

"Africa Can Be a Major Agricultural Power"

Call for multi-stakeholder mobilization for sustainable agricultural development in Africa

We, international organizations, development banks, businesses, financial institutions, research centers, philanthropic foundations and civil society organizations, meeting on November 10 and 11, 2023 at the Paris Peace Forum, call for mobilization for Africa's agricultural development. Africa has the potential to become a major agricultural power by 2050. A transformation of its agricultural systems is needed, not only to increase production, but also enabling sustainable and equitable food systems that generate wealth for small producers and agricultural workers, women, and youth, prioritize access to nutritious food, environmental sustainability, and resilience.

- 1. The coming decades will require major transformations in agricultural systems, to simultaneously produce more while decarbonizing and enable thriving and prosperous rural areas in Africa. Africa has immense potential:** it has the highest yield gaps and can increase its already high level of agricultural production, it has a wealth of experience, human strengths and skills, and variety in its pedoclimatic environments. Africa can leapfrog its transformation, pioneer novel agricultural and food systems paradigms, and establish itself as a prominent agricultural vanguard, sharing its knowledge with northern nations. The localized expertise, resilience, innovation capacity and adaptability of 33 million smallholder farms and the farmers that live on them, half of them women, are instrumental for achieving this transition. They contribute to 70 per cent of the food supply. Their youth, their propensity to innovate and their skills, will carry the reform of food systems.

There are still major challenges that we can overcome. The recent rise in the number of food-insecure people in the world - 9.2% of the world population, 22% of the African population - must be reversed. The resilience of food systems, and whose dependencies were further exposed by the Covid-19 epidemic and the war in Ukraine, must be strengthened. Rising demographics (9.7 billion by 2050, including 2.5 billion in Africa), combined with lower crop yields due to climate change and ecosystems loss, call for unprecedented mobilization. The limited percentage of climate finance that is effectively benefiting the transformation of agrifood systems call for strengthened instruments. Africa has a wealth of solutions for driving these transformations and support global food security.

- 2. Achieving this vision is based on a few principles:**

- All countries have an interest in agricultural development on the African continent and are therefore bound to act jointly for it.* The global fight against climate change, the protection of biodiversity, and sustainable food systems are intrinsically interconnected to Africa's agricultural destiny and to the preservation of forests, the health of soils, and their capacity to retain carbon. Development, stability, and global health are linked to strong, sustainable agricultural systems in Africa.
- No country should have to choose between achieving food security and protecting its environment.* In line with the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact held in Paris on June 22 and 23, 2023, we believe that the agendas of fighting global warming, protecting biodiversity and rural and agricultural development to achieve food security must not be pitted against each other. Climate transition will not happen if people are undernourished, struggle to lift themselves out of poverty, and if farmers are not supported; and food and nutritional security cannot be achieved if the planet is not protected.
- Each country can choose its own sustainable agricultural development path, adapted to the variety of contexts.* Needs and conditions are diverse and very different from those in other parts of the world. Solutions will emerge locally, from countries, small holder farmers, local communities, and can inspire other models outside the African continent.

3. In support of these principles, we have identified several directions for collective action:

- Recognizing that the agriculture challenge in Africa is a soil health challenge: soil health is both vital to agricultural production and central to climate resilience and biodiversity preservation. African soils are naturally poor and have accumulated a history of degradation. Improving soils health should start by providing the right nutrients and the right models of application, adopting a science-based approach, and developing the soil knowledge through extensive soil mapping programs. Comprehensive strategies to improve soil fertility must encompass the training of farmers on soil management practices and the responsible, sustainable use of customized fertilizers and solutions.
- Adopting integrated agricultural and food losses reduction strategies, that should include the improvement of post-harvest infrastructure and equipment, the enhancement of the capacity of stakeholders throughout all value chains, and the facilitation of better market access and rural finance.
- Managing the intensification of yields on plots of land already under cultivation in such a way as to ensure the long-term sustainability of yields; an effort to preserve the ecosystem services of uncultivated land.
- A shared, forward-looking vision of agricultural transitions, enabling the implementation of concerted agricultural and food policies appropriate to national and regional contexts.
- Improved access for farmers to training, credit and production capacity, particularly for family farmers and small businesses, with particular attention to gender equality, young people, and local populations.
- Development and facilitation of access to knowledge and technology for farmers, adapted to local contexts and co-constructed with them, aimed at optimizing their yields in a sustainable way while taking care of the soil.
- Strengthening all value chains, from production to consumption and even export. This will require the creation of logistical and industrial capacities for storage, transport, processing and access to markets for agricultural products, as well as strengthening market integration to facilitate food products trade across the borders and amongst key regions of the continent.
- Working with and through farmers' organizations, from grass-root, district, national, regional and continental levels to better meet farmers' needs, enlarge the overall outreach of rural development interventions, and foster efficiency and sustainability of interventions. Small-scale farmers and their organizations are key partners for co-construction of rural development programs and policies.
- Appropriate and substantial financing, without which these transformations will not take place: a substantial increase in public investment by governments and international public finance towards sustainable and resilient agriculture and livestock farming, as well as the mobilization of more responsible private investment, will be necessary. They will have to be accessible to smallholder farmers and accompanied by public policies and infrastructures adapted to these transformations.

4. We therefore call on all stakeholders who want to help unlock Africa's agricultural potential for sustainable food and nutrition security to join us.

List of signatories (November 10th, 2023):

- *International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)*
- *University Mohammed VI Polytechnic (UM6P)*
- *Agence française de développement (AFD)*
- *Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)*
- *OCP Group*
- *Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)*
- *Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (CIRAD)*
- *African Plant Nutrition Institute (APNI)*
- *Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement (INRAE)*
- *Boston Consulting Group (BCG)*
- *Mo Ibrahim Foundation*
- *Fondation Afrique-Europe*
- *Notre Europe – Instituts Jacques Delors*
- *The One Campaign – France*