

## **A critical look at the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN) in Senegal**

*Aga Khan Foundation Canada*

*Canadian Council for International Co-operation*

*Canadian Feed The Children*

*Canadian Foodgrains Bank*

*Canadian Lutheran World Relief*

*Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief*

*CARE Canada*

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*Inter Pares*

*Mennonite Central Committee Canada*

*National Farmers Union*

*Oxfam Canada*

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*Save the Children Canada*

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*United Church of Canada*

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*World Accord*

*World Animal Protection*

*World Vision Canada*

Canada's support for the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN) in Senegal has demonstrated that this model of public-private partnership is not necessarily the most effective way to meet development goals. This is according to research conducted in Senegal and Canada by the Canadian Food Security Policy Group<sup>i</sup> (FSPG). This policy brief presents key findings from the research. For details, refer to the full report: *Is Private Investment in Agriculture the Solution? An Evaluation of the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Senegal*.

### **Introduction**

The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN) was launched by the G8 in 2012, to build on previous G8 efforts, especially the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative of 2009. Whereas L'Aquila rallied governments to invest public funds in food security, NAFSN appealed to private sector companies, both national and multinational, to "achieve sustained and inclusive agricultural growth and raise 50 million people out of poverty over the next 10 years". Since its inception, NAFSN has drawn attention and concern worldwide. Reasons include:

- There are questions around the legitimacy of using public aid money in ways that would provide clear benefits (image, policy influence) for private corporations;
- There are questions around accountability, transparency and governance of these projects, when public officials are not in the driver's seat, nor are companies directly accountable to them;
- It is unclear and unproven how partnerships with private sector companies would provide any benefit for the poorest and most vulnerable;
- The initiative seemed to give priority to large-scale agricultural models and global value chains that have been linked to social and environmental costs;
- Partnering with multinational corporations that have questionable or no clear relation to advancing development goals (e.g. Coca-Cola, Monsanto, and Guinness).

Among the G8 countries, Canada took a leadership role in supporting Senegal within NAFSN, and committed CAD 80 million over four years (2013 to 2017). According to the cooperation agreement with Senegal, the initiatives will aim to: “support rural economic development, improved access to credit, increased production, agricultural product marketing and development, and nutrition. In particular, the initiatives will address the challenges and opportunities that women face in rural economies.”<sup>ii</sup>

In 2015-2016, the Canadian Food Security Policy Group (FSPG) carried out research to shed light on NAFSN, its impacts in Senegal, and the role of Canada within it. The evaluation was conducted by an independent researcher and guided by an advisory committee composed of FSPG members and academics. The 18 month-long research project was based on a literature review, 6 months of field work in Senegal and 60 key informant interviews with local NGOs, Canadian officials based in Senegal and Canada, Senegalese Government, private sector companies involved in NAFSN, and multilateral agencies.

The research sought to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is Canada’s involvement in NAFSN?
- (2) What is the motivation for the private sector to engage in NAFSN?
- (3) What initiatives have been supported by Canada through NAFSN?
- (4) What are the underlying assumptions of the projects funded through NAFSN?
- (5) What is the perception of results achieved?
- (6) What has been the impact of NAFSN?
- (7) Are there lessons to learn from NAFSN that can inform policy on private sector/ public partnerships using official development assistance?
- (8) How do Canada’s results through NAFSN comply with the ODA Accountability Act?

### **Key findings from the research<sup>iii</sup>**

#### **1. Big promises, little impact for smallholders and women**

NAFSN is based on the assumption that the private sector, supported by public aid funds, would deliver benefits for food insecure people, yet this assumption is neither examined nor proven in NAFSN documents. Our research found no evidence that NAFSN has had a direct and measurable impact on reducing poverty or improving food security for smallholder farmers. NAFSN encouraged value chain development for export markets, a model which is more likely to benefit large and medium scale farmers, rather than smallholders.

Despite the goal of focusing on women’s needs, there is little evidence that NAFSN programs targeted women, or even measured the impact on women. The only available NAFSN data that relates to women shows that on a three year average they could access only 18% of the services offered.<sup>iv</sup> Furthermore, women only occupied 24% of NAFSN-created jobs.<sup>v</sup> Despite the fact that smallholders, especially women, suffer the highest levels of food insecurity, NAFSN in Senegal seems to have made little effort to consult them or design activities to address their specific needs.

## **2. Big noise, no new money**

Despite press releases giving the impression of new funding for food security and nutrition, NAFSN did not provide new public funds, nor did it lead to new projects. It was comprised of old commitments and pre-existing initiatives that had already been budgeted for. Canada maintained existing levels of funding, and shifted the focus of its aid to align more with NAFSN goals.

The private sector failed to show up in the way that was expected by NAFSN proponents. Agricultural companies invested approximately \$200 million in Senegal during the NAFSN years, but this is considerably less than their initial pledges of \$770 million. NAFSN did not lead to the influx of new foreign companies in Senegal, since most companies were primarily Senegalese. Moreover, Senegal was working to attract private investment in agriculture well before NAFSN. Many of the initiatives credited to NAFSN were already underway, or likely would have happened without it.

## **3. Lack of ownership, mutual disappointment, and dwindling interest**

Canada played a limited role in Senegal's roll out of NAFSN. Although it was a champion of the initiative, Canada's role in implementation was minor. Despite this, Canada (and other donors) speaks of NAFSN as a success. In contrast, those closer to the ground, companies and the Senegalese government, are disappointed in the outcomes of NAFSN. The companies feel that the Senegalese government moved too slowly, whereas the government feels that companies did not fulfill the commitments in their letters of intent.

## **4. No smoking gun yet: land and seeds**

Despite initial fears of NAFSN facilitating land grabs and reducing peasants' access to seeds, there is no evidence yet of this happening in Senegal although this appears to have been the case in other NAFSN participating countries.<sup>vi</sup> This may be due to the local context, where civil society is strong, and has been effective at preventing important regulatory changes that would have facilitated land acquisitions or seed privatization. Senegal's experience seems to be different from other NAFSN participating countries in this regard.

## **5. Lack of consultation with smallholder farmers**

There was a poor level of involvement of smallholder farmers in the design and implementation of NAFSN. Peasant organizations have consistently advocated for policies that support smallholder agriculture but these concerns have not been effectively integrated into the functioning of the New Alliance. Nevertheless, some effort was made to include civil society into NAFSN in Senegal, with the *Association Sénégalaise pour la Promotion du Développement par la Base* (ASPRODEB) joining the initiative as a private partner. But overall, civil society and farm organizations perceive NAFSN at best as a top down initiative.

## **6. No accountability to measure or deliver on stated goals**

The Canadian government said it is not possible to measure food security outcomes of NAFSN. No evaluation mechanism was put into place to measure the effects of NAFSN on poverty reduction or food security. The Canadian government has also stated that Canada is responsible to the G8 in terms of implementing NAFSN and its outcomes, not to Senegal.

Furthermore, there was no clear selection process of private sector partners to attain NAFSN's stated goals. Canada did not take part in the selection process, which was devolved to a consulting firm and the goal was to recruit as many businesses as possible with little or no attention given to the question of how these companies might contribute to further the goals of addressing food security and poverty.

## 7. NAFSN does not respect the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act

According to the ODA Accountability Act, "Official development assistance may be provided only if the competent minister is of the opinion that it: (a) contributes to poverty reduction; (b) takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and (c) is consistent with international human rights standards.

Based on our assessment of the research, NAFSN fails to fulfill at least two of the three conditions under which ODA can be provided: (a) there is no demonstrated link between poverty reduction and NAFSN. NAFSN is not even measuring it; and (b) there is little evidence of NAFSN's design taking into account the perspectives of the poor. It appears to have been designed by G8 countries, who then invited developing countries to participate without consultation with poor people or their governments.

## Overall Lessons/ recommendations

This research found no evidence that NAFSN's approach of partnering with the private sector was effective in reducing poverty, improving food security and nutrition, or addressing the challenges faced by women in the Senegalese context. Based on previous research and decades of experience, the FSPG believes that Canada could more effectively achieve these goals by investing aid funds in programs to support smallholder farmers and their organizations. Our policy brief *Agenda for Food Security and Resilience*<sup>vii</sup> gives more information on this approach, which includes examples of profitable and nutrition sensitive agriculture, climate resilient agriculture such as agroecology, and women's empowerment and access to land and productive resources.

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<sup>i</sup> The Canadian Food Security Policy Group is a coalition of Canadian civil society organisations engaged in global food security. [www.ccic.ca/working\\_groups/food\\_e.php](http://www.ccic.ca/working_groups/food_e.php)

<sup>ii</sup> Source: [http://new-alliance.org/sites/default/files/resources/Cooperation-Framework-NAFSN-Senegal\\_compressed.pdf](http://new-alliance.org/sites/default/files/resources/Cooperation-Framework-NAFSN-Senegal_compressed.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Note that these findings are specific to Senegal and may not apply in other NAFSN countries

<sup>iv</sup> For the 2013-14 period, only 17% of people accessing NAFSN related services were women. This dropped to 14% in 2014-15 period, and rose to 23% in the 2015-16 period.

<sup>v</sup> Figure derived from calculating 40% of 926 jobs + 21% of 4226 jobs.

<sup>vi</sup> Cf. <http://www.mo.be/en/analysis/tanzanian-farmers-are-facing-heavy-prison-sentences-if-they-continue-their-traditional-seed>; Cf page 27 of European Parliament Study on NAFSN:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/535010/EXPO\\_STU\(2015\)535010\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/535010/EXPO_STU(2015)535010_EN.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> [http://www.ccic.ca/files/en/working\\_groups/food\\_security\\_and\\_resilience\\_07\\_.pdf](http://www.ccic.ca/files/en/working_groups/food_security_and_resilience_07_.pdf)

**ACCESS THE FULL REPORT:** *Is Private Investment in Agriculture the Solution? An Evaluation of the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Senegal* [http://www.ccic.ca/working\\_groups/food\\_e.php](http://www.ccic.ca/working_groups/food_e.php)