



CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRODUCERS ORGANISATIONS POLICY BRIEF

6th AU-EU AGRICULTURE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE (27 JUNE 2025)



Preamble

Adequate food is not only a fundamental human right – it is also a cornerstone for development and an essential lens through which we must address today's global challenges, from climate change and health crises to growing inequalities.

We, the undersigned organisations, have come together to convey the following key messages, in light of the *Kampala Declaration* and the *Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Strategy and Action Plan 2026–2035*,¹ as well as the EU's *Vision for Agriculture and Food*² and *Council Conclusions on global food security and nutrition*.³

At a time when multilateralism, human rights and international solidarity are under strain, the sixth *African Union (AU) - European Union (EU) Agriculture Ministerial Conference* must signal **a renewed and ambitious commitment** to transforming food systems in support of food sovereignty, the right to food, and long-term sustainability.

The conclusions from the previous *AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference (2023)* state that *"For our economy to thrive and the integration of our Continents to happen, we duly need to listen to our farmers and producers' voices"*.⁴ The following recommendations are formulated to address **the unacceptable reality of nearly 300 million people – one in five – across the African continent facing hunger**, with undernutrition, child stunting, wasting, and anemia still falling short of international targets.

We call for the following critical issues to be integrated into the *Ministerial Conference* outcomes, building on **the four priority areas of the Conference**:

1. Investment and Financing in Agri-food Value Chains
2. Sustainable Practices and Climate Resilience
3. Research, Innovation, and Technology
4. Market Access and Trade Facilitation

1 African Union, [CAADP Strategy and Action Plan: 2026-2035 \(Building Resilient and Sustainable Agrifood Systems in Africa\)](#), 11 January 2025, Ext./Assembly/2(XIX).

2 European Commission, 2025, [A Vision for Agriculture and Food Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations](#), COM(2025) 75 final.

3 Council of the European Union, 2024, [Stepping up Team Europe's support to global food security and nutrition](#) - Council conclusions, 16 December 2024.

4 5th African Union & European Union Agriculture Ministerial Conference, 2023, ["Resilient food systems and sustainable agri value chains : Chairs conclusions"](#).

1 Investment and Financing in Agri-food Value Chains

The AU-EU Partnership must reinforce public finance toward small-scale food producers and inclusive and resilient territorial markets

The 2024 *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* (SOFI) report⁵ highlights **a significant funding gap in the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition**. In addition to increasing the quantity of investment in food and agriculture, it is crucial to focus on the quality of those investments. To meet the needs of all people and ensure that no one is left behind, **investments in food systems must recognise the multifunctionality of food and agriculture; the social, cultural and environmental dimensions**. Furthermore, the investments must be **grounded in universal human rights frameworks**, starting with the *Right to Food*.⁶

Investments and economic growth will benefit local communities in Africa only insofar as they **equally encompass sustainability and inclusiveness dimensions**, while committing to **reducing economic, social and gender inequalities**. A solid foundation for such investments already exists, in **the family-based, territorially embedded, small-scale, and diversified food systems** that feed the majority of the people worldwide. It is essential not to overlook these systems in favor of a narrow focus on increasing private investment.

The AU-EU Partnership has acknowledged⁷ the need for meaningful participation of communities in decisions that affect them, increased capacity-building for farmers, more investment in agricultural research and extension services, and enhanced support for farmers' organisations. These valuable commitments must **align with the needs and priorities of small-scale food producers**, ensuring gender-responsive and transformative approaches.

We call for the AU-EU Partnership to:

- **Prioritise public investment in support of resilient food systems.** For AU member states, this means implementing the *Kampala Declaration* commitment and allocating at least 10% of national expenditure to agriculture. For EU Member States, this involves providing earmarked funding for global food and nutrition security within their national Official Development Aid (ODA) budgets and in the next *EU Multiannual Financial Framework* (MFF), prioritising funding for agroecological principles and gender equality in food systems.
- **Invest more in family farmers and local food economies.** This should include enhanced support for local small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises (agri-SMEs) and a renewed emphasis on local and territorial markets. There should also be greater capacity-building for farmers, which includes support for farmer-to-farmer exchanges and farmer field schools, with special attention to women and youth. Additionally, public procurement policies should prioritise smallholder, agroecological producers.
- **Ensure that the blending of grants with private funding or loans - under the Global Gateway or any private sector instrument - does not come at the expense of support for small-scale producers**, nor serve primarily to secure EU access to raw materials or advance the commercial interests of European industries.
- **Improve fiscal space for food security by cancelling unsustainable debt.** Several African countries are at high risk of, or already in, debt distress and also have high levels of food insecurity,⁸ while austerity measures are worsening inequality and the

5 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. (2024). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 – Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms*. Rome.

6 United Nations Treaty, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI), 16 December 1966. UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment n. 12 on the Right to Food*, 1999. FAO, *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food*, 2004.

7 5th African Union & European Union Agriculture Ministerial Conference, *"Resilient food systems and sustainable agri value chains: Chairs conclusions"*, 30 June 2023.

8 IPES-Food. (2023). *Breaking the cycle of unsustainable food systems, hunger and debt. A special report*.

food crisis across the continent. The financing gap to address hunger and enhance food systems is substantial, making it urgent to pursue debt relief to free up budgets for development and food security investments.

- **Ensure that emergency responses strengthen local food systems rather than undermine them.** This requires prioritising local actors and infrastructure. It includes implementing inclusive

and non-discriminatory social protection policies that are accessible to peasants and small-scale food producers. Food aid programs should prioritise sourcing from peasant agriculture, artisanal fisheries, and local producers to reinforce local economies and food sovereignty. Additionally, governments and institutions should invest in robust data collection systems and anticipatory action frameworks to detect and mitigate shocks before they escalate into major food and nutrition crises.

2 Sustainable Practices and Climate Resilience

The AU-EU Partnership must finance a just agricultural transformation that supports climate resilience through agroecology

Farming communities and small-scale food producers in Africa, who bear the brunt of the climate crisis despite contributing the least to global emissions, must be placed at the centre of adaptation strategies. It is essential to advance locally-led adaptation principles. These communities and producers are the most important investors in climate adaptation and biodiversity.

Agroecology is a highly effective climate adaptation strategy as it improves the organic matter quality, water-carrying capacity and natural fertility of soils while reducing risks posed by climate change through crop diversification. Agroecology encourages farmers to diversify, retain more of their income and maintain their complex farming knowledge, including crop and seed diversity. Additionally, agroecology provides numerous benefits to biodiversity, water resources, and the health of humans, plants, and animals, by minimising the use of synthetic pesticides, and preventing pollution in rivers, coastlines, and groundwater. An integral part of agroecology means it is not limited to farming practices and scientific knowledge, **it is also a social movement that aims to place the rights of food producers at the centre of food system policies.**

We call for the AU-EU Partnership to:

- **Significantly increase funding for practices based on the 13 principles of agroecology⁹** proposed by the *High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security*. These principles are aligned with the 10 Elements of Agroecology adopted by the 197 FAO Members in 2019¹⁰ and serve as an internationally recognised reference for agroecology.
- **Ensure climate finance is adequate, accessible, equitable and adapted to the needs of small-scale food producers.** It should be channeled through their organisations, networks and co-operatives, with a special focus on women and youth producers. This requires a substantial increase in public and non-debt-generating climate finance to support the food system transformation. EU Member States are accountable for their historical and ongoing contributions to climate change and have a moral and ethical responsibility to support people in vulnerable regions, as outlined in the *Paris Agreement*. They must credibly operationalise the *Loss and Damage Fund*, and ensure that those most responsible for the climate crisis bear the greatest burden for addressing it.

9 HLPE. (2019). [Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems That Enhance Food Security and Nutrition](#). A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Rome.

10 FAO Council. (2019). [The Ten Elements of Agroecology](#). 163rd Session, Rome, December 2019.

- **Enhance stronger small-scale farmers' representation and their meaningful participation in climate decision-making processes at all levels**, including within the UNFCCC, and in the development of national climate and biodiversity plans. These plans (*Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans*) should integrate agroecology as a holistic solution to address issues related to climate change, biodiversity, and food security and nutrition challenges.
- **Put an end to land grabbing and enforce free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)** for all agricultural and other land-based investments. Land rights are an integral component of climate resilience and food security, and the *AU-EU* agenda should include clear commitments to promote and

protect farming communities' access to land. In particular, public policies and legislation must be established to guarantee women's land rights.

- **Ensure that all EU policies, legislation, and projects aimed at reducing and offsetting carbon emissions do not compete with food production or violate land rights**, particularly those of women or communities. Large scale land-based climate strategies, such as forest carbon offsets bioenergy, often promoted as solutions for emission reductions, risk deepening already alarming levels of land inequality. Instead of offsetting emissions and relying on uncertain future land and ocean carbon sequestration, governments and companies should prioritise immediate and sustained reduction of emissions at the source.

3 Research, Innovation, and Technology

The AU-EU Partnership must elevate farmer-led innovation and seed sovereignty

A profound food system transformation is a complex political and social process that requires acknowledging underlying power inequalities and harmful social norms. Achieving this transformation cannot rely solely on technological advancements. A narrow focus on technology risks being inappropriate or inaccessible for most farmers, possibly creating new forms of dependencies on corporate-controlled seeds, agrichemicals and other agricultural inputs. Therefore, the concept of innovation under the *AU-EU Partnership* should **extend far beyond just incorporating new technologies**; it must embrace a broad, inclusive, and equitable vision that champions social, institutional, and behavioural innovations.

We support the *AU-EU Partnership's* recognition of the need for research that promotes agroecological practices and sustainable management of resources, including soil, water and seeds.¹¹

We call for the AU-EU Partnership to:

- **Support a research and innovation agenda rooted in the knowledge systems and priorities of small-scale producers.** Co-creation, the valorisation of local and indigenous knowledge (respecting the free prior informed consent of all communities, especially Indigenous Peoples), and independent public research must be at the core of the research and innovation process in the *AU-EU Partnership*. This includes public investment in farmer-led research, indigenous knowledge systems, and farmer-managed seed systems (FMSS).
- **Protect and strengthen seed sovereignty and agrobiodiversity through farmer-managed seed systems** (FMSS) that benefit farmers, enhance climate resilience, and protect biodiversity. This includes fully implementing farmers' rights to seeds as outlined in international treaties and

¹¹ Food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture was the [first common priority research and innovation area](#), as part of the AU-EU High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on Science, Technology and Innovation, embedded in the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). The partnership and roadmap were endorsed at the AU-EU Summit in 2017.

declarations,¹² formally recognising FMSS in national seed laws, and creating policies that offer funding and technical support for FMSS while acknowledging the importance of local knowledge. We reject the imposition of UPOV-aligned seed laws that threaten traditional seed practices and oppose the top-down imposition of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), new genomic techniques (NGTs) and other corporate technologies that undermine local food sovereignty and biodiversity.

- **Support the development and production of locally produced biofertilisers and biopesticides** to reduce dependence on imports and protect the environment and biodiversity. Making locally produced, quality organic inputs available to smallholder farmers at affordable prices will improve soil health, boost production, create jobs and support agroecology. We welcome the Nairobi Declaration's commitments¹³ to promote organic fertiliser production and utilisation, but we urge concrete actions and investments to realise these goals.

4 Market Access and Trade Facilitation

The AU-EU Partnership must facilitate trade that strengthens local food economies and food sovereignty

International and regional trade integration does not automatically guarantee improved living conditions for the majority of farmers and the poorest communities. Trade integration must acknowledge that food is not just another commodity but an indispensable human right. Economic relations and trade negotiations require specific considerations for food products. Otherwise, trade facilitation can exacerbate the concentration of the agri-food sector, benefiting only a few at the expense of smallholder farmers, local food businesses, and the environment.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) must **not further disadvantage farmers who are already struggling to obtain fair prices for their production**. Instead, it should support African agriculture that promotes prosperity and food security for the continent. Rather than pursuing global and regional trade integration at all costs, *AU-EU* policies must **prioritise territorial markets** that support diversified and resilient, locally-embedded food systems. This requires greater investment in developing coherent, cross-sectoral food strategies that connect rural and urban areas, as well as in infrastructure that enables African producers to supply urban markets with healthy and nutritious food. Additionally, there must be measures to protect territorial markets from **unfair import competition**.

We call for the AU-EU Partnership to:

- **Uphold a holistic approach to food systems in policymaking and respect the principle of policy coherence.** This means ensuring that EU policies and practices do not undermine agricultural development or food security in partner countries on other continents. The principle is particularly important in the areas of climate, trade, agriculture and fisheries. The *AU-EU Partnership* must adopt better policies across the board to reduce inequality, enhance climate and environmental justice, and promote good governance and fairer trade rules, so that international trade can also benefit smallholder farmers.
- **Reduce Africa's food import dependency and reinforce food sovereignty**, rather than promoting cash crops for external markets or seeking to open new markets for European agricultural surplus production. The *AU-EU Partnership* must take measures to fulfil the legal obligation to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.¹⁴

¹² These treaties and declarations include: [International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, 2009](#) (ITPGRFA), [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, 2018](#) (UNDROP), [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007](#) (UNDRIP), [Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992](#) (CBD), and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

¹³ African Union, Nairobi Declaration on Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit, 9 May 2024. AFSHS/Decl/4(II).

¹⁴ United Nations Treaty, [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#). General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI), 16 December 1966.

- **Reform trade rules to protect African producers from unfair competition with imported EU products** and ensure that market regulation measures guarantee fair prices for producers and affordable prices for consumers. The EU must be aware of the risk of undermining local markets by replacing domestic products with its subsidized products, as occurred with European dairy exports to West Africa. Trade must be carried out in a manner that is just, inclusive, equitable and beneficial to all, and does not result in any one country or region becoming overly dependent on another. Trade facilitation must also ensure gender-just access to markets and decision-making spaces, particularly for women and youth.
- **Reduce Africa's dependency on corporate agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers and pesticides and phase out the import and use of highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs).** Europe must end its double standard on pesticides and stop all exports to third countries of pesticides that are not approved for use in EU agriculture on the basis that they can harm people or the environment. What is harmful in Europe, is equally harmful abroad.
- **Reevaluate the *Global Gateway* strategy to ensure it delivers positive social, environmental, and developmental impacts for local communities in partner countries,** rather than primarily focusing on the EU's geopolitical interests.

The creation of strategic infrastructure and transport corridors should be designed to meet the needs of local and regional markets in Africa, including storage, transport, and digital access, rather than building economic corridors that primarily benefit multinational companies and global value chains. The *AU-EU Partnership* should prioritise strengthening existing agricultural corridors that align with the African continental agricultural strategy and the spatial development plans of host countries, as these initiatives have the potential to create employment and enhance food security in subregions.

- **Revisit assumptions related to economic systems.** Current economic systems assume that competition and the relentless pursuit of growth are key to material well-being. This assumption shapes agricultural systems in ways that promote harmful incentives, leaving both African and European farmers struggling with seemingly incompatible objectives, such as environmental protection and economic security. Agriculture and food policies under the Partnership, therefore, should investigate alternative societal and economic models that align with all of humanity's needs.

Conclusion

Food systems in Africa and Europe are increasingly influenced by and intertwined with geopolitics, which underscores the need to enhance global food governance. In this context, supporting the *UN Committee on World Food Security* (CFS) is crucial, as it serves as the most inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for coordinating and governing food security and nutrition.

The AU and EU Member States should reaffirm their commitment to the CFS and its internationally agreed policy products, such as the guidelines on land tenure¹⁵ and the guidelines on gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition.¹⁶ CFS policy instruments can be adapted to specific national or regional contexts, making them valuable tools for guiding national policies and investment strategies in both African and European countries.

15 CFS. (2012). [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security](#). Rome.

16 CFS. (2024). [CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition](#). FAO, Rome.



For any queries

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The organisations listed on the front page are the initial promoters of this joint position. The position and its recommendations are open for endorsement by civil society actors and producer organisations who wish to express their support.

If you are interested, please complete this Google Form: <https://forms.gle/SLCeQN279XXkRWop6>.
The form will remain open for endorsements until September 2025.