

- Question 1: How can the Netherlands (government, industry, social enterprises, civil society, knowledge institutions) achieve more results regarding themes such as conflicts and instability, providing reception in the region and emergency aid?
  - Conflict, instability and emergencies are interlinked with food and nutrition insecurity, both being its consequence and its provocative. Cut-off farming-based production and long-term scarceness of food can lead to tensions, vulnerability, riots and worse. For example, food was a catalyst for the Arab Spring. Providing food security makes people more resilient, therefore making it easier for them to recover from (man-made) disasters and emergencies. Aligning policies and investments, aiming at systemic change in dysfunctional value chains affected by conflict and instability or vice versa, combined with agribusiness coaching leads to leads to job creation, increased household income and improved livelihoods. Furthermore, results can be achieved in supporting the development of jobs within in the sector, especially for the younger generation who is dealing with high numbers of unemployment, which can lead to increased involvement in conflict too.
  
- Question 2: How can the Netherlands (government, industry, social enterprises, civil society, knowledge institutions) best address the population growth in Africa and stimulate employment among young people in Africa and the Middle East?
  - The agricultural sector is arguably the most important employer in terms of population growth but its running empty – how to feed 9 billion people in 2050? In West-Africa alone, 66% of total employment is in the food economy (OECD, 2016). But it is estimated that for eleven million young people entering Africa’s job market, there are only three million jobs created. The obvious answers are modernization, upscaling and technology. However, numbers by FAO show that due to mixed cropping on smaller pieces of land, smallholder farmers can be up to eight times more effective at job creation (in AGRA, 2017). ICRA believes that the solution lies in expanding this by building skills and sharing knowledge with these farmers through collaborations with and between TVET, universities, local supply chains and the advisory sector. Making sure that curricula match with demands on the labor market, is an important component here. Research, teaching and farming should and can be interlinked to develop effective and profitable value chains. Our vision is that those need the inclusion of small holder farmers and for that to happen, these farmers as well as the business and support actors they work with, need more than technological, managerial and financial support alone. Trustful business relationships and improved collaboration in local agribusiness networks make small holder value chains function better. These lead to efficient operations, security of supply, meeting market demands and continuous improvement of the supply chain. Although seemingly obvious, this does not happen automatically. Active facilitation and strengthening of specific capacities to partner are required. This is ICRA’s focus and expertise.  
<https://agra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Final-AASR-2017-Aug-28.pdf>  
<http://www.oecd.org/swac/topics/food-system-transformations/handout-agriculture-food-jobs-west-africa.pdf>
  
- Question 3: Which new areas of interest could the government identify? Resources are limited, so we must choose: which areas of interest needs less emphasis?
 

At ICRA we know how important it is to stand in one another’s shoes – it makes us gain vital insights into local realities and creates mutual understanding between different stakeholders. While technological innovations in the agriculture sector are vital and promising; to ensure they are successful we need to ensure they are linked to a real need in the value chain; need-driven solutions instead of technology driven

solutions. ICRA believes in facilitating relationships between different actors for profitable business solutions. Since change is not driven by money and technology alone, we must invest in education and actively facilitating and strengthening relationships between actors on the ground. This way, we built resilience and a base for sustainability.

Question 4: What innovative solutions can the Dutch government, NGOs and the private sector encourage to 1) reduce CO2 emissions (climate mitigation) and 2) help societies to adapt to climate change (climate adaptation)?

- Innovative solutions emerge from trustful partnerships and collaborations. We need to link research, education and the community for these solutions to be deployable on a larger scale. That's the tricky part; that large scale consists of millions and millions of consumers. Applying change management to all of them is too ambitious, but we can start by creating a place for producers who innovatively provide solutions that have the potential to grow. Meat for example is one of the biggest culprits. Initiatives stimulating the production and promotion of meat substitutes are actions to consider. An example: Banda-Borae women processing soya kebab. Read more about their road to a recipe of success [here](#).
- Question 5: Where do you see opportunities in production, trade and investment to make progress on societal challenges in the social field (such as better working conditions, higher wages, extra opportunities for women and young people) or on an ecological level (such as water, climate, biodiversity)?
  - Production, trade and investment are interlinked when it comes to creating social and ecological change. We find its biggest challenges in developing countries. Opportunities lie in creating partnerships in which for example not only farmers, but employees found throughout the entire value chain, combine forces. However, it is fact that not everyone has had the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to the economy. When women play an active role in the value chain together with men, youth and minorities, solutions for improvement and progress are found that work for everybody instead of just for specific groups. Adding female voices to the conversation does lead to more mutual understanding and thus to better and more sustainable solutions, relationships and in the end to improved income and livelihoods. Pressing for progress in achieving gender parity will have extraordinary effects on the economy. According to a report by McKinsey, if women reach their full potential, meaning they participate equally economically as men, global GDP can increase by 26%, or \$28 trillion. In Sub Saharan Africa specifically, GDP can increase by 27%, or \$0.7 trillion, when the equality gap is closed. ICRA is dedicated to play its part in bridging the gap and facilitating women to be drivers of change and success in agriculture research, education and value chains. Furthermore, local ownership combined with knowledge and training institutions' involvement (both in the North as in the Global South) can enhance not only safer and cleaner production, the ambition to strive for better working conditions and amongst other things, the interest of African youth in the agricultural sector. We must invest in creating systematic change in which farming is a means of business, instead of solely a means of survival.
- Question 6: Do you have concrete suggestions for how the government can promote that international trade and investments contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals?
  - Food and nutrition security are connected to many SDGs such as ending hunger (SDG 2), ending poverty (SDG 1), ensuring sustainable production (SDG 12), taking climate action (13), managing biodiversity (15) and creating partnerships (17) to name a few.

This last one, forms one of the pillars of food and nutrition security. One concrete suggestion would be to increase the agricultural exports of the least developing countries and implement a system in which they deal with a different set of rules, regulations and treaties, making it easier for them to access, trade and invest within and receive back from the market. The government should also work with local governments, from one overarching vision to align sustainable, consistent policies across departments (e.g. development support vs EU import tax barriers). We should support national governments in strengthening skills to establish enabling environments. Furthermore, the SDGs are currently high on the agenda of the private sector, a sector in which instruments can be aligned by developing it through education. This is directly influenced by investors who find that tracking achievements in the SDG framework helps make a business case and provide more financial and ethical trust in a sustainable future. Another concrete suggestion would be to invest in developing more of these successful business cases and allocate funding to help businesses track their achievements in the SDG framework to become finance ready.

- Question 7: With which innovative and creative solutions and in which areas could the government better support the business community and knowledge institutions to market knowledge and expertise worldwide?
  - Innovative shouldn't automatically mean 'enhanced by technology and money'. The government should take businesses and knowledge institutions into account that see the trading of knowledge and expertise as a two-way street; helping themselves while helping the other as well. This means that we should take the capacity we have regarding sustainable sources and sourcing and translate it into knowledge and expertise that works as seen from the context of a developing country. But besides this, we should have a facilitating role (like ICRA), to have local actors come up with solutions themselves – they know their countries best. ICRA has seen the impressive effect of its support to strengthen training staff and curricula of universities and technical schools to bridge the gap between theory and practice, relate to the local realities of partners and students and include the private sector. Right now, the physical classroom is key. We are seeing the vast and impressive developments in technology on the continent. However, ICRA sees technology as a tool to a solution; not as the solution itself. The virtual classroom can be extremely interesting in addition to in-person teaching. As mentioned before, engaging the youth into the agribusiness sector is key for both the generation and the sector itself. We see opportunities of blended learning to increase pan African learning and access more youth interested in making agriculture their business. Imagine how one could make youth see agriculture as a business through online guest courses by Akinwumi Adesina himself or what about mister Dangote? These are of course high-profile examples, but each country has great examples of successful agribusiness men and women who can relate to a new generation. Solutions won't be necessary if problems are prevented, hence education is where chances lie.
- Question 8: How can the business community and in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) receive better support in the process of internationalization in all necessary areas, and in which markets does this deserve extra support?
  - The government should pick and choose business community efforts and SMEs that have an agenda in favor of international equality and sustainability. In other words, those that contribute to markets that positively affect the realization of the 2030 agenda (such as food and nutrition and reducing poverty) should receive (extra) support. Then, it is in between markets where these SMEs could benefit the most

from the extra support. Often the real question already starts at identifying those markets – being aware that they exist and once they are they seem far and complicated, relations do not reach and other (business and culture) languages are spoken. ICRA believes in supporting value chain actors to gain capabilities and relations to 1) identify markets 2) accessing financing to access the market and 3) developing sustainable and profitable business relationships in new markets. A systematical, process-based approach is key here.

- Question 9: In addition to your contribution to the above questions, do you have other recommendations for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation?
  - In policymaking, incorporate methods, ideas, innovations, partnerships, approaches, programs and/or practices that are in favor of preventing the root causes of poverty, hunger, inequality, climate change etcetera, both in the Netherlands as in the rest of the world. Solutions are necessary, prevention is obligatory.

The Netherlands has always been a trailblazer when it comes to agriculture and agribusiness. The immense knowledge and expertise that we have been able to develop over many years is incredibly interesting to both Dutch and African businesses. To succeed in offering Dutch services abroad; intense knowledge and understanding of the local reality of the (new) county or region is a vital component for success. ICRA believes in investing to support Dutch Agribusinesses to understand local realities to set up strong local value chain networks and sustainable and profitable business relationships. By applying an IDH (the sustainable trade initiative e.g. pre-competitive convening, match funding) approach, not just throwing money and technology at problems and challenges, but sustainably collaborate with both small and large players is the way to get to an improved playing field from which we all benefit.

Finally, let's not forget to practice what we preach. Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (2018) published the latest report on the Netherlands' progress regarding the SDGs last week. One of the most striking facts is that the Netherlands has bottom ranking (26<sup>th</sup> out of 28<sup>th</sup> positions in Europe) for its greenhouse gas emissions per inhabitant. Furthermore, we lost our place in the greenhouse gas EU fast-track group. We must stay on track, nationally as well as internationally.

<https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/10/netherlands-closer-to-achieving-sustainability-goals>