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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**Cementing India-Africa
Partnership in Food
Security**

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CEMENTING INDIA-AFRICA PARTNERSHIP IN FOOD SECURITY

Context

- Recently, India hosted the **32nd International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE)** in Delhi, with Prime Minister of India as the Chief Guest and Union Agriculture Minister as the Guest of Honour, marking a momentous occasion as it was held in India after a gap of 65 years.

ICAE 2024 in India

- The **International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE)** is a significant global gathering that brings together experts, researchers, and policymakers to discuss critical issues related to agriculture, food security, and economic development.
- **Roots in India:** The last time India hosted the ICAE was in 1958 in Mysore, with Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister, as the chief guest. Interestingly, the roots of ICAE trace back to India: its **founding President was Lord L. K. Elmhirst**, a British agronomist, who was **inspired by Rabindranath Tagore's vision for rural development**.
 - ♦ **Tagore** envisioned education, music, and scientific training as tools to uplift rural India. From these humble beginnings, the **ICAE has grown into a global force for agricultural economics**.

Themes and Objectives

- The conference aimed to address pressing challenges faced by the global agricultural community. These challenges include climate change, natural resource degradation, rising production costs, and geopolitical conflicts.
- With around 1,000 delegates from approximately 75 countries participating, the ICAE provided a platform for sharing knowledge, research findings, and best practices in agricultural economics.

India-Africa Partnership Highlighted in ICAE

- A **special session at the ICAE** compared the experiences of major Indian states with those of 15 African countries from 2004-05 to 2019-20. This exchange of knowledge is crucial for both regions.
- **India and Africa share a common struggle:** ensuring food security for their populations. As both regions grapple with the challenges posed by climate change, population growth, and geopolitical conflicts, collaboration becomes essential.
- The ICAE serves as a bridge for collaboration between India and Africa, allowing them to learn from each other's experiences and work towards sustainable food systems.

Learning from Each Other

- **Comparing Experiences:** During a special session at the ICAE, experiences from 20 major Indian states were compared with those from 15 African countries. The goal was to learn from each other's successes and challenges.
- India's achievements in the **green revolution (boosting crop productivity)** and the **white revolution (transforming dairy production)** are well-known. However, **Africa still faces food shortages, especially among children under five**.
 - ♦ By sharing knowledge, both India and Africa can enhance their strategies for ensuring quality nutrition and sustainable agriculture.

India-Africa Partnership for Food Security

- The researchers from the **Observer Research Foundation (ORF)** analysed the potential for cooperation between India and African countries in the realm of food security and capacity building.

Availability, Accessibility, and Affordability

- **Availability:** Food security isn't just about the total agricultural output; it encompasses three critical aspects: availability, accessibility, and affordability.
- **Accessibility:** Ensuring efficient distribution systems across the entire population is essential.
- **Affordability:** Increasing the purchasing power of rural communities so they can afford food is crucial.

India's Role

- India produces substantial quantities of cereals and maintains a significant buffer stock. For instance, in 2018-2019, total food production in India stood at 285 million tonnes.
- The country's investments in African agriculture should focus on high-impact priority areas to achieve immediate and sustainable returns.

Cooperation Areas

- **Agriculture and Food Security:** India and Africa can collaborate on knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and capacity building.
- **Trade and Machinery:** Exploring trade partnerships and investments in agricultural machinery can enhance food security.
- **Technology-Based Services:** Leveraging technology is crucial. Initiatives like digital platforms for agricultural information dissemination can benefit both regions.
- **Trilateral Partnerships:** India's notable trilateral partnerships include the India, Brazil, and South Africa (IBSA) Fund, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID)-funded Supporting India's Trade Preference for Africa (SITA) program.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Nutritional Security:** Both India and Africa face the critical challenge of ensuring adequate nutrition for their populations.
 - ♦ Children under five remain vulnerable, and concerted efforts are needed to provide them with nourishing food.
 - ♦ India's experiences in improving nutrition can inform Africa's strategies, and vice versa.
- **Urbanisation and Changing Diets:** Rapid urbanisation in both regions demands innovative approaches to food production and distribution.
 - ♦ As diets evolve, there's a need to balance traditional staples with diverse, nutritious foods.
 - ♦ India's diverse culinary heritage and Africa's rich food traditions offer valuable lessons.
- **Commercialization and Productivity:** Africa is transitioning from subsistence farming to more commercialised and productive agriculture.
 - ♦ India's success stories—such as cooperative dairy models and smallholder innovations—can inspire similar transformations in Africa.

Way Forward

- As the world faces complex agricultural and economic issues, forums like the ICAE play a vital role in shaping policies, fostering innovation, and ensuring food security.
- By emphasising research, data-driven approaches, and international cooperation, the ICAE contributes to a more resilient and equitable global food system.
- In summary, the ICAE serves as a beacon of collaboration, knowledge exchange, and collective action in the pursuit of sustainable agriculture and food security.

Conclusion

- The India-Africa partnership in food security isn't just about policies and programs; it's about nourishing futures. By learning from each other, sharing best practices, and collaborating, we can build resilient food systems that benefit millions.
- As Tagore envisioned, let's create an ideal—one village at a time—for the whole world to follow.

Source: IE



Mains Practice Question

- [Q] How effectively can the International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE) serve as a platform to bridge the knowledge gap between India and Africa, leading to tangible and sustainable solutions for food security challenges in both regions?