



# **JOURNEY TOWARDS COP28:** ADAPTING AFRICA'S FOOD SYSTEMS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

**Voices from AFS Forum 2023**



**COP28  
UAE**

## Journey towards COP28: Adapting Africa's Food to Climate Change

Ahead of the upcoming COP28 in the UAE and in alignment with the outcomes of the Africa Climate Summit (ACS2023), the 2023 Africa Food Systems Forum served as a platform for setting the agenda and priorities for the continent COP28.

“We need to transform into credible mutual accountability platforms. COP28 must add value to addressing the climate change challenge.” - **Ms. Cristina Duarte, UN  
USG, Special Advisor on Africa**



Amidst global efforts to address the climate change crisis, it is essential to recognize that Africa bears the brunt of the adverse impacts of climate change more than any other region. As the international community gears up for COP28, a central point of emphasis will undoubtedly revolve around addressing Africa's unique challenges, special needs, and distinctive circumstances in the context of climate action.

# THE CASE FOR URGENT ACTION:



The over  
**500 million**

smallholder farmers around the world are already directly experiencing the impacts of climate change. In Africa, over 33 million smallholder farmers need urgent to cope with climate change. Farmers are farming under the hottest temperatures ever recorded in history since the beginnings of agriculture.

Droughts and floods in Africa have adversely affected the return on investments in food systems. The sector's risk profile has seen a significant rise, resulting in an increased cost of capital. The impact of climate change has gradually marginalized smallholder farmers, worsening their risk profile.



**10%**

Africa is responsible for less than 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Yet it is the most impacted and least able to cope with the negative impacts of climate change.



**4.3%**

Only 4.3% of climate finance is going to agriculture.



Africa is receiving

**\$30 billion**

in annual climate finance flows, a mere 11 per cent of the required annual amount.

Actors at the 2023 Africa Food Systems Forum identified the key areas of action and pathways below:



**Urgent action is needed NOW!**  
to address the challenges faced by  
the continent and build a resilient  
and sustainable food system.

Africa's unique position and challenges will require a coordinated approach and a unified voice going into COP28. Africa's role as both a steward of its unique ecosystems and a reservoir of enormous renewable energy resources must be recognized and rewarded.

In response to the appeal made by Heads of State and Governments at the Africa Climate Summit, Ministers at the Africa Food Systems Forum 2023 united in recognizing the crucial opportunity to initiate a new era of green growth. This collective effort is focused on generating positive outcomes for people, the planet, and prosperity, marking a significant moment for Africa.

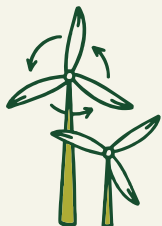


“We need to transform into credible mutual accountability platforms. COP28 must add value to addressing the climate change challenge.” - **Ms. Cristina Duarte, UN  
USG, Special Advisor on Africa**

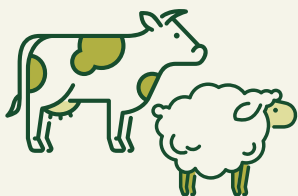
The Ministerial Declaration underscored the sobering reality that food systems and communities are already facing due of climate change, emphasizing the pressing need for immediate action. The Ministers recognized several key principles and called urgent action on:



- 1. Food Systems as victim and part of the solution:** Food systems are not merely victims of climate change; they also play a role in exacerbating the. However, there are significant opportunities to turn the sector into a source of solutions for a green economy in the future.



- 2. Balancing Food Security and Environmental Goals:** The Ministers stressed the importance of achieving better outcomes for nature and climate while also acknowledging the central significance of food security and livelihoods for Africa's growing population. This commitment extends to addressing poverty and hunger, which are integral aspects of the broader battle against climate change and other environmental issues. The Ministers recognized that hunger and poverty represent formidable adversaries to the preservation of our natural world.



- 3. Collaboration and Partnerships:** The Ministers affirmed their dedication to enhancing collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships among all state and non-state actors. They emphasized the necessity of adopting a holistic, “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” approach to address food systems and climate action effectively. This approach involves seamless coordination across various ministries within a country, including agriculture, livestock, fisheries, environment, trade, industry, energy, health, finance, and beyond, to ensure a united front in the pursuit of these critical goals.

“Smallholder farmers in Africa do not need handouts, they need their right equitable share of investment in the global climate funding,” - **Hon. Hussein Mohamed Bashe, Minister of Agriculture, United Republic of Tanzania**

# Right tools and support for smallholders

We need to get incentives right for smallholder farmers and the private sector to invest in resilience in agriculture. Only 35 cents of every dollar of climate finance gets to farmers. Resources need to be deployed more efficiently. Farmers are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts on food systems, and they must be supported and empowered to build their resilience and play an important role in mitigation and adaptation.

“Scaling climate smart agriculture is a knowledge-intensive process that requires a deep understanding of the farming systems, the socio-economic of farmers, and the risks. We must understand the impact of policies on the systems.”

**- Dr. Anthony Whitbread, Director of the Sustainable Livestock System program, ILRI**



Africa is collaborating to ensure that climate dialogues and decision-making are inclusive of the continent's needs and priorities since this is key to ensuring that we find solutions in Africa, for Africans. - **Dr. Agnes Kalibata, President - AGRA**



To contribute to the climate resilience and sustainable development of African smallholder farmers, helping them adapt to changing climate conditions while ensuring food security and livelihood stability:



1. **Access to Climate-resilient Seeds and Livestock Breeds:** there is a need to promote research and development efforts to breed crops and livestock that can thrive under changing climate conditions. The call is to ensure the widespread availability and affordability of climate-resilient crop varieties and seeds, as well as livestock breeds that are adapted to local conditions.



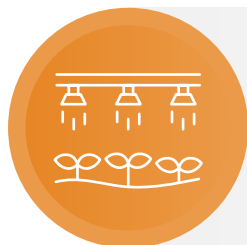
2. **Farm Advisory Services:** to empower farmers to make informed decisions and adapt to climate fluctuations, there is a need to establish and expand accessible and tailored advisory services that equip smallholder farmers with climate-smart farming techniques, best practices, and timely weather information.



“Climate finance is crucial for agriculture, but its current capacity is limited. We must expand its role and integrate it with traditional resources.” – **Mr. Kolyang Palebele, President, Pan-African Farmers Organization (PAFO)**



- 3. Financial Inclusion:** governments and the private sector need to promote financial inclusion by facilitating access to affordable credit, insurance, and savings mechanisms for smallholder farmers. These financial tools will enable farmers to invest in climate-resilient technologies, crop diversification, and risk mitigation strategies.



- 4. Infrastructure and Irrigation:** infrastructure improvements are crucial for enhancing productivity, reducing post-harvest losses, and building resilience to climate-related shocks. Governments and the private sector are urged to invest in rural infrastructure development, including irrigation systems, post-harvest storage facilities, and efficient transportation networks.



- 5. Capacity-building and Knowledge Transfer:** Prioritize capacity building and knowledge transfer programs that equip farmers with the skills needed to adopt climate-smart practices.



# National planning to build food systems resilience

As leaders on the continent, we find ourselves at a crucial juncture, approaching the end of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) period 2030. The imperative is clear: we must prioritize adaptation in our food systems. With less than seven agricultural seasons remaining to meet the development aspirations of our people, this urgency demands our unwavering attention and concerted action. - **H.E Hailemariam Dessalegn, Former Prime Minister Ethiopia. Chair AFS Forum**

**Integrating sustainable and resilient food systems into national plans is a multisectoral issue that requires a coordinated, multisectoral approach. Coordination and collaboration at the national policy-making level are crucial. Planning is a must to decrease the risk profile of the sector and mobilize external financing for food systems transformation.**



Countries need to factor in food systems transformation in nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

For every dollar planned in the national budget for food systems, a country can mobilize 4 dollars in external financing.

Fiscal policies play an important role. Countries must make sure agriculture policies and subsidy systems are incentivizing green and inclusive adjustments rather than obstructing them.

**Inclusion** – make sure we are not leaving any groups behind. Social safety nets are needed on the consumer side, while smallholders need access to programs that support growth. Youth and women must be part of identifying and implementing solutions. As SMEs are very important, policies must address constraints and provide infrastructure investment to support SMEs.



Ministers must exhibit robust risk management skills. The continuous wait for COP funds to support climate adaptation is unsustainable. Africa faces annual losses of US\$500 billion. It is more practical to identify areas of financial loss, establish institutions and processes to prevent such losses, rather than depending solely on COP funding. Countries should prioritize mobilizing domestic resources for sustainable financial strategies.

Promote the integration of the agriculture sector with other segments of the economy. For example, strategic investments in the energy sector can yield benefits for agriculture by enabling the expansion of agro-processing and tackling food loss and waste. Developing road infrastructure facilitates the connectivity of farmers to markets. Investment in electric railways and other transportation systems not only reduces transportation costs but also contributes to lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

# Climate-smart technologies and innovations at scale



- **Proper financial mechanisms** to support smallholder farmers are needed. Climate-smart agriculture must be funded to get into the hands of farmers.
- **Huge investments** must be directed to scaling up early warning systems, insurance programs, and infrastructure such as dams, irrigation technologies, and digital information systems crucial for building resilience.
- **Investments** must also be directed to research and to adapt them to local conditions and contexts.
- **Scale-up and invest in innovations** that are helpful to farmers and the value chains – climate resilient improved seeds.
- **Support SMEs in the agriculture sector.** Three out of 4 SMEs lack access to finance. Work with banks that are serving the missing middle (SMEs) in ag economies to push out the innovations.



“Innovation is key and we have to look at what is scalable and invest in it.”

**- H.E. Mariam Almheiri,  
Minister of Climate Change  
and Environment, UAE**

The cornerstone of sustainable climate action lies in adapting and building resilience, encompassing the active involvement of communities, ecosystems, and infrastructure but also addressing losses and damages caused by recurrent climate events. - **Amath Pathe Sene - Managing Director, AFS Forum**



“We need to be impatient about pushing these innovations that have real impact and are being used by smallholder farmers go to scale.” - **Ms. Ann Vaughan, Senior Advisor for Climate Change, Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, USAID**



AFRICA FOOD  
SYSTEMS FORUM  
PARTNERS





[www.agrf.org](http://www.agrf.org)