



## High-Level Policy Dialogue

### **BUILDING RESILIENCE IN NUTRITION ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT ACCELERATE THE HUMAN CAPITAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

26-27 May 2022

#### **I. Background**

The Africa Dialogue Series (ADS) was launched by the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) in 2018 as an interactive platform for policy and decision makers, civil society, experts, and the academia to discuss and debate challenges and opportunities influential to Africa's development. Ever since, ADS has become an important platform for OSAA to implement its mandate as set out in its Strategic Agenda, which was designed to help fulfil Africa's development agenda.

To ensure that ADS serves to echo the priorities of the African Union (AU) and African Member States and highlight their interrelationship with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, each year's edition of ADS focuses on the theme that the African Union has declared as the theme of the year, and analyses its interlinkages with peace and security, economic and social development. This way, it contributes to, and enhances the visibility of the AU's efforts, provides a platform to promote innovative ideas and recommendations related to each year's theme, and underscores the interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

In recognition of the United Nations strong partnership with the African Union, OSAA partners with the African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the UN, as lead ADS co-organizers.

At the 35<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in February 2022, the AU adopted "*Strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the African continent: Strengthening agro-food systems, health and social protection systems for the acceleration of human, social and economic capital development*" as its theme for 2022. This theme will contribute towards the achievement of Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063, which envisions a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, and a key goal of which is to ensure a continent of healthy and well-nourished citizens. Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 has commonalities with Sustainable Development Goal 2, which aims to end hunger and malnutrition by 2030, as well as increase agricultural productivity and ensure sustainable food production systems.

## II. The High-Level Policy Dialogue

The objective of the High-Level Policy Dialogue is to provide a platform for a political debate on the impact of food security on Africa's development, feeding from the technical discussions held throughout the month of May. In this regard, the Dialogue is structured around four sessions, each of which will focus on one of the sub-themes of the 2022 Africa Dialogue series.

Each of the thematic sessions will start with two key-note speeches to frame the discussion, delivered by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, the African Union Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment and high-level representatives of the entities that have led the respective subthemes.

Following the key-note speeches, two African Permanent Representatives will present the main concerns, challenges and opportunities that the subtheme presents from an African perspective. The floor will be then open for other Permanent Representatives and UN entities to participate in an interactive dialogue, under the moderation of a UN Resident Coordinator. The objective of the interactive discussion is to reflect on the ideas that the keynote speakers and the African Ambassadors have presented in order to reach common strategic areas of understanding to advance in the implementation of the African Union's theme of 2022.

## III. Description of the Subthemes

### A. **Sub-theme 1: Building Resilient Socio-Agricultural Food Systems: The Key to Nutrition**

Building resilience goes beyond crop diversification and productivity increases. It calls for building social and human capital and understanding that food systems are more than value chains – they are socio-ecological systems, and ecological sustainability results directly from the level of human capital. In this respect, social and human capital addresses the non-monetary dimension of poverty and is an important requirement to build capacity in terms of absorption, recovery, adaptation, and transformation – the four dimensions of resilience.

It is necessary that stakeholders focus their efforts on “resilience thinking”. Absorption, recovery, adaptation, and transformation are the elements that feed policy making in Africa, particularly in terms of:

- Gathering, processing, and analyzing data;

- Improving the decision-making process;
- Building structured scenarios;
- Promoting active adaptive management; and
- Embracing long-term thinking to tackle transformative solutions.

This planning must be done in an interactive, systemic, and holistic way. In essence, it calls for a policy-making reboot in Africa to move from a reactive response to crises to proactively preventing and anticipating them.

Resilience bridges short-term emergency and long-term development interventions. Ultimately, zero hunger, ecological sustainability, climate change adaptation and inclusive socio-economic development cannot be achieved without resilient agricultural livelihoods.

## **B. Sub-theme 2: Strengthening the Resilience of Farming Systems: Land, Digital transformation, and Access to Finance – Making Small Holder Farmers the Back Bones**

Productivity-enhancing technologies and practices are an important starting element for agricultural transformation. However, even once they are on the market, there are still major gaps in farmer access to and adoption of these solutions, particularly for women who comprise most smallholder farmers and who would benefit the most. Women farmers in many African countries provide 50 to 80 per cent of productive labor but receive a fraction of extension services (seven per cent), access to finance (one per cent) and access to inputs as compared to men. Giving women farmers the same inputs and education as men could increase their yields by more than 20 per cent.

Therefore, smallholder farmers' yields in most African countries remain low, and technologies and practices that have long been replaced in favor of more productive and efficient ones in other parts of the world continue to be used in Africa. The challenge is creating the conditions for smallholder farmer adoption of new inputs and practices by developing and strengthening systems and institutions that delivery technologies and impact at farm level.

Scaling technologies needs both public and private sector investment into the following priorities: well organized input delivery systems, mature and functional market outlets, conducive policy environments for private sector investments to thrive, and functional and efficient regulatory environments.

With information, access, and confidence of returns, smallholder farmers will in general proactively invest in activities that increase their income. The process of technology-transfer and adoption along integrated value chains with adequate market access at local levels, when

multiplied across millions of farms across the continent, contributes to economic stimulation in rural areas and ensure greater food security at national levels.

### C. Sub-theme 3: Social Protection, Resilience and Nutrition

Social protection can significantly reduce families' vulnerability, severe food insecurity and exposure to risk. In recent years, threats, and crises - due to both natural and human-made disasters - are not only more frequent but also increasingly complex. As such, the international community is progressively facing the need to tackle emergencies that combine several vulnerability drivers: chronic poverty, food insecurity, inequality, violence, instability, displacement, climate change, natural hazards, and weak governance.<sup>1</sup>

The following thrusts will be important to mainstream into national development policies, to achieve a sustainable and inclusive development of African countries leaving no one behind.

- Social Protection policies and their inter linkage with the use of ICT and data,
- Governance and management for enhancing Social Protection systems
- Synergies between Social Protection and public finance management

### D. Sub-theme 4: Human Capital Development, Climate, Energy and Food Systems

Enhancing agriculture productivity and food systems in general requires appropriate and affordable technology and innovations supported by sound policies and functioning institutions. Use of modern irrigation systems, mechanization of farming and reduction of post-harvest losses are high priorities for the continent. Adoption of sound policies and practices which enhance management of natural resources, identify and enhance innovative financing models and boost regional value chains are key to the desired agriculture transformation in the continent.

Education, vocational training, and access to health services are major factors contributing to increased agriculture productivity, eradication of poverty and lifting communities out of a place of constant strife.

Developing resilient agriculture systems will require technologies and practices that build on agro-ecological knowledge and enable smallholder farmers to counter environmental degradation and climate change in ways that maintain sustainable agricultural growth. It also requires that supporting systems are functional to help cushion the effects of change and to facilitate transformation of systems.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/social-protection/thematic-priorities/resilience/en/>

While adopting an integrated approach to the implementation of SDG 7 on energy, it is critical to ensure coherence and align energy, economic, social, and agriculture policies to promote a synergistic approach to structural transformation. Equally important, the creation of the enabling conditions, including through strengthening data systems, policies and regulations and harnessing the interlinkages between energy and other economic sectors like agriculture, energy governance.

Considering the interlinkages between drought, land degradation and energy, is an important element to building resilience.

Connecting renewable energy investments with food system value chain, will pave the way for integrated approaches for energy strategies and agriculture policies anchored on water, energy and food nexus.

It is important to consider the energy-food linkage connecting the production, the processing, and the preservation of food, and to support the smallholders to scale up innovative and alternative practices.

Therefore, policy formulation to integrate clean energy technology in agricultural development should be a key priority for a sound food system, and resilience development in Africa. In this context, the following streams are worth considering.

- Strengthen policies and institutions
- Enhance agricultural skills, education, and R&D
- Dissemination and adoption of technologies and innovations, including indigenous knowledge
- Promote investment in cost-effective and quality agricultural inputs
- Application of post-harvest loss management technologies
- Promote natural resource management and practices appropriate for African agricultural
- Disaster risk mitigation