Britain to help Africa achieve greater food security and fight malnutrition

Britain will improve food supply and farming across Africa to help pull 50 million people out of chronic poverty over the next ten years in conjunction with the private sector, International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell announced today.

The UK will join G8 nations, African countries, aid agencies and 45 leading multinational and African companies in a new alliance to help millions of African farmers boost their productivity and help poor farmers produce more reliable crops and healthier livestock.

Announced in Washington ahead of the G8 leaders’ meeting, the New Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security is expected to increase average agriculture sector growth rates by 1.5 per cent per year over 10 years across sub-Saharan Africa.

Britain’s contribution will include the first ever support to the World Bank’s Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) fund helping it to expand agricultural investment in low-income countries.

Secretary of State for International Development Andrew Mitchell said:

“It is shameful that one in three people in Africa go to bed desperately hungry every night. Hunger is directly linked to poverty, so farmers need investment and support if they are to grow more nutritious food and escape the threat of harvest failure.

“Governments cannot tackle this challenge alone. The skills, resources and financial expertise of leading private businesses will help transform African agriculture, giving poor farmers the chance to pull themselves out of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.”

The New Alliance will increase:

- **Support for agricultural reform:** This fund will help poor countries to improve their agriculture, for example by linking smallholder farmers to markets through investment in rural roads.

- **Private investment:** African farmers are often starved of the investment and resources they need to grow and develop. 45 leading private companies, including British businesses Diageo, Unilever, and Vodafone will invest over $3 billion in developing African agriculture and sign up to a new code of responsible investment.
Innovative technology: Drive more private and public investment into researching and implementing new agricultural technology. This will give farmers access to the latest drought-resistant and nutritionally-fortified seeds to boost crop yields.

Insurance: Extend agricultural insurance services to poor African farmers to help protect them from future droughts, crop failures or other catastrophes.

Stimulate investment: Set up a new ‘Agricultural Index’ to help private companies to better understand the local investment climate and make it easier for them to invest.

The New Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security will build on the previous international agreement made at L’Aquila in 2009 by stimulating growth in African agriculture by providing technical and financial support to help develop farming and agriculture. This will drive private investment and make it easier to invest responsibly in the food and agriculture sectors.

70 per cent of African people are engaged in agriculture, yet across Sub Saharan Africa farmers are struggling to meet local and regional demands for food and only four per cent of arable land is irrigated. Improving farming methods, increasing irrigation and boosting trade links could have an immediate affect on food shortages, levels of chronic hunger and the incomes of farming families.

The UK has already been instrumental in tackling global hunger. By 2015, the UK’s African Free Trade Initiative will cut border crossing times in Eastern and Southern Africa by a third. This will increase cross-border food trade in staples such as maize by 15 per cent, making food more readily available and helping farmers increase their profits.

Notes to editors

1. The New Alliance will:
   - Bring together African countries, the G8 and the private sector to deliver plans on improving agricultural productivity, such as the rural roads project in Tanzania, which will improve trade and growth.
   - Increase measures to enable better growth, such as improving agricultural finance and increasing use of the best technology and crops
   - Increase funds to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP)

2. Find out more about GAFSP here: [http://www.gafspfund.org/gafsp/content/global-agriculture-and-food-security-program](http://www.gafspfund.org/gafsp/content/global-agriculture-and-food-security-program)


4. Since 2010 the UK has doubled investment in agriculture research for development and more than doubled resources for tackling under-nutrition. For example, results achieved on agricultural research include:
   - Development and distribution of East Coast Fever vaccine for cattle estimated to be worth £170 million a year in 11 affected countries of eastern and southern Africa.
• Development of drought tolerant maize enabling more than two million smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa to grow new maize varieties.
• Development of flood tolerant scuba rice by the International Research Rice Institute (IRRI). This aims to raise yields by 50% over ten years, benefiting an estimated 18 million households in target countries.

And the doubling of resources to tackle undernutrition has led, amongst other initiatives, to scaling up of UK’s work to reach 20 million pregnant women and children under five with by 2015.

5. The UK met all its commitments under the agreement signed at L’Aquila in 2009. For example, in Ethiopia, 1.2 million people received cash transfers enabling them to meet consumption needs and reducing their risk of food insecurity; and in Zimbabwe, 256,400 smallholder farmer households were provided with seeds and fertiliser through a livelihoods programme and over 34,000 poor people in rural areas, of which over half were women, were provided access to finance.