

Rockefeller Foundation Points to the Importance of Technology and Local Innovation in the Fight against Climate Change

Nairobi, 31 August 2010: The Rockefeller Foundation President, Dr. Judith Rodin, today commenced a three-day visit to review the Foundation's work in Africa. During her visit, Dr. Rodin will meet the Foundation's grantees, leading scientists on agriculture and food security, private sector leaders and government officials in the agriculture sector. Her visit will culminate in her participation in the first ever African Green Revolution Forum, which will bring together international leaders in the agricultural and financial sectors.

In a press briefing in Nairobi, Dr. Rodin emphasized the Foundation's integrated approach to development by highlighting its commitment to strengthening food security in Africa while building resilience to the negative impacts of climate change. With a significant investment in building a sustainable agricultural future for Africa, Dr. Rodin pointed to three grants – the Index Based Weather Insurance (IBWI) project, *Africa RiskView*, and the Kenya Farmers Helpline - that utilize the power of local innovation and technology to increase food security during a time of climate change.

Dr. Rodin commented:

"Climate change today is the single biggest threat to finding a solution to food security in Africa. It will only be through an integrated approach, harnessing local innovations and technology to build resilience to the impact of climate change, that we will be able to develop a sustainable green revolution in Africa. We are greatly encouraged by the work of our partners and grantees, and the support of local government officials as we look for and support new ways to establish Africa as a thriving and innovative agricultural market in the face of a changing climate."

In Africa, the majority of households depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. In 2008, the agricultural sector in Kenya contributed roughly 25 percent of the total GDP of the country. However the unpredictability of the weather can often threaten food security as well as reducing the participation in private sector investment in the sector. In June 2009, private sector investment in agriculture in Kenya was only 3.7 percent. The three grants highlighted by Dr. Rodin point to local innovative solutions to building resilience to climate change as a means of increasing food security and financial stability.

Index Based Weather Insurance (IBWI) project: The IBWI is aimed at developing and testing the market viability of index based weather insurance products designed to reduce the impact of weather related risks on small holder farmers in Kenya. IBWI seeks to address a significant gap in agricultural insurance – with data showing that as of June 2009 only 7 percent of adults in Kenya use an insurance product. Many agricultural insurance products fail to address the most severe agricultural risk, drought, focusing instead on diseases and the less common weather perils such as hailstorm and frost. IBWI will use recorded data on actual weather from monitoring stations and adapt conventional agricultural insurance products to address weather-related risks more effectively while aligning products with market demand.

Africa RiskView: Developed by the World Food Program with a USD 3 million grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, *Africa RiskView* is a software platform that translates satellite-based rainfall data into near real-time needs and cost estimates for every first-level administrative district in every country in Sub-Saharan Africa. Combining four well-established disciplines: crop monitoring and early warning; vulnerability assessment and mapping; emergency response; and financial planning and risk management, *Africa RiskView* will arm governments with the tools they need to be financially prepared and take action before a weather related disaster strikes. Building on this innovation, the Rockefeller Foundation is supporting the World Food Program in helping the African Union to design a Pan-African Disaster Risk Pool for participating member states.

Kenya Farmers Helpline: Mobile phones are transforming nearly every part of African life. According to the Center for Global Development, only 10 percent of the population of Africa had mobile phones in 1999 compared to 60 percent or 447 million in 2008. By 2012 they predict that most villages in Africa will have coverage. The Kenya Farmers Helpline, ‘Huduma Kwa Wakulima’, is a call-in service funded by the Rockefeller Foundation that provides direct access to detailed agricultural information on improving agricultural production, sourcing farm inputs, and marketing farm produce for Kenyan farmers. The service allows farmers to obtain real-time answers in English or Swahili from in-house agricultural experts who provide them with solutions or call them back with feedback within 24 hours.

Upon leaving Nairobi, where the Foundation’s regional office is based, Dr. Rodin will bring with her to the African Green Revolution Forum in Accra some of the lessons of these three innovative ways to address food security and climate change simultaneously, as well as, the Foundation’s long term vision for how to successfully and sustainably create a green revolution in Africa. The summit will bring together African heads of state, industry representatives and the international donor community. The Forum will produce an action plan on the acceleration of a Green Revolution in Africa.

ENDS

Notes to editors

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The Rockefeller Foundation

The Rockefeller Foundation fosters innovative solutions to many of the world's most pressing challenges, affirming its mission, since 1913, to “promote the well-being” of humanity. Today, the Foundation works to ensure that more people can tap into the benefits of globalization while strengthening resilience to its risks. Foundation initiatives include efforts to mobilize an agricultural revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa, bolster economic security for American workers, inform equitable, sustainable transportation policies in the United States, ensure access to affordable and high-quality health systems in developing countries, accelerate the impact investing industry’s evolution, and develop strategies and services that help

vulnerable communities cope with the impacts of climate change. For more information, please visit www.rockefellerfoundation.org.