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AKADEMIYA

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA

Invited Panel Session for the 32nd International
Conference of Agricultural Economists
ICAE-2024

📍 C5 (First Floor, Convention Centre), New Delhi, India

📅 Saturday, August 3 🕒 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM (IST)



Session Description

Africa's food systems are under enormous pressure that threatens their sustainability. They confront exogenous shocks and challenges on many fronts: ranging from extreme weather events and more frequent and damaging effects of climate change to recurrent pests and disease outbreaks, a growing number of conflicts, and natural resource and environmental degradation. The fragility of African food systems has been laid bare by the Ukraine-Russia war and the COVID-19 pandemic that have aggravated food insecurity and poverty through disruptions in supply chains and trade, higher food prices, and losses in jobs and incomes. In fact, in 2022, the number of Africa's hungry rose to about 282 million people, that is almost 57 million more since the start of the pandemic.¹ Thus, Africa is not on track to achieve all the Malabo Declaration agri-food transformation goals by 2025 or the sustainable development goal (SDG) 2 of zero hunger by 2030.

In light of the above challenges, transforming African food systems is imperative. The transformation of food systems is necessary to ensure sustainable and resilient livelihoods as well as healthy, safe, nutritious, and affordable diets. The transformation will need a wholesale change in mindsets and behaviors of food system actors to alter food system outcomes for the better.

Objectives

This invited panel will bring together a diverse group of leading experts to share their research and perspectives on: 1. the urgent need to transform Africa's food systems, 2. critical and emerging issues that need to be tackled to ensure sustainable food systems on the continent, and 3. innovative and practical approaches for realizing and accelerating the transformation at the regional and national levels across Africa. The discussion is timely, as it will help inform efforts led by the African Union Commission to prepare for a post-Malabo agenda that is evidence-based and takes on a more comprehensive food systems approach.

Format

The session will begin with brief opening remarks five (5 mins) to introduce the topic and set the scene. This will be followed by two sets of panels: each consisting of three (3) short presentations and an interactive session with the audience. Each presentation will last 7-8 mins, where each speaker will offer insights from their research and innovative approaches related to critical and emerging issues that need to be addressed to sustainably transform African food systems.

For a lively discussion, each panel will be followed by a moderated discussion to allow the researchers to interact with the audience in a question-and-answer session for 10 mins.

Target Audience

The event will appeal to academics, policymakers, and development practitioners working to advance the food systems transformation agenda in order to realize the achievement of all SDGs and Africa's agri-food transformation goals.

¹ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO. 2023. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. Urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural-urban continuum. Rome: FAO.

<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3017en>

AGENDA

Session Chair: Dr. Ousmane Badiane, Executive Chairperson, AKADEMIYA2063

Opening Remarks [5 mins]

Dr. Ousmane Badiane, Executive Chairperson, AKADEMIYA2063

Presentation 1 [7-8 mins]

Prof. Sheryl Hendriks, Director, Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich

“Ensuring Food Systems Policy Coherence in Africa”

Abstract

Radically improving livelihoods and dietary outcomes requires transforming food systems. Following the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, like the rest of the world, African countries are designing and implementing national food systems transformation pathways and policies that affect different segments of food systems. However, crafting effective policies is challenging in light of the important interactions between different dimensions associated with simultaneously ensuring food and nutrition security, livelihoods, and environmental sustainability. It is critical for countries to ensure food systems policy coherence, which is an outcome where various policies are aligned so that efforts in one policy area do not undermine efforts in another area, and even reinforce those efforts where possible. This presentation will highlight the importance of and explore tools for safeguarding alignment and integration of policies across different sectors or domains of the food system, so that they collectively contribute toward the achievement of a common goal.

Presentation 2 [7-8 mins]

Dr. Anna Lartey, Professor of Nutrition, University of Ghana

“The Nutrition Imperative for Food Systems Transformation in Africa”

Abstract

Africa is facing the double burden of malnutrition. Child stunting and underweight are declining slowly while overweight and obesity are increasing rapidly. Failures within the food systems are driving the current nutrition situation. The food systems are not resilient; within a year of the COVID-19 pandemic the number of undernourished persons increased by an additional 44 million in sub-Saharan Africa. Food systems are not supporting access to healthy diets. Of the 3.1 billion people globally, who cannot afford a healthy diet, 1.04 billion are in Africa. Agricultural policies of many African countries focus on staple food production, while the nutritious crops and animal source foods that contribute to healthy diets do not receive much support. To address the malnutrition challenge, we need to put nutrition at the heart of the food systems transformation to ensure everyone has access to affordable healthy diets.

Presentation 3 [7-8 mins]

Dr. John Ulimwengu, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

“African Food Systems Transformation and the Post-Malabo Agenda”

Abstract

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) was launched in 2003 as a shared continentwide framework for agriculture-led growth and development. The CAADP agenda was broadened in the 2014 Malabo Declaration. In 2023, after two decades of CAADP implementation, Africa’s leaders began to envision the next phase of CAADP after the end of the Malabo Declaration in 2025. Africa has made substantial progress since the launch of CAADP in terms of growth and poverty and hunger reduction, but a recent deceleration of progress combined with the devastating impacts of shocks have created an urgent need to accelerate Africa’s progress toward meeting its goals. The increasing complexity of Africa’s food systems has made the need to craft development strategies through a food systems lens all the more relevant. This presentation will provide a range of evidence on key issues in food systems transformation to aid policymakers in designing a robust and comprehensive post-Malabo agenda.

Q&A [10 mins]

Presentation 4 [7-8 mins]

Dr. Getaw Tadesse, Director, Department of Operational Support, AKADEMIYA2063

“Accelerating Implementation of Climate Ambitions and Actions in Africa for Food Systems Transformation”

Abstract

Since adoption of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, a wide range of global, regional, and national initiatives have been developed and adopted by governments and intergovernmental organizations to mitigate and combat climate change and its consequences. Nearly all African countries have established Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) outlining their climate mitigation commitments, and more than 17 countries have developed National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) identifying their adaptation goals and actions. In 2022, the African Union also adopted its Climate Change and Resilience Development Strategy and Action Plan. Adaptation actions proposed in these plans include several interventions that have varying risk management channels and co-benefits for food systems transformation. In this presentation, we will present a review of the proposed actions, the challenges of implementation, and the types of technical support, with a focus on data and analytics, needed to help countries and continental organizations accelerate the implementation of their climate plans.

Presentation 5 [7-8 mins]

- » **Dr. Julius Ecuru**, Principal Scientist and Manager, BioInnovate Africa
- » **Dr. Katrin Glatzel**, Senior Researcher and Program Lead, Center for Development Research, University of Bonn

“Leveraging Africa’s Bioeconomy for Food Systems Transformation”

Abstract

African economies are confronted with the challenges of addressing climate, health, and economic shocks while maintaining due focus on innovations and on the strategic orientation of food systems transformation. A strategic opportunity for many countries is the development of a sustainable bioeconomy. Innovations in developing a sustainable bioeconomy in Africa offer real opportunities to address multiple challenges simultaneously. Africa is endowed with abundant natural resources and has already strong traits of bioeconomies. A vibrant bioeconomy can increase agricultural productivity and support the expansion of agro-industries. This presentation will draw attention to innovations that are rapidly evolving worldwide and where Africa is well-positioned to create its own unique approach, despite starting from a comparatively low base. The presentation will also highlight the experience of African countries whose policy and institutional innovations have shifted the needle toward systemic change and transformation, propelling them to the forefront of the developing bioeconomy.

Presentation 6 [7-8 mins]

Dr. Racine Ly, Director, Department of Data Digital Products, and Technology, AKADEMIYA2063

“Applying AI and Remote Sensing Data to Guide Action on Climate Change and Food Security”

Abstract

In the face of escalating climate change impacts, ensuring food security in Africa demands innovative solutions. This presentation will showcase the results emanating from the AKADEMIYA2063’s program – the Africa Agriculture Watch (AAGWa) – that employs cutting-edge applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in conjunction with Satellite Remote Sensing (SRS) data to address the pressing challenges facing Africa. We will discuss a transformative approach that leverages machine learning algorithms to analyze vast datasets from satellites, enabling granular monitoring of climate variations and their effects on agricultural landscapes. Our focus will be on practical AI frameworks that predict food crop production and yields, detect early signs of drought, and guide efficient resource allocation. By integrating AI and SRS, we aim to provide accurate, timely, and granular data and analytics to bolster agricultural resilience and food security across African nations through informed decision-making.

Q&A [10 mins]

Wrap Up [2 mins]

Dr. Ousmane Badiane, Executive Chairperson, AKADEMIYA2063

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