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Annan to lead green revolution for African agriculture

By Wangui Kanina

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Former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan speaks during a news conference in Nairobi, Kenya, July 16, 2007. Africa needs a "green revolution" to double agricultural output and end chronic food insecurity in the world's poorest continent, Annan said on Monday. REUTERS/Antony Njuguna

NAIROBI (Reuters) - Africa needs a "green revolution" to double agricultural output and end chronic food insecurity in the world's poorest continent, former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Monday.

The former top diplomat is the chairman of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, set up last year with a \$150 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation.

"We are the only continent that has not gone through a green revolution and we are the only continent that cannot feed itself ... this is not sustainable," Annan told a news conference in Nairobi.

Annan said the Nairobi-based group hoped to replicate farm changes that boosted agricultural productivity in countries like India in the 1970s.

"I hope that in 10 to 20 years or so we will be able to double Africa's agricultural productivity," he said.

According to the United Nations, food insecurity in Africa is worsened by weak institutions, insufficient investment in agriculture by governments and donors, and a harsh environment made worse by climate change, corruption and mismanagement.

He said the group would focus on helping Africa's millions of small-scale farmers fight poverty and boost productivity by providing stronger and more resistant seed varieties, and improving access to farm inputs and markets.

Annan said the group would not seek to spearhead the use of genetically modified seeds, which have been a controversial subject in some African countries, but would use traditional methods to boost disease resistance of existing seeds.

“The decisions on using genetically modified technology area decisions for African governments,” he said.

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