



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Investing in women farmers key to halving hunger**

Wednesday, April 21, 2010- Investing in women smallholder farmers is the key to halving hunger and results in twice as much growth as investment in any other sector (1), a new ActionAid report reveals, as the Senate Foreign Relations committee meets Thursday to consider President Obama's new global food security initiative (Thursday April 22)

Less than one per cent of the agriculture budget is targeted at women in the three countries researched by ActionAid – Malawi, Kenya and Uganda, despite women's central contribution to the growing of food, reports ***Fertile Ground***.

And international donors say that as little as ten per cent of their aid to agriculture goes to women farmers.

“One billion people going hungry must be a wake-up call that there's something very wrong with our farming,” said Peter O'Driscoll, Executive Director of ActionAid USA

“This startling increase in hunger damages peoples' development and is undermining progress on other Millennium Development Goals, especially child and maternal mortality,” he added.

The report is released on the eve of USAID Administrator Raj Shah's testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee tomorrow, kicking off accelerated efforts in the Senate to secure passage of food security legislation authorizing the Obama administration's new food security initiative. Also on Thursday, the World Bank launches its Trust Fund for Global Agriculture & Food Security in Washington.

With billions of dollars in new funding for agricultural development with the Obama initiative and the World Bank Trust Fund, the report's findings offer important lessons for these new efforts. At the moment, virtually nothing is being spent on research into crops grown by women, training, credit, early childhood education and access to land, despite food price hikes and shortages likely to worsen as climate change intensifies.

“Despite recent commitments, donor aid to agriculture is still too little, uncoordinated and arrives too late,” said Tennyson Williams, ActionAid's Acting Regional Director for West Africa. “It has also been poorly targeted and remains hugely inconsistent with the realities of women's role in food production.”

“Governments and donors must keep their promises to tackle this unprecedented growth in hunger and get back on track to halving hunger by 2015,” he said.

***Fertile Ground*** shows that 2.9 million Ugandans could be lifted out of poverty by 2015 if the country reached a six per cent agricultural growth rate annually. (2)

In Kenya, 1.5 million lives could be improved, if current sums on agriculture doubled from 5 to 10 per cent. (3)

In stark contrast, Malawi is one of Africa's highest spenders on agriculture and as a result food security is better than at any time in recent history. In 2004, 1.5 million people needed food aid while in 2009; this number had dropped to 150,000 people.

Extension services, agricultural research focused on smallholders, and rural financial services – are the most under-resourced but would help women the most.

Low-cost, ecologically sustainable and climate-resilient methods of increasing productivity are being neglected in favour of conventional intensive approaches that often benefit richer farmers most, and can have high environmental costs.

Farmers themselves say they value the increased stability of yields achieved through sustainable approaches, as much as increased volumes. (4)

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ActionAid is an international anti-poverty agency working in over 40 countries taking sides with poor people to end poverty and injustice together  
[www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)

ActionAid's HungerFREE campaign calls on governments to deliver on their commitment to halve world hunger by 2015.

***Stories, photos and video*** to accompany the report are available to download from ActionAid's StoryHub: <http://storyhub.actionaid.org/?c=21262&k=93602f4063>

**ActionAid's report *Fertile Ground*** is available to download at <http://www.actionaidusa.org/news/publications/fertilegroundreport.pdf>

## **References**

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