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## What should the agriculture agenda be in B20 under South Africa's leadership?

- When South Africa assumes the leadership of the Group of 20 (G20) on December 1 2024, the country will be in a prime position to chair the Business Forum, the B20. The G20 comprises 19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Russia, Türkiye, the UK, and the USA) and two bodies: the African Union and the European Union. South Africa's agenda is under the theme of "Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability."
- The B20 brings together business representatives from the G20 countries and sets out workstreams that take their cue from the theme defined by the government, although its actual work is autonomous. The process for formulating the priorities of the business community should soon be underway. Going to the G20, the South African agricultural sector, as a critical stakeholder in the B20, will need to outline bold goals.
- First, there should be a strong call for knowledge sharing on climate-smart agricultural practices. This theme is relevant not only for the G20 countries but also for the African continent. There is much more to learn from the experiences of Australia, Canada, the EU, and others. South Africa must open an avenue for this discussion. The insights must be canvassed with the broader African continent to help improve the continent's agricultural resilience under the current challenging climatic environment.
- Second, South Africa should pursue deepening agricultural trade. As a country, we already enjoy deeper access to several G20 economies. Still, prioritizing the theme of trade integration and ensuring that the current policies of relatively open borders on agricultural trade are maintained is vital. This point is essential in a current climate where trade fragmentation and "friend-shoring" seem to be a practice of the day. South Africa's agricultural sector is export-oriented. Therefore, it is in businesses' interest to ensure that the current practices are maintained and that there is even a deeper appreciation of trade by other partners. The African continent, whose agricultural sector still faces productivity challenges, may not benefit as much as South Africa from this theme in the near term. However, in the long run, the benefits will be widely shared.
- Third, South Africa should continue prioritizing discussions about deepening the fertilizer trade in Africa. The sub-Saharan African continent (excluding South Africa) has poor agricultural productivity due to multiple factors. One challenge is poor fertilizer usage. Access to affordable finance is also a challenge.

More fundamentally, a conducive infrastructure is needed to ensure the fertilizer reaches the farmers and their produce gets to market. Thus, linking the fertilizer matter with a need for investments in network industries is key. Still, if the political leaders want to raise a theme that would have a broader continental positive impact on reducing hunger, a discussion about fertilizer would be worthwhile. This would also entail thinking about ways to raise funds to buy and distribute fertilizer to the most vulnerable regions of the African continent. Improvements in agriculture will help reduce hunger.

- We know from the literature that growth in agriculture is generally two to three times more effective at reducing poverty than an equivalent amount of growth generated outside agriculture. Moreover, the advantage of agriculture in reducing poverty is largest for the poorest individuals in society and extends to other welfare outcomes, including food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Lastly, South Africa must discuss sharing insights about agricultural technology and investment opportunities. This work stream would involve most mechanical and IT-related technologies, which are increasingly vital for agricultural productivity and the efficiency of the food value chains. While the G20 countries are advanced in this area of work, knowledge sharing would be beneficial, mainly for the broader African continent. Thus, South Africa has a strong enough reason to support this theme.
- The South African government should define a clear agenda that considers Brazil's outcomes and, at the same time, chart a new path. This work needs to start sooner. The first step must be for South African businesses to undertake detailed thinking and formulate priorities slinked to the sectors of the economy. The next step is to engage the government in such priority areas. This will help ensure South Africa formulates an inclusive agenda for the B20, aligning well with the G20 priorities.