



Development pathways for the DRC to 2050

Agriculture and Climate Change

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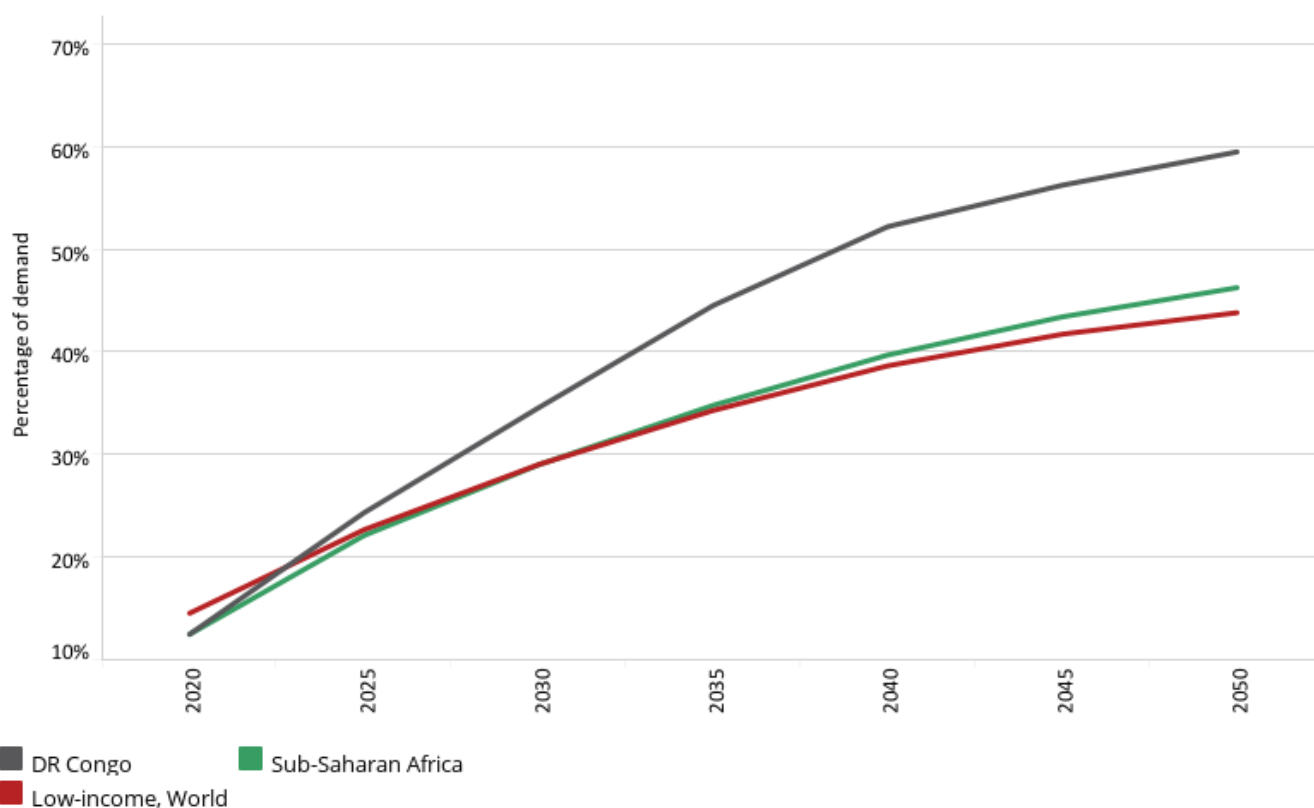
Agriculture and Climate Change

The DR Congo has the potential to become a global agricultural power. Indeed, with 80 million hectares of arable land, of which only 10% is cultivated, agriculture is one of the country's largest untapped resources. The agricultural sector provides about 60% of the jobs although most of these jobs only provide for subsistence needs.[1]

The main cash crops are coffee, palm oil, rubber, cotton, sugar, tea and cocoa. Food crops include cassava, plantains, corn, peanuts and rice, among others. Despite being the country with the largest available farmland in Africa with agricultural potential that could feed the entire continent, the DR Congo has not achieved food independence, and malnutrition is widespread. The agriculture sector has been severely affected by the violent conflicts since the 1990s. For instance, by 2006, agricultural productivity had fallen to 60% of its level at independence in 1960.[2]

The crop yield, currently estimated at about 3.4 tons per hectare, is quite low and will continue to make the country a net food importer, like many African countries, for a long period. Currently, the food trade deficit of the DR Congo is US\$1.5 billion per year.[3] This is not only absurd given the country's huge agricultural potential but also unsustainable. On the Current Path, the food import dependence will continue to increase to about 60% of food demand in the country by 2050 (Chart 17).

Chart 17: Food imports dependence for DRC and other groups



Source: Forecast in IFs version 7.54; historical data from FAO

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Food insecurity in the DR Congo is likely to be worsened by [climate change](#) and will affect the already weak agricultural productivity. The effects of climate change can already be noticed in the country through heavy rain and flood events which contribute to soil erosion and degradation.

Agricultural production, internal trade in agricultural products and exports of agricultural products in the DR Congo are hampered by several factors such as poor transport infrastructure, limited access to financial services and agricultural inputs, land disputes and conflicts.[4] However, the lack of transport infrastructure such as roads and railways means that this constraint is likely to continue for a longer period as infrastructure development is costly and requires time.

Several efforts are underway to improve agricultural production and to improve food security in the country. Recently, the World Bank granted additional funding of US\$75 million for the Agriculture Rehabilitation and Recovery Support Project with the expectation to boost agricultural production in the country.[5]

In addition, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is involved in several projects aimed at developing sustainable agriculture in the DR Congo.[6] For instance, the organisation works hand-in-hand with the government in its effort to produce and distribute high-quality seeds while the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through its Food for Peace (FFP) programme, is contributing to reducing food insecurity by improving agricultural production techniques and output.[7] President Tshisekedi has also allocated an additional 33 000 hectares of land to food crops.

Endnotes

1. Embassy of the DRC, Invest in DRC, [Agriculture](#)
2. M Nanivazo and K Mahrt, [Growth and poverty in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), in C Arnt, A McKay and F Tarp, Growth and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2016
3. World Bank, Democratic Republic of Congo, Systematic Country Diagnostic, Report No. 112733-ZR, 2018.
4. World Bank, Democratic Republic of Congo, Systematic Country Diagnostic, Report No. 112733-ZR, 2018.
5. Z Adebayo, [Sustainable agriculture in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), The Borgen Project, 2018
6. FAO, [The Democratic Republic of Congo](#)
7. USAID, [Agriculture and food security](#)

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Dr Kouassi Yeboua is a senior researcher in African Futures and Innovation programme in Pretoria. He recently served as lead author on ISS studies on the long-term development prospects of the DR Congo, the Horn of Africa, Nigeria and Malawi. Kouassi has published on various issues relating to foreign direct investment in Africa and is interested in development economics, macroeconomics, international economics, and economic modelling. He has a PhD in Economics.

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