



Recalibration of Norwegian development aid to Africa based on Africa's agricultural response measures to the Ukraine War

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Publisher: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
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ISSN: 1894-650X

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Contents

Key take-aways	4
Introduction.....	4
Recalibration	5
Response initiatives to increase agricultural yields in Africa.....	6
Policy implications for African and Norwegian partner countries to consider.....	8

Key Takeaways

- Africa has formulated and implemented several response measures to address the many threats and external shocks that are detrimental to its agricultural sector.
- The Ukraine War has added to Africa's agricultural burden and negatively impacted farmers' ability to adequately prepare the fields for the sowing season, leading to decreased harvests.
- Halting wheat exports to some African countries has led to steep price increases in wheat products, impacting local diets and consumption.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Norway demonstrated the ability to recalibrate its development aid focus to target new threats as they arose.
- The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Nigeria are used as case studies to demonstrate potential agricultural optimisation opportunities.
- To assist Africa and Norway's partner countries in particular, Norway's experience in addressing unexpected global shocks is well suited to supporting and strengthening Africa's response measures.
- Technological advances in optimising agricultural yields should be shared with African farmers to help them harvest more resilient yields.

Introduction

As the world grapples with the fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, an adage comes to mind: In every crisis, there is an opportunity. As Africa formulates and implements policies to promote agricultural safeguards, given the impact of the war on food security, it may also be an opportune time for Norway to prioritise and identify African countries that can lead to a new agricultural revolution¹ aimed at increasing agricultural yields and thus becoming more self-reliant. This could position some African countries as alternative markets to source agricultural products. Norway has an opportunity to lessen the impact of the Ukraine conflict by offering vital support that can strengthen specific response measures in multilateral and bilateral engagements.

While Africa may have about 60% of the world's arable land, the continent remains a major food importer. Russia and Ukraine are major global producers and cheap suppliers of fertilisers needed for the planting season. The Ukraine conflict has had a direct impact on Africa's agricultural purchases and seed planting. A recent NUPI published policy brief—"The Ukraine War and Food Security: Consequences for Norway's Partner Countries"—found that African partner countries do not produce any fertilisers, indicating a heavy reliance on imports.¹ Without access to enough fertilisers, seed planting will produce smaller yields and directly impact food security.

In 2020, the Russian Federation exported approximately US\$4 billion of agricultural products to Africa, most of which were wheat, and another \$1.4 billion came from Ukraine.² According to FAO data, 14 African countries depend on Russia and Ukraine for more than half of their wheat imports, while almost half the continent depends on imports for more than one-third of their wheat.³ Eriksen's analysis further highlighted the pattern of wheat imports for Norway's partner countries in Africa, as shown in Table 1.⁴

Table 1. Primary sources of wheat imports for Norway's partner countries in Africa

Ethiopia	US 61.2%	Argentina 16.6%	Ukraine 12.4%	Russia 4%	Bulgaria 2.6%
Ghana	Canada 53.6%	Russia 26.1%	Latvia 8.5%	France 6.3%	Lithuania 2.3%
Malawi	Russia 22.8%	Australia 14%	Canada 11.3%	US 11%	Mozambique 7.6%
Mozambique	Russia 31%	Canada 22%	Ukraine 8%	Latvia 5.5%	Argentina 4.2%
Tanzania	Russia 70.7%	Poland 10.3%	Lithuania 7.9%	Ukraine 3.7%	Germany 3.4%
Uganda	Russia 35.3%	Argentina 26.4%	Ukraine 12.8%	Germany 11.6%	Lithuania 4%
Mali	France 62.3%	Russia 35.7%	Senegal 2%		
Niger	Nigeria 100%				
Somalia	Ukraine 53.1%	Russia 36.7%	India 9.4%		
South Sudan	No data				
DRC	Russia 59.9%	France 15.6%	Germany 11.8%	Latvia 4.2%	Lithuania 4.1%

Source <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/cod?yearlyTradeFlowSelector=flow1>

¹ While bilateral programmes tend to take a longer time to develop, policies developed in response to the impact of the Ukraine War should not be merely stopgap measures; they should be looking at longer-term initiatives for sustained success rates.

Table 1 shows that Russia and Ukraine are important sources of wheat imports for several of Norway's partner countries, particularly Tanzania, Ghana, Mozambique, Mali, Somalia and Uganda. However, across the continent, the effects of decreased grain imports are uneven, with North Africa and the Horn of Africa suffering the most, while wheat consumption remains relatively limited in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2021, Ukraine was the largest single source of food for the World Food Programme (WFP) by volume, providing 9% of its total food procurement. Alarming for Africa is the WFP's Executive Director David Beasley's warning that the conflict will worsen the already dire problem of global hunger. He warned that the WFP may have to cut food rations in Yemen, Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger in response to feeding the three million migrants directly affected by the conflict.⁵ With a presence in 40 African countries, this warning is a major concern for food security on the continent.

On 25 March 2022, in a co-authored Op-ed, Minister of International Development Anne Beathe Kristiansen Tvinnereim stressed, 'If ever there was a time to drastically raise food production in Africa, it is now'.⁶ To achieve this aim and provide targeted policy recommendations to strengthen Africa's agricultural output potential, this policy brief is guided by the following questions:

- Which countries in Africa have the highest potential to optimise production, with the potential to expand agricultural output for consumption?
- Where should medium-/long-term ODA interventions be targeted?
- How is the applicability of different interventions affected by the duration of the war? Is the cost-effectiveness of particular interventions dependent on prolonged high-level food prices?

Recalibration

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Norway adopted a leadership role in formulating policies to alleviate threats to vulnerable nations. Norway showed a willingness to seize the opportunity to adopt a more flexible development aid focus, to recalibrate its priorities and to provide support to Africa's response measures against the COVID-19 threat.⁷ Important positive lessons can be shared from Norway's experience to address Africa's agricultural gaps in the following way:

- To overcome the rather lengthy time used to implement new initiatives, the focus should be on supporting existing rapid funding mechanisms.
- Norway's development aid interests may be better served by assessing Norway's value to and positions held in existing rapid funding mechanisms and initiatives.

Two years after the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa has also learned pandemic-related lessons to help it deal with the fallout from the Ukraine conflict, which may prove key to formulating mitigating strategies to strengthen response measures. The key to addressing the agricultural predicament is identifying African countries with the potential to become significant food exporters. According to Sara Mbago-Bhunu, the Director of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), East and Southern Africa Division, countries such as the DRC, Malawi and Zambia have the potential to become food exporters if they receive adequate support.

Wheat and other common grains used to make bread are more challenging to cultivate due to suboptimal growing conditions. This requires a reframing of farming options, as it presents an opportunity for local cereals, such as millet and sorghum, to be planted, as well as a wide variety of fruits and vegetables.

Because of enforced farming habits left from colonial times, many countries in the Global South were encouraged to focus on tropical export products, such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, sugar, tea, timber and tobacco, at the expense of growing local food to feed the population. However, grain storage was not prioritised, potentially compromising food security when unexpected shocks occurred.

Another legacy from colonial times is the 'colonised diet'. Mozambique is an example: Portugal transformed its local diet when white bread became a staple food, despite the absence of naturally growing wheat in Mozambique before colonisation. This meant that local demand could not be met by local cultivation, leading to an increase in wheat imports, from 767,000 tonnes in 2019 to 900,000 tonnes in 2020.⁸ Wheat consumption remains limited compared to maize and cassava in Mozambique.

Response initiatives to increase agricultural yields in Africa

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the African continent had been battling several threats that had adversely affected its agricultural processes, including climate change, droughts, floods, intractable conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, several initiatives were launched to mitigate these threats. Additionally, the ongoing war in Ukraine has had a severe negative impact on Africa’s agricultural systems. Hence, there is an urgent need to further strengthen the continent’s response initiatives. A flexible recalibration of Norwegian development aid may contribute to this by targeting and supporting African partner countries as they attempt to reduce their overreliance on food imports.

Table 2 lists key current response initiatives, providing Norwegian development aid analysts with an opportunity to assess and prioritise which of the response initiatives are most important and consistent with Norwegian development objectives as part of their targeted ODA interventions. While Table 2 is not an inexhaustible list, it does focus on key implemented agricultural response measures, both prior to and as a direct response to the war in Ukraine.

Table 2. Partial list of Africa-focused agricultural response measures²

Initiative	Aim	Intervention Focus	Potential Norway engagement
The African Union Commission (AUC) and African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD)	Working with countries to adopt common positions in line with the AU’s Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.	Transforming Africa’s food security resilience and rapid expansion in agricultural and food productivity.	Norway’s Permanent Mission to the AU and NORCAPS’ positive working relations with the AU organs may prove useful.
African Development Bank (AfDB)	Approved a \$1.5 billion emergency food production facility for 20 million farmers.	Shortage of 30 million metric tonnes of food—increasing local production of cereals and oil grains to build resilience across Africa’s food systems. ⁹	AfDB mobilised \$1.3 billion—a gap of \$200 million. Initiative in line with Norwegian objectives of providing 20 million farmers with certified seeds.
Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT)	Teaching 40 million farmers to increase their harvests of heat-tolerant wheat varieties to feed about 200 million people.	Train farmers new techniques to increase their crops’ resilience to climate change’s impact.	Leader in mitigating effects of climate change awareness—six of the countries in the project are Norway’s partner countries. ³
Seeds for Resilience	Five-year project to support the national gene banks. ¹⁰	Gene banks are limited because of insufficient funding and inadequate staff.	Focus aid towards funding and training of staff; strengthen the gene banks’ capacity. ⁴
Crop Trust	Ten-year project focusing on genetic diversity in agriculture.	Ensure genetic diversity in agriculture by preserving crops’ wild relative species of food plants.	Norway will continue supporting genetic diversity in agriculture, which will benefit African food-insecure countries.

² For more on other global mechanisms of high relevance to Africa, please refer to The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), a G20 multilateral financing platform dedicated to improving food and nutrition security worldwide; the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA), which was established in 2004 to enhance FAO’s capacity to rapidly respond to emergency situations; and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), an international financial institution and a specialised agency of the United Nations dedicated to eradicating poverty and hunger.

³ Norway’s partner countries involved: DRC, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Tanzania and Uganda.

⁴ Partner countries Ethiopia and Ghana will be direct beneficiaries.

The World Bank	Approved a \$2.3 billion programme to help countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. ¹¹	Intended to ease food-system shocks brought on by drought, conflict and pest and disease outbreaks that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated.	First phase: Ethiopia—22.7 million/ Madagascar—7.8 million people are food insecure. Second Phase: Comoros, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. ⁵
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Case Studies: Potential agricultural optimisation opportunities

To determine which countries in Africa have the highest potential to optimise production with the potential to expand agricultural output for consumption, two short case studies were selected: the DRC and Nigeria⁶. Nigeria offers a more immediate short-term solution, whereas the DRC, if sufficiently supported, provides a longer-term solution to increase its agricultural yields, which in turn will safeguard food security on the continent.

Table 3. Fertiliser imports in Norway’s partner countries (in million USD)

Ethiopia	410
Ghana	126
Malawi	214
Mozambique	196
Tanzania	132
Uganda	34
Mali	41
Niger	NA
Somalia	NA
South Sudan	0,6
DRC	63

As stated, Eriksen’s analysis found that Norway’s partner countries at this stage have no production of fertilisers.¹⁵ This leads to a situation whereby partner countries are over-reliant on fertiliser imports and more susceptible to price increases. Eriksen also found the unstable fertiliser supply to be the main direct threat to food security caused by the Ukraine War for Norway’s partner countries. Therefore, the Nigeria case study presents an opportunity for Africa to have a more stable supply of fertiliser, which is crucial for safeguarding food security on the continent.

Source: [The Observatory of Economic Complexity https://oec.world/en](https://oec.world/en)

Nigerian fertiliser—An export opportunity

As the agricultural crisis deepens, Nigeria has identified its fertiliser industry as a sector that has the opportunity to mitigate certain hardships. A new \$2.5 billion fertiliser plant was inaugurated earlier this year to contribute to the global supply in response to the increasing prices brought on by the Ukraine conflict. The Dangote Fertiliser Plant has a capacity of 3.0 million metric tonnes of urea per annum.¹² During the launch, President Muhammadu Buhari stated that the plant would further advance Nigeria’s drive towards achieving self-sufficiency in food production. According to African Development Bank data, Nigeria previously relied heavily on imported fertilisers to meet 80% of its national demand. The Dangote Fertiliser Plant makes Nigeria the leading producer of fertiliser on the African continent. It is Africa’s largest granulated urea fertiliser plant and the second largest plant in the world. This plant can not only meet local demand but also export excess.

With the production of the plant finalised, Norway is well positioned, through expertise and support from YARA International, to offer technical support, best practices in extraction and/or formulation strategies and training (where necessary) to strengthen the operations of the plant, which in turn strengthens Africa’s food security ambition. YARA has had a long and beneficial presence in West Africa, and on 8 August 2022, it committed USD 20 million to supply fertiliser to local farmers.¹³ This commitment is expected to benefit about 100,000 productive smallholder farmers. With Russia’s exports compromised because of the war and sanctions disrupting global markets, many importing countries are looking for alternative sources. As a result, Nigeria’s investment in the new fertiliser plant may prove important as a suitable alternative and regional fertiliser hub. This could assist in mitigating some of the threats facing fertiliser-importing countries and help reduce some of the negative impacts of the crisis on fertiliser-importing countries, particularly those in West Africa and the continent at large.

5 Norway’s partner countries involved: DRC, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and South Sudan.

6 The DRC is a partner country, whereas Nigeria is not.

Democratic Republic of Congo—A potential primary food source for the continent

The DRC has great agricultural potential and could become a primary food source for the continent, with an estimated potential to feed about two billion people. It has 80 million hectares of arable land, forests and water resources with large fishing potential. However, this potential has barely been tapped, as the DRC is unable to feed itself and spends about \$1.5 billion on food imports each year.

The eastern part of the DRC has been plagued by a seemingly intractable insecurity situation and a lack of good governance, with several local and foreign actors involved. This insecurity does not bode well for realising the DRC's agricultural potential and has resulted in a lack of investment and inadequate infrastructure for commercial farming and market transport. Additionally, the conflict areas have experienced people being run off their farms and livestock being killed or stolen. Many young men have been drawn to mining, where investments and job creation are expanding. All of these factors are problematic for realising agricultural potential.

While the DRC has been plagued with serious governance issues, under the leadership of President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, it appears that the country is moving towards stemming serious governance concerns. His efforts to promote good governance have been recognised by his contemporaries, as he was elected Chairperson of the African Union for the year 2021 and assumed the position of Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for 2022–2023.

As an example of the complex political and security dynamics at play, the DRC and Rwanda are periodically entangled in ongoing disputes. The DRC imports corn flour from neighbouring Uganda. In response to their ongoing disputes, Rwanda, which also borders the DRC, refuses to allow Ugandan goods to enter its territory. This causes the DRC to rethink its import routes, which may be longer and less secure, leading to price increases for many goods and food products, including corn flour. These issues speak to a larger crisis in the DRC agricultural sector, and this is all occurring as the country recovers from the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and new concerns stemming from the Ukraine conflict.

Helping the DRC realise its agricultural potential by optimising agricultural yields is important for the continent and its development aid partners. For example, cassava is a staple food for several countries across the continent, with 47.6% of the region's cassava being produced in the DRC. If sufficient targeted needs-based support is offered, it will have a direct positive impact on agricultural systems. For example, increased cassava output will result in enhanced food security on the continent. Rice is produced in the region bordering Rwanda and Burundi, with relatively easy access to these markets. However, this is the part of the country facing violence and insecurity. Palm oil is produced by small farmers who harvest it from palm nuts and convert it using a traditional and rudimentary process to sell it at local markets. Modernisation of harvesting and conversion to palm oil can significantly benefit the country, region and continent. Other agricultural products widely harvested are plantain, corn and yams. Because of the tropical climate and vast amounts of water, fruits, including mangos, oranges, guavas, papayas, avocados and bananas, grow with little effort. However, only coffee, cocoa, rubber, palm oil and tea currently represent significant exports from the agricultural sector.

Recommendations to support the DRC's agricultural optimisation:

- Continuous engagement and support efforts to bring about peace and stability in the eastern part of the country.
- A secure agricultural sector will stop young people from being drawn to mining as the only viable opportunity for economic benefits.
- Modernisation and sustainable implementation of farming methods: The rapid conversion of forests into agricultural land may lead to climate challenges that undermine the potential for sustainable and productive agriculture yields in the longer term.⁷

Policy implications for African and Norwegian partner countries to consider

Whatever the outcome of the current Ukraine–Russia negotiations, it may be too late, as the conflict has already threatened the next harvesting seasons. This may have had a ripple effect through food systems for several years. African food-insecure nations should brace for a challenging future. While it is important for African countries to develop strategies to address the agricultural downturn in response to the war in Ukraine, it is also important that the countries remember their commitments and compliance with existing obligations, such as the Maputo Declaration: AU 2003 Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security | AUDA-NEPAD. The Declaration contains several important decisions regarding agriculture, but prominent among them is the 'commitment to the allocation of at least 10 percent of national budgetary resources to agriculture and rural development policy implementation within five years'.¹⁴ To date, 44 African countries have signed the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Inclusive of the 10% allocation, countries are also expected to

⁷ According to the 2021 Climate Change Performance Index, Norway is considered a leader in climate change performance, ranking 8th out of 61 countries for its progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, renewable energies and climate policy.

raise agricultural productivity by at least 6%. If compliance is not respected, it may deter future additional donor development support from being made available when unexpected shocks occur.

From the findings of this policy brief, it is apparent that the war in Ukraine could lead to a downturn in agricultural productivity and food security. There is a need for African governments to prioritise formulating actionable solutions and interventions to mitigate the repercussions exasperated by the conflict. For improved engagement at bilateral or multilateral forums, policy analysts (donors and partner countries) focusing on common issues should produce better outcomes and future initiatives. The following are potential policy recommendations for policy analysts to consider when formulating response measures.

In the short term:

- Countries should strengthen initiatives that provide food to vulnerable populations through access to strategic food reserves. This approach should be multi-stakeholder-led and not only include the government.
- Major grain producers should be encouraged to increase their production and distribution.
- Resolve logistical bottlenecks, release stocks and refrain from imposing food export restrictions.
- To address immediate food shortages, remove restrictions impeding access to markets, including border restrictions and the movement of food, which should be prioritised to get food to those in need.
- Governments should provide the necessary essential planting kits (e.g., seeds, fertiliser, equipment and limited fuel) to ensure that farmers do not miss the next planting season.
- Providing relevant data will assist farmers in continuing their operations to produce agricultural yields to feed the nation.
- Rising food prices are compounded by seasonal price fluctuations. The government cannot alter global market prices much, making it more important than ever to stabilise seasonal fluctuations in maize prices.
- Safeguarding Africa's rich biodiversity, forests and other carbon sinks is key to increasing agricultural yields.

In the long term:

Continental and regional approaches—The African Union has taken the lead in the rollout and implementation of continental response measures. At the regional level, the RECs should develop strategies to strengthen markets, harmonise key policies and implement measures that will expedite and improve cross-border trade for agriculture and food. Norway's Permanent Mission to the AU is well placed to provide support and continue strengthening its relations with the continental body. Norwegian-supported initiatives, such as the NORCAPS roster and the work of the Training for Peace (TfP) programme, are significant, as these bode well for relations with the continental body and the RECs.⁸ Trust has been established, which is an advantage for better engagement when aiming to strengthen continental and regional approaches. This will lead to gaps in policy development being recognised at an earlier stage, during which Norway, as a development partner, may assist in strengthening local initiatives, which may improve their success rates.

Trade will remain a priority in the medium to long term in relation to offering African products' access to foreign markets when the international market seeks new trading partners as they lessen their dependence on Russia. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is ideally placed to strengthen regional trade integration initiatives and unblock impediments to the transportation of vital agricultural and food products while providing opportunities for new markets and strengthening supply chains.

Climate resilience in Africa's food systems—Climate change is disrupting weather patterns, which in turn are impeding the growth and productivity of African food systems. Estimates claim that climate change has the potential to erase 15% of the gross domestic product by 2030, leading to an additional 100 million people being forced into poverty by the end of the decade. Therefore, climate-resilient technologies must be promoted to provide opportunities to increase African food production and productivity while building resilience and reducing poverty and hunger.

⁸ Norway's MOU with the AU includes the secondment of personnel via the NORCAPS roster of the Norwegian Refugee Council and policy development, research and training support to the Political Affairs and Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission via the TfP programme. The TfP is Norway's flagship support initiative to the AU, especially in peace and security, and is one of Norway's longest-running programmes, now in its 26th year.

Climate change is expected to be the leading threat to global food security. African policy analysts should focus on formulating long-term sustainable solutions aimed at strengthening crop resilience and adaptability as we all grapple with the effects of climate change. Norway can play an influential role in providing support to partner countries in their policy development and implementation processes, which could lead to more sustainable, longer-term solutions aimed at strengthening their agricultural production capacity.

Research and development (R&D)—Investment in agricultural and food system R&D is crucial to improving agricultural productivity. The focus should be on crop variety to produce climate- and nutrition-friendly crops, detecting regions best suited for optimal harvest, increasing food and nutrition security and resilience to shocks. Norway is already supporting similar initiatives, such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR); however, the Ukraine conflict has exposed new vulnerabilities in Africa's food supply system that require more research and development to address immediate concerns while also addressing longer-term concerns.

Promotion of local substitutes—Food producers in Cameroon, the DRC, Egypt, Kenya and Nigeria have experimented with mixing cheaper alternatives into their breads, pastries and pastas. Local rice, cassava flour and sorghum are being used as substitutes for wheat. Norway has experience in genetic diversity in agriculture and should encourage the promotion of local crop substitutes, as domestic crops are less exposed to trade disruptions or global inflation, which offers some protection from food price increases brought on by external shocks. The promotion of other indigenous grains proving suitable substitutes for wheat are teff in Ethiopia.

Multi-partner diverse stakeholder inclusion—It is important to promote the inclusion and adoption of a wide variety of stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, civil society and philanthropic organisations, to help the most vulnerable in communities and to be proactive actors in the pursuit of coordinated solutions. Fragmented interventions will not lead to optimal results.

Recommendations for achieving recalibration:

- While the Ukraine conflict may be prioritised and development aid may be redirected, it is critical that cuts in development aid to partner countries are avoided.
- Continue to support partner countries in Africa as they formulate and implement initiatives to mitigate the fallout from the war in Ukraine.
- Prioritise and strengthen current response initiatives, particularly those that include partner countries, for a higher chance of success.
- As Norway demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa will need a respected partner to speak for and bring attention to, if grain and fertiliser hoarding occurs, as was evident with COVID-19 vaccine hoarding.
- It is essential to design and implement policies and strategies that anticipate global shocks to be able to recalibrate its focus and intended funding when required.

Endnotes

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Research for this report was funded by NORAD.

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