AUDA-NEPAD
AFRICAN UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Africa Common Position on Food Systems

A summary of the official Africa Common Position presented in September 2021 as part of the United Nations Food Systems Summit - Information Note

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About AUDA-NEPAD

The African Union (AU) Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD) is Africa's first-ever continental technical and development agency. The foundation of AUDA-NEPAD is built on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) that was established as Africa's continental renewal and development programme by AU in 2001 and championed through the then NEPAD Secretariat, based in Midrand, South Africa. The NEPAD vision represented a common pledge by African leaders to eradicate poverty and foster Africa's sustainable economic growth and development through the promotion of regional and continental integration, through the inclusion of Africa in global processes and through the empowerment of socially disadvantaged groups, such as women and children.

About AICCRA

The AICCRA project contributes to the construction of an African future that is climate-smart and driven by science and innovation in the agricultural field. It is led by Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and supported by a grant from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA). AICCRA works to increase access to climate information services (CIS) and Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) technologies for millions of smallholder farmers across Africa. AICCRA investments are concentrated in six main countries namely Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Senegal and Zambia with the implementation of four components (i) Knowledge Generation and Sharing, (ii) Strengthening Partnerships for Delivery, (iii) Validating Climate-Smart Agriculture Innovations through Piloting and (iv) Project management. The sub-regional component of AICCRA in West Africa is implemented through the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships of existing scientific and educational networks and centres in order to achieve results that cannot be achieved easily, or not at all, by engaging with individual partners at national level. Explore AICCRA's work at aiccra.cgiar.org.

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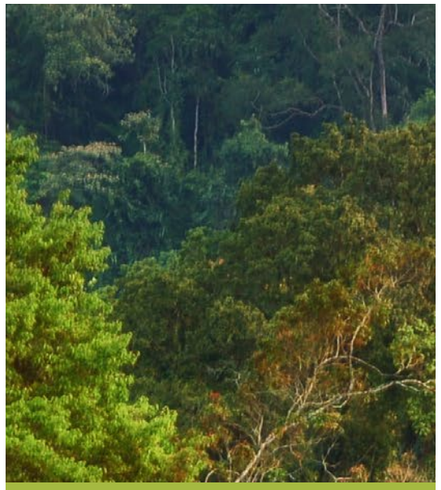

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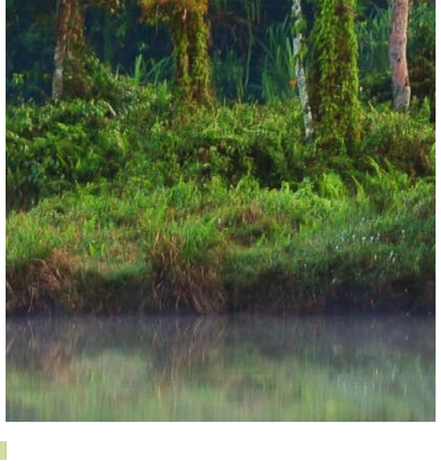


1: Africa Agri-Food Systems Programme

Africa's food security was already on a downward trend prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of which was substantial. As of August 2022, 140 million people across 35 African countries were living in crisis or worse (IPC 3 or higher) acute food insecurity, representing an annual increase of 17 percent (20 million people).[1] In addition, the effects of climate change on Africa's agri-food systems are systemic and projected to leave at least 30 million more people at risk of hunger by 2030. Efforts to strengthen the climate resilience of Africa's agri-food systems are therefore ongoing and critical.

The 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) presented the opportunity to apply an agri-food systems approach to Africa's existing agricultural and food security efforts. The dialogues provided platforms for governments, businesses, communities and civil society to identify pathways towards resilient and inclusive agri-food systems and to reflect on the benefits of the approach and propose strategies for its mainstreaming. Subsequently, the UNFSS and AUDA-NEPAD have joined forces to champion a continental programme to leverage momentum gained through the 2021 UNFSS and the Africa Common Position on Food Systems. The programme aims to accelerate the implementation of national, regional and continental initiatives towards transition to resilient and inclusive agri-food systems within the context of Agendas 2063 and 2030 goals. The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) framework is to be the primary entry point for the programme to ensure country ownership and leadership.

The Africa Common Position on Food Systems was presented to the UNFSS in 2021, it synthesises the views, priorities and ambitions of Member States on the main challenges affecting African and global food systems. Informed by existing continental and regional policy frameworks and outcomes from the national dialogues on the UNFSS, it demonstrates the continent's commitment to contributing to the global agenda for agri-food systems transformation. This briefing note summarises key thematic areas of the Common Position including challenges and opportunities to ensuring climate resilient food systems, to securing access to improved technologies, and to innovation and biotechnology. It further summarises drivers of transformation and levers of change and potential game changing solutions. This information is integral to the design and development of a transformative Africa Agri-Food Systems Programme (2024 – 2034).

1 FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises. 2022. GRFC 2022 Mid-Year Update. Rome

2: Strong Food Systems for Africa

The following list highlights outcomes from the high-level conversation hosted by the Malabo Montpellier Panel to reflect on the UN Food Systems transformation agenda.

- **Strong food systems would depend on a productive agricultural sector**, encompassing the related sectors of production, processing, transportation, and consumption
- **Nourishing all peoples will require a strong and productive agricultural sector** that can grow and produce the food supplies to meet food demands for Africa and the globe
- **Africa's anticipated population growth over the next few decades is equally a major consideration in driving efforts towards the continent's food systems transformation.** Africa's population is expected to grow to 2.5 Billion by 2050. A large share of this will be young people, energetic, and more educated who will all be looking for well paid, meaningful, and decent jobs
- **Not only will we be eating more, but we will also be eating differently**, including more animal products. Our food systems approach has shown us that we should focus on not only agriculture but also nutrition, and support livelihoods, all the while preserving the environment
- **Boosting nature-based production solutions** brings our attention to a changing climate and the need to sustain soil fertility and healthy ecosystems to maintain growth
- **The need to stress the impact of climate change on our food systems and our economies more strongly.** Africa is at the forefront of climate impact, and few sectors are more vulnerable than food and agriculture

The Africa Common Position[2]

Africa presented a common position to the UNFSS, whose narrative was guided by the current challenges related to feeding the growing population amid the environmental footprint of global agriculture, worsening climate crisis, and deepening inequality amplified by the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. Informed by existing continental and regional policy frameworks and outcomes from the national dialogues on the UNFSS, the **Africa common position** demonstrates the continent's commitment to contributing to setting the agenda for global food systems transformation.

The African common position, which is anchored in the **Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme** (CAADP), the framework for agricultural transformation in Africa, underscores the role of food systems transformation in facilitating the achievement of all the 20 goals of Agenda 2063," said H.E. Josefa Sacko, AU Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Development (AUC-DARBE). "The principles developed to guide Member States and other entities towards using their food systems to achieve the SDGs cannot be ignored. The African common position provides an aggregation of views on key issues that will shape Africa's food systems over the next decade, primarily on resilience in the face of growing vulnerability and shocks,".

Africa's common position is informed by existing continental and regional policy frameworks, and outcomes from the national dialogues on the UNFSS facilitated by AUDA-NEPAD across the continent. The position is further informed by the numerous independent dialogues organized by farmer organizations, civil society, academic and research organizations, private sector, among others.

This series of briefing notes summarises key thematic areas of the Africa Common Position.

2 What do the outcomes of the United Nations Food Systems Summit mean for African food systems transformation? Recommendations from The Malabo Montpellier Panel post-UNFSS Policy Conversation.

3: Challenges & Opportunities

Ensuring resilient food systems & safety nets to weather climate change

38 million more people are at risk of hunger due to climate change. Agricultural pests and diseases are also expected, which could threaten crops, livestock and fisheries.

Adaptation and mitigation strategies are needed to ensure resilient food systems in Africa.

Policies and practices should focus on locally nuanced investments and interventions, climate-adapted technology and approaches, increased productivity and value-addition processes.

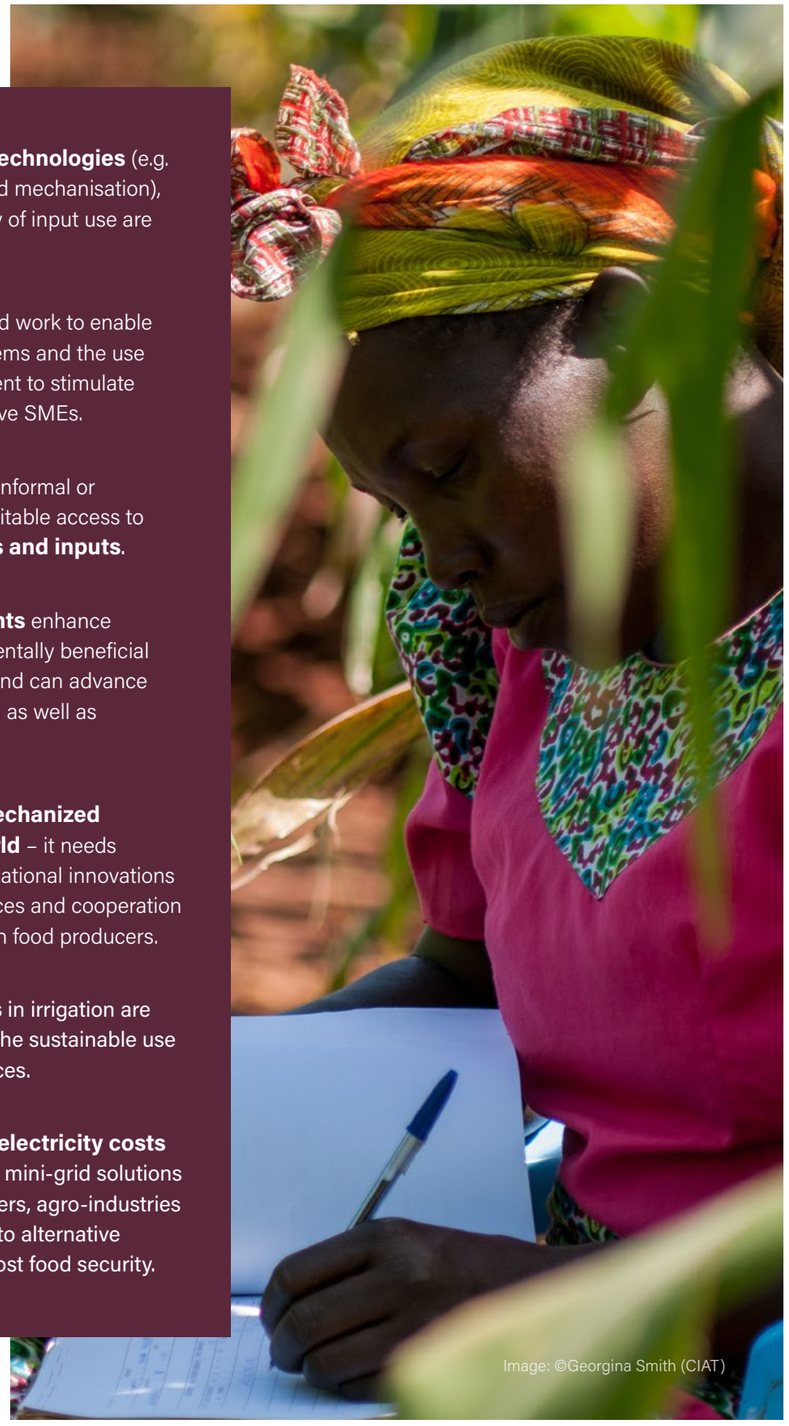
Smallholder farmers are constrained by insecure tenure rights and inadequate access to finance, climate-adapted crops/ livestock, information, markets and risk-management tools. Sound infrastructure, as well as investment in research, innovation and technology are needed to overcome these barriers.

Covid-19 highlighted the need for safety nets to secure the livelihoods and food security of vulnerable populations during times of unexpected crisis.

Small-scale producers require targeted and diversified social, health and nutrition programmes.

Image: ©Olivier Girard (CIFOR)

Improved production technologies & securing access



Improved production technologies (e.g. better seeds, irrigation and mechanisation), accessibility, and intensity of input use are needed.

Future strategies should work to enable private sector based systems and the use of government procurement to stimulate investment and competitive SMEs.

Most food producers are informal or small-scale and need equitable access to **improved technologies and inputs**.

Tenure and access rights enhance productive and environmentally beneficial agricultural investments and can advance climate change mitigation as well as adaptation.

Africa has the least-mechanized food system in the world – it needs technological and organizational innovations that include reliable services and cooperation arrangements for and with food producers.

Expanded investments in irrigation are also required, as well as the sustainable use of available water resources.

Africa has the highest electricity costs in the world. Off-grid and mini-grid solutions are needed for rural farmers, agro-industries and households. Access to alternative energy sources could boost food security.

Image: ©Georgina Smith (CIAT)

Innovation, biotechnology & integration to benefit all

The continent needs to embrace biotechnology on a much larger scale, and it should become integrated into all food-production policy frameworks – including small-scale producers and the food & nutrition sector.

Biofortification and industrial food fortification must be taken to scale to increase the nutrient content of African diets.

Aquatic foods (blue foods) are under-valued, yet an essential component of Africa's food system. It contributes to livelihoods, food security and nutrition. They are, however, threatened by climate change, harmful activities, degradation and contamination. Key actions are required to ensure their conservation.

Increased economic integration and trade are necessary and it's crucial to develop Africa's agro-industry through the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources. The industrialization of the continent's food systems can help to achieve higher growth rates, economic diversification, transformation and less vulnerability to external shocks.

Image: ©Duangphorn Wiriya (Unsplash)

4: Drivers of Transformation and Levers of Change

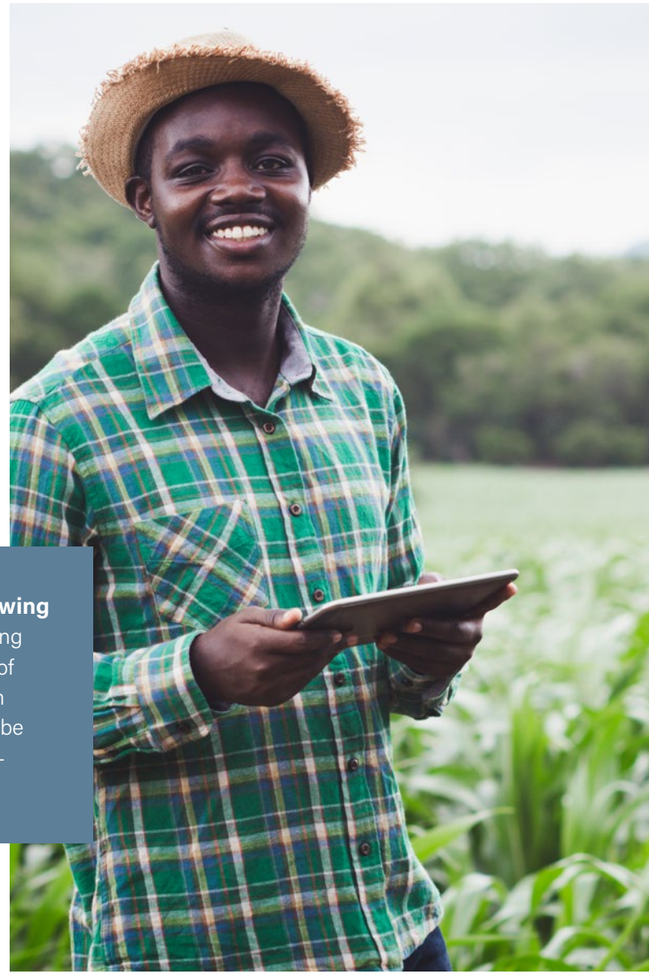
Sustained, broad-based economic growth: The continent's food systems are evolving and agricultural commercialization is increasingly attracting private investments and expanding operations.

Africa's demography and the youth dynamic in food systems: Broad-based development policies that create opportunities for all rural people may do more to support the growing youth population than policies designed specifically for youth.

Globalization, food trade and changing diets: High levels of imports expose the continent's agricultural markers to high volatility, and globalization is driving changes in dietary patterns and associated health conditions.

Image: ©Artem Beliaikin (Unsplash)

Rising demand for animal source foods: In response to a growing demand for animal products, there will be significant investments in the livestock value chains – which will have unprecedented impacts on livelihoods, public health and the environment. It calls for targeted policy innovations to ensure a sustainable increase in production and productivity.



Digitization and the growing agri-tech industry: Placing digitalization at the centre of food system transformation strategies and policies will be key to harnessing its cross-cutting innovative power.

5: Game-changing Solutions

Image: ©Ollivier Girard (CIFOR)

Ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all. Measures include promoting the biofortification of staple foods and industrial fortification and expanding school feeding programmes.

Shifting to sustainable consumption patterns. For example, promoting and supporting sustainable production and consumption of traditional and indigenous food crops.

Boosting nature-positive production at sufficient scale. This includes investing in productivity-enhancing technologies such as improved seeds, feeds and animal breeds adapted to the changing climate.

Advancing equitable livelihoods and value distribution. Done through strategies such empowering women and youth with greater access, and the security of tenure over land, water, and productive resources.

Building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stress. Including promoting the production of aquatic food products as alternative and supplementary protein sources and as options for improved diversity for nutrition, accessibility, and environmental sustainability.

Access to means of production. Specifically, enhancing access to production and productivity-enhancing technologies and resources that include land, finance, data, and information; as well as technologies. It also includes access to water and energy – both availability and affordable access.

Cross-cutting, game-changing solutions, as proposed in the five Action Tracks. Africa's commitments include:

- Strengthening integrated policy-making and private sector engagement as a cornerstone for
- Food systems transformation
- Enhancing continental accountability for food systems transformation
- Expanding social protection programmes
- Developing and implementing tenure reform policies
- Engaging the youth meaningfully in food system transformation
- Supporting regional coordination
- Building resilient and sustainable food and agricultural systems

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