Unscrambling Africa:  
Regional investments and policies required for raising agricultural productivity

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Unscrambling Africa

1. Origins of Africa’s capricious political borders  
2. Impact on agriculture  
3. Cures
1. Origins of capricious political borders: Katanga

- Berlin Conference (1884-85)
- King Leopold: 2 emissaries (1889-90)
- King Misri: declines (1889-90)
- Cecil Rhodes: 1 emissary (1891)
- William Stairs: Leopold’s 3rd emissary (1891)
- Anglo-Belgian border commission (1910-14)
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- King of Italy: adjudicates (1914)
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- Anglo-Belgian border commission (1910-14)
- King of Italy: adjudicates (1914)
- Belgian Congo: merges Congo and Katanga (1919)
- DRC-Zambia (1964)
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2. Impact on agriculture and food security
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a) Restrict technology spillovers
b) Limit cross-border trade

da) agro-ecological zones
Magnitude of agricultural productivity spillovers

• Eastern and Central Africa
  → spillovers = up to 75% of total benefits
• Mali cotton
  → 6 releases over past 40 years

• Worldwide
  → research spillovers account for majority of benefits
a) Technology spillovers across agro-ecological zones

- AEZs cut across multiple countries
- Technology spillovers
  - magnify productivity gains
  - require research networks, common seed release and certification protocols

- Research networks permit economies of scale, specialist staffing and facilities
- Political borders restrict technology spillovers

2. Impact on agriculture and food security

a) Restrict technology spillovers

b) Limit cross-border trade
b) Political boundaries restrict cross-border trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surplus Zones</th>
<th>Deficit Markets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Mozambique</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Tanzania</td>
<td>Malawi, DRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Uganda</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Zimbabwe, S. Mozambique, Botswana,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tanzania, Niger, coastal W. Af.</td>
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Surplus millet and sorghum production in West Africa
Surplus millet and sorghum production in West Africa

Millet and sorghum market sheds in West Africa
b) Political borders affect trade

1. Raise transaction costs
   → lower farm prices
   → higher consumer prices
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2. Diminish incentives for private investment
   • farm productivity
   • storage, trade

Zambia-Katanga border
b) Political borders affect trade

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1. Raise transaction costs
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2. Diminish incentives for private investment
   • farm productivity
   • storage, trade
3. Prevent economies of scale, impose inefficiencies
   • input distribution
   • power generation
   • storage, processing, logistics and trade

Mo Ibrahim, November 19, 2009

“Who are we to think that we can have 53 tiny little countries and be ready to compete with China, India, Europe, the Americans? It is a fallacy... We need scale and we need that now. “
b) Political borders affect trade

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a) Regional R&D
   • Investments: regional r&D networks
   • Policies: seed registration and certification harmonization

b) Regional trade corridors
   • Investments: infrastructure (donors); silos, processing facilities, storage (private sector); farm productivity (farmers)
   • Policies: trade policy (African governments, RECs)

Conclusions

1. Africa’s political borders
   • arbitrary
   • externally imposed

2. Cures for undoing the damage inflicted in Berlin
   • regional research programs
   • regional trade corridors

3. Disconnected, individual, country-level efforts
   • costly
   • inefficient
   • dominate donor spending!

4. Donors need to reorient spending
   • to support regional programs
   • to help unscramble Africa