Welcome to the latest edition of FAO in Africa, from FAO’s Regional Office for Africa. This quarter we are celebrating World Food Day on 16th October, under the theme of leaving no one behind. It is particularly pertinent in Africa as the continent faces pockets of catastrophic food insecurity amid overall rising hunger driven by conflict, climate change and rising food prices.

In this edition, we are sharing updates on our work for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life in Africa. Find out about the One Country, One Priority Product (OCOP) initiative in Africa, the latest news on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, an innovative rice and fish project in Rwanda and more.

As always, our newsletter is tailored to mobile phones, and easily shareable so please feel free to forward to your contacts.

Happy reading.

Abebe Haile-Gabriel
FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa
FEATURE

Transforming agrifood systems in Africa to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals was at the heart of discussions at the AGRF Summit 2022 in Kigali, the Republic of Rwanda, in September, at which FAO was an organising partner. More than 6,000 participants attended over the five days.

Alongside heads of state and government, FAO speakers took the stage to share solutions and advocate for food systems transformation. Chief Economist Maximo Torero briefed a panel of African leaders, at the Council of the Wise session, on the worsening food security crisis and urgent actions needed to address the issue.

Chief Scientist Ismahane Elouaﬁ spoke on the importance of science and innovation to drive agrifood systems transformation in Africa, including innovations in food processing and post-harvest handling and storage.

FAO Representative in Rwanda Coumba Sow represented FAO at the First Ladies event on nutrition,
and advocated for homegrown school meals that encourage better production and better nutrition.

Highlighting FAO’s Digital Villages Initiative, FAO digital agriculture specialist Ken Lohento said: “Connecting the unconnected and transforming available data into anticipatory strategies will help thousands of farmers overcome a climate shocks and produce better.” Ken also judged the Pitch AgriHack competition that celebrated young agripreneurs across Africa.

Mohamed Manssouri, Director of FAO’s Investment Centre underscored the importance of strategic investments in Africa: “The investments of today are the impacts of tomorrow. Focus on investments that will deliver change,” he said.

Among many bilateral meetings on the sidelines of AGRF, the FAO Africa ADG Abebe Haile-Gabriel met Rwanda’s Minister for Agriculture Gerardine Mukeshimana and Minister for Trade and Industry Jean-Chrysostome Ngabitsinze.

The Summit Declaration called on leaders to act decisively and swiftly to implement the ambitions and practical actions discussed during the Summit.

The declaration included four main priorities agreed by participants: support to country-led food systems transformation; development and implementation of city and municipal food systems visions; elevating healthy diets, particularly in the African Union year of nutrition; and showcasing models, best practices, evidence, and lessons learned for African food systems, and to disseminate them systematically through knowledge platforms.
In early September, FAO renewed its calls for immediate, scaled-up assistance to devastated drought-affected rural communities in the Federal Republic of Somalia to avert a hunger catastrophe.

FAO is bringing assistance to hard-hit rural areas including those facing large scale displacement and imminent famine. By supporting communities where they are, FAO is helping to keep families together and paving the way for a faster, future recovery.

“Saving and protecting livelihoods saves lives, but livelihood support is disproportionally underfunded,” FAO Representative in Somalia Etienne Peterschmitt said. “Every 1 USD spent on protecting rural livelihoods saves around 10 USD in food-related assistance for displaced families.”

Direct cash transfers to vulnerable rural families through FAO’s Cash+ programme is assisting rural communities to address their immediate needs while helping mitigate livelihood collapse. The mobile money transfers have seen FAO reach 31 out of the 35 hard-to-reach or inaccessible areas of the country. An emergency livestock treatment campaign has helped families maintain productive assets that are critical for the food security and nutrition of vulnerable families, especially those with young children.
The FAO initiative on One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) in Africa benefitted from a visit by the Director of Plant Production and Protection Division Dr. Jingyuan Xia (pictured) to the Republic of Ghana, the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of Malawi in July. The mission included site visits to farmers’ fields, agricultural extension facilities, universities, laboratories, ministries and relevant agribusinesses and industries. Lesotho is developing a proposal for the green development of potato, Malawi for revitalizing its banana industry, and Ghana for promoting soybean production, processing and marketing. “There is great political will and commitment for OCOP,” Jingyuan Xia said.

A plane taking part in control operations in Tanzania surrounded by quelea birds.

FAO has carried out aerial spraying in strategic locations in the United Republic of Tanzania to protect crops from swarms of quelea birds, in partnership with national authorities. The small, sparrow-like quelea birds are a major pest to small-grain cereal crops in much of sub-Saharan Africa. The ongoing aerial spray operation has saved over 800 acres of rice, wheat, and barley, as well as other food security crops from the bird invasion.
News

BETTER PRODUCTION

New strategies to manage pests in southern Africa

Nine new regional strategies to manage transboundary pests and diseases affecting Southern Africa have been endorsed by Southern African Development Community (SADC) ministers responsible for food security and agriculture.

The strategies were developed under the FAO ‘Support towards the operationalization of the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy’ (STOSAR) project, funded by the European Union.

They cover Foot and Mouth Disease, Avian Influenza, Peste des Petits Ruminants, Banana Fusarium Wilt, Fruit Fly, Fall Armyworm and others.

“Effective management of transboundary plant and animal health threats can be achieved through domestication of the strategies” STOSAR Project Coordinator Elma Zanamwe said.

News

BETTER NUTRITION

Rice-fish project in Rwanda boosts nutrition

An innovative FAO-funded rice-fish project in Rwanda is boosting access to nutritious food.

The integrated approach combines rice production with aquaculture in the same area of land, with mutual benefits for both. The fish are raised in the rice paddy and eat pests that could harm the rice, while the rice is fertilized by the fish droppings. Farmers use less pesticides and chemical fertilizers, while harvesting nutritious fish and rice.

“This project has surprised many people in Rwanda,” said Leonce Rutinduka, from the Union of Cooperatives for Rice Farmers in Rwamagana District. “Farmers are getting fish on the same area that they used to only harvest rice,” he said.
The 44 recommendations from the 23rd Session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission, held in Kinshasa in August, will help drive forward sustainable forest and wildlife management in Africa in coming years.

The FAO Commission is the most important continental forum to discuss policy, scientific and technical issues relating to forestry and wildlife in Africa. Over 215 participants from 27 countries participated in AFWC23, including two ministers, plus 45 partners and observers.

Recommendations from the Session include implementing policies that conserve, restore and sustainably manage forests and wildlife as a means of creating resilient recovery plans from COVID-19 and other shocks, enhance the skills of women and youth in the sectors, and strengthen public and private investments to enhance forest resilience and the capacity to adapt to climate change.

The final report will be available on the AFWC List of Documents page, and Tanzania has offered to host the next AFWC Session.
The sustainable management of teak forests was central to discussions at the 4th World Teak Conference, held in Accra in September with support from FAO. The conference brought together over 300 participants from more than 30 countries from across the teak sector to discuss the future of sustainable teak production. Teakwood producers in Africa include Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Togo.

"Teak is a major asset for economies and attracts large investments from the private sector," FAO Deputy Regional Representative for Africa Yurdi Yasmi said.

Ghana’s Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Hon. Samuel Abu Jinapor, highlighted the contributions that sustainable teak production can make across the Sustainable Development Goals.

Seven African countries are ready to share their investment plans for the Hand-in-Hand Initiative (HiHI) at the upcoming HiHI Investment Forum in Rome (17-19 October). Ministers of Agriculture from Burkina Faso, the Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, and Zimbabwe will lead their country delegations over the three-day forum. The event will see countries presenting impact investment opportunities in agrifood systems to corporations, multilateral development banks and donors.

For example, Burkina Faso has developed an investment plan on value chain development of rice, peanut and sesame. Congo is focusing on cassava flour, soy, maize and poultry production, while Sao Tome and Principe’s plan focuses on the blue economy.

The Investment Forum is part of the World Food Forum.
Land Rights in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone has passed two new laws for land tenure security, aligned with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) which FAO promotes globally.

The laws will help boost the rights of rural landowners including women by empowering them to negotiate the value of their land with investors and prevent it being leased out without their express consent.

“We are pleased to see such great progress in support of rural women and men landowners in Sierra Leone,” FAO Representative in Sierra Leone Saeed Bancie said.

Sierra Leone is a pioneer in Africa in reviewing its policy and legal frameworks in line with the VGGT.

Finding Africa’s next women entrepreneurs

A pilot accelerator mentorship programme for women-led small-to-medium businesses in Africa has just been launched by FAO and the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN).

The 50 successful applicants are women entrepreneurs involved in the agrifood sector in Sub-Saharan Africa. They will be connected on a one-to-one basis with mentors to help them address key challenges and constraints they face in their businesses.

Participants will also be provided with access to knowledge and tools necessary to grow their enterprises and adapt to an ever-changing marketplace, including within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
Groundwork for GEF-8

Representatives from West African government ministries and FAO country offices met in the Republic of Senegal in September for a four-day intensive workshop to prepare countries to develop national and sub-regional proposals for the next funding round of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

GEF-8 sees the largest ever replenishment of the Facility and more than USD 5 billion will be disbursed for projects that deliver environmental benefits in climate change mitigation and adaptation, combatting land degradation, biodiversity support, sustainable management of natural resources, and more.

“FAO is ready to support you to develop projects for funding under GEF-8,” FAO Sub-regional Coordinator for West Africa Robert Guei told participants.

Talking books partnership to reach remote communities

FAO has partnered with Amplio, a US based nonprofit social enterprise, to launch a ‘talking books’ project in Uganda. Talking books are audio devices designed for people with limited access to the internet or electricity, can play several hours of audio programs, work offline, and function with either rechargeable or conventional batteries.

Around 8,000 people are using the devices to hear information on women’s land rights, climate change adaptation and more under the pilot.

“Inclusive digital solutions can be powerful tools to promote social inclusion and empowerment in rural contexts,” Martha Osorio, FAO Gender and Rural Development Officer said.
What’s New

Digital Brochure:
FAO’s Work on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa

Explore FAO’s work on South-South and Technical Cooperation in Africa through the lens of rice production in Nigeria and Guinea. The digital publication can be explored using a laptop, tablet or mobile phone.

Publication:
Building resilience to climate change-related and other disasters in Ethiopia

This publication looks at the challenges, lessons and the way forward towards a comprehensive, proactive disaster and climate risk management approach in Ethiopia.

Publication
Youth in the poultry value chain in Kenya and Uganda

This brief explores the presence and characteristics of youth working in the poultry sector through data collected in two urban and peri-urban subregions in Kenya and Uganda.

Publication: Business models along the cattle dairy value chain in Ethiopia

This publication brings together information to help understand and document the various business models along the cattle dairy value chain nodes in Adaâ and Sululta districts of Ethiopia.

Story: Communities in the Far North region of Cameroon open their doors to those fleeing conflict:

How FAO is supporting host communities and internally displaced people to access food and livelihoods.

Video: Hayad’s Story: How FAO is Helping Puntland Pastoralists Towards a Sustainable Future

Contact us: If you have feedback or a story suggestion, contact the FAO Africa Communications Team.