

Njuguna Ndung'u: Combating structural poverty amongst producers in Africa

Remarks by Prof Njuguna Ndung'u, Governor of the Central Bank of Kenya, at the launch and celebration of Solidaridad's achievement of ISO 9001–2008 Certification, Nairobi, 20 March 2014.

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The Solidaridad Eastern and Central Africa Expertise Centre (SECAEC), was officially established in September 2008 in Nairobi, Kenya with the vision to be a regional leader in combating structural poverty amongst producers in Africa and promoting social and environmental sustainability. – This is what I term binding constraints in our economies. Its mission is to facilitate the smallholder producers to produce commodities in an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable manner that ensures good market access, improved prices and high incomes for better quality of life.

To achieve this, SECEAC is working in the Eastern and Central Africa region, impacting over 400,000 smallholder farmers in Coffee, Tea, Livestock, Horticulture and Food Security, Cotton, Gold and Sugarcane.

The 2008 World Bank's "*Agriculture for Development Report*" recognized the enormous potential of agriculture in offering employment globally. SECEAC programs in Kenya are also aligned to the achievement of Vision 2030, which recognizes the agricultural sector as one of the key sectors within the economic pillars for the country's economic growth. It envisages "*a food-secure and prosperous nation*".

Regionally, the program targets to achieve *six* out of the *eight Millennium Development Goals* targeting reduced poverty and hunger by half by the year 2015; promoting gender equality and empowering women through integrating gender issues in their projects, reducing child mortality, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a Global Partnership for Development.

SECAEC programs on these value chains are currently valued at 16 million Euros, targeting improvement of productivity and quality for better incomes, with the overall objective of improving the livelihood of the smallholder farmers in the region.

In achieving its goals and mandate, indirectly SECAEC are contributing towards the economy of the region through foreign exchange, creation of employment and empowerment of women and youth through programs designed to address gender and youth disparity.

Within the region and internationally, SECAEC has established a network of experts and consultants in all the value chains, working with a wide range of collaborators including key government departments. In public private partnership projects (PPP), the organization values the role played by both public and private institutions.

Notable partnership in the region has been with international commodity traders in Coffee, Tea, Horticulture, Cotton and Sugarcane, with Donors funding various projects in the region.

Building sustainability in the programs has been the key focus. SECAEC recognized that to achieve success, financial linkages are important. SECAEC has been able to link 75 percent of its smallholder farmers to microfinance institutions such as KREP, KWFT and mainstream banks such as Cooperative Bank, Chase Bank, Equity and KCB.

It has remained focused and diligent in implementing its programs through integrating quality system management, leading to the award of the ISO 9001–2008 Certification, which guides its program management.

Today, we are all gathered here to celebrate part of this achievement through a Documentary and ISO 9001–2008 Certification. This is satisfying and deserves credible support and appreciation.

Thank You.