

FINAS DIALOGUES

DISPATCH - 002

Ethiopia expands financial inclusion for pastoralists in Somali Region



A pastoralist woman with her livestock. Photo Credit: FAO

Pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in Ethiopia's Somali Regional State are set to gain greater access to formal banking services and credit following the signing of a strategic agreement between the Somali regional administration and the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE).

The deal, finalised in Jigjiga on January 25, aims to deepen financial inclusion for rural residents whose livelihoods depend on livestock and crop farming.

The signing ceremony brought together senior regional officials and CBE representatives and follows earlier discussions between the Somali regional state's Vice President, Ibrahim Osman Farah, and bank officials.

The agreement is designed to ensure that rural communities — which make up the overwhelming majority of the Somali Region's population — can benefit from improved access to credit, savings accounts, and other banking services.

Pastoralists and farmers account for approximately 80 per cent of residents living outside urban areas in the region.

"This is a programme to ensure access to banking services, particularly for pastoralist and farming communities, which constitute the largest segment of the population in the region," said Mohamed Yousuf Roble, Deputy Minister at the Office of the Somali Regional State President.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>

IN THIS ISSUE

-  **FAO launches agricultural inputs voucher scheme in Zimbabwe**
-  **Financing agri-food systems: When markets, nature, and communities align**
-  **OPEC Fund, TDB join special agro-processing zones alliance**
-  **FINAS Secretariat sets course for 2026 Summit**

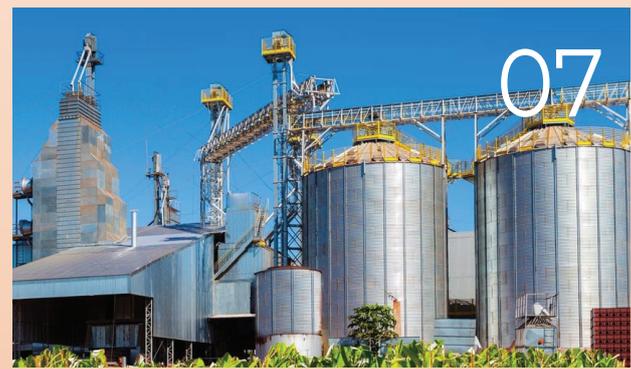


FINAS DIALOGUES

FEBRUARY ISSUE

Contents

- 03** FAO launches agricultural inputs voucher scheme in Zimbabwe
- 05** Financing agri-food systems: When markets, nature, and communities align
- 07** OPEC Fund, TDB join special agro-processing zones alliance
- 08** FINAS Secretariat sets course for 2026 Summit



✉ summit@finasafrica.org
☎ +254 722 670 910 /+254 717 782 782/ +254 734 782 782
🌐 <https://finasafrica.org/>

🌐 [Financing Agri-food Systems Sustainably](#)

FAO launches agricultural inputs voucher scheme in Zimbabwe

By Murimi Gitari

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), in partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe, has rolled out an agricultural voucher system to give rural households in drought-hit regions access to subsidised high-quality agricultural inputs.

The Nourish and Thrive project, which has received funding support from the French Government, is designed to strengthen food security and nutrition by helping communities build resilient and sustainable livelihoods.

The initiative is being implemented in Masvingo and Mwenezi districts, areas severely affected by drought and the El Niño-induced crisis. Through the distribution of subsidised agricultural input packages, farmers are empowered to access drought-tolerant seeds and other essential resources.

This voucher-based approach not only improves access to resilient inputs but also enhances households' ability to recover from climate shocks, laying the foundation for long-term food security and sustainable rural development.

The voucher distribution event brought together local leadership, agro-dealers, and project participants, marking a significant step towards inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems transformation. The project targeted 4,000 households across selected wards in Masvingo and Mwenezi, ensuring timely access to nutritious crops and promoting resilience in the face of climate shocks.

In addition to boosting agricultural productivity, the mission placed strong emphasis on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), underscoring FAO's steadfast dedication to safeguarding vulnerable community members. Participants received comprehensive education on effective strategies to prevent exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers and development partners, fostering a culture of awareness and accountability throughout the programme.

"A stitch in time saves nine. It is important that we share the information we learnt with our colleagues and teams and create awareness to prevent exploitation and abuse," said Ruramai Sibiyi from World Vision Zimbabwe, highlighting the importance of proactive awareness.

During the mission, FAO trained Voucher Redeeming Suppliers (VRS) on the FAO's Identification, Delivery and Empowerment Application (IDEA) platform. The IDEA



platform is a digital ecosystem of applications designed to protect and manage beneficiary data, deliver assistance, and distribute aid using cash and voucher modalities ensuring smooth voucher redemption and transparency in input delivery. The training covered system navigation, troubleshooting, and customer service best practices. Local leadership engagement and on-site monitoring further strengthened accountability and efficiency.

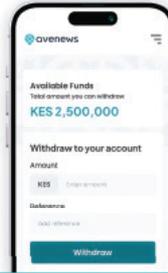
"The training on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse was very much educative, and I followed it properly. I thank the FAO team for this opportunity," said Dumisani Simango, an agro-dealer from Masvingo, expressing his appreciation for this initiative.

FAO's PSEA Focal Person, Leticia Njowola, emphasised that reinforcing PSEA is anchored on FAO's zero-tolerance policy, which applies to all UN personnel, implementing partners, and service providers.

"Preventing and protecting against sexual exploitation and abuse is a priority in the humanitarian and development sector. Any form of exploitation or abuse violates people's rights and undermines programme sustainability and impact. At a policy level, embedding PSEA measures ensures institutional accountability, strengthens governance frameworks, and reinforces trust between implementing partners and the communities they serve, critical for achieving inclusive and rights-based sustainable agrifood systems transformation," Njowola said.

Most agri-SMEs know what to do, they just don't have the float to do it.

If predictable capital were available for even 30% of SMEs, we'd unlock untapped trade worth over KES 50 billion annually.



Learn more about Avenews Agri-trade financing
Visit our website www.avenews-gt.com

Contact us at +254-111-133-300 or jibiwa@avenews-gt.com
Financing designed for Agri-SMEs Growth

<<from pg 1

“Since nearly 80 per cent of the population outside urban areas are pastoralists and farmers, it is essential to provide them with banking services, credit, and financing they need to improve their livelihoods and accelerate their economic activities.”

The agreement aligns with Ethiopia’s national Financial Inclusion Strategy, which seeks to increase the number of pastoralists, farmers, and other underserved groups accessing formal financial services.

The strategy helps banks and financial service providers to track their outreach to rural clients and tailor products accordingly.

Roble said that the initiative will expand access to a range of banking products including culturally relevant services such as Islamic banking.

“The agreement accelerates efforts to ensure that pastoralist communities across regions and districts can access Islamic banking services, and it will significantly improve livelihoods and raise living standards,” he said.

By facilitating credit, savings, and other financial services, authorities expect to strengthen small-scale economic activity, enhance food security, and promote rural development across the region.

Financial inclusion has long been a challenge in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas where formal banking infrastructure is limited and many residents lack the documentation or collateral traditionally required for loans.

Across Ethiopia and the wider Horn of Africa, pastoralist communities have historically been underserved by formal financial institutions, relying instead on informal savings systems and limited microcredit facilities.

Development experts argue that expanding access to formal banking and affordable credit can support resilience to climate shocks like droughts — a frequent threat in arid regions such as Somali — and enable households to invest in livestock, fodder, and farm inputs to boost productivity and incomes.

Regional and bank officials said they hope the new partnership will build confidence among rural residents in formal financial services and set a precedent for further expansion of inclusive banking across Ethiopia’s pastoral zones and beyond.



AGRICULTURAL FINANCE CORPORATION



PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Livestock Development
- Seasonal Crops
- Cash Crops
- Fisheries Development
- Machinery
- Water Development
- Horticulture
- Floriculture
- Agri-business
- Farm Infrastructure
- SACCOs
- Micro-Finance Institutions

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT US

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| HEAD OFFICE | | REGIONAL OFFICES | |
| Agricultural Finance Corporation
Development House, Moi Avenue
P.O. Box 30387, 00100, Nairobi
+254-020-327200/3317199
+254 - 788 324898/704153773
info@agrifinance.org | | Central Rift - Naivasha +254 - 788-642862
Coast - Kilifi +254 - 776-634800
Eastern - Kisumu +254 - 708-318863
North Rift - Eldoret +254 - 776-188782
Mt. Kenya - Nyeri +254 - 771-281498
Nyanza/Western - Kisumu +254 - 020-2567262 | |

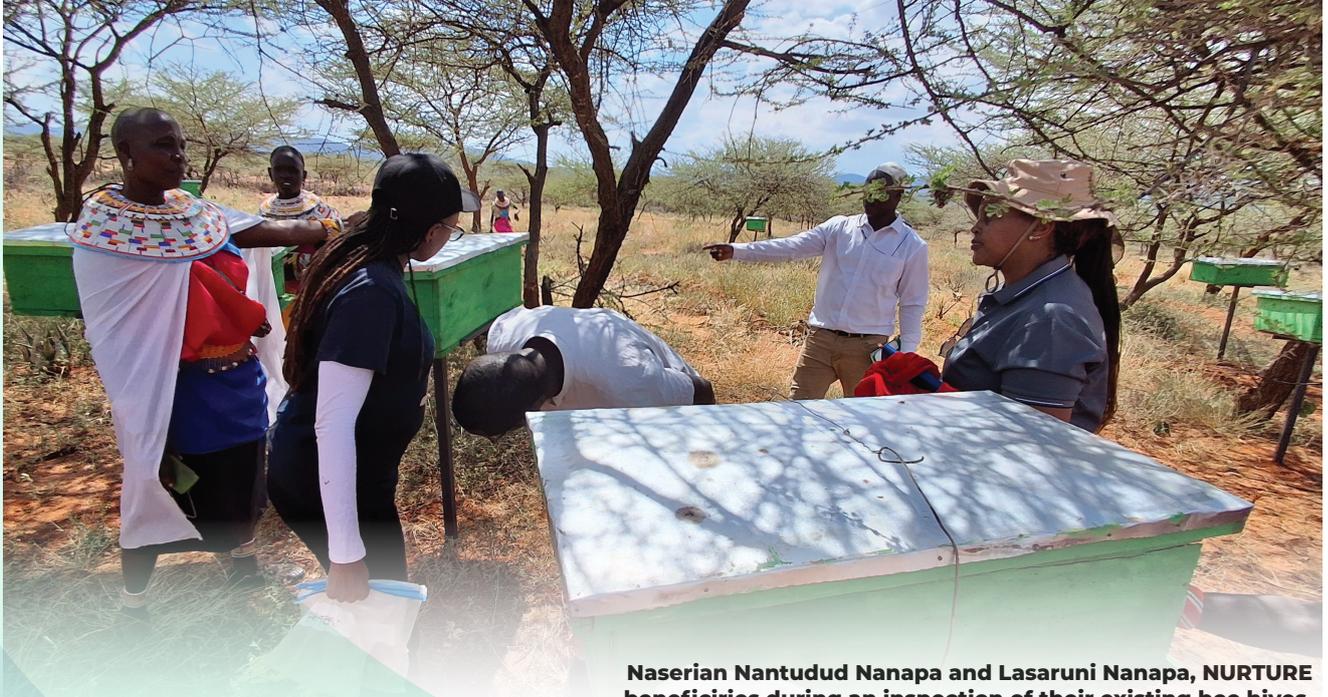
www.agrifinance.org
 Agricultural Finance Corporation
 Agri_FinanceKe

Agricultural Finance

agrifinanceke



Financing agri-food systems: When markets, nature, and communities align



Naserian Nantudud Nanapa and Lasaruni Nanapa, NURTURE beneficiaries during an inspection of their existing bee hives.

In Northern Kenya's fragile drylands, where the land carries both promise and precarity, financing that overlooks market incentives never quite takes root.

For years, honey and gum arabic were known to hold commercial potential, yet the system around them remained fragmented: producers lacked reliable markets, buyers struggled with inconsistent supply, and financial institutions saw only risk where communities saw opportunity.

Swisscontact's NURTURE initiative stepped into this landscape with a simple premise: if markets are failing, it's rarely because people are unwilling; it's because the system isn't enabling them. So, we set out to understand the incentives, gaps, and relationships shaping the honey and gum arabic economies.

What emerged was a collaborative, market-first model that blends catalytic capital with private-sector investment. Buyers were ready to invest, if they could trust supply. Finance could flow, if repayment risks were reduced. Women and youth could produce more, if skills and tools met market requirements. Communities could steward ecosystems, if doing so strengthened their incomes.

We quickly saw that once the real constraints in the market system are understood—and communities are supported to address them—finance starts to flow naturally. In Northern Kenya, aligned incentives are already creating a ripple effect: stronger skills are raising product quality; better quality is securing formal contracts; those contracts reduce financial risk; and derisked finance is accelerating ecological restoration. This is the quiet power of a market beginning to function as it should.

By letting incentives, not subsidy, drive transformation, the system is slowly shifting. A thousand women, youth, and agents are finding their voice in markets that were once perceived as “too risky” and proving they are investable.

And Northern Kenya is showing that when finance, nature, and markets work together, resilience is the outcome.

Want to learn more and partner in scaling a model that turns fragile markets into resilient ones? Contact: countrydirectorkenya@swisscontact.

YOUR PARTNER KWA GROUND

understands that no two Agribusiness needs are the same

KCB Agribusiness solutions range

From financing purchases to expanding farms

Dairy Herd Improvement Loan | Livestock Financing Loan |
Agribusiness Asset Finance Loan | Mavuno Coffee Loan |
Mavuno Tea Loan | Seed Financing Loan



Visit your nearest KCB Branch today.

Call: 0711087000

T&Cs Apply

For People, For Better.



Empower by financial Inclusion

OPEC Fund, TDB join special agro-processing zones alliance



A section of the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones. Photo Credit: AfDB

The OPEC Fund for International Development (OPEC Fund) and the Trade and Development Bank Group (TDB Group) have joined the Alliance for Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones, strengthening multi-partner efforts to accelerate agro-industrialisation across Africa.

Launched at the 2023 Africa Investment Forum in Marrakech, Morocco, the Alliance pools financing, technical expertise and private sector participation to scale agricultural value-chain development across the continent.

The addition of the OPEC Fund and TDB Group builds on the strong foundation laid by existing members: the African Development Bank Group; the Islamic Development Bank Group; Arise Integrated Industrial Platforms; African Export-Import Bank; the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa; the West African Development Bank; and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development.

The platform brings together public, private and development partners to help close Africa's agricultural investment gap by expanding special agro-industrial processing zones (SAPZ). Through coordinated financing, shared infrastructure, targeted incentives and structured value chain linkages, SAPZ enhance competitiveness, reduces investor risks, and attracts sustained private capital.

"The Alliance will intensify efforts to mobilise co-financiers to accelerate SAPZ implementation across Africa," said Dr Sidi Ould Tah, President of the African Development Bank Group. "This work directly advances the Bank's Four Cardinal Points: Unlocking Africa's

capital through blended finance; Strengthening food systems and value addition; Turning demographics into a dividend by prioritising youth and women; and Delivering integrated, resilient infrastructure."

Special agro-industrial processing zones are central to Africa's agricultural transformation, bridging rural and urban economies by linking smallholder farmers to structured value chains, processing facilities and consumer markets. This approach helps countries shift from primary commodity export toward higher-value agro-industrial production.

To date, the African Development Bank has committed about \$934 million to develop over two dozen SAPZ in 11 countries. These investments have already leveraged an additional \$938 million in co-financing from partners.

TDB Group President and Managing Director Admassu Tadesse said the institution looks forward to deepening collaboration with Alliance partners to scale bankable agro-industrial opportunities.

Abdulhamid Alkhalifa, President of the OPEC Fund, noted that the Fund's Food Security Action Plan aligns with the Alliance's objectives, describing the partnership as a strategic opportunity to accelerate sustainable agricultural and agro-industrial development across Africa.

By joining the Alliance, the OPEC Fund and TDB Group will work with existing members to mobilise blended finance and catalytic capital for SAPZ development, support project preparation and risk-mitigation tools, strengthen value chains, and accelerate job creation and rural industrialisation.

FINAS Secretariat sets course for 2026 Summit



The Financing Agri-food Systems Sustainably (FINAS) Secretariat. Photo Credit: FINAS.

By Murimi Gitari

The Financing Agri-food Systems Sustainably (FINAS) Secretariat convened on 27th January 2026 for a strategic breakfast meeting to advance preparations for the upcoming FINAS 2026 Summit.

The three-day summit in July will be held under the theme “Towards Sustainable Financial Architecture for Africa's Food Systems.”

The meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on progress since last year's summit, sharpen priorities, and align stakeholders around a shared ambition to transform agri-food financing across Africa.

Discussions centred on reinforcing FINAS's role as a catalytic platform that connects policy, capital, and implementation. Members examined the successes and the shortcomings to date, while stressing the need to move beyond dialogue toward measurable outcomes.

A strong emphasis was placed on accelerating solutions for small and medium enterprises, expanding private sector participation, and mobilising investable ideas that respond to real needs within Africa's food systems. Collaboration, innovation, and accountability were highlighted as critical to building resilient and scalable financing models.

The Secretariat reaffirmed five strategic priorities for the summit: policy alignment and advocacy, innovative and inclusive financing models, data-driven decision-making, stronger partnerships and market engagement, and embedding sustainability and resilience in financing frameworks.

The first two days of the FINAS 2026 Summit will feature plenary sessions and technical panels with government officials, investors, farmer leaders, and private sector representatives. The final day will focus on deals and field engagement, including investor-agripreneur matchmaking, master classes on fintech and climate funds, site visits to logistics and processing facilities, and breakout negotiations to draft action plans and investment pledges.

The Secretariat expects tangible commitments in areas such as storage, irrigation, cold chains, and digital infrastructure, alongside policy advances on agri-finance coordination and trade harmonisation. The summit also aims to strengthen access to finance by small and medium enterprises (SMEs), deepen government-private sector collaboration, and produce knowledge products to track investment pledges and policy reforms.

By reaffirming its collective commitment to action-oriented dialogue and strategic partnerships, the FINAS Secretariat signalled that FINAS 2026 will be about turning ideas into impact ensuring financing flows to where it matters most: strengthening Africa's food systems and driving sustainable development.

The Secretariat comprises various agri-food systems financing champions drawn from various organisations, including GIZ, AGRA, Aceli Africa, SwissContact, GAIN, FSD, Heifer International, MicsoSave, AgriFinancing, Agricultural Finance Corporation, Rotooba and the County Government of Murang'a.

FINAS 2026



#FINAS

FINANCING AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS SUSTAINABLY DIALOGUES

Towards Sustainable Financial Architecture
for Africa's Food Systems

REGISTER TO ATTEND
www.finasafrica.org

July 2026

Nairobi



For more information contact
summit@finasafrica.org / +254 717 782 782 / +254 734 782 782