

# **REPUBLIC OF RWANDA**



## **THE PRIME MINISTER**

**Keynote address by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister  
Dr. Ngirente Edouard**

**At the Fourth Malabo Montpellier Forum**

**Kigali Marriott Hotel, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

- **Your Excellency Hailemariam Dessalegn, Former Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,**
- **Hon. Ministers, here present,**
- **Representatives of Development Agencies,**
- **Malabo Montpellier Panel Members,**
- **Distinguished Guests,**

**Good morning,**

- 1.** I would like to welcome you all to this Malabo Montpellier Forum and wish you a good stay in Kigali, Rwanda. Allow me first to thank organizers, particularly the Malabo Montpellier Panel, for organizing this Forum and for giving us the opportunity to host it in Rwanda.
- 2.** Hosting such an important forum on digitalization of African Agriculture is timely and relevant to Africa's economic transformation. African farmers need the right skills and approaches to increase their production, modernize agricultural extension services and better manage risks. This requires our highest attention as governments, policy-makers, researchers, entrepreneurs and development partners.

## **Distinguished guests,**

- 3.** Statistics show that in Africa, agriculture sector accounts for around 32% of the GDP. Agriculture contributes to our economies considerably in assuring of food security, agro-processing industries and exports among others. Therefore, one way of developing the continent would require increasing investment in this sector.
  
- 4.** In this regard, the Malabo Declaration set the Africa 2025 Vision for Agriculture. This vision is implemented within the Framework of Africa's Agenda 2063. The Malabo Declaration commits, among others, to enhance investment finance in agriculture, boost intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services, and to end hunger in Africa by 2025.
  
- 5.** To develop strategies for achieving the Malabo Commitments, this forum is extremely important. In fact, the Malabo Montpellier Forum provides a platform for informed dialogue and exchange among African policy makers at the highest level on agriculture, nutrition and food security.

**6.** The use of ICT in transforming agricultural sector is very important. ICT would allow farmers and other agriculture sector stakeholders to access efficiently accurate and timely information for the decision-making in the sector.

**Distinguished guests,**

**7.** Rwanda has an ambition to achieve an upper-middle-income status by 2035 and high-income status by 2050. The transformation of agriculture into a productive, high value, market oriented sector, with forward linkages to other sectors is one of the important pillars in our Vision.

**8.** In this regard, a holistic national ICT strategy for Rwanda Agriculture (ICT4RAg) 2016-2020 was developed. This strategy aims among others at increasing the efficiency of the support offered to farmers by realizing potential synergies, avoiding duplication of interventions and increasing cost effectiveness of the services and support.

9. Within the framework of enhancing labor productivity and ICT-based agricultural commercialization, several initiatives to digitize agriculture in Rwanda were undertaken:

- i) Rwanda has embraced an ICT transformational agenda since 2000 through the National Information Communications Infrastructure (NICI) policy. The National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) 2017-2024 calls for the development and coordination of national ICT and innovation policies, programs and citizen's empowerment.
- ii) The Ministry of ICT and Innovation has been established to address national priorities related to digitalization to foster national economic growth and fast-track poverty reduction.
- iii) Rwanda has also established partnerships which have seen the setting up of academic institutions of technology recognized at international level. Currently, more than 7,000 km of fiber optic is laid across the country from 4500 km in 2015. Internet penetration rate has increased to more than 52% in 2018 from 7.9% in 2010; and the phone penetration rate is more than 77%.

## **Distinguished guests,**

**10.** On the agriculture sector side, the fourth Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture in Rwanda (PSTA4) 2018-2024 aims at the sector digitalization to have real-time and accurate information:

- i) Currently, the Management Information System (MIS) allows the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources to get timely data from Districts.
- ii) Furthermore, an Agricultural market pricing information system e-Soko has been initiated. This digital platform for trade and services provides market prices on agriculture products, in addition to the existing smart nkunganire System which allows farmers to order inputs.
- iii) In collaboration with development partners, we are developing a digital project with various mobile services including weather, crop calendar and fall army worm monitoring system. This project has an objective of providing rural farmers with agricultural information and knowledge to increase their income.

- iv) The private sector also plays an active role in the agricultural digitalization process. It is helping farmers to build their digital identity and create trust to resolve issues related to access finance for smallholder farmers.

### **Distinguished Guests,**

- 11.** Although a good progress has been made in transforming agriculture, Rwanda like other African countries, still have challenges to overcome. These challenges include insufficient agriculture financing, low level of agricultural mechanization, limited agriculture professionalization, climate change and low capacities to meet standards and manage price volatility on international markets.
- 12.** To address these challenges, there is a need for policy makers to de-risk the sector to attract more investments, continue empowering youth to embrace agriculture as an attractive and competitive business, strengthen research and extension, use of modern technologies and improve agricultural literacy for all involved in the sector.

**13.** While anticipating useful recommendations from this forum, I would like to thank once again all the organizers and declare the Malabo-Montpellier forum officially open.

**Thank you for your kind attention.**