



FINAS DIALOGUES

DISPATCH - 001

Let's keep the conversation going



Dear valued Partner,

Thanks to your support and participation, the Financing Agri-Food Systems Sustainably (FINAS) Dialogues has grown into a continental platform driving innovative solutions to agrifinancing challenges in Africa.

Through the annual FINAS summits, we are living up to our mission to serve as the go-to pan-African platform for dialogue and action, mobilising strategic partnerships and fostering public-private sector collaboration to advance sustainable, inclusive, and de-risked financing solutions for Africa's agri-food systems.

The summits have also become bigger and better - in terms of participation, scope of solutions explored and experiences shared.

We are currently making preparations for FINAS 2026, which is set to be held in Nairobi from 9-11 June this year.

This year's summit will build on the success of the past two, focusing on building a sustainable financial architecture that links capital flows to policy, trade and investment frameworks.

Registration for the June summit is ongoing, and I invite you to join us.

The overwhelming majority of participants at the previous summits have expressed their wish for more regular

communication, engagement and feedback among FINAS partners.

As they rightly observed, a lot happens on Africa's agri-food systems financing landscape in between the FINAS events that people need to know about.

We heard them, and we agree with them that the conversation must never stop.

Beginning January 2026, we will be putting together and sending out the FINAS Dialogues, a monthly newsletter showcasing impactful food systems financing stories, insights, and activities from across the African continent.

We are particularly keen on amplifying activities involving our FINAS partners.

In keeping with FINAS's spirit of collaboration and partnerships, we wish to involve you in co-creating content for this newsletter.






As part of this effort, we will periodically reach out to you to share your stories and other relevant information on activities you would like us to feature.

We also warmly welcome your suggestions on content ideas and any feedback to help us improve the newsletter and champion progress for Africa's food systems financing.

A happy new year to you all!

Dr Charity Mutege

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   Financing Agri-food Systems Sustainably

EAC partner states urged to back youth agripreneurs with affordable financing



Hon. Andrea Ariik, EAC, Boaz Keizire, AGRA and Betty Kibaara, Rockefeller Foundation at an exhibition booth during the East African Youth in Agri-Food Systems Expo 2025 (EAYASE 2025). Photo Credit: EAC

East African Community (EAC) Partner States have been urged to collaborate with financial institutions to design affordable and flexible loan products tailored for young agripreneurs. The call, made during the East African Youth in Agri-Food Systems Expo 2025 (EAYASE 2025) in Nairobi, Kenya, seeks to address one of the biggest barriers limiting youth participation in agriculture: access to finance.

The Expo, organised by the EAC in partnership with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), brought together youth agribusiness exhibitors from across the region, including young women and vulnerable groups. Policymakers, private sector actors and development partners also attended, creating a platform for knowledge exchange, innovation showcases, policy dialogue and

investment matchmaking aimed at strengthening youth employment and agribusiness across East Africa.

Delegates called on Partner States to strengthen policy and regulatory frameworks that support the integration of climate-smart agriculture and advanced technologies such as drones, digital systems and precision tools. Governments were also encouraged to introduce targeted incentives, including tax exemptions, affordable credit and investment in enabling infrastructure, to promote youth innovation and competitiveness across agricultural value chains.

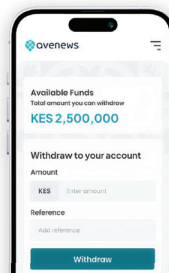
The meeting further urged the EAC Secretariat and Partner States to mobilise financial and technical resources to establish a regional flagship programme on youth in agribusiness. The initiative is expected to accelerate innovation, investment and inclusive growth across the sector. In addition, the EAC Secretariat and AGRA were requested to establish the EAYASE 2025 Network of Youth Champions to provide structured mentorship and long-term engagement for young innovators. Delegates also affirmed the need to institutionalise the Expo as a permanent regional platform for monitoring progress and strengthening youth inclusion in agri-food systems.

Speaking at the official opening, EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Infrastructure, Productive, Social and Political Sectors, Hon. Andrea Ariik, underscored the central role of agriculture in the region. "Limited access to finance, markets and technical skills remains a major obstacle for our young people. This is why youth empowerment is at the centre of the EAC Youth Strategy and fully aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063," he said.

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Hon. Andrea Ariik, EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Infrastructure, Productive, Social and Political Sectors. Photo Credit: EAC

Representing the Government of Kenya, Dr. Peter Orangi, Assistant Director at the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, noted that youth have transformed agriculture through modern technology and innovation, shifting their role from passive participants to active entrepreneurs. Mr. Joel Imitira, Senior Agricultural Economist at the Food and Agriculture Organization's Kenya Country Office, described youth as strategic partners in reshaping Africa's food systems and emphasised the importance of digital solutions in bridging market information gaps.

AGRA's Director of Policy and State Capability, Mr. Boaz Keizire, announced the rollout of a new Youth Performance Index to track progress on youth empowerment, commending the EAC for its leadership in regional integration. Meanwhile, Ms. Betty Kibaara, Director at the Rockefeller Foundation, encouraged young entrepreneurs to embrace agribusiness as a pathway to Africa's future prosperity, urging them to remain patient, strategic and resilient.

The Expo concluded with a strong call to institutionalise EAYASE as a permanent regional platform for driving youth inclusion, innovation, partnerships and accountability in agri-food systems. With agriculture continuing to anchor food security and economic growth across East Africa, empowering youth agripreneurs is seen as critical to securing the region's future.



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African Development Bank invests €102 million to boost poultry production in Benin



By Murimi Gitari

The African Development Bank Group approved a €102.12 million loan to Benin to launch the first phase of its Agriculture Transformation Programme in the country's Savannah region. The initiative, set to run from 2026 to 2030, is designed to significantly increase poultry meat production while strengthening food sovereignty, job creation, and inclusive economic growth.

The programme will integrate maize, soybean, and poultry value chains to meet national production standards. By cultivating 120,000 hectares of maize and 80,000 hectares of soybean, Benin is expected to achieve annual poultry output of approximately

41,000 tonnes. Beneficiaries will receive broiler chicken farming kits, certified seeds, fertilisers, and plant protection products, while smallholder farmers will be equipped with portable tools to enhance sowing and crop management.

Robert Masumbuko, Country Manager for the African Development Bank in Benin, emphasized that the programme will be implemented in phases to support gradual growth of the poultry sector, particularly broiler production, which requires substantial inputs. He noted that the project draws inspiration from Brazil's Cerrado region, which has successfully transformed into a national food basket.

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Beyond production, the programme will establish a multi-stakeholder platform for agricultural and environmental research, focusing on maize and soybean cropping systems. It will also promote climate-resilient, nutrient-rich seeds and strengthen storage infrastructure through the construction of 60 barns with 1,000-tonne capacity, 90 barns with 500-tonne capacity, and 150 drying areas of 200 square metres each.

The impact of the initiative is expected to be far-reaching. Around 50,000 people will benefit directly, while an additional 500,000 will benefit indirectly. Importantly, 30% of both direct and indirect beneficiaries will be women, underscoring the programme's commitment to inclusive development.

By leveraging modern agricultural technologies and private sector participation, the African Development Bank aims to transform Benin's savannah zone into a hub of productivity and resilience, positioning the country as a leader in sustainable poultry production across West Africa.



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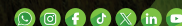
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NATIONAL YOUTH AGRIBUSINESS STRATEGY DOMESTICATION DIALOGUE

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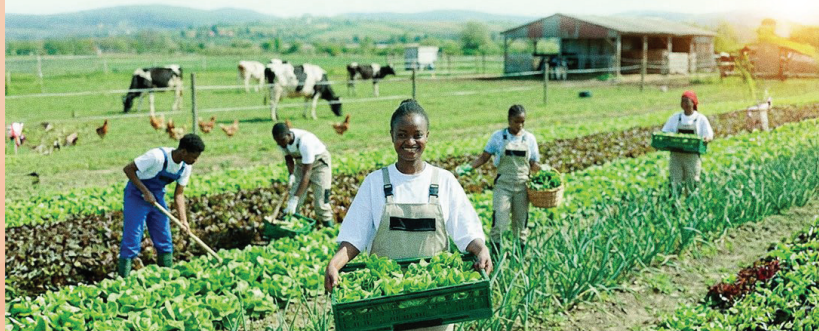
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ECOWAS Bank, GGGI launch \$600,000 seed fund for climate-smart agriculture

The ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) has signed a USD 600,000 Seed Funding Agreement with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) to strengthen climate-smart agriculture across West Africa. The partnership, announced at EBID Headquarters in Lomé marks a major step in advancing the West African Initiative for Climate-Smart Agriculture (WAICSA) and expanding climate-resilient agricultural value chains in the ECOWAS region.

The Seed Fund, established under EBID's Regional Fund for Agriculture and Food (RFAF), will serve as a catalyst for technical assistance and resource mobilisation. It is designed to support financial institutions, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and agribusinesses by equipping them with tools and capacity to withstand climate change impacts while contributing to adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, EBID President and Chairman of the Board, Dr. George Agyekum Donkor, underscored the transformative potential of the collaboration. He noted that climate-smart agriculture is central to EBID's mandate of fostering sustainable, inclusive, and resilient development across West Africa.

"WAICSA is a flagship intervention that will enhance food security, promote green investments, and unlock new opportunities for millions of smallholder farmers and agribusinesses," he said.

GGGI's Regional Director for Africa, Ms. Katerina Syngellakis, commended EBID's



EBID President and Chairman of the Board, Dr. George Agyekum Donkor and GGGI's Regional Director for Africa, Ms. Katerina Syngellakis at the signing of the agreement. Photo Credit: EBID

leadership in advancing climate action and reaffirmed GGGI's commitment to accelerating green investment initiatives in the subregion. She emphasized that the partnership reflects a shared vision of climate-smart agriculture as a foundation for food security and economic resilience.

The agreement will provide critical support for WAICSA's ongoing efforts, including project preparation, investor outreach, and ecosystem mobilisation. By embedding climate-smart practices into agricultural value chains, EBID and GGGI aim to empower farmers and agribusinesses, strengthen regional adaptation capacity, and drive long-term sustainable development across ECOWAS.

Microsoft and AfDB join forces to drive AI-powered agriculture in Africa

Microsoft has surpassed its 2025 connectivity target by bringing internet access to more than 117 million people across Africa and is now partnering with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to accelerate the continent's agricultural transformation. The collaboration, announced at the B20 South Africa Summit, will combine finance and digital innovation to empower small and medium enterprises in agriculture, positioning Africa to harness AI-driven solutions for food security, climate resilience, and inclusive growth.

The achievement marks a significant step in closing Africa's digital divide. Since 2022, Microsoft has worked with local Internet Service Providers, hardware manufacturers, and multilateral organizations to expand connectivity and build digital skills. The company emphasized that reliable internet access is not only a foundation for inclusive growth but also a critical enabler for AI adoption.

"Connectivity is a key enabler for AI adoption and inclusive growth," said Melanie Nakagawa, Microsoft's Chief Sustainability Officer. "Without access to the internet, the promise of technology remains out of reach."

The impact of expanded connectivity is already visible across the continent. In Kenya, rural communities are benefiting from improved video conferencing for patient care. In South Africa, affordable devices and youth-focused gaming centers are opening new opportunities, while high-speed broadband and free community Wi-Fi are boosting digital literacy and economic engagement.

Beyond connectivity, Microsoft is deepening its role in Africa's agricultural transformation. The company has committed to supporting AfDB's establishment of a pan-African financing facility for agribusiness SMEs. The initiative will combine financial investment with digital access to enhance productivity, strengthen climate resilience, and create inclusive opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs. By pairing digital tools with financing, the partnership aims to accelerate innovation and growth across agricultural value chains.



Connectivity is a key enabler for AI adoption and inclusive growth. Without access to the internet, the promise of technology remains out of reach.



Melanie Nakagawa,
Microsoft's Chief Sustainability Officer.

Microsoft underscored that no single company can close the digital divide alone, stressing the importance of collaboration between governments, development partners, and the private sector. The AfDB Financing Agribusiness SME Trust Fund, alongside Microsoft's connectivity milestone, is being positioned as a blueprint for how technology and finance can work together to drive sustainable development in Africa.

AU hosts inaugural digital agriculture conference



Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) Ambassador Selma Malika Haddadi. Photo Credit: AU

The African Union (AU) convened its first-ever Digital Agriculture Conference (DAC), reaffirming the continent's commitment to harnessing technology to transform agri-food systems and advance the AU Agenda 2063 vision.

The three-day gathering, brought together policymakers, researchers, and private sector

- leaders under the theme “Shaping Agricultural Policy for Africa’s Future: Innovation, Climate-Smart Practices, and Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development.”

- The conference underscored the pivotal role of agriculture in Africa’s economic transformation, food security, *page 10>>*

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and job creation, while highlighting digital innovation as a key driver of sustainable growth. Delegates deliberated on aligning digital agriculture strategies with continental frameworks such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Malabo Declaration, and the AU Digital Transformation Strategy, alongside global commitments like the Sustainable Development Goals.

Speaking at the opening, AU Deputy Chairperson Amb. Selma Malika Haddadi stressed the strategic importance of technology.

“Policy is the foundation, innovation is the engine, and digital tools are the accelerators for building knowledge-driven farming systems and ensuring economic and social inclusion.”

Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, Moses Vilakati, echoed the urgency of digital adoption, describing it as a necessity for tackling climate change, land degradation, and market access challenges. He reiterated Africa's ambition to produce 45 percent of its agri-food needs by 2030.

Ethiopia's State Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Efa Muleta Boru, called the conference a turning point, urging member states to translate ideas into collective action. He emphasised the need for bold agricultural policies, protection of agricultural data, and accessible digital tools to empower farmers, women, and youth.

The conference concluded with a communique outlining key outcomes, including the establishment of a biennial AU Digital Agriculture Conference, a continental repository of best practices, a multistakeholder working group to track implementation, and a digital entrepreneurship hub to create jobs for Africa's youth. Delegates also committed to embedding digital solutions across soil mapping, seed systems, extension services, and climate-smart agriculture.



Policy is the foundation, innovation is the engine, and digital tools are the accelerators for building knowledge-driven farming systems and ensuring economic and social inclusion.

Selma Malika Haddadi, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) Ambassador



By institutionalising digital agriculture as a cornerstone of policy and practice, the AU aims to accelerate productivity, sustainability, and resilience, positioning Africa as a leader in shaping the future of agri-food systems.

FINAS 2026



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