



State of the African Diaspora Parliament

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AGRIBUSINESS, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

From the Neolithic Revolution onwards, human activity shifted from hunting to agriculture. In Africa, ceramics appeared 10,000 B.C., for example at Ounjougou in Dogon country, over 2,000 years before the appearance of ceramics in the Near East. Craftsmen formed containers or jars to preserve seeds, beverages or oils, such as palm oil, which has left identifiable traces on shards found by archaeologists. By 7,000 or 6,000 BC, cattle and donkeys had already been domesticated in Africa, as evidenced by rock paintings.

Populations became increasingly sedentary, cultivating millet, sorghum, rice, fonio and yams. Irrigation techniques improved: the Egyptians built hydraulic structures such as the qanat and the chadouf. Villages were created, then tribes, and soon kingdoms and empires, such as the Kingdom of Kush, the Empire of Mali, the Empire of Ghana and the Kingdom of Great Zimbabwe. Farmers everywhere used a variety of tools, such as the machete for clearing land, the spider for ploughing and the sickle for harvesting. In addition to food uses, plants were cultivated for decoration, perfumes, medicine, textiles and writing, as was done in Egypt with papyrus.

Fertilizers were also used, such as the famous Nile silt. They were especially useful when large populations had to be fed - in the 15th century, Timbuktu had a population of 100,000. To supplement and diversify supplies, trade routes were increasingly used to exchange agricultural commodities such as dates and wheat. Caravans and camels crossed the deserts, while ships sailed along rivers such as the Congo and Niger.

But the slave trade changed all that. The Eastern slave trade from the 7th century onwards in North and East Africa, followed by the Atlantic slave trade from the 16th century onwards in West and Central Africa, led to radical destabilization. Raids were organized, harvests burned, livestock stolen and famines multiplied. Empires were dismantled, populations were deported, many agricultural systems collapsed.

From the 19th century onwards, the continent was totally colonized. Agriculture developed and even became industrialized, but it was placed entirely at the service of European countries. During the reign of Leopold, King of the Belgians, over 6 million people died on the hevea plantations of

the Congo, not to mention the hands cut off when adults or children were not productive enough, according to the criteria of the Belgian colonists.

In southern Africa, the San people, called Bushmen by the Europeans, were driven out by the Dutch and British, and relegated to the Kalahari desert. Everywhere, fertile land was monopolized, and people were used and abused in forced labour, which was slavery in disguise. In 1913, in South Africa, the Natives Land Act limited black land ownership to 7% of the territory. From the 1960s onwards, independence enabled African countries to reclaim their land, but not always their sovereignty. At the end of apartheid in 1994, white farmers and white-controlled companies still held 85 % of South Africa's arable land.

In Africa today, agriculture is still the livelihood of 50% of the working population, but accounts for less than 20% of GDP. 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land is in Africa, so the potential is enormous, but African agriculture is threatened by many challenges. The most important of these is climate change, which is increasing regular flooding (in Kenya, for example) and desertification in many countries, creating more and more tensions and conflicts over water (between Ethiopia and Egypt, for example), and driving populations to the rural exodus to the big cities or to emigration to Europe or America - global warming is now in Africa the leading cause of migration.

A Great Green Wall, made up of millions of trees, is being built from Senegal to Djibouti to halt the advance of the desert, but it is progressing very slowly. In southern Africa, the Kalahari's influence can be felt all the way to Central Africa: in southern Congo, some provinces that were once covered in jungle are now covered in savannah. In South Africa, there used to be water in the rivers in certain regions, but no pipes to carry it to the towns; today, with the development of infrastructures, there are pipes, but no water flows in, due to the drought.

The second challenge for African agriculture is land grabbing by foreign States or multinationals. According to the World Bank, in recent years, 60 million hectares of land in Africa have been made available to foreign powers or institutions - the equivalent of the French territory. A new, insidious form of colonization is taking place.

The third challenge is the lack of yield in African agriculture. Very often, the techniques used are rudimentary, making it impossible to increase productivity. And when farmers do want to increase productivity, they are tempted to use dangerous pesticides, which are sold to them at low prices, even though these chemicals are sometimes banned in the very countries that sell them to Africans. And since agricultural and fishing products are often not processed, added value remains low: for example, although Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana supply 2/3 of the world's cocoa production, farmers in these countries earn barely 5 % of the chocolate industry's revenues.

The fourth challenge, which stems from all the others, is the lack of food sovereignty. Despite all the available space, Africa is a long way from food self-sufficiency. In 2020, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Africa imported over 80% of the food it consumed. By comparison, Europe imports only 26.2% of the food it needs. During the war in Ukraine, everybody could see just how vulnerable Africa was, exposed to the vagaries of global geopolitics. For several years now, agricultural production has been increasing by around 4% a year, which is twice as much as global agricultural growth, but we are still importing more and more of the food that we need.

What is more, some multinationals are increasingly selling seeds that produce sterile or seedless plants, preventing farmers from having their own seeds for subsequent years. As a result, they are forced to buy new inputs all the time, which keeps them in a perpetual state of dependence, and further undermines the food sovereignty that needs to be achieved.

As far as the diaspora is concerned, agricultural problems are also very serious. From the 16th century onwards, in the colonies of America and the Indian Ocean, deported Africans were mainly assigned to work on plantations, where tobacco, indigo, cotton and, increasingly, sugar cane were grown. Men, women and even children were exploited, exhausted, and whipped when profitability was deemed insufficient by the masters. Under these conditions, in the plantations of Jamaica, for example, life expectancy averaged barely 5 years.

Nevertheless, the slaves organized themselves as best as they could. Around the huts, they were allowed to have a small Creole garden, with vegetables, manioc, sweet potatoes, yams, bananas and a few chickens. Despite the conditions in which they lived or survived, some slaves even managed to perfect agricultural techniques. Edmond Albius (1829-1880), a slave on Reunion Island, observed the reproductive organs of the vanilla flower at the age of 12. Skillfully, he succeeded in spreading pollen from the stamen to the pistil, and soon the plant did produce precious pods. This discovery made his master's fortune and the island's fortune -but not his own.

Also, George Washington Carver (c. 1864-1943), born a slave in Missouri, became an agricultural expert after the Civil War. He earned a master's degree from Iowa State Agricultural College and headed the agriculture program at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (now Tuskegee University) in Alabama. In this context, he invented hundreds of peanut-based products, including flour, coffee, Worcestershire sauce, beverages, chicken feed, soap, laxatives, shampoo, leather dye, paper, insecticide, linoleum and insulation, and may even have been the inventor of compost.

While in Africa, peasants often own land, even when they are poor, outside the continent, Afro-descendants are very often landless peasants. In a passage from *Texaco*, novelist Patrick Chamoiseau, winner of the 1992 famous Goncourt Award, recounts how, in the aftermath of abolition, the slaves of Martinique sought to implement agrarian reform as a form of reparation, but to no avail. The land remained in the hands of the former slave owners. In Brazil in particular, even today, the large latifundia are still owned by whites, and the workers are very often blacks, as in the past.

What is more, many of the problems that arise in Africa also exist in the diaspora. For example, the environmental challenge was very quickly identified in Haiti, notably in Jacques Roumain's novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, which describes the drought in a country where accelerated deforestation has led to a catastrophic chronic situation.

As for the problem of pesticides, it is particularly acute in Martinique and Guadeloupe, where the békés, descendants of the slavers, have requested and obtained from the government an exemption to use chlordecone, a toxic product banned in France, but authorised in these oversea territories. Today, in these two islands, over 90% of the population is contaminated, cancer cases are

multiplying as a result, the soil has been contaminated for at least 7 centuries, and of course, no one has ever been convicted, neither the békés nor the French Government.

So, for Africa and the Diaspora, given this burdensome heritage, given these challenges, the objective today is to create a sustainable space for agri-food production and trade, enabling them to escape multinationals and attempts at exploitation, by setting up tools of pan-African solidarity.

It is necessary also to fight against poverty in a context where those who provide food for others may not have food for themselves. That situation is even more frequent for women who produce up to 80% of food for household consumption and sale on local markets in Africa, but own only 15 % of the land on the continent, and even less in the diaspora, according to the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

This is why the African Union and CARICOM are trying to work together on this topic, and it is of course what the State of the African Diaspora is working towards, notably with its flagship program, the Pan-African Agribusiness Commodity Exchange (PACE). It is therefore in the interest of this law to lay down the rules that must govern SOAD's practices in a field that is so vital and strategic for the pan-African community. These provisions aim to promote sustainable agriculture, protect the environment, ensure food security and sovereignty, support rural livelihoods and address the challenges posed by climate change and threats to agricultural sustainability.

TITLE I : LAND

Article 1 : Jurisdiction

This law refers to the territories under the jurisdiction of the State of the African Diaspora. The notion of jurisdiction, in this law, includes not only the main headquarters of SOAD, but also any other land that is leased, sold or made available for SOAD to develop it. This law also refers to the digital jurisdiction of the State of the African Diaspora.

Article 2 : Terms and Conditions

In each country where the State of the African Diaspora may settle to set up agribusiness programs, discussions will take place between SOAD, the local government and the traditional authorities, to define the terms and conditions relating to land, ownership, exploitation, trade, food or any other consumables.

TITLE II : THE AUTHORITY

Article 3 : The Agriculture Development Authority

The Minister of Agriculture shall establish an Authority for Agribusiness and Food in the framework of the Ministry. The role of the Authority shall be to organise and implement the policies, the procedures and the discussions in the area of agribusiness. The Authority shall be a technical body under the political leadership of the Ministry.

Article 4 : Sustainable Farming Practices

The Authority shall be responsible for the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, such as crop rotation, conservation tillage and integrated pest management, to promote soil health, water conservation and biodiversity. It shall be responsible also to provide incentives for farmers to diversify their crops, reducing monoculture and promoting resilience to pests, diseases and market fluctuations.

Article 5 : Water Management Regulations

The Authority shall be in charge of implementing regulations to ensure efficient and responsible water use in agriculture, including irrigation efficiency standards, water recycling measures and protection of water sources from pollution.

TITLE III : SEEDS AND SEED BANK

Article 6 : Seeds

No productive entity or agreement with SOAD can include in any shape or form Genetically Modified Organisms seeds in its process of production, trade or diffusion.

Article 7 : Seed Bank

The State of the African Diaspora shall create a seed bank in order to preserve the diversity of natural heirloom seeds and the sovereignty of farmers.

TITLE IV : INSURANCE

Article 8 : Insurance

The State of the African Diaspora shall create an insurance to protect crops and livestock from the vagaries of weather, diseases, epizootics and other undesirable events. Farmers and their associations will be strongly encouraged to join.

TITLE V : THE PACE

Article 9 : Creation of the PACE

The State of the African Diaspora shall create an entity called the Pan-African Agribusiness Commodity Exchange (PACE). Its objective is to provide :

- marketing services
- warehousing
- logistics facilities
- appropriate financing
- adequate insurance coverage
- pension scheme
- extension services

The PACE shall be directly under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Article 10 : Membership

All the stakeholders of the agro-industry chain, from the seed to the fork, which are compliant with the laws of SOAD in general, and this one in particular, dealing with agribusiness and sustainable development, shall be eligible for membership to the PACE.

Any stakeholder desirous of being a member of the PACE must agree in writing to abide by the policies of SOAD.

The Authority shall be in charge of the approval and admission of new members of the PACE.

TITLE VI : AGRICULTURE AND BUSINESS

Article 11 : Negotiations

When deemed necessary, mandatory negotiations will be held between producers and central purchasing agencies regarding prices and other issues that seem relevant, according to the different parties. These negotiations will be coordinated by the Authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, in relationship with the PACE.

To avoid the all-too-frequent discrepancy between the incomes of farmers and the incomes of agri-food companies, a share ownership scheme will be developed to support the farmers who are members of the PACE.

This will enable them to benefit from the profits generated by the sector. The number of shares and the terms of allocation will be determined by the Authority.

TITLE VII : FINANCING

Article 12 : Financial support

The State of the African Diaspora shall provide financial and technical support for small-scale and family farmers (including access to credit, training programs and assistance with marketing and value-added processing), working with the Government, directly or through the PACE, to help them to have access to land, equipments, seeds, infrastructure, agro-processing, etc.

TITLE VIII : AGRICULTURE AND HEALTH

Article 13 : Organic Inputs

Only organic farming inputs shall be allowed in the territories under the jurisdiction of the State of the African Diaspora. However, in the event of crises or special circumstances, the Authority may authorize temporary exceptions to this principle.

Article 14 : Organic Food

Only organic food will be allowed in the territories under the jurisdiction of the State of the African Diaspora. For any food produced that does not comply with this regulation, the Authority may give a special approval.

Article 15 : Traditional Medicine

The Minister of Agriculture will work in conjunction with the Minister of Traditional Medicine to make sure that the plants that are necessary for traditional medicine are grown in different locations in the farms under the jurisdiction of the State of the African Diaspora.

TITLE IX : AGRICULTURE AND EDUCATION

Article 16 : Faculty of Agriculture

The faculty of Agriculture of the University of the State of the African Diaspora shall be under the dual authority of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Article 17 : Farmer Field School Training

Farmer Field School Training training programs will be offered to the farmers who are members of the PACE and open to SOAD citizens and the general public who would wish to enter the farming and agribusiness industry.

Article 18 : Research and Innovation Fundings

The Ministry shall allocate fundings for agricultural research and innovation to address emerging challenges, improve productivity and promote sustainable farming technologies and practices.

TITLE X : FOOD SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY

Article 19 : Food Security

SOAD shall adopt food security as a principle for populations within the ambit of its jurisdiction.

It shall be the duty of the State to make sure that the proper systems are in place to ensure food security for all.

Article 20 : Food Sovereignty

It shall be the duty of the State to make sure that the proper systems are in place to ensure food sovereignty in all the territories under its jurisdiction.

Article 21 : Food Safety

The Authority shall establish measure to enforce stringent food safety standards and inspection protocols to ensure the production of safe and wholesome agricultural products for consumers.

TITLE XI : ETHICS, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Article 22 : Human Rights

The Authority will ensure that farmers live and work in decent and safe conditions, that there is no abuse of child labor, that there is no forced labor or slavery in any shape or form. It will also ensure that women farmers receive all the support they may need.

Article 23 : Animal Welfare Standards

The Authority shall establish standards for the treatment and care of farm animals, including provisions for ethical housing, handling and transport, as well as restrictions on the use of antibiotics and growth hormones.

Article 24 : Environmental Protections Measures

The Authority shall require farmers to implement measures to protect natural habitats, minimize chemical runoff and preserve ecosystem services, such as pollination and soil fertility.

Article 25 : Climate Change Adaptation Strategies

The Authority shall be responsible to develop and promote agricultural practices that enhance resilience to climate change impacts, such as drought-resistant crop varieties, agroforestry systems and soil carbon sequestration techniques.

Article 26 : Land Use Planning

The Authority shall establish land use planning measures to prevent agricultural land degradation, mitigate urban sprawl and protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses.

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