



Key Recommendations to Guide the First 'Africa-Europe Policymaker Meeting on African Agri-food Systems' (ATLAS Roundtable), 10 June 2024

The 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, economic shocks, and conflicts. The EU has its own agri-food challenges, which include inflation and rising food prices, farmers' opposition to the burden of EU policies on agriculture, environment and trade, major health problems associated with obesity, such as diabetes, and the need to adapt to climate and biodiversity shocks. Recent assessments by the Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF) Strategy Group on Agri-food Systems offer an overview of the state of the Africa-Europe partnership following the 6th AU-EU summit of February 2022, and a set of recommendations in the context of the current international situation, which is enflamed by rising levels of conflicts in Africa, Europe and the Middle East, 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. Looking at the post-EU elections period and moving towards the upcoming AU-EU Ministerial Meeting in October 2024, leaders from the two continents should encourage the 6th AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Meeting and 7th AU-EU Heads of States Summit, both set to take place in 2025, to review successful progress made under the EU-Africa Global Gateway, including agri-food related flagships and initiatives, as well as by the G7/G20 and forward-looking countries, and the key elements responsible, for wider emulation. New political cycles at the European Union, European Commission, and African Union Commission in 2024/2025 respectively should offer 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 climate change, economic shocks, conflicts, 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 (G7/G20) 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 and future instruments as their strategic compass. These include the recently adopted AU's Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 (2024-2033), opportunities presented by the African Free Trade Continental Area (AfCFTA), and the post-2025 Malabo process currently under development and which will define the next 10-year strategy of the Comprehensive Agricultural African Development Plan (CAADP).

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. It is essential for the EU-Africa partnership on agri-food systems to work on two fronts: Short-term emergency response and longer-term investment in resilient agri-food systems. On the latter, Africa and Europe should work towards developing and strengthening agri-food value chains and enhancing trade as a driver of modernisation.

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.

DRIVE MORE CLIMATE FINANCE INTO AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS: There is a need to build on past momentum (UN Food Systems Summit UNFSS; UN Food Stocktaking moment; Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on Agriculture and Food Security, COP28 Declaration on Food and Agriculture) to factor food systems into the revision of NDCs prior to COP30 in 2025. 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.