



Harnessing SDG-based Agrifood System Transformation through the Empowerment of the Next-Generation of Agrifood Leadership in Africa

Generating transformational changes in people, processes and markets across Africa

Global progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to agrifood systems, is alarmingly slow. Africa as a region is also not on track to meet SDG 2 and the Malabo targets of ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition. Hunger has surged since 2020, with nearly 282 million people undernourished in the region in 2022, an increase of 57 million people since the COVID-19 pandemic, and 868 million people estimated to be moderately or severely food insecure.

In the face of challenges such as economic downturns, extreme climates and changing consumption patterns, alternative approaches and innovative solutions are needed to effect sustained and impactful change in agrifood systems and accelerate progress to realize the 2030 Agenda.

Currently, many SDG initiatives focus on gathering data, frequently neglecting holistic capacity development for systems thinking. As a result, behavioural, societal, and political-economic factors often hinder the synergies and trade-offs embedded in sustainable development. These barriers mean that collected data is insufficient to accelerate the implementation of public policies. To bridge this gap, it is necessary to invest in developing new skills in particular among youth, to cope with complex multilevel, multi-sectoral and multistakeholder governance, SDG integration and cross-cutting themes such as inclusion, gender, youth, and environmental sustainability.

Working towards SDGs



The HASTEN Project

HASTEN: Harnessing SDG-based Agrifood System Transformation through the Empowerment of the Next-Generation of Agrifood Leadership in Africa, aims to foster and generate transformational changes in people, processes and markets by strengthening capacities among the next generation of leaders on sustainable agrifood systems transformations.



Implementing training, analysis and enterprise scale-up activities in: Lesotho, Rwanda and Sierra Leone

It encourages a move from incremental to transformative change by nurturing transdisciplinary systems thinking; developing capacities to analyse SDG interlinkages and identify synergies and trade-offs to make multiple impacts; promoting formal changes and new mindsets and competencies for the creation of effective, inclusive and accountable institutions; and enhancing the private sector's contribution to the achievement of the SDGs through innovative business practices.

HASTEN contributes to the regional programme of work for Africa and regional initiatives to promote sustainable agrifood production systems and efficient and equitable food and nutrition systems. It also closely links with national priorities and on-going initiatives established in the Country Programming Frameworks for implementing countries, Lesotho, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.



Nurturing young agrifood professionals from the public, private and academic sectors.



This project was initiated upon the request of the Governments of Lesotho, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFSN) of Lesotho, the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) and Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) of Rwanda, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) of Sierra Leone. It is co-led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Office of Sustainable Development Goals, Regional Office for Africa, Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, and Subregional Office for West Africa, and implemented in close collaboration with FAO's Country Offices in Lesotho, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

The project encourages partnerships as effective instruments for mobilizing human and financial resources, expertise, technology, and knowledge. In particular, the project identifies partnerships between national governmental counterparts, international investors, representatives of academia (universities), research institutes and youth entrepreneurs to strengthen the development of youth enterprises and enable an ecosystem of support for agrifood SMEs.

Expected Results

HASTEN aims to promote efficient and equitable national agrifood systems by supporting participating countries to improve their agrifood systems' governance, structures, and functionality.

The project outputs include:



Empowering youth to lead solutions

HASTEN focuses on increasing the competencies of young agrifood systems professionals in transdisciplinary systems thinking. This includes carrying out a capacity gap analysis disaggregated by sex, age and stakeholders' role in the agrifood system and foreign exchange visits to study good practices for engaging stakeholders to lead solutions for agrifood systems transformation.



Enhancing peer learning for process innovation

National workshops will be held in the participating countries and nationally focused policy briefs developed on priority thematic issues with the aim of promoting peer learning between public and private sector practitioners to inspire the change in processes necessary for agrifood systems transformation.



Scaling-up eco-inclusive, social agripreneurship

Sustainable business practices among young entrepreneurs will be strengthened, enabling the scaling up of agripreneurship models for SDG acceleration. This involves upgrading the support ecosystem for agrifood SMEs, with a focus on inclusive, climate-smart, resilient, and digitalized value chains. It will include business incubation initiatives with coaching/mentoring and pitch preparation, among other techniques.



For more information:

Office of Sustainable Development Goals
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

✉ SDGs@fao.org

www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals

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