

Africa-Europe Policymaker Meeting on African Agri-food Systems

1st ATLAS Roundtable

10 June 2024 (UM6P, Benguerir, Morocco – Spring meeting of the Paris Peace Forum)

Replay: [ATLAS Roundtable, 1st Edition](#)

BRIEF SUMMARY: Key takeaways and agreements from the meeting

- **Launch of the ATLAS Lab:**

- Mission: Advocating for increased investments in African agri-food systems from public, private, and philanthropic sources.
- Goals: Facilitating consensus on global investment priorities and shared agendas for agricultural transformation in Africa.

- **Increased Funding:**

- Highlighted the need for substantial investment in African agriculture, estimated at \$200 billion annually.
- Post-ODA Era: Recognition of the shift away from Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the mobilization of public and private sector resources.
- Urged governments to allocate a fair share of national budgets to agriculture, nearing the 10% target of the Maputo Declaration.
- Investment Guidelines: FAO's revision of investment guidelines to align with post-Malabo processes.

- **Focus Areas for Investment**

- Smallholder Farmers: Enhancing access to finance, technology, and knowledge, promoting climate-smart agriculture. Emphasized the critical role of smallholder farmers, who produce 80% of Africa's food, in driving food systems transformation.
- Value Chains: Addressing underfunding, de-risking value chains, and incubating projects for demand and fair pricing.
- Climate Finance: Increasing adaptation finance, exploring carbon markets, integrating food systems into climate action.

- **Definition of Sustainable Agriculture and Common Standards:**

- Cooperation between Africa and Europe to define sustainable agriculture linking productivity with sustainability.
- Definition of common food standards enabling greater trade between both continents.

- **Support for Continental Strategy and Africa-Europe Cooperation:**

- Support for Africa's continental strategy, including frameworks like the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and Malabo, with the upcoming post-2025 Malabo process.
- EU-AU Alignment: Ensuring EU strategies align with AU aspirations and frameworks, including Agenda 2063 and AfCFTA.
- Political Focus: Utilizing upcoming political cycles in EU and AU for sustainable agri-food systems. Developing long-term objectives based on shared interests between Africa and Europe.
- Progress Tracking: Regular monitoring of commitments to ensure implementation and build trust.

DETAILED SUMMARY

The transformative potential of agriculture in Africa is overlooked. Even if the sector knows many challenges, solutions lie in investing in agri-food systems and rural development. Africa has the potential to become a major agricultural powerhouse.

It is fundamental to recognize and accept that the world is entering into a post-ODA era and that there will be implications for developing countries in their search for greater resources to support agri-food transformation. As such, there is a pressing need to mobilize both the public and private sectors, including public development banks, as well as to target the needs of smallholder farmers, the enablers of food systems transformation in Africa.

During the Spring Meeting of the Paris Peace Forum on 10 June 2024 in Benguerir, Morocco, African and European policymakers met with representatives from the private sector and NGOs for a high-level policymaker meeting to discuss Africa-Europe agri-food systems cooperation.

The meeting took place at a time of huge challenge for agri-food systems in Africa and Europe, which are confronted to a multifactor crisis of rare magnitude, affecting Africans disproportionately, due to a lack of investments, economic shocks, the impacts of climate change, and conflicts.

Participants from the two continents engaged in dialogue on the launch of the ATLAS (Agricultural Transitions Lab for African Solutions) Roundtable. The ATLAS Laboratory serves as the permanent structure for South-North dialogue and cooperation for the multi-stakeholder coalition of the Paris Peace Forum on African agricultural systems, following the November 2023 call to action ["Africa Can Be a Major Agricultural Power."](#)

The ATLAS Laboratory's mission is to advocate for a significant increase in investments in African agri-food systems from public, private and philanthropic sources, and to drive consensus on globally shared common agendas and investment priorities for agricultural transformation in Africa.

The meeting agreed that the ATLAS Lab is both pertinent and opportune, coming at the right moment. Arguing against the "geo-politization" of food systems experienced in recent years, the ATLAS Lab presents a pertinent initiative able to unleash both a food systems transformation and drive greater investments in this strategic sector of cooperation.

With \$200 bn of investment required annually for African agriculture, all actors need to be mobilized, and governments must play a leading role in allocating a fairer share of their budget to agriculture. Public funds provide the backbone to the agri-food sector and draw in private sector funding. However, to date, only 2 out of 54 have realized the Maputo objective of spending 10% of national budget into agriculture (Ethiopia and Malawi).

It has also become necessary to agree on a common definition of sustainable agriculture, one that illuminates clearly the connection between sustainability and productivity. To achieve this task, greater cooperation between Africa and Europe is welcome.

The meeting noted that Africa is working on its continental strategy. It has developed a number of policy frameworks to support agri-food systems transformation, starting with CAADP, and Malabo. Now the post-2025 Malabo process is currently under development which will define the next 10-year strategy of CAADP. The major evolution across these processes is the importance of a multi-sectoral, integrated approach to agriculture, encompassing soil, water, energy, nutrition, trade, and development.

It is key for the EU's strategies and programming to align with the AU's aspirations and frameworks. All actors interested in agri-food systems in Africa should use the African common position on Food Systems, 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) and opportunities presented by the African Free Trade Continental Area (AfCFTA). The meeting also heard that FAO is currently revising investment guidelines in food systems, which will need to align with the post-Malabo process.

The meeting heard that Africa, in cooperation with partners, has to double down on commitments from CAADP and Malabo. There is a need to take stock of progress achieved, missed opportunities, and work towards ensuring the continent meet its commitments. There is also a need to ensure that the Post-Malabo process translates priorities into concrete projects, focusing on water, soil, irrigation, land ownership, and infrastructure.

The convening also stressed how essential it is to increase the focus on smallholder farmers, which contribute 80% of the food produced. Smallholder farmers are not only the enablers of the food systems transformation but also its first financiers. As such, it is important to invest in these actors for them to evolve into agribusinesses and SMEs. The priority should be to crack issues of access to finance for these actors, and to work towards all options, be it through blended finance, grants, loans, insurance, and guarantees.

Smallholder farmers should also be valued as active contributors to addressing climate change challenges, notably by deploying climate-smart solutions, including sustainable practices and carbon farming. As such, it is important to share existing tools with these actors to amplify climate and biodiversity action at large, while restoring and regenerating soils. Climate smart intervention can enhance production while making a contribution to mitigating climate change and unlocking carbon finance. Given current trends, it is important to go beyond ODA and philanthropy to generate revenue for rural development.

For Africa, the import bill continues to grow. By 2030, there will be millions of additional consumers. There is a need to address the growing population needs, and to create the right enabling environment with the right policies. There is an opportunity to work with the EU to learn from its successes and mistakes, and to work towards a transition that is responsive to reality. There is a need to create policies and systems that attract private sector actors, and encourage value addition, including through agri-processing. There might also be an opportunity to work towards establishing a common food standard between Africa and Europe, enabling greater trade between both continents.

Africa has developed a number of avenues to enhance cooperation with Europe. This includes the Africa Food Security Plan and the FeedAfrica flagship programme of the African Development Bank (AfDB). The African Union has also emphasized the need to support agri-food processing zones in order to move up the value chain and increase local transformation and processing. This provides opportunities for the EU to work with Africa.

There are also additional avenues for cooperation, such as working on the identification of bread baskets across the continent, trade corridors, as well as limiting factors that hold back trade. Beyond this, there might be opportunities for greater mobility in research and development with feedback loops to learn from experience.

Regarding African agri-food systems priorities, there is a need to look at the entire value chain. This can be categorized into three priorities: (1) Production, through the use of modern knowledge and technologies, AI, carbon farming, (2) Made in Africa, ensuring both the downstream and upstream is supported, not only to produce more in terms of quantity but also quality, and value of products, (3) Empowering local ecosystems, with the provision of services, including opportunities to access markets and knowledge.

A key priority should be to address the chronic underfunding of value chains, de-risk value chains, and structure and incubate projects along the value chains. It was suggested to build supply chains in those sectors where we know there is demand, both internal and external to Africa. By having possible off-takers, there would be more clarity on expected demand and opportunity to drive a fair price for the commodities to be traded.

There is also 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, smallholder farmers receive less than 1% of all climate finance, and face tortuous processes to gain access to funds, so we need a greater share of adaptation finance going towards agriculture

and food systems. In parallel, Africa and Europe could usefully explore the potential of carbon markets to provide incentives for land restoration and sequestration of carbon in soils and vegetation, thus generating additional funds for investments.

The meeting also heard the importance of tracking 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 trust in the partnership.

Looking at the post-EU election period and moving towards the upcoming AU-EU Foreign Affairs 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 progress made under the EU-Africa Global Gateway, including agri-food related flagships and initiatives, as well as agri-food initiatives under the G7/G20.

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 high dependence on fluctuating global commodity prices.

It is high time for the two continents to deepen and renew cooperation, and ensure more attention is given to agriculture. To do so, it will be key for Africa and Europe to recognize that they represent the two regions with the highest potential to design common strategies for agri-food transformation. As such, the two continents should look together at the future, recognizing their different starting points, from which to identify their shared interests and co-design long-term objectives.

List of participants:

Co-chairs:

- **Mr. Pascal LAMY**, Vice-President, Paris Peace Forum (PPF); President of the Board, IFPRI; former Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO); and Africa-Europe Foundation High-Level Group Member
- **Mr. Ibrahim MAYAKI**, Special Envoy for Food Systems, African Union (AU); Co-chair of the Africa-Europe Foundation Strategy Group on Agri-food Systems; Former CEO at African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)
- **Mr. Rémy RIOUX**, Director General, French Development Agency (AFD)

Participants:

- **Mr. Amadou HOTT**, Special Envoy for the Alliance for Green Infrastructure in Africa, African Development Bank (AfDB)
- **Ms. Holy RANAIVOZANANY**, Deputy Executive Director, Africa-Europe Foundation
- **Ms. Joytsna PURI**, Associate Vice President, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- **Ms. Elisabeth CLAVERIE de SAINT-MARTIN**, CEO of the French Agricultural Research Center for International Development (CIRAD) (remote)
- **Mr. Cheick Oumar SYLLA**, Director for Northern African and the Middle East, International Finance Corporation (IFC)
- **Mr. Hamadi BOGA**, Vice President-Program Delivery, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)
- **Mr. Younes ADDOU**, Vice-President, InnovX, OCP Group
- **Mr. Charles KLEINERMAN**, Team Leader - Capacity Development Unit, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)
- **Ms. Rhoda BERGER**, CEO, Global Perspectives Initiative
- **Mr. Carlos Eduardo PELLEGRINO CERRI**, Director of CCARBON (Center for Carbon Research in Tropical Agriculture); Professor at the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil
- **Mr. Mohammed HETTITI**, Chief Operations Officer & SVP East Africa, OCP Africa
- **Ms. Amsale MENGISTU**, Senior Program Officer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)
- **Mr. Rachid SERRAJ**, Director of Strategy, University Mohammed VI Polytechnic (UM6P)
- **Mr. Jackson KIMANI**, Co-founder & CEO, Climate Action Platform for Africa (CAP-A)
- **Ms. Abir LEMSEFFER**, Deputy Managing Director, Azura Group; Director General, Initiative for the Adaptation of African Agriculture to Climate Change
- **Mr. Christian STAMMKOETTER**, CEO Asia Middle East Africa, Danone
- **Mr. Patrick DUPOUX**, Managing Director and Senior Partner, Former Head of BCG Africa System, Boston Consulting Group
- **Mr. Désiré ASSOGBAVI**, Francophone Africa Director, The One Campaign