

Malabo renewable electricity

The Malabo Montpellier Panel, which consists of seventeen international experts in agriculture and related fields, has released a report on Tuesday in Banjul listing the six leading African states that have made some progress in terms of providing energy accessibility to rural farmers and women.

“Under the Malabo Declaration, African governments have committed themselves to increase the use of reliable and affordable mechanization and energy supplies, including agricultural inputs. Africa is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services by 2030,” said Gambian-born Professor Muhammadou M.O. Kah, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost and Professor of Information Technology and Computing at the American University of Nigeria and Member of the Malabo-Montpellier Panel.

Investing in new off-grid and mini-grid technologies to extend energy access across Africa will be instrumental in helping smallholder farmers to meet rising food demands, according to a new report.

Joachim von Braun, co-chair of the Panel, Gambia’s Agriculture Minister Amie Fabureh (middle) Ousmane Badiane, co-chair of the Malabo Montpellier Panel. The report states that Africa accounts for just six percent of the world’s energy demand, despite hosting 20 percent of the global population, leaving rural areas relying on manpower for as much as 80 percent of the energy used in farming.

“As demand for food continues to grow globally, universal access to energy will become an urgent necessity, both for the production, processing and consumption of more nutritious food,” said Ousmane Badiane, co-chair of the Malabo Montpellier Panel, which met in Gambia for the Malabo Montpellier Forum.

He added that access to reliable, affordable and sustainable sources of energy to prepare land, plant, harvest, process, distribute and cook food, will ensure that Africa’s agricultural sector can respond to this demand, all within the context of climate change and increasingly scarce natural resources.

The experts highlighted opportunities for greater energy access to transform the livelihoods of the rural poor, reducing the drudgery of their work and generating higher incomes.

The report states that the rapid spread of off-grid and mini-grid solutions for renewable energy offers hope that Africa can leapfrog outdated and dirty technologies, with almost five million families installing solar home systems in 2018, the authors said. Overall, it added, cooking accounts for more than 70 percent of household energy usage in Africa, compared with less than 10 per cent globally.

“Africa is the highest consumer of traditional solid biomass such as fuelwood, charcoal and farm residues, including animal dung, in the world,” said Joachim von Braun, co-chair of the Panel who



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serves as director, Center for Development Research (ZEF) at the University of Bonn in Germany.

A new report by the Malabo Montpellier Panel highlights the promising energy-related strategies, policies and technologies emerging across Africa's agricultural value chain. The report identifies both successes and challenges in improving the rural poor's access to energy as part of a broader agriculture sector transformation. Drawing on the government actions of six African countries that were identified as leaders within this space, it also makes recommendations for policy and program interventions that can be replicated across the continent to accelerate this progress.

Access to energy can have a transformative impact on the livelihoods of the rural poor, reducing the drudgery of their work and generating higher incomes. Women, in particular, would spend less time collecting fuel for cooking and heating, benefitting from less pollution in their homes. It is, therefore, promising to see several African countries taking bold steps to better connect rural areas and food systems to energy sources, and already benefitting from the sustainable supply and use of traditional and renewable energy sources in the agriculture sector.

The report provides in-depth analyses of six African countries, which were identified as the continent's best performing in terms of how their policies and regulations relate to the sustainable, efficient use of energy. Three indicators were used in this indexing process: night-time lights, the agricultural value-added per worker growth rate, and the Regulatory Indicator for Sustainable Energy (RISE).

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