AKADEMIYA

MITIGATING STRATEGIES IN RESPONSE TO THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Implications for African Economies

A Moderated High-Level Conversation Facilitated by AKADEMIYA2063 and AfDB Group

Tuesday, September 15, 2026
12:00-13:00 CAT/9:00-10:00 GMT

Virtual Event

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1. Background and Context

The outbreak of the U.S.-Israeli war against Iran in late February 2026 has set in motion a cascade of economic shocks whose consequences extend far beyond the Gulf region and the broader Middle East. The near-complete closure of the Strait of Hormuz — through which roughly 20 percent of the world's oil and gas supply and over a third of globally traded fertilizer normally transits — has already sent commodity prices surging across global markets and increased price volatility in the markets of secondary products.

For African economies, the moment is particularly acute. Coming on the heels of COVID-19 recovery, the Russia-Ukraine fertilizer and grain crisis of 2022, and persistent climate-driven agricultural shocks, the continent faces a compounding set of vulnerabilities:

- *Global urea prices have risen nearly 26 percent since the onset of the conflict, while ammonia prices in the Middle East are up more than 90 percent year-on-year.*
- *Vessels are now rerouting around Africa, adding approximately 9,000 kilometers to shipping journeys and imposing emergency freight surcharges of USD 2,000–4,000 per container, directly inflating humanitarian logistics costs.*
- *WFP estimates that almost 45 million more people could be pushed into acute hunger if the conflict continues through midyear, adding to the 318 million already food-insecure globally.*
- *Sub-Saharan Africa — where over 90 percent of fertilizer is imported, and households spend a disproportionately large share of their income on food — is widely considered by analysts to be the most vulnerable region globally to this shock.*

The continent's trade ministers, regional bodies, and development partners face urgent decisions on emergency responses, contingency policies, supply chain diversification, and the longer-term strategic question of fertilizer and food self-sufficiency. There is also a real risk that food price stress could translate into political instability and conflict in fragile states already under pressure.

This virtual dialogue convenes a select group of ministers, regional policymakers, and leading international trade experts to examine these dynamics candidly, share real-time intelligence, and explore what emergency and structural responses are both necessary and feasible.

2. Objectives of the Discussion

The discussion has five core objectives:

- **Diagnose:** Assess the immediate and medium-term impacts of the Strait of Hormuz disruption on food and fertilizer prices relevant to African economies.
- **Analyze:** Examine the transmission channels through which energy and food price shocks affect food security, poverty, and social stability across the continent.
- **Take stock:** Understand what emergency and contingency measures governments, the African Union Commission (AUC), and their partners are already deploying or activating.
- **Identify priority actions:** Identify priority policy interventions — at national, regional, and continental levels — that should be accelerated or put in place urgently.
- **Strategize:** Consider the longer-term structural reforms needed to reduce African economies' vulnerability to external commodity shocks.

3. Speakers

The discussion brings together a group of high-level participants — several serving Ministers of agriculture, economy, finance, and trade, and three internationally recognized experts in food systems, agricultural economics, and development policy.

ROLE	INVITED SPEAKERS	TITLE / AFFILIATION
Chair and Moderator	**Dr. Debisi Araba**	Managing Director, AKADEMIYA2063
Minister — Kenya	**Hon. Lee Kinyanjui**	Cabinet Secretary for Trade, Investments, and Industry, Republic of Kenya
Minister — Kenya	**Hon. John Mbadi Ng'ongo**	Cabinet Secretary for the National Treasury and Economic Planning, Republic of Kenya
Minister — Kenya	**Hon. Mutahi Kagwe**	Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development, Republic of Kenya
Minister — Ethiopia	**Hon. Kassahun Gofe Balami**	Minister of Trade and Regional Integration, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Minister — Ethiopia	**Hon. Addisu Arega Kitessa**	Minister of Agriculture, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Minister — Ethiopia	**Hon. Ahmed Shide**	Minister of Finance, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Minister — Tanzania	**Hon. Ambassador Khamis Mussa Omar**	Minister of Finance, United Republic of Tanzania

ROLE	INVITED SPEAKERS	TITLE / AFFILIATION
Minister — Tanzania	**Hon. Daniel Chongolo**	Minister of Agriculture, United Republic of Tanzania
Minister — Tanzania	**Hon. Judith Kapinga**	Minister for Industry and Trade, United Republic of Tanzania
Minister — Djibouti	**Hon. Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh**	Minister of Economy and Finance, Republic of Djibouti
Minister — Djibouti	**Hon. Radwan Abdillahi Bahdon**	Minister of Agriculture, Water, Fisheries, and Livestock, Republic of Djibouti
Minister — Djibouti	**Hon. Orbis Hélaf Orbis**	Minister of Trade and Tourism, Republic of Djibouti
Expert	**Dr. Martin Fregene**	Vice President, Agriculture, Human, and Social Development and Director of Agriculture and Agro-Industry, African Development Bank
Expert	**Dr. Ousmane Badiane**	Executive Chairperson, AKADEMIYA2063
Expert	**Prof. Joachim von Braun**	Distinguished Professor, University of Bonn

4. Format and Structure

The session is structured as an expert-moderated conversation, not a panel of presentations. Participants will be invited to speak directly to the moderator's questions, respond to one another's points, and engage in genuine dialogue. There are no formal statements or speeches. Each thematic segment is designed to yield specific insights and, where possible, points of consensus or divergence.

The conversation is divided into four substantive segments plus an opening and closing, as set out in the program below.

Program Overview

TIME	SEGMENT	CONTENT
5 mins	**Welcome and scene-setting**	Moderator opens the session. Brief framing of the geopolitical moment and its economic dimensions for Africa.
15 mins	**Segment 1: the shock and its transmission to Africa**	What does the data tell us about price trends, supply chain disruptions, and Africa's specific exposure? Ministers share ground-level intelligence from their countries. Experts provide continental and global context.
15 mins	**Segment 2: food security, social stability, and the risk of cascading crises**	From price spike to plate: what are the pathways to food insecurity and social unrest? What conflict-affected and fragile settings on the continent face the greatest compounded risk?
15 mins	**Segment 3: emergency responses and longer-term policy imperatives**	What emergency measures are in place or should be activated? What structural reforms — in fertilizer supply, trade policy, and regional integration — should Africa accelerate?
8 mins	**Segment 4: immediate priorities**	Each participant names the single most important action that should happen in the next 30 days. Moderator synthesizes.
2 mins	**Closing**	Moderator summarizes key messages and highlights the next steps.

5. Thematic Discussions

The following framing outlines the key substantive questions and background for each segment of the conversation. Participants are not expected to address every question; the moderator will use them as guides.

Segment 1 The shock and its transmission to Africa (15 minutes)

The Strait of Hormuz is not merely an oil chokepoint. Gulf states, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran, together account for about 49 percent of global urea exports and roughly 30 percent of ammonia exports. Since the conflict began on February 28, 2026, commercial traffic through the strait has largely been halted, triggering a structural rerouting of vessels around the Cape of Good Hope — an additional 9,000 kilometers that dramatically increases freight costs and delivery times.

For Africa, the consequences arrive through several distinct channels:

- **Direct input channel:** Fertilizer prices and availability: Sub-Saharan Africa imports more than 90 percent of its fertilizer. The dollar-denominated nature of fertilizer markets compounds the challenge, given currency pressures on many African economies. Urea prices have risen sharply; some estimates suggest nitrogen fertilizer prices could double from current levels.
- **Food import channel:** Many African countries, particularly in North Africa and the Horn, are major importers of wheat and other staples from the Gulf corridor and related markets. Higher fuel costs increase the cost of moving food across the continent.
- **Energy channel:** Elevated oil prices ripple through every layer of the food supply chain — from powering farm machinery to transporting harvests to processing facilities and urban markets.
- **Humanitarian logistics:** Emergency freight surcharges of USD 2,000 to 4,000 per container are already being reported, directly inflating the cost of humanitarian operations, including WFP's largest program in Sudan.

Guiding Questions for Segment 1

- What are you seeing on the ground in your country right now? Are fertilizer and food price increases already materializing, and what sectors or populations are being hit first?
- Is the current shock structurally different from the Russia-Ukraine crisis in 2022 — and if so, how?
- Which African sub-regions and country typologies are most exposed, and why?
- What is the realistic worst-case scenario for the continent if the strait remains closed through and beyond the main planting season?
- What policy and institutional 'muscles' have we built, learning from recent macro shocks?

Segment 2 Food security, social stability, and the risk of cascading crises (15 minutes)

The Arab Spring of 2011–2012 was, in part, triggered by food price spikes, particularly in wheat-importing countries in North Africa. The Russia-Ukraine conflict of 2022 drove an estimated 27.2 million additional people into poverty and 22.3 million more into hunger in the two years following, with SSA disproportionately exposed.

Africa already hosts a significant share of the world's acute food insecurity crises — Sudan (over 21 million people without adequate food), Ethiopia, the DRC, the Sahel, and the Horn of Africa. The compounding of external commodity shocks with existing fragility creates risks beyond food access alone:

- **Food-conflict nexus:** Food price stress has documented historical linkages to social unrest and armed conflict. Countries already experiencing climate-related stresses, governance challenges, or active conflicts are particularly exposed to this dynamic.
- **Harvest risk:** If African farmers reduce fertilizer use — as many are likely to do amid price and availability pressures — crop yields in the 2026 main season could fall materially, with the effects felt most acutely during the 2027 hungry/lean season.
- **Macroeconomic:** Higher food and energy prices will widen current account deficits, put pressure on central banks, and risk exchange-rate depreciation in import-dependent economies, further compounding the cost burden on households.
- **Humanitarian:** Agencies such as WFP face both higher operating costs and a growing caseload. This dual squeeze could force prioritization decisions that leave the most vulnerable unserved.

Guiding Questions for Segment 2

- Which specific conflict-affected or fragile settings on the continent should the international community be most urgently focused on in the coming months?
- How does this crisis interact with existing climate stresses, debt burdens, and ongoing conflicts in places like Sudan, the Sahel, and the Horn?
- What is the evidence base on food-price-to-conflict transmission pathways in the African context? Are there effective early warning mechanisms in place?
- Are there distributional dynamics within countries that deserve attention — for example, net food-producing rural areas versus net food-buying urban populations?

Segment 3 Emergency responses and longer-term policy imperatives (15 minutes)

This segment shifts from analysis to action. It asks what governments and regional institutions are already doing, what they should do urgently, and what structural changes would reduce vulnerability over a multi-year horizon.

Immediate and emergency measures

- Are African countries drawing on existing fertilizer reserves or emergency stocks? Is there a case for establishing a continental emergency reserve mechanism?
- The suspension or reduction of import tariffs and value-added taxes on fertilizers, food staples, and agricultural inputs could cushion price pass-through to farmers and consumers. Several countries deployed this tool during the 2022 crisis.
- Given fiscal constraints, how can safety net programs be scaled rapidly and targeted (more) effectively?
- What is the AUC's role in coordinating between Member State responses, RECs, and international humanitarian agencies?

Medium-term structural policy imperatives

- The OCP fertilizer complex in Morocco, the NOTORE and Dangote fertilizer complexes in Nigeria, as well as the nascent Dangote gas deal to power East Africa's largest fertilizer plant, point to the potential for greater continental self-sufficiency. What does it take to accelerate this agenda?
- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers a framework for reducing intra-African trade barriers and creating a more integrated food market. Is this current crisis the necessary inflection point for accelerating its implementation?
- (How) Should the crisis reshape conversations about sustainable intensification, soil health, and reduced dependency on synthetic inputs over the medium term?
- Many African governments face severely constrained fiscal space. What role should international financial institutions play in providing emergency budget support and debt relief in this context?

Guiding Questions for Segment 3

- What emergency measures have your governments already activated, and what gaps remain?
- What is the most important thing the AUC can do in the next 60 days?
- How is the African Development Bank preparing to support Member States through this shock, and how could other international financial institutions and development partners align with this?
- If Africa were to use this crisis as an accelerant for genuine fertilizer sovereignty and food systems transformation, what are the two or three most critical investments or policy moves needed right now?
- How can the AfCFTA be a meaningful tool right now, in the immediate crisis response?

Segment 4 Immediate Priority Round (8 minutes)

In the final substantive segment, the moderator invites each participant to answer a single, direct question in no more than 90 seconds:

> ***"What is the single most important action that must happen in the next month — and who needs to take it?"***

The moderator will synthesize common themes and divergences across responses to serve as the basis for the closing statement.

6. Expected Outputs

- **Policy Brief:** A short policy brief synthesizing the expert analysis and ministerial perspectives for distribution to AU member states, international financial institutions, and relevant UN agencies.
- **Recording:** A recorded version of the session for broader dissemination.
- **Follow-on analysis:** Potential commissioning of a rapid analytical note from participating experts on the scenario of a prolonged Hormuz closure and its implications for African food security.

Inquiries

For further information or to confirm participation, please contact:

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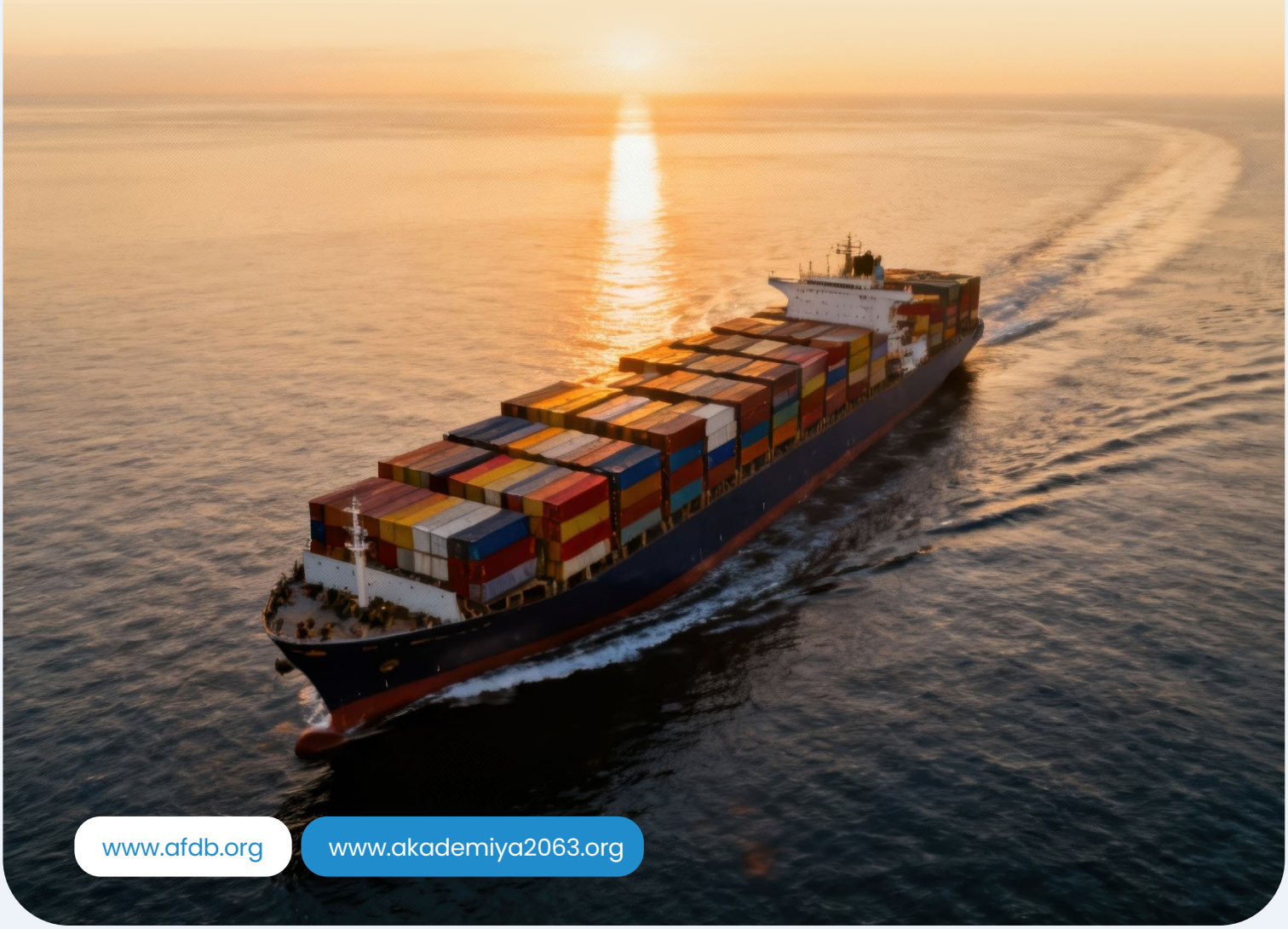

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