

David Beckman, Bread for the World

My organization, Bread for the World, is a faith-based advocacy movement. We organize Christians of all stripes all across the United States to urge Congress and the President to change laws and systems in ways that help hungry and poor people in this country, in Africa, and around the world.

Bread for the World led the legislation coalition that won U.S. support for the Jubilee movement of the year 2000 and the reduction of the unpayable debt of many African countries. We also played a major role in expanding and shaping U.S. development assistance to Africa. But we also always supported AGOA, because we understand that trade is crucial to development and the reduction of poverty in Africa.

I was asked to talk about the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, which was launched at the G8 Summit last month. It is a major new initiative by the G8 to promote international investment in African agriculture.

In 2009, the G8 nations focused on high grain prices and the resulting increase in hunger in many countries, and they committed themselves to a major expansion of agricultural development assistance. There has indeed been a major expansion of official financing for food security since then, including an impression expansion of the agricultural development budgets of African governments.

In response to high grain prices, the World Bank also helped many developing countries expand social protection programs. New knowledge about how best to reduce the carnage of child malnutrition has been the inspiration for 1000 Days, a global movement to invest in best-practice child nutrition programs.

At this year's G8 Summit, which was chaired by President Obama, the G8 nations committed themselves to maintain this focus on food security and nutrition. But they put new emphasis on the private sector.

International investment in Africa is already increasing rapidly. Ten percent of all the foreign direct investment in the world last year was in Africa. A score of international companies have worked with political leaders in Africa to develop "Grow Africa," a framework for international investment in African agriculture. These companies have committed themselves to invest in African agriculture in ways that increase production, reduce poverty, and also reduce greenhouse gases.

Then last month, the G8 announced a New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. Simultaneously, 45 international companies announced \$3 billion in planned investment in Africa. Three African governments – Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Ghana – committed themselves to new private-sector oriented reforms, and the G8 government said that they will focus some of

their increased funding for agricultural development in these and other countries that become part of this New Alliance.

In effect, African governments and G8 governments are jointly committing themselves to facilitate a major expansion of private investment in African agriculture.

There's a lot we don't yet know about the New Alliance. It will be led by a high-level committee of government and private-sector leaders.

But African leaders, certainly Africa's ambassadors to the United States, have repeatedly said that what they most want from the U.S. government is help in attracting trade and investment, and this initiative is a major new step in this direction. The planned expansion of investment will presumably also increase trade.

Civil-society groups have important roles to play as this New Alliance takes shape. Some NGOs can help international companies connect with African farmers in ways that really do contribute to development. NGOs will also need to monitor the expansion of international investment in Africa. It can do a lot of good, but it's also likely to do some harm.

The expansion of international investment in African agriculture is a bit like a gold rush. World demand for agriculture is expanding rapidly, and sixty percent of all the undeveloped arable land in the world is in Africa. Africans can benefit from the expansion of private-sector investment in African agriculture, but civil-society groups will need to monitor what's going on and be active in advocacy. Those of us who have been active in AGOA understand the importance of international commerce to development, and the New Alliance will be building on the expansion of international commerce that AGOA has supported.