

Date: Monday 26 October 2015

For immediate release

“Draconian EU suppresses African development”, says Harvard professor

A leading development expert at Harvard University, Professor Calestous Juma, has lambasted the “draconian” rules imposed on Africa by the EU.

Professor Juma, a Kenyan national, pointed out policies including the escalation of tariffs on overseas exports, restrictions on technological innovation and food export preferences that hinder Africa’s ability to develop its industry and exports.

He criticised the draconian attitude of the EU towards Africa, saying: “African leaders would like to escape the colonial trap of being viewed simply as raw material exporters. But their efforts to add value to the materials continue to be frustrated by existing EU policies.”

He cited the example of cocoa, where the EU charges 30 per cent for processed cocoa products like chocolate bars and 60 per cent for some other refined products containing cocoa. The protectionism of EU towards its food manufacturing industries is to the detriment of growth and development in Africa.

Professor Juma added: “It is estimated that Africa imports nearly 83 per cent of its food. African leaders are seeking ways to feed their peoples and become players in the global economy.”

As well as trade tariffs, Juma also criticised the EU’s suppression of innovative technology “under the pretext of protecting the environment and human health.”

He cited GM as a technological innovation that could have a significant impact on agriculture production in Africa, were it not for the EU’s “draconian bio-safety rules.”

There are, he said: “certain uniquely African problems where GM should be considered as an option,” including the devastating *Xanthomonas* bacteria that causes over £325 million of bananas to rot in Uganda and a moth responsible for the destruction of around £200 million of black-eyed peas in Nigeria. These diseases have no treatment and leave local populations vulnerable to famine.

He added: “Pursuing EU-inspired biosafety policies denies Africa the capacity to leverage biotechnology and use it to meet its own local needs.” He argued that lifting punitive restrictions would help Africa achieve the goal of feeding itself in a generation.

Professor Juma will be speaking to an audience in London on 27th October at 55 Tufton Street, SW1 at an event hosted by former Cabinet minister Owen Paterson's UK2020 think tank.

Mr Paterson has spoken out in the past in favour of GM crops, most recently at an event in September where American scientists from Breakthrough Institute and Cornell University outlined the role of technology in both protecting the planet and allowing the human population to prosper.

Mr Paterson commented: "It is simply wrong that a neo-colonial EU is imposing inappropriate and damaging policies on African nations striving to feed their growing populations.

"It is a tragedy that greater use is not made of modern technology to lift people out of poverty.

"As it is, we are letting some of the least privileged people in the world starve because well-fed Europeans are imposing their own prejudiced ideas on African farmers.

"We should be supporting all efforts to develop African's agriculture and industries with modern technologies."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Event details:

Date: Tuesday 27 October 2015

Time: 10.00 am – 12noon

Location: 55 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3QL

Speakers: Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, Chairman, UK 2020

Professor Calestous Juma, Harvard Kennedy School

Please RSVP to info@uk2020.org.uk

For all media inquiries, contact Beatrice Timpson of Media Intelligence Partners at beatrice@mippr.co.uk and 07803 726 977.

UK2020 is a think tank launched by Owen Paterson in November 2014 to create policies in line with a robust Conservative vision.

Since its inception, it has produced policies on the EU, climate change and taxation.

Professor Calestous Juma is the Professor of the Practice of International Development at the Harvard Kennedy School. He is the UK promoting the second edition of his book, *The New Harvest – Agricultural Innovation in Africa* published by Oxford University Press.

<http://www.uk2020.org.uk/>