



PROMOTING AGRICULTURE SECTOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

A Comparative Analysis of Uganda's Political Party Manifestos (2011-2016)



Ronald Naluwairo

ACODE Policy Research Series No. 41, 2011

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List of Abbreviations

ACODE	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
ASARECA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
ATAAS	Agricultural Technology, Agribusiness and Advisory Services
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CCF	Commercialization Challenge Fund
DP	Democratic Party
DSIP	Development Strategy and Development Plan
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
MFPEd	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organization
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NRM	National Resistance Movement
PDP	Peoples' Development Party
PFA	Prosperity for All
PGRFA	Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
PMA	Plan for Modernization of Agriculture
PPP	Peoples' Progressive Party
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNHS	Uganda National Household Survey
UFA	Uganda Federal Alliance
UPC	Uganda Peoples' Congress
UNFFE	Uganda National Farmers' Federation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDF	Village Farmer Development Forum

Acknowledgements

In their hunt for votes in the February 2011 general elections, Uganda's political parties primarily targeted farmers because, among other things, they constitute the majority of voters and generally tend to be easier to convince and win over. But what did these political parties promise Uganda's farmers—along with the general citizenry at large—in return for their votes? Specifically, what measures did they promise to undertake to address the challenges facing farmers in particular and the agriculture sector in general?

This policy research paper compares and analyses the promises of Uganda's different political parties as stated in their campaign manifestos for the 2011-2016 period with respect to improving the general performance of the agriculture sector. The paper is part of efforts by the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) to improve and strengthen Uganda's agri-food system policies and governance mechanisms to ensure food security and improved livelihoods for the poor rural farmers who form the bulk of Uganda's agricultural workforce. It is important to note in this respect that in 2009, in partnership with the Uganda National Farmers' Federation (UNFFE), ACODE prepared a Farmers' Petition to the President and Members of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda. The petition not only summarizes the major problems faced by Uganda's farmers and the agriculture sector but also gives policy measures that can be undertaken to overcome those challenges. Importantly for this paper, to ensure that Uganda's political parties address the issues raised in the petition in the preparation of their manifestos for 2011 – 2016 *inter alia*, in 2010, ACODE held advocacy meetings on the petition with many of Uganda's political parties. For the ruling party – the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the petition was officially presented to the chairperson of the party and its flag-bearer in the 2011 presidential elections during the 2009 Annual National Agriculture Trade Show in Jinja. Examining the extent to which political parties took on the proposals in the petition does not fall within the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that a number of the proposals in the petition were adopted in the manifestos of the different political parties. The major proposals in the farmers' petition reflected in the different political parties include: increasing agriculture sector funding to at least 10 per cent of the national budget; establishing an agricultural bank; revamping existing national irrigation schemes and establishing new ones; and investing in climate change adaptation technologies.

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Executive Summary

This paper is an analytical comparison of the promises made by Uganda's different political parties in their manifestos (2011 – 2016) with regard to the measures proposed to address the challenges facing the agriculture sector. The comparison is along eight major areas generally considered key for agricultural growth and development in Uganda. These areas are: agriculture sector financing; agricultural inputs; agricultural credit for farmers; agro-processing and marketing; agricultural education; agricultural extension and advisory services; agricultural research and technology development; and water for agricultural production.

None of the political parties whose manifestos have been reviewed presents a coherent agenda for agriculture sector growth and development. Many of the promises of these political parties to develop the agriculture sector do not take into consideration certain important issues and the manifestos do not address a number of key challenges undermining development efforts in the sector.

The manifestos also frequently fail to provide sufficient information as to how exactly the pledges made therein will be implemented. Most of the promises made in the manifestos are too general and, as such, do not effectively communicate the precise measures that the political parties will need to undertake in order to address the different challenges facing the sector. While it is recognised that a manifesto cannot contain everything that a political party intends to do, it is nevertheless important that it should contain priorities and policy measures that are detailed enough to communicate the exact interventions that the political party plans to make to address the challenges at hand.

Concerning the issue of agriculture sector financing, with the exception of NRM and the Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP), all the political parties whose manifestoes were reviewed promised to increase budgetary allocations to the agriculture sector beyond the 10 per cent target set under the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). While this promise to increase agriculture sector financing is laudable, such funds must be efficiently allocated, and managed well if they are to stimulate the desired growth and development.

Regarding the issue of agricultural inputs (like fertilizers, pesticides and improved seed), the provision and use of which are reportedly very low in Uganda, parties like UPC, FDC and PPP have promised to provide such inputs to farmers at subsidized prices. While this is a commendable proposal given the challenges that farmers face in accessing inputs, these political parties need to devise ways to subsidize farmers in a manner that does not breach Uganda's international obligations under the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture. For the NRM, which promises to provide agricultural inputs to the beneficiaries of its current schemes—the six

market-oriented, three commercial, and one hundred food-security farmers per parish—it must address the issue of selection criteria for these farmers in order not only to minimize political bias and interference but, more importantly, to ensure that the very poor and vulnerable groups like the women also maximally benefit from these schemes.

With respect to the issue of agricultural credit, the major promises put forward in the manifestos are to promote the growth of micro-credit financial institutions and to establish an agricultural bank. While these are great steps in addressing the challenge of access to agricultural credit, what is more important are the measures that will be put in place to ensure that, once established, the agricultural bank (or indeed any other financial mechanism), does not set harsh conditions and charge prohibitive interest rates to farmers. Regrettably, none of the political parties offered any measures to address these immensely important questions.

On the issue of agro-processing and marketing, all the political parties—with the notable exception of NRM—promised to revive and promote cooperative unions to, among other things, enable joint marketing by smallholder farmers, guarantee markets for farmers' produce, and help stabilise prices for agricultural produce. But beyond these generalities, none of the political parties provided any sense of how exactly, they would go about reviving and promoting cooperative unions in Uganda. Given their mixed history, the future success of cooperative unions in Uganda largely depends on the enforcement of strong government measures not only to mitigate the threat of political interference and the politicization of their activities, but also to ensure transparency in their management.

In terms of improving agricultural research, most of the political parties (with the exception of NRM) pledged to promote agricultural research and technology development, but failed to give any details as to how they would do it. The NRM, meanwhile, offered more specifics: it promised to promote research in quick-maturing high-value seed technologies; expand animal genetic multiplication and distribution; encourage the use of artificial insemination; improve breeding of poultry; scale up research in disease-resistant varieties of cassava; and avail farmers with soil-testing kits.

One major question that arises regarding the promises made by NRM is where the party will get the financial resources to fulfil them, especially given its non-committal posture on the issue of increasing funding for the agriculture sector. Taking into consideration the Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs) and the projected national budgets up to 2012/13, under the NRM Government, agriculture sector funding is anticipated to decrease, rather than increase, as a percentage of the national budget. For the year 2012/13, the sector is expected to receive a mere 3.2 per cent of the national budget. This spells doom for farmers in particular and the agriculture sector in general.

The analytical comparison of the political party manifestos has also established that

none of the political parties provided any policy measures to address challenges in a number of other areas critical to the growth and development of the agriculture sector. Key among these areas include governance of the sector, agricultural innovation beyond research and technology development, and the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Governance weaknesses and challenges reflected in the sector's many parallel institutions— institutions with blurred lines of responsibility and accountability for instance, inherently affect the effective implementation of programmes and service delivery. Therefore, notwithstanding all the good promises made by the different political parties, their failure to provide policy measures to address such serious issues will ultimately hamper the full flowering of the sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 18 February 2011, Ugandans went to polls to vote for their next president and parliament to lead the country for the next five years (2011-2016). There were eight candidates in total standing for the Office of the President, seven of whom were flag-bearers of their respective political parties, while the eighth stood as an independent candidate. To market their candidature, each of these Presidential aspirants, through their political parties, prepared a manifesto indicating the social, economic, cultural, and political priorities they would focus on if voted into power.

These elections came at a time when the growth and performance of Uganda's agriculture sector is very disappointing. Although the country has generally enjoyed good economic growth in the last ten years—averaging seven per cent per year¹—the growth in the agriculture sector has been disappointing. Real growth in agricultural output has been steadily declining over the years, from 7.9 per cent in 2000/01 to about 2.6 per cent in 2008/2009². The poor performance of the agriculture sector is also reflected in the sector's declining contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), from 39.9 per cent in 2001/02 to only 23.7 per cent in 2008/09.³

The current government has argued that such declines are indicative of the socio-economic transformation taking place⁴—a highly contentious claim. In 2008, the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) reported that in that year, about 75 per cent of households were involved in agricultural activities compared to 64 per cent in 2004.⁵ This means that there are more people getting involved in agricultural activities—a situation in which one would expect the agriculture sector to contribute more to GDP than it has in previous years.

Given the real possibility of such a scenario, the declining contribution of the agriculture sector to GDP suggests a much more complicated picture than the one painted by the government's explanation.

In 2008, 75% of households were involved in agricultural activities, compared to 64% in 2004, meaning that there are more people getting involved in agricultural activities.

Given the importance of the agriculture sector to the national economy and the livelihoods of so many Ugandans, its declining fortunes—and what that means for the well-being and survival of the majority of Ugandans, any serious presidential candidate or political party aspiring to lead Uganda must prioritise investing in

1 See generally The Republic of Uganda (2010), National Development Plan (NDP) 2010/11 – 2014/15, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Kampala, para. 26.

2 Ibid, para. 242.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid, para. 38.

5 UBOS (2008), *The 2008 National Service Delivery Survey Report*, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Kampala, p.95.

and generally developing the sector. Above all, they should have sound, clear and feasible proposals for addressing the challenges facing the sector.

The major objective of this policy research paper is to compare and analyse the manifestos of Uganda's different political parties that participated in the presidential elections. The comparison is with respect to the promises they make in regard to developing the agriculture sector. This paper also highlights other important issues for the development of the sector that were not addressed in the manifestos, but which, nonetheless, need to be addressed by any president or political party in power.

Following this introduction, the analytical comparison of the promises made in the manifestos is done in section 2 of the paper. In section 3, the paper highlights some of the critical areas for the growth and development of the agriculture sector that went unaddressed in the manifestos. Section 4 is the conclusion of the paper.

2. COMPARING THE PROMISES IN THE MANIFESTOS

The seven political parties that participated in this year's presidential elections are the ruling party – NRM, Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP), Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC), Democratic Party (DP), Uganda Federal Alliance (UFA), and the Peoples' Development Party (PDP). The comparison of manifestos below does not include Mr. Samuel Lubega's, who stood as an independent in the presidential race, because our repeated requests to obtain a copy of his manifesto went unanswered.

Rather than pinpoint the best promises made, this paper puts the commitments made by the political parties into perspective to enable readers decide for themselves which proposals are better. Although it is recognised that the pledges made by these political parties in regard to developing other sectors impact on agriculture, this section only looks at the specific proposals made to develop the agriculture sector. It is important to note, in this regard, that all the manifestos under review have a particular section that addresses agriculture as a distinct sector. It is the proposals made under this section of each manifesto that are the subject of the comparison that follows.

A critical analysis of the manifestos points to eight major areas where the political parties focus their interventions. These are: agriculture sector financing; agricultural inputs for farmers; agricultural credit; agro-processing, storage and marketing; agricultural education; agricultural extension and advisory services; agricultural research and technology development; and water for agricultural production. Needless to say, these thematic areas are generally the traditional areas considered to be important for agriculture sector development in Uganda.⁶ The major interventions proposed by each political party under each of these thematic areas will be examined in turn.

2.1 Agriculture Sector Financing

Many studies have rightly pointed out underfunding as one of the major challenges facing the agriculture sector.⁷ Despite the importance of the sector to the national economy—coupled with the general government rhetoric about prioritizing it in the national development agenda—the sector had until 2009/10 never received any annual budgetary allocation of more than four per cent. The five-year expenditure

6 See, for instance, the seven priority intervention areas for the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA). The Republic of Uganda (2000), *Plan for Modernization of Agriculture: Eradicating Poverty in Uganda* (Government Strategy and Operational Framework), Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Entebbe and Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Kampala, Chapter 7.

7 See, for instance, Action Aid Uganda (2010), *Invest in Smallholder Farmers: Six Areas for Improvement in Agricultural Financing*, Kampala. See also MFPED (2008), *Agriculture Sector Investments and Institutional Performance in Uganda*. Discussion Paper No.17, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Kampala.

framework of the recently adopted NDP, which runs from 2009/10 – 2014/15, now allocates an average of 5.4 per cent of the national budget to the agriculture sector. While this is an increment to what the sector has been receiving in the last decade, this allocation is still too small for the sector to make any substantial investments that can lead to the desired growth.⁸ The 5.4 per cent budgetary allocation is also still far below the 10 per cent that the government committed itself to allocating under CAADP.⁹ The 10 per cent budgetary allocation benchmark is considered key to meeting CAADP's agriculture sector growth target of six per cent per year.

Table 1: Summary of Commitments with Respect to Agriculture Sector Funding

Political Party	The Promise/ Commitment
UPC, DP, PDP and UFA	Increase budgetary allocation to 15%
FDC	Increase budgetary allocation to 12%
NRM	Increase funding in accordance with the sector's DSIP
PPP	Non-committal

With the exception of NRM and PPP, with the latter being silent on the question of funding, all political parties express concern about the underfunding of the agriculture sector, and commit to increasing it. UPC, DP, PDP and UFA have pledged to increase budgetary allocations by up to 15 per cent, while FDC pledges to scale up the allocation to 12 per cent of the national budget. Although NRM promises to increase investment in agriculture over the next five years, it is not explicit by what percentage of the national budget it will do this. Instead, the manifesto says that the party will increase investment in the agriculture sector in accordance with the sector's Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP).

It is important to note in this respect that DSIPs are operationalized through MTEFs, which provide three-year budget ceilings for the various sectors. For instance, the DSIP 2010/11 budget for the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) was Shs. 459.9 billion, but the MTEF ceiling for the ministry was set at Shs. 342.2 billion, meaning that MAAIF could ultimately not receive more than Shs. 342.2 billion¹⁰—which is Shs. 117.7 billion less than the amount recommended in the DSIP budget. Unless NRM also promises to revise the MTEF for MAAIF to align it with its ideal DSIP budget, the agriculture sector may never get the kind of resources needed to implement its programme of work. In fact, according to a recent study by the World Bank, based on the MTEF, national expenditure on agriculture is projected to continue declining.¹¹ According to this study, taking into consideration the MTEF and the projected

8 The nominal GDP growth rate over the NDP period is projected at an average of 7.2 per cent per annum. See NDP, supra note 1, para. 16.

9 CAADP is a programme of the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) working to boost agricultural production and productivity in Africa. Uganda ratified the CAADP compact on 31 March 2010. See <http://www.caadp.net/news/?p=639> [Accessed on 01/02/2011].

10 Republic of Uganda (2010), *Agriculture for Food and Income Security: Agriculture Sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan 2010/11-2014/15*, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Entebbe, p.11.

11 World Bank (2010), *Uganda: Agriculture Public Expenditure Review, Agriculture and Rural Development Unit*, Washington DC, p.6.

national budget, in 2012/2013 the agriculture sector's share of the national budget will sink to approximately 3.2 per cent¹². The budget for agriculture as a share of GDP is also expected to decline from 1.6 per cent in 2008/09 to 1.4 per cent in 2012/13¹³. That this is going to be the case is absurd and spells near-doom for the agriculture sector's development during this period. Apparently, the country will be shifting resources to other areas to sustain its long-term economic growth, notably to roads, education and health, among others¹⁴. Arguably, this means that in the very near future agriculture will cease to be a meaningful priority for the current government.

It thus follows that with the exception of the NRM and the PPP, all the political parties have committed to increase funding to the sector beyond the 10 per cent target set by CAADP. There is no doubt that if efficiently allocated and spent, an increase in funding of more than 10 per cent of the national budget would significantly promote the sector's growth and development. In one of their studies, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), for instance, points out that if Uganda were to spend 14 per cent of its budget on agriculture by 2015, it could meet the six per cent growth target of CAADP.¹⁵ But for this to happen, the increase in budgetary allocations has to be accompanied by efforts to allocate and invest resources more efficiently, which also means addressing the challenges of corruption and the mismanagement of public resources—both of which are prevalent in the sector. Unfortunately, no manifesto provides information on how these challenges will be tackled. For instance, regarding the issue of budgetary allocations, with the exception of NRM (which says it will increase resources in accordance with the DSIP), none of the other political parties give any hint as to how the sector's increased resources will be allocated and spent. But even for the NRM, the major question is whether it will actually fulfil its promises. The NDP acknowledges that the agriculture sector's first DSIP, which was adopted in 2008, was not effectively implemented, and that the major shortcoming was the failure to align public resources to DSIP priorities.¹⁶

Although increasing budgetary allocations to the agriculture sector is laudable, those increases must be followed by the efficient allocation, utilization, and management of such resources if they are to stimulate and lead to the desired growth and development of the sector.

2.2 Agricultural Inputs

The role of agricultural inputs (like fertilizers, pesticides, planting materials and breeding stock etc) in agricultural production and productivity is self-explanatory. But access and use of agricultural inputs in Uganda is still very low. MAAIF has, for

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Benin, S, (2008), *Agriculture growth and Investment options for poverty eradication in Uganda*, IFPRI Discussion Paper 00790, pp.38-39.

16 NDP, supra note 1, para.256.

instance, recently confirmed that Uganda has the lowest fertilizer use in the world.¹⁷ Fertilizer use in Uganda stands at an average of 1kg/ha, compared to 6kg/ha in Tanzania, 32kg/ha in Kenya and 51kg/ha in South Africa.¹⁸ The 2008 National Service Delivery Survey report indicates that in 2008, only about 14 per cent of households reported use of at least one type of input, while 86 per cent did not use any input.¹⁹ Table 2 gives a picture of the number of farmers that were using agricultural inputs in 2006.

Table 2: Farmers Using Agricultural Inputs in 2006 (%)

	Improved Seeds	Manure	Chemical Fertilizer	Pesticide, Herbicides, Fungicide
Central	5.5	8.7	1.3	4.8
Eastern	11.9	4.1	1.1	4.7
Northern	7.6	0.5	0.7	2.6
Western	2.2	9.6	0.6	1.5
National	6.3	6.8	1.0	3.4

Source : UBOS (2007) UNHS 2005/06, Agricultural Module

The very low use of agricultural inputs means that farmers are not deploying improved agricultural technologies to help them address challenges such as drought, declining soil fertility, pests, diseases and weeds. This partly explains Uganda's low agricultural production and productivity. More importantly, it suggests that if the number of farmers using agricultural inputs were to substantially increase, it would lead to increased agricultural production and productivity. The major reasons advanced for the very poor or non-use of inputs include the high costs of acquiring the inputs and lack of knowledge about the importance of inputs and how to get them.²⁰ There are also challenges regarding the input quality, which has been deteriorating over the years largely as a result of a failure to enforce standards, something which has led to the proliferation of counterfeits on the market.²¹ Provision of quality and affordable agricultural inputs, therefore, constitutes one of the major bottlenecks to increased agricultural production and productivity. What, then, are the political parties proposing as the best way to address this challenge?

17 See Mudoola, P. (2011), Uganda has the lowest fertiliser use in the world, *The New Vision*, 7 February.

18 Supra note 10, p.35.

19 UBOS (2008), supra note 5, p.82.

20 Ibid

21 See USAID/BizCLIR (2010), *Commercial, Legal and Institutional reform in Uganda's Agriculture Sector: Agenda for Action*, Available at http://www.bizclir.com/galleries/country-assessments/Uganda_Ag.pdf [Accessed on 30/01/2011]. p.123.

Table 3: Summary of Commitments with Respect to Provision of Agricultural Inputs

Political Party	The Promise/ Commitment
FDC, UPC and PPP	Provide agricultural inputs at subsidized prices
NRM	Support 6 market-oriented model farmers, 3 commercial model farmers and 100 food security farmers per parish per year
DP, PDP and, UFA	Non-committal

UPC, FDC and PPP promised to provide farmers with agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, breeding stock and pesticides, as well as advisory and extension services at subsidized prices. The manifestos do not, however, give details about the extent and manner in which the agricultural inputs will be subsidized. While subsidizing agricultural inputs is a commendable measure, it has to be done in a manner that does not violate Uganda’s international obligations under the World Trade Organisation governing issues of subsidies in agriculture.

For the NRM, the major promise is to continue supporting the six market-oriented, three commercial and 100 food security model farmers per parish per year. Unfortunately, the NRM’s manifesto does not give any details regarding the distinction between and among these categories of farmers. Nor does it give the criteria for selecting them. But regarding the issue of selection, the Prosperity for All (PFA) policy provides that the selection of the six market-oriented farmers per parish is to be done by a 10-member team chaired by the LC3 Chairperson.²² The sub-county chairperson of the ruling party is entrenched in the policy document as one of the 10 members. If this is how the NRM plans to deal with the question of provision of agricultural inputs, then it urgently needs to address the concerns of many farmers and other stakeholders who worry about the existence of politically-biased selection processes and the fact that vulnerable groups like women and the very poor—those who often need the most support—are rarely selected as beneficiaries.

These concerns are not surprising for two major reasons. First, as already mentioned, the sub-county chairperson of the ruling party is entrenched as one of the members of the selection committee. Given the power and influence that these chairpersons wield, they can exert a lot of pressure on the other members of the selection committees to ensure that farmers belonging to the ruling party benefit the most from the scheme. Second, the criteria for the selection of these farmers, as stipulated in the PFA policy, are not pro-poor or pro-vulnerable-groups. For instance, the policy states that the household or farmer to be selected must already be undertaking some income-generating activities within the locale, and be ready and able to change from subsistence to commercial farming.²³

The criteria for selecting farmers to benefit from the PFA policy initiatives like provision of agricultural inputs is not pro-poor, nor is it pro-vulnerable groups

²² The Republic of Uganda (2008), Prosperity for All Policy, Office of the President, Kampala, Section 3.1, p.17
²³ Ibid, p.18.

This is coupled with the fact that under the PFA policy, agricultural inputs are to be provided on loan basis.²⁴ The vast majority of poor rural farmers and vulnerable groups in the rural settings cannot meet these conditions. They are thus not eligible to benefit from the agricultural input measures that the NRM's manifesto promises. This shortcoming has to be urgently addressed if the NRM seriously means to increase agricultural production and incomes of the rural poor.

2.3 Agricultural Credit

In their manifestos, many of the political parties rightly recognise the importance of providing farmers with affordable and reliable credit. In a study commissioned by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), farmers highlighted the issue of shortage of capital and credit as one of the biggest constraints to improving farming.²⁵ In a recent study conducted under the auspices of MAAIF, it was found out that only about 10 per cent of Ugandans had access to financial services like credit.²⁶ This lack of or shortage of credit means that farmers cannot invest in things like buying improved agricultural inputs or expanding their agricultural enterprises which are critical for increasing agricultural production and productivity.

While the situation concerning access to and the provision of agricultural credit has improved from what it was a decade ago, there are still big challenges that tomorrow's leaders need to address. These range from the highly prohibitive conditions set by the financial institutions and the high costs of accessing credit, to the general lack of knowledge about how to access credit and the inadequacy and unreliability of financial institutions.²⁷ Regarding the conditions set by financial institutions and the costs of accessing credit, it is important to emphasise the fact that credit is provided to farmers mainly through micro-finance institutions. These institutions charge very high interest rates ranging from 36 to 48 per cent.²⁸ Many of them justify the high interest rates on transaction costs in the administration of the loans given to farmers.²⁹

The credit given to farmers is also too little to be economically productive.³⁰ It normally ranges between Shs. 20,000 – 50,000.³¹ For the farmers who want to access credit through the Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs), they are required to formally register their groups and have at least Shs. 20 million in savings.³² The overwhelming majority of Ugandan farmers who form SACCOs in

24 Ibid, sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. These sections deal with issues of the source and identification of inputs, delivery of inputs and recovery of inputs.

25 Benin S, et al (2007), *Assessing the Impact of the National Agricultural Advisory Services in the Uganda Rural Livelihoods*, IFPRI Discussion Paper 00724, p.12.

26 MAAIF (2009), *Uganda: Review of Ongoing Agricultural Development Efforts*, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Entebbe, p.6. See also Action Aid Uganda (2010), *supra* note 7, p.31.

27 UBOS (2008), *supra* note 5, p.94.

28 EPRC (2009), *Agriculture Sector Public Expenditure Review – Phase three*, Final Report submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, pp.7-8.

29 ACODE/UNFFE (2009), *Farmers' Petition to the President and Members of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda*, ACODE Infosheet No.7, Kampala, p.9.

30 *Supra* note 28.

31 Ibid.

32 MFPED (2008), *supra* note 7, pp.77-78.

rural areas find it very difficult to meet these conditions. It is from this perspective that we now turn to examine the promises made by the different political party manifestos with respect to the question of providing convenient and affordable agricultural credit to farmers.

Table 4: Summary of the Commitments with Respect to Provision of Agricultural Credit

Political Party	The Promise/ Commitments
FDC	Establish an agricultural bank
PDP	Establish an agricultural bank
DP	Establish an agricultural bank and encourage the growth of micro-credit financial institutions
UPC	Re-establish cooperative banking and encourage the growth of micro-credit financial institutions
NRM	Increase agricultural credit through partnerships with private financial institutions, promote agricultural insurance, and establish a Commercialization Challenge Fund
PPP	Provide easy access to affordable credit
UFA	Non-committal

PPP promises easy access to affordable credit but does not provide any detail as to how it will do this. FDC, DP, UPC and PDP propose to establish an agricultural bank to give affordable and convenient credit and finance to farmers. Specifically, UPC promises to re-establish a Cooperative Bank (which in years past operated as a farmers’ bank) to serve as one of the major mechanisms through which it will provide conducive and affordable credit to farmers. Additionally, UPC and DP also promise to encourage the growth of micro-credit financial institutions to avail funds to small-holder farmers and processors. NRM, for its part, pledges to increase credit to farmers through partnerships with private financial institutions. It also promises to promote agricultural insurance and establish the Commercialization Challenge Fund (CCF) under NAADS to provide financial support to nucleus farmers under the Public-Private Partnership Strategy. Unfortunately, NRM’s manifesto provides no details as to how this fund will operate. Neither does it give any information about the intended beneficiaries, i.e. the nucleus farmers.

Although from a generalised perspective, all the proposals summarised above appear good, none of the manifestos is explicit as to the exact measures that will be undertaken to ensure that farmers actually have easy access to affordable credit and other financial services. For instance, although parties like UPC and DP promise to encourage the growth of micro-credit financial institutions to avail funds to small-scale farmers and processors, they provide no specifics as to how they will do it. How they will encourage the growth of micro-finance institutions, let alone create the appropriate mechanisms to ensure that such institutions provide affordable credit is not known. In the same vein, although establishing an agricultural bank is a good idea, this in itself is not enough to guarantee easy access to affordable credit

by farmers. What is more important are the measures to be put in place to ensure that the agricultural bank (or indeed any other financial mechanism), once established, will not set harsh conditions and charge prohibitively high interest rates. Similarly, although NRM promises to promote agriculture insurance as one of the ways of ensuring that farmers have access to affordable credit, it does not tell us what, exactly, "promotion" means or what the party will actually do to promote agricultural insurance. The parties' manifestos would have been immensely more useful had they provided such detail.

Although establishing an agricultural bank is a good idea, this in itself is not enough to guarantee easy access to affordable credit by farmers. What's more important is the existence of measures to ensure that the agricultural bank (or indeed any other financial mechanism), once established, will not set harsh conditions and charge prohibitively high interest rates.

2.4 Agro-Processing, Storage and Marketing

Despite government interventions, the situation with regard to agro-processing, the storage of farmers' produce, and agricultural marketing is wanting in many respects. Major challenges include the lack of value addition, poor and inadequate storage facilities, poor market infrastructure, inadequate and poor market information flow, poor linkages between farmers and the market, and the poorly functioning regulatory and standards-enforcement agencies.³³ Regarding value addition, it is worth noting that the proportion of Uganda's agricultural commodities which are processed is no more than five per cent.³⁴ This low level of value addition is largely attributed to the low capacity of farmers to participate in value chains, the limited availability of (and access to) necessary equipment and machinery, and the poor quality and quantity of goods produced.³⁵ With respect to the question of poor market information flow, the 2008 National Service Delivery Survey found out that because there existed no established system for market information, farmers were improvising to market their produce and purchase inputs.³⁶ The survey report also noted that the lack of access to market information was causing the exploitation of farmers by middlemen who purchased produce directly from farmers who are unaware of alternative markets for their produce.³⁷

33 See generally supra note 10, pp.40-43.

34 Ibid, p.43.

35 Ibid.

36 UBOS (2008), supra note 5, p.93.

37 Ibid.

Table 5: Summary of Commitments with Regard to Improving Agro-Processing, Storage and Marketing

Political Party	The Promise/Commitment
FDC	Set up marketing cooperatives to increase sales and improve incomes of farmers; offer guaranteed markets for strategic agricultural products; promote and support agro-processing to add value to farmers' produce; and establish and maintain national food reserves in rural areas
DP	Promote marketing cooperatives to enable joint marketing by small-holder farmers; create market linkages; create enabling environment for players to access market information at each level of the marketing chain; provide credit to support the Warehouse Receipt System; and invest massively in rural electrification to enhance agro-processing and provide market.
NRM	Provide milk coolers, rice hullers and maize mills at sub-county level; establish cold chain facilities; increase the coverage of the Warehouse Receipt System; construct 44 warehouses and over 190 grain satellite collection centres in grain producing areas; and continue supporting the three commercial model farmers per parish particularly regarding capacity for value addition and or/bulking of produce.
UPC	Re-establish cooperatives and primary societies; re-establish storage and processing facilities; re-establish the produce marketing board; and develop and improve maintenance of feeder roads network.
PDP	Establish cooperative unions that are specific on products; encourage and fund agro-based industries for value addition; establish a national food storage system; create a national agriculture marketing bureau with branches in all cooperatives and districts; and establish standards for agricultural products.
PPP	Sensitise farmers to form cooperatives or other community-based societies.
UFA	Re-establish cooperative unions to guarantee product quality, markets and price stability.

To address the challenges to processing, marketing and storage, all the political parties, with the exception of NRM, pledge to re-establish, revive, and promote cooperative societies to enable joint marketing by small-holder farmers, guarantee markets for farmers' produce and help stabilize prices. The major shortcoming of these pledges, again, is that the political parties provide no information as to how exactly they will promote the growth of cooperatives in Uganda.

Before their disbandment in the 1990s, following government's decision to liberalize the economy, cooperative movements (like the Busoga Cooperative Union, the Banyankore Kweterena, and the Bugisu Cooperative Union, among others), and producer boards, played an important role in the marketing of farmers' produce. They established big storage infrastructure in almost all parts of the country and created ready markets for many farmers. They used to buy produce from almost all corners of the country, including the very hard-to-reach areas. They safeguarded farmers against fluctuating prices by offering fixed prices. And even when they made sizable profits by re-selling produce on the world market at higher prices, many poor rural small-holder farmers were at least satisfied that they had a ready market for their produce within reach.

Yet, while these cooperatives played an important role in agricultural marketing, they also had a number of weaknesses, the greatest ones being political interference, politicization of their activities, mismanagement and fraud.³⁸ As Nakabuga rightly observed, when these cooperatives expanded and became big entities, they lost some of their initial purpose as tools to develop

Any efforts to revive and promote cooperative unions must address as a matter of priority the threats of political interference, politicisation and mismanagement which undermined their viability in the past.

Uganda's agricultural economy. Their leaders even started forming alliances with political parties.³⁹ The point to emphasise here is that any efforts to revive and promote cooperatives must address as a matter of priority the threats of political interference, politicization and mismanagement which undermined the viability of cooperatives in the past.⁴⁰

In addition to re-establishing and promoting cooperative societies, UPC promises to re-establish storage and processing facilities and put them in charge of the produce marketing boards. If UPC plans to re-establish produce marketing boards as well, it will have to establish measures that will ensure that these boards do not over tax farmers, as was reportedly the case before their abolition in the 1990s.⁴¹ UPC also takes the issue of road infrastructure in rural areas seriously. It promises to develop and improve the maintenance of the feeder road network, while upgrading critical community roads to district feeder road status, and feeder roads to trunk road status in order to ease transport in the rural agricultural areas.

PDP and FDC, for their part, promise to establish and maintain a national food storage system. In particular, FDC promises to establish and maintain food reserves in the rural areas. Establishing food storage facilities is expected to, among other things, reduce post-harvest losses and improve marketing of farmers' produce. PDP and FDC also further promise to promote, support and fund agro-based industries to add value to farmers' agricultural products. Additionally, PDP promises to create a national agricultural marketing bureau with branches in all cooperatives and districts. It also promises to establish standards for agricultural products and legislate for their enforcement. Similarly, DP promises to create an enabling environment for all players to access market information at each level of the marketing chain. Like NRM has promised over the years, DP also says that if voted into power, it would invest massively in rural electrification to enhance agricultural processing and provide markets to stimulate small-holder mass production. For its part, NRM promises to provide milk coolers, rice hullers and maize mills at the sub-county level, and to establish cold chain facilities. In addition, NRM promises to increase the coverage of

38 Muhwezi-Bonge, G. (2009), *Uganda's Cooperatives Rise Again*. Available at <http://www.panos.org.uk/?lid=26160>. [Accessed on 10/02/2011].

39 Nakabuga, R. (2008), Govt should strengthen cooperatives, *The New Vision*, 29 December.

40 For other important strategies to promote cooperatives, see Omona, J. (2010), "Reviving Cooperatives in Uganda: Strategies for Effectiveness in this Era of Global Financial Crisis." *Malaysian Journal of Cooperative Studies*.

41 See MFPEd (2008) supra note 7, p.15.

the Warehouse Receipt System and to construct 44 warehouses and over 190 grain-satellite collection centres in grain producing areas. NRM also promises to continue supporting the three commercial model farmers per parish, with a particular focus on value addition and/or the bulking of produce through organised commodity platforms. These are clear and measurable promises which, if implemented, could address many challenges that farmers face with respect to agro-processing, storage and marketing. The ultimate question is whether these promises would actually be fulfilled.

2.5 Agricultural Education

Agricultural education undoubtedly stands out as another important thematic area critical for stimulating agricultural growth and development. But what is the current situation with respect to agricultural education in Uganda? A recent report by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) correctly observed that although Uganda has several universities and vocational schools focused on agriculture, most are relatively weak.⁴² There is a shortage of qualified staff, poor teaching facilities, and inadequate infrastructure. Also, the curriculum of these institutions is not up-to-speed with many national, regional and international developments.

Another major challenge is that enrolment in technical agricultural areas is dropping.⁴³ It is a fact that many students are shunning pursuing careers in agriculture because they think there are too few opportunities, at too little pay. The government even acknowledged recently that many public and private institutions in the agriculture sector are experiencing shortages in quality technical staff in key areas such as research, pests and disease control, extension services, mechanisation and soil science.⁴⁴ Indeed, some large agri-businesses say that in many cases, they have to outsource agriculture management-level staff from outside the country, given the often-inadequate skills of Ugandan applicants.⁴⁵ But why should this be the case in an agricultural country like Uganda with many jobless citizens? What interventions are the political parties promising to undertake to address the above-described and other challenges in the area of agricultural education?

42 USAID/BizCLIR (2010), *supra* note 21, p.11.

43 *Ibid.*

44 NDP, *supra* note 1, Section 5.1.2.

45 *Supra* note 42.

Table 6: Summary of Commitments with Respect to Improving Agricultural Education

Political Party	The Promise/Commitment
UFA	Introduce the teaching of agriculture in primary and secondary schools and provide incentives within the education system for students to opt for it.
PDP	Upgrade all the district agriculture training institutes to centres of excellence; transform the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry into a School of Agriculture; transform the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine into a School of Animal Resources and Production; and establish the School of Aquatic Sciences, Fisheries and Aquaculture.
PPP	Introduce programmes in skills and vocational training.
NRM	Align the curriculum of agricultural training colleges to market demands; establish a Uganda Farmers' School and Leadership Centre; set up farmer academies; strengthen centres of excellence for strategic commodities.
DP, FDC and UPC	Non-committal

UFA promises to introduce agriculture as a key subject in primary and secondary schools and to provide incentives within the education system for students to opt for the subject. However, what these incentives will be is not clear because the UFA's manifesto does not elaborate more on the matter. The PDP, meanwhile, promises to upgrade all the district agriculture training institutes to centres of excellence to serve as training institutions for farmers, managers and students of agriculture. It also promises to transform (what is presumed to be) Makerere University's Faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine into Schools of Agriculture and Animal Resources and Production respectively. PDP also promises to establish a School of Aquatic Sciences, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Assuming, again, that the said faculties are the ones at Makerere University (which, oddly enough, the manifesto does not say), it needs to be pointed out that similar transitions have already occurred at the University. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine is now the School of Veterinary Medicine and will soon become a College of Veterinary Medicine. Likewise, the Faculty of Agriculture has combined with the Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation and the Institute of Environment to form the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. The promise of the PPP with respect to improving agricultural education is to introduce programmes that will scale up skills and vocational trainings as one major way of boosting the productivity of small-holder farmers.

For its part, the NRM pledges to align the curricula of agricultural training colleges with market demands and establish a Uganda Farmers' School and Leadership Centre to bring about a shift in life orientation and changes in mind-sets. It further promises to set up farmer academies to provide specialized training on specific aspects of agriculture, while strengthening centres of excellence for strategic commodities like cassava and rice (at Namulonge), and fish (at Kajjansi). Although these pledges seem good and practical, some questions need to be asked regarding their economic efficiency, value addition, and implementation. First, how will they be implemented? Is there any need to establish farmers' academies and the Farmers'

School and Leadership Centre given the existence of many agricultural programmes at Uganda's institutions of higher learning and district agriculture training institutes? Would it not be more strategic and make more economic sense to strengthen these institutions (to be able to provide specialized trainings and change mind-sets) rather than investing in new ones? Besides, the NRM's manifesto—like the manifestos of the other parties-- is quiet about the specific measures needed to undertake its proposals.

2.6 Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

The importance of agricultural extension and advisory services to agricultural development cannot be over-emphasised. Agricultural extension and advisory services are not only important in transferring agricultural knowledge and skills to farmers, but are also critical for providing farmers with information on important aspects such as markets, new technologies, and weather patterns. It is for these reasons, among others, that the provision of extension and advisory services should be key to any efforts aimed at promoting agricultural growth and development. But the picture of Uganda's agricultural extension and advisory services is not a rosy one.

Over the last ten years, alongside the government extension workers at the districts, Uganda has been implementing, under the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), a farmer-led, demand-driven agricultural extension and advisory service system, where farmers through their farmer groups are expected to demand for the services they need. But the implementation of NAADS has been riddled with many challenges, from policy uncertainty reflected in the frequent changes made to the programme implementation guidelines, to political interference (which normally comes in form of directives and influence peddling), embezzlement, and the mismanagement of public funds.⁴⁶

Another challenge worth pointing out with respect to NAADS—which serves as the country's major agricultural extension and advisory service programme—is that its services do not benefit all farmers. In fact, NAADS excludes the majority of farmers from its activities and initiatives. First, NAADS mainly targets the “economically active poor” who are defined as subsistence and semi-commercial farmers with access to productive assets and some skills and knowledge.⁴⁷ However, the majority of farmers in Uganda are illiterate, have limited knowledge and are very poor. Second, the demand-driven approach championed by NAADS means that only those farmers who can articulate their demands get the services. Unfortunately, many farmers in Uganda do not have the capacity or wherewithal to demand for services.⁴⁸ And while NAADS is trying to develop these farmers' capacities, it still has a very long way to go. For the government extension workers employed by the local district administrations, the major problems have always been poor facilitation,

46 Naluwairo, R. (2011), In Quest for an Effective and Efficient Agri-Food System: A Review of Uganda's Major Agri-Food Policies. Forthcoming.

47 Action Aid Uganda (2010), *supra* note 7, p.27

48 *Ibid*

underfunding, and the very high ratio of farmers-to-extension workers.⁴⁹ All these challenges, among other issues, have combined to constrain the ability of NAADS and government extension workers to effectively and efficiently deliver services to farmers.

According to the 2008 National Service Delivery Survey, for example, only 14 per cent of all farming households had been visited by an extension worker in the 12 months preceding the survey.⁵⁰ In 2008, MFPED also reported that despite the expansion of NAADS from 13 districts in 2001 to 80 in 2008, most poor households were yet to fully benefit from its training programmes and initiatives, and the majority were not members of farmer groups -which are key institutions through which extension needs are identified and delivered.⁵¹ Only about nine per cent of households had participated in NAADS training programmes and initiatives, and only 5.4 per cent of households had a member in a farmer group.⁵² From this snapshot, it is clear that provision of agricultural extension and advisory services is a big challenge to the agriculture sector's development. How then do political parties plan to address this challenge?

As already mentioned, parties like UPC and FDC promise to provide farmers with advisory and extension services at subsidized prices. It is important to note here that while the government through NAADS is currently paying the private service providers of agricultural extension and advisory services, this is expected to end in the long run, with the farmers themselves expected to pick up the tab. UPC and FDC also pledge to revive, construct and support District Agricultural Farm Institutes in each sub-region to provide agricultural research and extension services support. For its part, DP promises to provide extension services to support producer clusters. The NRM's main strategy is to boost the availability of extension workers and the quality of advisory services by recruiting four extension staff (i.e., a coordinator and three service providers) at the sub-county level to be employed through performance-based contracts.

Considering the fact that the high ratio of farmers-to-extension staff is one of the big challenges affecting agricultural extension and advisory services, recruiting more extension staff at the sub-county level is a welcome idea. It is also important to acknowledge that the NRM, as the ruling party, has already started implementing this promise. But the manner in which such recruitment

It makes more sense to mainstream advisory services into existing district production departments under the tight supervision of the NAADS Secretariat rather than creating parallel structures and diverting technical staff from these departments.

49 See generally MAAIF (2009), *Policy Position of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries on the Proposed Conversion of Public Extension Staff in Local Governments to National Agricultural Advisory Services*, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Entebbe.

50 UBOS (2008), *supra* note 5, p.88.

51 MFPED (2008), *supra* note 7, p.44

52 *Ibid.*

is being done is unfortunately likely to cause more problems than it will solve. NRM is converting public extension staff in local governments to contractual private service providers under NAADS. Given that the biggest wage bill of these private service providers is paid with money provided by donors, long-term sustainability becomes an important issue. The NRM's move is also likely to severely weaken the production department/technical arm of local governments to plan and implement government programmes beyond these services.⁵³ As MAAIF rightly proposes, it makes more sense to mainstream advisory services into existing District Production Departments under the tight supervision of the NAADS Secretariat rather than creating parallel structures and diverting technical staff from these departments.⁵⁴

The important question to ask now is: Even taking the totality of the measures promised by the different political parties, is that all that is needed to address the challenges regarding the provision of agricultural extension and advisory services? Obviously, the answer is no. The political parties, for instance, are not providing any measures to deal with the challenges of political interference and the politicization of agricultural extension programmes, nor have they proposed any ways to curtail the mismanagement of public funds – issues that are prevalent in the implementation of NAADS.

2.7 Agricultural Research and Technology Development

To increase agricultural production and productivity, farmers need a variety of technologies to help them address the challenges brought about by pests and diseases, declining soil fertility, drought, low yields, and post-harvest losses, among others. Agricultural research and technology development is, therefore, a critical component of agricultural development. Uganda, however, faces enormous challenges with respect to its efforts to provide farmers with such technologies. First, government spending on agricultural research is very low. The agricultural research budget accounted for an average of 18 per cent of the agriculture sector spending between 2006 and 2009.⁵⁵ In real terms, given that the agriculture sector budgetary allocation is generally very low, 18 per cent of the agriculture sector budget is very little money. Such paltry spending limits the ability of the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) to invest in research and develop appropriate technologies needed to address a wide range of farmers' needs.

The challenges brought on by limited government spending are compounded by the fact that many of the agricultural research initiatives taking place in the country are either donor-funded or receive funding through collaborative research arrangements between NARO and institutions from abroad.⁵⁶ As with many donor-funded projects and initiatives, they often come with certain

53 MAAIF (2009), *supra* note 49, p.7.

54 *Ibid.*

55 Lukwago, D. (2010), *Increasing Agricultural Sector Financing: Why It Matters For Uganda's Socio-Economic Transformation*. ACODE Policy Research Series No. 40, 2010. Kampala, p.15.

56 Informal chat with one of the NARO staff (requested anonymity).

conditions and restrictions. Because of these limitations, organizations like NARO and its semi-autonomous institutions may not be able to determine an appropriate domestic agenda to the degree necessary. This is not good for Uganda.

The over-emphasis of market-oriented research is likely to skew public research away from areas that are important to sustaining domestic food security.

Further, although NARO has made good progress in developing technologies to help address the challenges facing farmers in Uganda,⁵⁷ most farmers have not been able to access and use them.⁵⁸ This is partly attributed to the poor linkages between NARO, the private sector, extension workers and farmers. Another major challenge worth pointing out relates to the policy position emphasising the demand-driven, market-oriented research approach. NARO's vision for national agricultural research is "a market-responsive, client-oriented and demand-driven national agricultural research system..."⁵⁹ This emphasis on market-oriented research is likely to skew public research away from those crops and animals that are very vital to ensuring food security in rural areas. Crops like yams and sorghum, for example, are not "marketable" in the traditional sense, but are nevertheless critical to local livelihoods—especially during periods of food scarcity. With an almost-exclusive emphasis of demand-driven, market-oriented research, such crops will not get the attention they deserve. In addition to the problem of research focus, is the perennial problem of research facilities. The deeply inadequate state of research facilities and infrastructure in the country, coupled with the poor remuneration received by scientists, mean that unless corrective measures are undertaken, Uganda will continue to suffer shortage of highly qualified scientific and technical personnel due to the brain drain.

Concerning the promises made by the political parties, most (with the exception of the PPP and the UFA) promise to promote agricultural research and technology development as a major way of improving production and productivity. The major shortcoming is that, except for the NRM, they do not give any appreciable detail as to what exactly they will do to promote such research. On its part, the NRM pledges to promote research in quick maturing high-value seeds and drought/pest-resistant seeds, expand animal genetic multiplication and distribution, encourage the use of artificial insemination, improve breeding of poultry, scale up research into disease-resistant cassava varieties, and avail farmers with soil-testing kits to enable them select enterprises and fertilizers suited for their soils. These are well targeted measures which, if implemented, would go a long way in improving agricultural productivity in Uganda.

57 Since 2003, NARO is reported to have developed up to 218 improved varieties, breeds and prototypes for increased yields, food security and incomes. *Supra* note 10, p.35.

58 *Ibid*, p.53

59 See Republic of Uganda (2003), *The National Agricultural Research Policy*, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Entebbe, Section 2.2.

2.8 Water for Agricultural Production

Given the fact that Uganda's agriculture is nature-based, with a heavy reliance on rainfall, the question of water for agricultural production becomes very important. This is particularly so at this time when, largely as a result of climate change, the country's rainfall patterns are changing in unpredictable and unreliable ways. Moreover, the state of water infrastructure for agricultural production is poor, due to mainly lack of maintenance and vandalism.⁶⁰ In fact, most of the country's water infrastructure is not even in working condition. MAAIF, for instance, reports that of the over 1,000 valley dams and tanks that the government has constructed over the years for livestock production, only about 20 per cent are functional.⁶¹ It is therefore not surprising to find that estimates indicate that livestock in Uganda only receive 33 per cent of their daily water requirements.⁶² Improving access to water for agricultural production is therefore a big challenge that has to be addressed by any person or political party that comes to power.

What, then, are the plans of the different political parties to increase water for agricultural production? The NRM, PDP, PPP, DP, and FDC promise to set up affordable irrigation schemes to reduce over-dependence on rainfall. The manifestos of the UPC and the UFA are silent on the question of water for agricultural production. Of the political parties promising to improve and increase availability of water for production, it is only the PDP and the NRM that are specific on what they actually intend to do to address the challenge of water for agricultural production. The PDP promises to divide the country into agricultural production zones and ensure that each zone has access to affordable water sources.⁶³ In this respect, it promises to construct and protect permanent water reservoirs in all the production zones.

The NRM promises to provide water machinery for agricultural production; establish micro-water harvesting and irrigation demonstration sites in at least 100 sub-counties every year; rehabilitate four medium-scale irrigation schemes in Butalejja, Mubuku and Olweny; establish four new medium-size irrigation schemes; and construct 23 communal valley tanks across the county. There is no doubt that, if implemented, these interventions can go a long way in easing access to water for agricultural production. One of the major questions that arise, especially with regard to the promises of the NRM generally, is how the party plans to fulfil them given that over the next five years, it does not plan to increase budgetary allocations to the agriculture sector in any substantial manner. If these promises are not mere rhetoric, where will the money to finance their implementation come from?

60 Supra note 10, p.40

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Unless the PDP means to divide the country into new agricultural zones altogether, under the Plan for Zonal Agricultural Production, Agro processing and Marketing (2004), Uganda is already divided into ten agricultural zones.

2.9. Other Promises

In addition to the promises of the political parties analysed above, which fall under the specific thematic areas that were highlighted at the beginning of this section, there are a number of other commitments that political parties have made for the growth and development of the agriculture sector. For instance, the PDP promises to expand the land fund to compensate *mailo* land owners with *bibanja* holders. If implemented, this measure can go a long way in addressing the chaotic situation of overlapping rights in land ownership that affect the use and investment in land for agricultural production. The PDP also promises to improve aquaculture by, among other things, promoting investments in supportive industries (e.g., aqua-feed) and strengthening aquaculture research, training, and production by enhancing collaboration between existing skilled personnel, training institutions, research stations and the private sector. The proposal to improve aquaculture is very important given the importance of fisheries to the national economy and the livelihoods of many Ugandans.

For PPP, the major additional promise made is to review the country's current poverty reduction strategies, particularly the Prosperity for All (PFA) policy, NAADS, PMA, and micro-finance activities, in order to revamp their procedures, processes, and other implementation modalities, with the goal of ensuring that they serve and benefit Ugandans effectively and equitably. For NRM, the major additional promises include promoting the mechanisation of agriculture by loaning tractors and other related implements to farmers and intensifying pest and disease control, market regulation, regulatory enforcement, and a general awareness of standards among agricultural producers.

3. WHAT THE POLITICAL PARTY MANIFESTOS MISSED

Although Uganda's political parties were able to address several of the challenges facing the agriculture sector, they nevertheless overlooked a few key areas that are critical to the long-term viability of the sector. This section briefly highlights those areas. It does not provide the policy direction, plans, strategies or measures that political parties should take or should have taken. Rather, it points to the need for political parties to consider the importance of such areas in their effort to improve the performance and growth of the agriculture sector.

3.1 Governance and Institutional Framework

A well-organized governance and institutional architecture is prerequisite for the good performance and development of any sector. In the agriculture sector, a lot of literature⁶⁴—and indeed the recently adopted NDP⁶⁵—rightly highlight the issue of many institutions and structures with overlapping mandates and blurred lines of accountability as one of the major challenges constraining the performance and development of the agriculture sector. In their agendas for the advancement of the sector, political parties should have addressed this challenge as a number one priority, which they did not. This is a serious omission. Without addressing this challenge, it is plausible to argue that these parties will be unable to effectively fulfil their promises. The institutional weaknesses will simply undermine most efforts aimed at programme implementation.

3.2 Agricultural Innovation beyond Research and Technology Development

For some time, the government of Uganda has tried to promote science and technology (S&T) to spur agricultural production and development. The establishment of NARO and its semi-autonomous institutions was a big step in this direction. Yet, despite the efforts of NARO to develop different technologies to address the needs of farmers, many of its technologies do not reach farmers,⁶⁶ and often, a number of them are found to be inappropriate or inapplicable.⁶⁷ This is one of the major limitations of investing in and promoting research without adopting a comprehensive approach to innovation, in which research and technology development is only a component.

While research and technology development focuses on generating scientific

64 See, for instance, ACODE/UNFFE (2009), supra note 29 and MFPED (2008), supra note 7.

65 NDP, supra note 1, Section 5.1.2.

66 Supra note 10, p.53.

67 See <http://www.naro.go.ug/About%20NARO/outreach.htm> [Accessed on 03/02/2011].

knowledge, a comprehensive approach to innovation goes beyond the creation of knowledge to the application and outcome of such knowledge. In other words, such an approach does not only focus on the creation of scientific knowledge, but is also concerned with the dissemination of such knowledge and the issues of access to such knowledge among all players in the innovation system.⁶⁸ This is what Uganda's agriculture sector needs. It is only then that the scientific knowledge generated can stir

Uganda's agricultural innovation system should aim to promote cooperation, linkages, interactions and feedback mechanisms between and among players such as NARO, NAADS, Makerere University and other higher institutions of learning involved in R&D, private sector, extension staff, civil society organisations, farmers, policy makers and regulatory bodies

maximum development. It is also why comprehensive approaches to innovation place a lot of emphasis on cooperation, linkages and the interactions between and among players within the system. In Uganda's agriculture sector, such an approach would, for example, promote cooperation, linkages, interactions and feedback mechanisms between and among players such as NARO, Makerere University, and other institutions of higher learning involved in Research and Development (R&D), as well as the private sector, extension staff, civil society organizations, farmers, policy makers and regulatory bodies. None of the political party manifestos stipulated any measures in this direction.

It is only the NRM's manifesto that talks of the Agricultural Technology, Agribusiness and Advisory Services (ATAAS), a joint programme of NARO and NAADS to "be actualised through interface and synergy between research and advisory services in each agricultural zone". Other than this statement, the manifesto does not provide any information on the nature of the interface and synergies to be promoted, or how they would foster and promote cooperation, linkages and interactions not only between NARO and NAADS, but also among other players in the agriculture sector. Indeed, it follows that in their endeavours to promote and improve the performance of the sector, the political parties missed out on the chance to leverage the benefits that can come from genuine agricultural innovation systems. This too is a major shortcoming.

3.3 Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

The importance of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) to agricultural production and development cannot be over-emphasised. PGRFA is defined as any genetic material of plant origin with actual or potential value for food and agriculture.⁶⁹ PGRFA constitute the most important source of raw material for

68 See Rajalahti, R. (2009), *Promoting Agricultural Innovation Systems Approach: The Way Forward*. Available at <http://knowledge.cta.int/en/Dossiers/Demanding-Innovation/Innovation-systems/Articles/Promoting-Agricultural-Innovation-Systems-Approach-The-Way-Forward>. [Accessed on 4/02/2011].

69 See Article 2 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Rome, 2001.

most agricultural enterprises and provide the building blocks to boost production and productivity.⁷⁰ In this regard, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture rightly acknowledges that PGRFA “are the raw material indispensable for crop genetic improvement, whether by means of farmers’ selection, classical plant breeding or modern biotechnologies, and are essential in adapting to unpredictable environmental changes and future human needs”.⁷¹

Although Uganda is acknowledged to be richly endowed with biodiversity, a significant part of which is PGRFA, these resources are eroding at alarming rates.⁷² This is partly as a result of ecosystem degradation (most of which is human-induced), and partly the result of the displacement of traditional and indigenous plant varieties by improved and modern varieties. Given that Uganda’s population is growing at an alarming rate and will require more food and fibre to feed, any political party that aspires to take power is expected to have some clear measures and strategies to protect, conserve and promote the sustainable use of these resources. Unfortunately, none of the political party manifestos promises anything in this direction. This is disappointing given the fact that Uganda is party to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture,⁷³ which requires governments to take policy, legal and administrative measures for the conservation, sustainable use, and equitable sharing of benefits arising from these resources.

70 Tumushabe, T., Demissie, A., and Naluwairo, R. (2008), *Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in Eastern and Central Africa: Analysis of Trends, Emerging Policy Issues and Strategic Priorities*, ASARECA, Entebbe, p.4. See also Naluwairo, R and Mulumba, J. (2006), *Towards a National Policy on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in Uganda*, NARO Policy Briefing Paper, NARO, Entebbe, p.1.

71 See the Preamble, *supra* note 69.

72 Naluwairo and Mulumba (2006), *supra* note 70.

73 Uganda acceded to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture on 25 March 2003. See <http://www.fao.org/Legal/TREATIES/033s-e.htm> [Accessed on 2/02/2011].

4. CONCLUSION

In their quest to garner votes in this year's general election, political parties promised to undertake many measures to develop and improve the performance of the agriculture sector. Although most of the measures promised appear good, many of them are stated in generalized terms with very little or no information as to how the political parties actually plan to deliver on their promises.

With the exception of the NRM, a striking observation about many of the proposals made by the different political parties is that they are either the same as, or strikingly similar to, the policies and initiatives that were pursued by the government in the 1960s, 70s and early 80s. Among such measures include re-establishing and promoting cooperative unions, revamping the network of District Agriculture Training Institutes, providing agricultural inputs at subsidized prices, and (re) establishing an agricultural bank. This move by many political parties may well be a demonstration of a lack of confidence in many of the policy measures and initiatives that the NRM government has pursued over the last two decades which are failing to deliver in terms of improving the performance of the agriculture sector. But besides demonstrating lack of confidence in the NRM's policy measures, the backward focus apparent within so many manifestos also points to a dearth of policy innovation within Uganda's political parties themselves. This is problematic because, as earlier emphasised, some of the agricultural policies of the past decades had their own challenges and pitfalls, none of which were mentioned by those manifestos that recommended they be re-implemented.

In general, the NRM plans to continue implementing its current policy measures, which include continuing the demand-driven agricultural extension and advisory services system; providing agricultural credit through partnerships with private financial institutions; and, supporting the market-oriented, commercial and food-security model farmers. The major concern, of course, is how these measures will perform in the future, given their failure over the past decade to stimulate the desired growth and development of the sector. In fact, the NRM's refusal to commit itself to increased funding for the agricultural sector makes the practicality of implementing many of its promises highly questionable.

In its final section, this policy research paper sought to highlight some important areas that the political party manifestos missed, which require urgent interventions if the agriculture sector is to flourish to the levels that Ugandans want. These areas include the governance and institutional architecture of the agriculture sector; agricultural innovation beyond research and technology development; and the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. Any presidential candidate or political party that comes to power must address the challenges in these areas if they truly mean to improve the performance of the agriculture sector and the livelihoods of Uganda's farmers.

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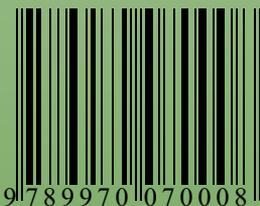
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