



Aid agencies teaming up to streamline help for Africa

A MERGER involving an Irish and a UK development agency is expected to deliver significant savings and see more money going to help those in need in Africa.

Speaking at the launch of Self Help Africa, a merger of Irish group Self Help Development International and the UK-based Harvest Help, chief executive Ray Jordan called on other charities and NGOs to follow the initiative's lead.

"This is the first time an Irish and a UK development organisation have amalgamated in order to better tackle poverty in Africa.

"There are hundreds of organisations all doing well in Africa, but they can be far more effective if they're working together.

"We are seeing a reduction in our management and administration costs and an increase in our capacity to do more in Africa," he told the gathering in Dublin yesterday.

Both organisations have been working with rural communities in Africa for over 20 years. They focus on

enabling people to grow their own food, developing savings and credit schemes to allow people to start their own businesses.

Mr Jordan said that spiralling food prices, the collapse of the world trade talks, climate change and rapid population growth had combined to plunge 100 million Africans into extreme poverty.

Development

"If Africans are to break free from hunger and poverty, then farming and rural development is the key. Up to 80pc of Africans rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. It must be at the heart of what we as international development agencies do," he added.

He called on Irish corporations and organisations in the agri sector to join it in turning around the fortunes of African farmers.

"We want to see them create their own wealth. Africa has a market of 900 million people. The Chinese have been coming into African markets in a very large way for the last 15 years - why should European organisations play second fiddle?"

Breda Heffernan