

Wednesday April 23, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. / Le mercredi 23 avril 2014 à 17h00

Guest Speaker: Paul Hagerman, Director of Public Policy, Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Special Guest: Jim Cornelius, Executive Director, Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Agenda items

1. Welcome by the Chair / Mot de bienvenue de la Présidence

The Chair noted that since its founding in 2007, the ASG was now in its eighth year and that some 60 monthly meetings had taken place. Three recently inducted participants were introduced:

Gwen Temmel is enrolled in International Development and African Studies at NPSIA with Carleton's Institute of African Studies. Her focus is on human rights and gender equity. She is also studying Swahili. Gwen has a B.A. from UVic and spent 2012-13 working in Peru. She intends to go to Africa in the next few years for research, work or volunteering.

M. l'Abbé Donat Mulumba est originaire de la localité de Kamiji au Kasai Oriental en RDC, et habite maintenant à Gatineau. Il est Président de la fondation Congo-Faim/Hunger Inc. La fondation manifeste sa compassion auprès des populations défavorisées de la République démocratique du Congo, en accompagnant les efforts des organisations civiles locales dans leurs initiatives de lutter contre la faim et la pauvreté. Un aperçu des impressionnantes initiatives de développement rural en RDC appuyées par la fondation se trouve sur son site-web, www.congofaim.ca .

Heinrich Hattingh was born in Vryheid, kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa. He speaks English, German, Zulu and Afrikaans fluently and has a basic knowledge of Korean. He holds a BA Degree in Languages and Cultures, University of Stellenbosch and completed his Post Graduate Teachers Degree and an Honours degree in English through the University of South Africa. In South Africa, he worked as a teacher and initiated and managed a program which provided tutorials and food parcels for AIDS orphans in the Msigazi Tribal Area as well as engaging in other philanthropic endeavours. In South Korea, he was a weekly guest speaker on a radio show. Canada has been Heinrich's home since June 2013 and he hopes to settle in Ottawa permanently.

2. Paul Hagerman, "Growing for the Thirteenth Month: From Vulnerability to Food Security / Semer pour le treizième mois: De la disette à la sécurité alimentaire"

Mr. Hagerman explained that the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a collaborative venture involving a partnership among 15 church-based groups from nine provinces. Its goals are to educate Canadians and get them involved; support partnerships overseas to reduce hunger and develop agriculture; and to influence policy-making.

The Bank's activities include:

- Provision of food aid, e.g. to the Sahel and Syria. This amounts to about 60% of the budget; Canadian farmers may donate part of their harvests. The Bank had lobbied to allow for this to be converted to cash and the food aid is now untied.
- Improve agriculture, e.g. through intercropping, higher yield seeds, extension. 25%
- Nutrition – 5%

- Advocacy on policy – 5%
- Administration – 6%

The Bank's budget of approximately \$40 million annually is helped by around \$25 million in matching grants from DFATD (formerly CIDA). The last increase was in 2007-08. DFATD's aid to the agriculture sector has been decreasing and averages only 15-20% of the ODA budget.

Mr. Hagerman based his presentation on a study done recently in Zambia among 141 farmer-stakeholders, as well as 37 extension agents and the use of focus groups in 10 African countries.

What had changed in recent years: rain less abundant or predictable; gender roles have evolved.

The main conclusions had been as follows:

Step one:

- Training in farm techniques should precede other forms of agriculture interventions. The public sector or NGOs rather than the private sector are better placed to provide basic training e.g. on how to adapt to less rain; agro-forestry cover cropping; inclusion of men and women; power of groups to provide loans; innovative extension methods needed

Step two:

- Farming as a business: diversity beyond grains (e.g. market gardens, processing, rural businesses);
- Enter markets for inputs and to sell surpluses; access finance; keep records (e.g. with new technologies such as cell phones, herbicides, irrigation)
- This will enable families to avoid the shortfalls before the next harvest and create surpluses.

Role of private firms: The speaker saw their role as advice to those buying their inputs or with contract farmers. Their role is not a substitute for public investment.

Policy: In the Maputo Declaration, African countries pledged to devote 10% of their budgets to agriculture. In 2012, the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition launched by the G8 countries at their meeting at Camp David in the USA pledged to provide a positive framework for FDI. Building on previous G8 efforts, this joint partnership aims to accelerate responsible investment in African agriculture and lift 50 million people out of poverty by 2022.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is lobbying DFATD for support to smallholders in its trade policies as well as supporting a greater share of ODA devoted to agriculture. It is also seeking allies among politicians.

In response to questions, Mr. Hagerman indicated that US and EU agricultural subsidies remained significant and hurt developing countries (e.g. cotton). The Bank had lobbied against them without much success.

On whether foreign owners were buying large tracts of African land, Mr. Hagerman said that this did not appear to be the case in Zambia as it was land-locked. It may be more significant in countries with port capacity to export food quickly.

He noted that current extension workers in Africa were now locally trained by the Bank's partners. They were still hampered by things such as lack of fuel for their field trips.

On successful models where small farmers had prospered, Mr. Cornelius cited Ghana and Vietnam.

Marketing boards: it was noted that the private sector had shown greater efficiency than government-operated marketing boards in a number of countries.

Gender data: this dimension is integrated into all the Bank's programs. Local cultures vary widely in their practices. The role of women can also depend on which crop is involved.

Zambia had proven more optimistic about the future of agriculture than some other partner countries. The availability of good seed was a positive factor. Zambia does not currently allow GMO. Local farmers seem satisfied with the status quo as their seeds have adapted to a broad range of local conditions.

3. Recent African Developments and Views from Members / L'actualité africaine et les nouvelles des membres

ASG member Mr. Eugene Nzeribe outlined planned activities of ICAfrica, a new anti-poverty organization established in Canada, of which he is Executive Director, which targets Nigeria. More information can be obtained at www.icafrica.com.

The Chair noted that the next ASG meeting, on the theme of human rights in Africa, would be held on May 28. The second annual ASG barbecue to be organized by Paul Hitschfeld will be hosted by Ron and Eleanor Rose at their home on June 18, with more information to follow.

The meeting was adjourned close to 7 p.m.