

Agricultural Productivity Fails to Grow in East Africa: Urgent Action Needed to Change Course

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The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 2 calls for doubling agricultural productivity of the world's smallholder farmers. Productivity growth – increasing the output of crops and livestock using fewer resources – is critical for food and nutrition security, rural development, and climate change adaptation. Despite positive trends in productivity growth during the 1980s and 1990s, much of East Africa has experienced negative productivity growth during the past 15 years. East Africa's farmers need affordable, reliable access to inputs that increase crop and livestock productivity, including fertilizer, mechanization, improved seeds, agronomic knowledge, and veterinary services. Without adequate access to these inputs, farmers will use more land and livestock to increase output, an expensive and unsustainable solution. We will use data and insights from Virginia Tech's Global Agricultural Productivity Report (GAP Report), to review the latest productivity data for Kenya and the region and outline approaches to reverse current trends, including investing in agricultural research and extension, embracing science-based technology, improving market access for inputs and outputs, cultivating public-private-producer partnerships, and increasing regional and global trade.