Family Farmers for Climate Action

African Food Systems Forum - Kigali, Rwanda, 1–4 September 2026

"Investing in Africa's Agri-Food Systems: Nourishing Nations, Growing Jobs, Building Resilience"

The Africa Food Systems Forum (AFSF) brings together heads of state, ministers, policymakers, the private sector, and civil society to discuss and advance the transformation of Africa's food system, with this year's agenda focused on investment and finance, boosting jobs and opportunities for women and young people, and building climate resilience.

It's the first gathering since the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) came into force – a 10 year plan to end hunger and cut poverty by boosting productivity, climate resilience and environmental sustainability, cutting food waste, and increasing intra-Africa trade – alongside the Kampala Declaration, a legal commitment by African leaders to fund it by mobilising $100 billion in public and private finance including committing 10% of national income to agriculture.

It's urgently needed. Decades of underinvestment means Africa's food systems woefully unprepared for the challenges ahead from conflict, energy and fertiliser price spikes. The war in Iran has seen fertiliser prices rise by 30-45% in many parts of Africa, while the climate-fuelled "super" El Niño threatens widespread crop failure, surging food prices and a sharp increase in hunger, and could cost African producers nearly $327 million in lost income.

Investment and finance

International funding for African agriculture has significantly declined in recent years while African governments have struggled to deliver on the decades-old promise to dedicate 10% of national income to agriculture. Meanwhile private investment remains alarmingly low - with only 3% of private investment targeted at the sector - considerably less than the 10% global average

Yet mobilising finance is only half the battle. Ensuring finance reaches African smallholders who account for up to 70% of the continent's food supply, as well as economically important export crops such as coffee and cocoa is key to implementing CAADP.

Significant barriers mean smallholders and their organisations struggle to access finance - getting less than 1% of the finance they need to build resilience and adapt to shocks.

Investors often misrepresent the risks and overlook the opportunities of smallholder farmers. As a result many banks charge high fees and interest rates, or refuse to lend altogether while complex application processes, overly stringent conditions such as a requirement for formal land titles, and the limited availability of financial products tailored to the needs of smallholders create further barriers to access. Farmers organisations face similar challenges - including at an international level where opaque, complex, costly, and time consuming application processes mean they are largely shut out of climate finance flows.

Building resilience

Building resilience to shocks, from climate change to fertiliser price spikes, requires long term investment: in Africa's soils – around two-thirds (65%) of the continents productive and agriculture land is degraded; improved water management – more than 90% of African agriculture is rainfed; seed saving systems which enable farmers to save, select and exchange locally adapted seeds; and improved access to insurance and early-warning systems – fewer than 3% of smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa are covered by agricultural insurance.

Critically, it also requires a shift to nature-positive practices such as regenerative farming and agroecology which have been shown to boost resilience. For example, reducing chemical fertilisers that provide a short-term fertility boost but degrade the soil over time, and increasing the use of organic fertilisers such as compost or biochar, which is often cheaper, boosts soil fertility and beneficial soil microbes, and improves the soil structure so that it retains more moisture, is less vulnerable to erosion or waterlogging, and stores more carbon.

Agroecology has been shown to increase average crop yields in Africa by as much as 116% and an increasing number of governments recognise the potential with national agroecological strategies adopted - or in the process of being adopted - in Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Benin, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Tunisia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi.

Farmers engagement

Smallholder farmers produce 90% of Africa's food and are the backbone of rural economies. In Sub-Saharan Africa family farms employ around two thirds of the workforce (60 - 65%) while agriculture accounts for at least 20% of the region's GDP. Smallholders are also some of the biggest investors in agriculture - globally spending US$368 billion a year of their own income on climate adaptation and natural resource management - while their knowledge, experience and expertise is key to overcoming the challenges facing our food system.

Yet despite their critical role smallholders and their organisations are often sidelined by governments and international funders and shut out the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural policies and investments.

Women and youth

Transforming African agrifood systems offers a multi-billion-dollar opportunity to boost local food production, reverse a nearly $65 billion annual food import bill, and create millions of productive jobs - particularly for young people.

Unlocking this potential will require both investment and the removal of structural barriers. For example, women make up over half of sub-Saharan Africa's 33 million smallholder farmers but face disproportionate constraints in accessing finance, technology, extension services, markets and productive assets such as land, irrigation or livestock. The UN estimates that closing the gender gap would boost overall agricultural crop production by up to 19% and lift hundreds of thousands of rural families out of poverty.

Farmers call to action

Farmers groups representing 250 million African smallholders are attending the African Food Systems Forum to call on governments and funders to:

1. Recognise smallholders and their organisations as important economic actors, investors, entrepreneurs and partners in development and institutionalize farmers' participation in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural policies and investments, including the CAADP Kampala Declaration.

2. Invest in smallholder agriculture and support greater private sector investment through blended finance, affordable credit, agricultural insurance, guarantees, climate finance, and financial products adapted to agricultural production cycles.

3. Build resilience by prioritising investment in soil health, water management, climate-smart and regenerative agriculture and agroecology, locally adapted seed systems, agricultural insurance, early-warning systems, renewable energy and climate-resilient infrastructure.

6. Support women and youth to build careers and businesses in agriculture - including through the removal of structural barriers such as land ownership.

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Family Farmers for Climate Action (FFCA) is an alliance of family farmer organisations representing over 95 million producers from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific.