



Key Recommendations to Guide the 5th African Union (AU) – European Union (EU) Agriculture Ministerial Meeting, June 30th 2023

This meeting takes place at a time of huge challenge for agri-food systems in Africa and Europe, which are confronted by a multifactor crisis of rare magnitude, affecting Africans disproportionately, due to impacts from climate change and the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The EU has its own agri-food challenges, which include needing to adapt to climate and biodiversity shocks, inflation and rising food prices, and major health problems associated with obesity, such as diabetes. A recent assessment by the Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF) Strategy Group on Agri-food Systems offers an overview of the state of the Africa-Europe partnership following the 6th AU-EU summit of February 2022 in the context of the current international situation, which is enflamed by rising levels of conflict in Africa, war in Ukraine, global inflation, debt distress, and human-induced climate change.

TRACK PROGRESS AGAINST COMMITMENTS: the large number of Summits on agri-food has not led to an acceleration in implementation. The AEF encourages regular tracking of the multiple commitments made at summits and ministerial meetings, to clarify progress, identify implementation constraints, and fast-track the roll out of joint initiatives. This will generate greater confidence within the partnership. The 5th AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Meeting should review successful progress made by some countries, and the key elements responsible, for wider emulation. The Ministerial meeting offers a critical moment for greater *political focus* on sustainable agri-food systems, by harnessing the concerns for food security and food sovereignty that have arisen as a result of the Russian war in Ukraine and the high dependence on fluctuating commodity prices.

BROADEN THE SCOPE OF THE AGRI-FOOD PARTNERSHIP TO ANCHOR IT IN REALITY: Development assistance is only a small part of the multiple connections linking Africa and Europe in the field of agri-food systems. Trade between the two continents and Foreign Direct Investment flows from Europe are many times larger in scale. Hence, a discussion of these broader components could move relations beyond a donor-recipient axis, to identify common interests in agri-food trade, and identify hurdles to closer partnership, such as agricultural subsidies. A case in point is the recent EU Deforestation-Free Regulation (EUDR) which seeks to reduce the impact of EU consumer demand on global forest areas and supply chains. But, given the scale of trade into the EU market, this directive has serious socio-economic implications for countries in Africa, and elsewhere. The EU needs to engage with Africa and other parts of the world to build their concerns into the workings of such new policy measures.

ALIGN EU's ACTIONS WITH AU's ASPIRATIONS AND FRAMEWORKS: Agri-food system initiatives led by the EU and global agenda often do not fit with the relevant instruments at the AU level, such as the Malabo Declaration and the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). In the context of the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), the African Union has advanced an '[Africa common position on Food Systems](#)'. All actors interested in agri-food systems in Africa should use this position, as well as existing instruments as their strategic compass, based on the objectives laid out in the 2063 Agenda, and opportunities presented by the AfCFTA.



STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN IMMEDIATE AND LONGER-TERM NEEDS: The multiple inter-locking challenges faced by the agri-food sector - whether demographic growth, urbanisation, conflict-led disruptions, soil degradation or climate change – can seem daunting. Equally, high levels of indebtedness constrain government expenditure and state investment in this sector. However, focus helps bring results. One such example is the EU-supported 'Food and Resilience Facility' led by IFAD which shows ways to sustain local agricultural systems, improve food sovereignty, and support more climate-resilient agricultural practices. Africa-led actions, such as the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative, offer opportunities for greater local production and processing, market access, and regional integration.

REMEMBER THE BASICS – SOILS, NUTRITION, TENURE, MARKETS: Many fundamentals of farming remain constant despite the rapid shift in context and ideas. Investment in the fundamentals would go a long way to grow productivity, improve health, and strengthen resilience to climate and other shocks. Such investment is done predominantly by farmers themselves, the most vital part of the private sector, who need to feel secure in the rights they hold over the land, water and grazing which are the foundations for building more productive agri-food systems. A joint Africa-Europe focus on healthy soils, improved nutrition, secured land tenure, market access and climate resilience would create learning opportunities within and between continents, and contribute to the transformations in agri-food systems need to deliver the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

ANCHOR THE GREAT GREEN WALL IN FUTURE PROGRAMMING: This AU-led initiative, supported by the EU, seeks to create a mosaic of green landscapes across the drylands of Africa. An ambitious programme which started in the Sahel, is now to be extended across many other regions of Africa. By restoring degraded land, encouraging natural regeneration, and promoting value chains based on the harvest of local trees and shrubs, it offers a model for much broader geographies needing to anchor climate adaptation and resilience into local landscapes and production systems. As European regions seek solutions to rising climate risks, the outflow of rural populations, and management of marginal areas, this regeneration of rural landscapes provides a shared vision for resilience in both Europe and Africa.

CONNECT THE AU-EU AGRICULTURE MINISTERIAL MEETING INTO COP28 FOOD SYSTEMS AGENDA: There is a need to build on past momentum (UN FSS; UN Food Stocktaking moment; Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on Agriculture and Food Security) and factor food systems into the revision of NDCs, and NAPs in view of the COP28 Global Stocktake. Climate finance represents a critical lever for farmers and land-users as they seek to adapt to climate change, invest in greater resilience, protect themselves from shocks, and build back better in the face of crises. But, with only 2-3% of climate finance going to agriculture, and tortuous processes for local structures to gain access to funds, we need a greater share of adaptation finance going towards agriculture and food systems. And, in parallel, Africa and Europe could usefully explore the potential of carbon markets to provide market incentives for land restoration and sequestration of carbon in soils and vegetation, thus generating additional climate finance.