Machinery Manufacturers Federation. Also speaking at the conference were government representative from Egypt, Sudan and Zambia.

The focus of relateurs was on development policies for the Sub-saharan region, technologies for mechanization aimed at increasing farming productivity, the role of international organizations and cooperation programs, training and technical assistance facilities based on the targeted Nomisma survey. This survey covered the critical factors of the area, Nigeria, Eritrea, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Sudan and Zambia. Other than analyses of productivity, farmlands and the choice of crops raised in these countries, also taken up was an in-depth study on categories of the fundamental mechanization factors for the development of the primary sector. The machinery inventories are generally very scarce with outstanding exceptions such as Kenya and Zambia indices of 251 and 209 tractors for 100,000 hectares, figures which drop drastically for Nigeria and Uganda and even lower levels for Ghana and Ethiopia with 40 tractors per 100,000 hectares. It was explained at the conference that mechanization must increase rapidly and be aimed at specific technologies which comply with conditions in Africa and machinery with a limited scale with simple maintenance.

The methodologies to evaluate for the economic requirements of these various countries, detailed by Nomisma, are divided according to the potential found in some cases. Especially for Tanzania, Ethiopia and Zambia, it was seen that international cooperation programs and investments for the purchase machinery could move forward with great speed. Agricultural development programs, and other issues discussed during the conference, were said to make it possible to maintain local populations on their lands to curb the flow of migrants bound for Europe. Nigeria, Guinea, the Ivory Coast and Eritrea are the countries which drive substantial migratory flows to Italy but actually have the potential for developing efficient farming systems to providing their communities better living conditions. These considerations are a plus factor for the launch of cooperation programs and the transfer of technologies.

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