



They will feed us!

A people's route to African food sovereignty

AUTONOMOUS ASSESSMENT OF UNFSS NATIONAL PATHWAYS AND DAKAR 2 SUMMIT COMPACTS



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Africa - Afrique



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National case studies

Lead researcher: Mamadou Goïta, Institute for Research and Promotion of Alternatives in Development (IRPAD)

ZAMBIA

Lead organisation: Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity (ZAAB)

Lead resource person: Frances Davies

MOROCCO

Lead organisation: Fédération Nationale du Secteur Agricole de l'Union Marocaine du Travail (FNSA/UMT)

Lead resource persons: Ali Belarbi

MALI

Lead organisation: Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (CNOP-Mali)

Lead resource persons: Modibo Goïta and Ousmane Ouattara

KENYA

Lead organisations: Mazingira Institute, BIBA Kenya, World March of Women Kenya

Lead resource person: Anne Maina and Samuel Ikua

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Lead organisation: Concertation Nationale des Organisations Paysannes du Congo (CNOP-Congo)

Lead resource person: Giles Mampassi

Task team

Established by the African regional popular consultation space of the CSIPM:

Musa Sowe, Network of Farmers' Organizations and Agricultural Producers of West Africa (ROPPA), The Gambia

Hala Barakat, Habitat International Coalition (HIC), Egypt

La Via Campesina Southern and Eastern Africa (LVC-SEAf)

Samuel Ikua, Mazingira Institute, Kenya

Sefu Sanni, World March of Women, Kenya

Dieudonné Pakodtogo, ROPPA, Burkina Faso

Nora McKeon, CSIPM

Editor: Clare Crowe Pettersson

Design: Clare Crowe Pettersson

Editorial project management: Marion Girard Cisneros

Cover images: [ROPPA](#)

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1. Main messages

- The autonomous people's assessment of the UNFSS national pathways and the Dakar 2 Summit national compacts identifies many of the inadequacies and negative impacts of these food systems policy processes. It finds that they are often externally initiated, time-pressed, and top-down in their orientation, rather than building up from the needs, experiences, and proposals of national actors—particularly those most affected by food policies and most engaged in food provisioning. Their negative impacts are discussed in detail in the *Key findings* and *Conclusions* sections of this report.

At the same time, the assessment points in a positive direction, to steps that can help to terminate dependence on food imports and implement a vision of food sovereignty that benefits African peoples and territories:



Democratic policy decision-making rooted in a human rights framework, not multistakeholderism

States must reform their policy processes by building on inclusive spaces that exist in some countries and strengthening the involvement of and accountability to people's movements for more inclusive food systems promoting food and nutritional sovereignty. Transparent, inclusive, self-organised participation by people's organisations and civil society at all levels—particularly those sectors most affected—is essential to ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of national policies. Corporate economic interests should have no place at the policy decision-making table.



Public financing for more sustainable food systems

The national pathways and compact approach promotes dependence on external financing rather than on public policies and judicious use of public finances. Public policies should set the framework for investments, not the contrary. This issue should be addressed urgently. The key message for states deriving from the case studies is to respect the Maputo and Malabo commitments: to devote at least 10% of the national budget (mobilised from national resources) to the agricultural sector and food systems, and to give priority to investments in family farming, including all agro-sylvo-pastoral and fishery activities, and to agroecology. Public-private partnerships are imposing a model of financing that does not correspond to the interests of family farmers, who are the biggest investors in agriculture. Public provisioning and the constitution of food stocks should privilege local small-scale producers. Credit and insurance programmes should be designed to meet their needs.



Family farming/agroecology/territorial markets vs. green revolution/industrial agriculture/private sector-led, export-oriented supply chains

All of the case studies point to the need for a determined transition away from industrial agriculture, Green Revolution technology and agribusiness-led supply chains. The direction must be towards agroecological approaches and territorial food systems that provide opportunities for women and youth, ensure healthy diets, link rural and urban areas and retain value added for redistribution in the territories. States must ensure a critical participatory assessment of public policies in order to achieve overall coherence, taking into account the legitimate needs and goals of peasants, Indigenous Peoples and other people working in rural areas and those of food-insecure urban inhabitants. The issue of the sustainability and equity of food systems must be at the heart of such a process. Protecting territorial markets, and people’s access to them, is key.



People’s access to and control over land, water and seeds

States must commit to resolutely supporting people-centred, inclusive and participatory land tenure reform as well as access to seeds and other resources that provide security for communities and are based on customs and traditions. These must be drawn up, finalised, implemented and monitored, taking into account the well-being of communities without discriminating against the most marginalised, in particular pastoralists, fisherfolk, women, youth and persons with disabilities. States must commit not only to recognising peasant seed systems but also to promoting them through participatory research, with peasant-researchers at the centre in all fields in order to assert seed sovereignty. Seed policies and laws must systematically exclude all provisions that criminalise or call into question peasant seed systems and their operating methods. Corporate capture of African peoples’ resources must be blocked.



Gender equity and youth access to opportunities are serious issues that need to be addressed urgently

All actions and investments related to the pathways and compacts should be analysed from a gender and youth perspective to ensure that they strengthen, rather than undermine, women and youth’s empowerment and livelihoods. This would also promote generational sustainability of family farming, enabling young people to access productive assets such as land, which are largely captured by industrial agriculture corporations. The socially embedded approach of POs and CSOs points in this direction, in contrast to the high tech/entrepreneurial approach of the “modernisation” narrative.

2. Preface

African agriculture and food systems are evolving in an increasingly volatile context, impacted by climate change, conflicts, fragile and iniquitous globalised food systems, successive food crises, and unaddressed structural causes. Africa is one of the first victims of existing global inequalities, with a generally subordinate economic position, a limited voice in political decisions affecting the continent and its nations, and an extremely unequal distribution of the costs and benefits stemming from the exploitation of natural resources. In this context, the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), [widely denounced](#) by people's movements around the world as undemocratic and illegitimate, sought to kickstart a global process towards "food system transformation" and urged countries to develop their own "national pathways" for achieving this goal. The Dakar 2 – 'Feed Africa Summit' in January 2023, sponsored by the African Development Bank, also enjoined countries to present "national compacts" emphasising private sector investment.

African governments are calling for an end to dependence on food imports. However, instead of supporting peasant agroecology and territorial markets, they often favour a "modernisation" approach, focusing on investment in specialised crops and zones, privileging privatised seeds and so-called modern technologies, relying heavily on foreign private investment and promoting export-oriented value chains. The national pathways designed by African governments within the framework of the UNFSS, like the national compacts presented at the Dakar 2 Summit, could further reinforce this trend. This is why African peasant's organisations (POs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) have decided to conduct their own autonomous assessment of these developments.

A broad range of African POs and CSOs have denounced the corporate capture of their food systems and are advocating for their real solutions to food crises. This autonomous evaluation report is rooted in a process that began before the 2021 UNFSS and has produced two widely shared statements, whose key recommendations addressed to African authorities are recalled in Box 1. These POs and CSOs, acting in what has come to be known as the 'African regional CSIPM popular consultation space', have mandated the research whose findings are reported here. The [Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism \(CSIPM\)](#) is the autonomous, self-organised, inclusive mechanism that brings people's voices to the deliberations of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

The CSO research on the UNFSS national pathways and the Dakar 2 compacts has been participatory and inclusive. A task team was mandated to develop the evaluation proposal, which was subsequently validated by the space, open to all interested African POs and CSOs. This task team oversaw the research process and the development and validation of this report. Regular consultations between the task team and the participants in the African space ensured their involvement in the activities and validation of the findings. Case studies have been conducted in five countries (Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Mali, Morocco and Zambia), representing different African sub-regions.

In all five case studies, the research has been led by producer and civil society organisations actively engaged in the people's counter-mobilisation against the UNFSS and the popular consultations promoted by the CSIPM. A national resource person was identified in each country to conduct the study under the guidance of a continental lead researcher. The research examines both the development process of the pathways and compacts and their content, comparing them with national movements' action and policy proposals.

This report presents the key findings that have emerged. They are drawn from different sources, including interviews with official informants, analyses of governmental declarations, online sources, media, community consultations, personal communications and more. A comparison of these sources was conducted to ensure data quality. The case studies have received validation from national POs and CSOs, and this synthesis report is also validated by the African regional CSIPM popular consultation space.

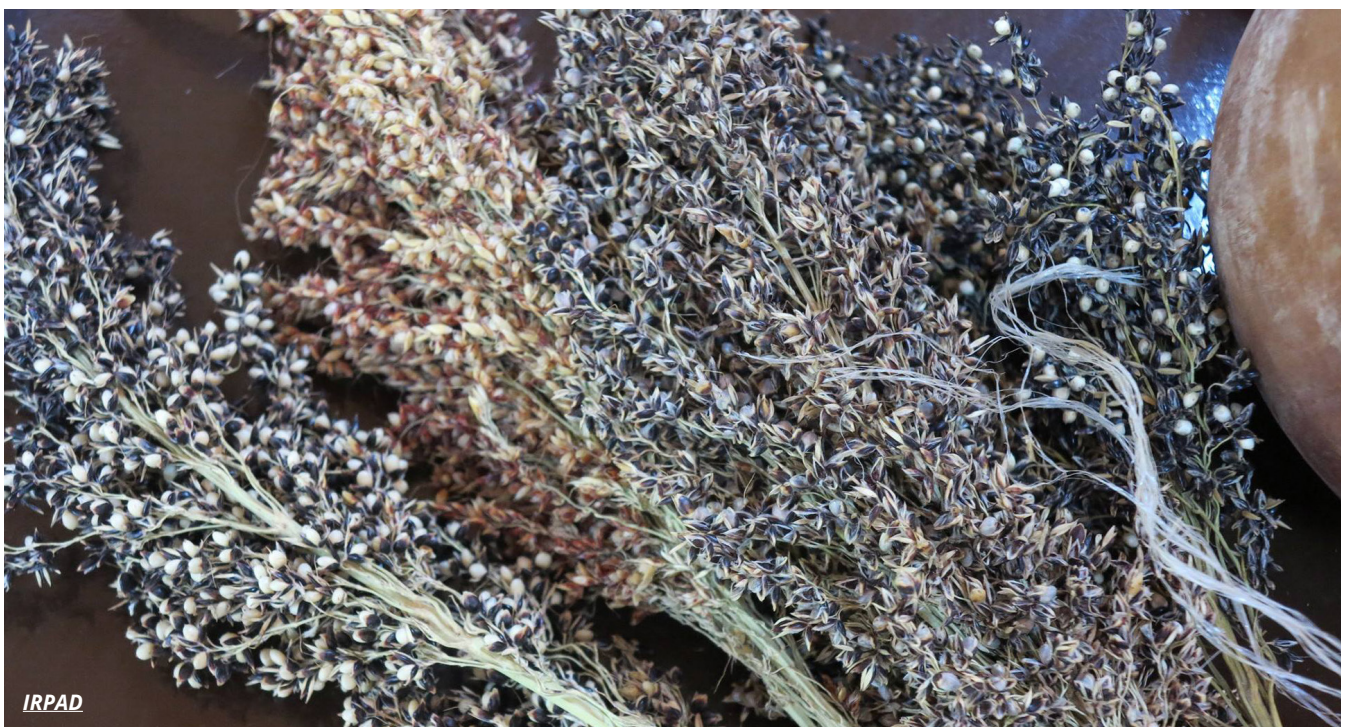
The members of this space are committed to widely disseminating this report and using it as a tool for raising awareness among POs and CSOs, as well as a political instrument for advocating their positions in various policy forums.

BOX 1**Key recommendations from previous consultations**

African CSOs and POs have come together in a series of inclusive consultations to discuss and articulate key recommendations and demands for long-term food system transformation, including:

- Support democratic policy decision-making rooted in a human rights framework
- Respect the Maputo commitment and prioritise investment in family farming, peasant agroecology and territorial food systems to reduce dependency on food imports and achieve food sovereignty
- Regulate markets and block imports that undercut local products
- Block land and resource grabbing and ensure control over natural resources and biodiversity by African peoples themselves
- Promote farmer-managed seed systems
- Promote gender equality and empowerment of women and youth
- Address the structural causes of migration, protracted violence and conflict
- Raise the voice of Africa in international spaces and not allow decisions to be taken by well-resourced countries and economic interests
- Support the CFS, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP) and the UN Decade on Family Farming (UNDF)

For more information on previous consultations, see: [Africa responds to the UN Food Systems Summit and Declaration](#) and [Grassroots impacts of COVID-19, conflicts, and crises on the right to food and food sovereignty in Africa](#)



IRPAD

3. Context

“This is the third food crisis in 15 years. We are living in a situation where the dominant economic and food systems are causing multiple crises evidenced by continuing, multi-layered food crises, catastrophic climate change, public health emergencies, and ever-rising levels of poverty and inequality, as well as corporate profiteering, speculation and food price inflation.

In the context of an agro-industrial production model, our societies have become extremely vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity due to overdependence on global value chains and fossil fuel-based production inputs, corporate concentration in almost all aspects of food systems, and a stubborn adherence to neoliberal economic logic with its lack of market regulation and unjust trade rules. Countries with high levels of indebtedness and dependency on food imports are more deeply affected, with almost no means to cope with upwardly spiralling food and fuel prices, and volatile commodity markets.

Only if the crisis is understood in a comprehensive and systematic way can it be rightly addressed and overcome. A profound transformation of the global food system and economic model is needed.”

Ibrahima Coulibaly, President of the Network of Farmers’ Organisations and Agricultural Producers in West Africa (ROPPA)

To read more, see: [Voices from the ground 2](#)

African food systems: put to the test by capitalist systems

At independence in the early 1960s, most African countries strongly advocated for food self-sufficiency through the promotion of domestic agricultural production. With the introduction of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) during the early 1980s, this policy was abandoned for food security approaches based on the international liberalisation of commodity markets.

In Africa, liberalisation implied the political disengagement of the state and the privatisation of agricultural services. At an economic level, it involved land grabbing, the privatisation of genetic resources including seeds and other biodiversity resources, bio-piracy, the imposed use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and reliance on agrochemicals. Recent years have witnessed the emergence of biofuels and other related commercial products. This strategy has been developed mainly by replacing food production with non-food products, framing food as a commodity rather than a human right.

Due to misguided political decisions made by policy officials and other decision-makers, an increasing portion of the African population now faces limited access to food. In such circumstances, it is vital to deepen the analysis and understanding of all factors impacting agriculture and rural development policy.

It is essential to underscore the impacts of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) on African countries’ economic systems and the ensuing crises. Following the debt crisis of the 1980s, when the prices of raw materials collapsed, the IMF and the World Bank, backed by powerful economies and other economic interests, pressured African countries to adopt SAPs in order to get access to loans. These programs entailed reducing the land allocated to subsistence farming and concentrating on one or two export crops to generate foreign exchange, such as cotton in Burkina Faso, and coffee and cocoa in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana. In Mali, for example, cotton production grew from less than 200,000 tonnes to 620,000 tonnes by the end of the 1990s. The country paid a heavy price for this shift to specialisation, with increased debt and the reassignment of technical assistance away from agro-sylvo-pastoralism. Cotton was soon the only commodity benefitting from any investment in both production and marketing.

The export-orientated approach, a heavy legacy of colonisation, had already been draining wealth from rural areas. With the introduction of new neo-liberal instruments, African economies increasingly adopted export-oriented development strategies justified by the comparative advantage narrative, focusing on access to export markets.

The results were dramatic, including:

- A reduction of the role of the public sector
- A reduction of technical assistance to peasants, including fisherfolks, pastoralists and other persons working in rural areas
- A removal of price-stabilisation mechanisms that previously helped to sustain other forms of small-scale production
- An abandonment of policies aimed at self-sufficiency in grain production
- The brutal opening of domestic markets to external commodities to the detriment of locally produced, and in some cases, strategic commodities

These measures, coupled with the opening of African markets to foreign capital, resulted in economies becoming extremely fragile and susceptible to global market fluctuations. This led to significant reductions in budgets for social services, a drop in subsidies for local products, and the destruction of nascent local, national and sub-regional markets. The intransigence of the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI) and the underlying geo-political and economic interests destroyed modes of production and, consequently, modes of consumption in African countries. This ushered in the dramatic era of food aid, reshaping the food consumption habits in affected countries with wheat products, canned goods, imported milk powder and more.

The advent of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Agreement on Agriculture further entrenched the view of food as a commodity rather than a human right, and constrained the governing space of African states. African populations have borne the heavy burden of these policy outcomes, which quickly proved to be dangerous. The widespread liberalisation of trade in agricultural goods has had serious consequences for Africa beyond the food domain, contributing to a loss of rural jobs, the impoverishment of peasant populations and a subsequent spike in the rural-urban exodus, posing a serious threat to political and social stability.

Amidst these consequences, small-scale producers found themselves in direct competition with large multinationals. Despite the negative impacts of neo-liberal policies, a positive development emerged—the birth of organised peasant movements in Africa, especially in the severely affected Sahel countries. These movements have played a crucial role in responding to policy failures, which have become increasingly evident in the past 15 years and during three major crises—the 2008 food-price crisis, the 2019 COVID-19 crisis, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Within months of the onset of these three crises, food prices skyrocketed, doubling and, in some cases, more than tripling. Cereal stocks typically plummeted to critically low levels due to rampant speculation creating scarcity. The price of a meal soared exponentially, and the looming threat of famine became painfully real.

Additionally, these crises exposed the lack of coherence among international institutions and states in managing food and agriculture challenges in Africa. For instance, during the 2008 food-price crisis, international analysis and media focused on bad weather, changing modes of consumption in China and India, and low food stocks as the causes of rising food prices. However, as time rolled on, the deeper causes of the crisis became more apparent, thanks in large part to civil society advocacy. Among these causes were the impact of a boom in production of biofuels, insufficient stocks of cereal products in Europe and the US, and, above all, financial speculation, an artefact of the neoliberal model and the commodification of food.

A pattern of overlooked structural causes to crises has become the norm. Responses generally ignore key challenges that must be addressed if Africa is to have a chance of developing thriving food systems. These include:

1. Weak public investments in agriculture, as illustrated by the non-achievement of the Maputo and Malabo declarations by a significant majority of the countries¹
2. Inadequate inclusion and participation of food producers in policymaking
3. Policy incoherence in the majority of countries, with a lack of linkages between food production, markets and trade regimes
4. Market distortions and reliance on international markets for food access
5. Weak public research on food production, processing and market access, and a landscape overtaken by corporate-led research
6. Weak national food processors and controlled state-owned or national private sector-owned agro-industries
7. Price volatility creating uncertainty and insecurity for family farming systems
8. Inadequate land access and tenure security to family farms, fisherfolk, pastoralists and other small-scale food producers, especially for women and youth

The direct consequences of the economic and food policies pursued so far have led to a progressive loss of control by small-scale producers over their essential resources and means of production: land, seeds, water.

This shift in power has opened the door to the emergence of new actors, namely multinational companies, and agribusinessmen. Many are former civil servants or individuals with political connections, leveraging their networks to acquire land and resources through corruption and political pressure. In Burkina Faso, for example, many private companies and government officials become landowners through transactions that take place outside sanctioned channels. The major current developments are attributed to these new actors.

It is crucial to recognise that family farmers' investments, including their time, labour and financial resources, are critical to building robust and resilient food systems. These investments must be supported by appropriate policies.²

Despite navigating constant pressure from various corporations, governments, "cooperating partners" and international BWI financial institutions including the World Bank and IMF, social movements in Africa have continued to fight for food as a human right under the leadership of small-scale producer organisations. In response and opposition to the corporate capture of food systems and co-opting of global governance spaces, African CSOs and POS are setting light to the voices and visions of small-scale food producers.



A promising process: food sovereignty and peasant agroecology promoted by small-scale family farms

"Our vision is one of food sovereignty. We defend our right to healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and our right to define our own food and agriculture systems, taking into account the resources, needs, conditions and culture of our communities. We hold that the way forward is to support territorially-embedded solutions that integrate and enhance the rights of small-scale producers of all kinds—farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, agricultural workers—and safeguard the rights of all food consumers to access healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food."

- Joint declaration by African civil society organisations

For a list of organisations that endorse the declaration, see:
[Africa responds to the UN Food Systems Summit](#)

Confronted with losses in purchasing power and a dramatic deterioration in their means of survival, and having witnessed the failures of top-down policies and programmes, peasants have self-organised around the world towards the progressive realisation of the right to food. By expanding on collective networks, they have gained recognition and shaped

platforms to directly voice the concerns and demands of small-scale producers at the highest levels of international forums.

Their initiatives are based on knowledge of agricultural systems built over millennia, and on recent developments and techniques to strengthen these systems for the future.

Social movements and civil society have been [building a global movement](#) and community-based processes of governance around the vision of food sovereignty, based on agroecology and the rights and aspirations of small-scale food producers, workers, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and rural-urban communities.

During the [Nyéléni 2007 Forum](#), social movements, led by farmers and involving diverse constituencies, established six core pillars of food sovereignty:

1. Focuses on food for people
2. Values food providers
3. Localises food systems
4. Empowers local control
5. Builds knowledge and skills
6. Works with nature

Since then, the vision and practice of food sovereignty has spread widely in Africa, drawing from the initiatives and policy advocacy of POs and CSOs. Championing and applying the pillars of food sovereignty, agroecology, and territorial markets, their efforts have contested the industrial food system through counter-mobilisation statements, popular consultations, solidarity-building programmes and policy positions, as well as peasant-led training programmes, exchange of experiences, and support for farmer-produced inputs.

An alternative to industrial food production exists, centred on the principles of food sovereignty and agroecology. This model is rooted in the traditional practices of family farmers and other agricultural producers, valuing their expert knowledge and capacity to conserve, develop and manage local food systems that respect nature. It fully recognises the role and importance of women and youth in food provisioning, adding value to products, and marketing surpluses to meet the needs of national and global populations. The adoption of this model reconnects networks that extend beyond production activities to all the economies and ecologies of local territories, and is imbued with the cultures, values and practices of local communities.

Food sovereignty has evolved through decades of work by producers in response to the negative impacts of structural adjustment policies and free trade agreements, and the pressing challenges posed by climate collapse. It is a system that has been highlighted by the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science & Technology (IAASTD) and other international authorities, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and others.

An integrated system, food sovereignty is based on sustainable models of food production (including different techniques, technologies and knowledge related to agroecology, such as agroforestry, the production of organic inputs, and using viable circular approaches, fostering mitigation of and adaptation to climate change), food transport, storage, processing, market and nutrition. Power relations and the political, social, cultural and environmental dimensions of food systems are considered instrumental to the sustainability thereof.

Numerous scientific studies carried out in recent years have shown that agroecological approaches provide significantly higher yield and crop diversity than the current industrial methods [promoted by the Green Revolution](#). These findings underscore the [multiple advantages offered by agroecological practices](#), encompassing not only enhanced food production but also environmental benefits, including strengthening ecosystem functions and preserving natural landscapes.

These sustainable models of food production, developed within the framework of food sovereignty, are based on peasant agroecology. Peasant agroecology was co-defined in 2017 by social movements through a broad panel of organisations and international movements of small-scale food producers and consumers (Box 2).

Food sovereignty sets food as a fundamental human right and expands people's participation and articulation into policy processes. It reflects the visions and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food, placing people at the heart of the food system. Governments and other duty-bearers have an obligation to prioritise the needs of people over profits. The veiled interests of initiatives such as the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, Grow Africa, and other investment programmes concentrate global gains in the hands of a few, promoting industrial agriculture and corporate interests through public-private-partnerships and policy changes that create a favourable environment for foreign investments.

This report explores the risk that the UNFSS and the Dakar 2 Forum could push countries to undermine the rights of their citizens and their own food systems transformation by assigning a lead role to the corporate private sector and external investment. The attention of African people, their governments and global allies is critical to resist the consolidation of corporate power in food systems and to defend the African popular vision of food sovereignty based on agroecology, sustainability, territoriality and inclusiveness.

BOX 2

Nyéleni Peasant Agroecology Manifesto

Peasant agroecology refers to “food and agricultural systems geared towards family farming and food sovereignty, and is based on securing natural resources, safeguarding the genetic diversity of cultivated heritages, sustainable agricultural practices based on notions of complementarity and adaptability, valuing the role of women and young people, promoting local food systems, collective action, and developing public policies favourable to agroecology”.

It is based on six basic principles, as outlined [in the manifesto](#):

1. The human rights to food, water, and land are fundamental; they are essential for life. All people—men and women, adults and children, rich and poor, rural and urban dwellers—should be able to enjoy these rights.
2. Water and land are not only vital natural resources, they are also a part of our common heritage. Each community should ensure that these rights are safeguarded and regulated for the common good of our societies and in order to protect the environment, today and for the generations to come.
3. Water, land and seeds are common goods; they are not commodities.
4. The legal and constitutional mandate that we assign to the State is to represent the interests of the population. For that reason, the State has a duty to oppose any political policy or international treaty that threatens human rights or State sovereignty; this would apply to mechanisms for settlement of disputes between corporations and governments as well as to the majority of investment treaties.
5. Land and water management policies should help to bring about social equity, gender equality, improved public health, and environmental justice.
6. There should be a firm rejection of all forms of foreign occupation and domination.

To read more on peasant agroecology, see: [Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology](#)



4. UNFSS national pathways and Dakar 2 Forum compacts

The UNFSS process

In September 2021, the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) was convened by the UN Secretary-General without a political mandate from UN member states and in close cooperation with the global consortium of multinational enterprises, the World Economic Forum (WEF). The Summit raised deep concerns among small-scale producers and civil society organisations, particularly regarding the [unprecedented participation of agribusiness corporations](#) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in its organisation and the inadequate role of governments in both the preparation of the Summit and the endorsement of its outcomes.

The selection of the President of the Gates Foundation-funded Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Agnes Kalibata, as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the organisation of the Summit, is illustrative of the close link with private sector interests. The UNFSS constituted an attack against multilateral decision-making and government accountability. In particular, it was seen as an attempt to sideline the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the most inclusive global intergovernmental forum mandated to discuss and decide on food issues in a human rights framework.

It is important to recall that the CFS is the only space in the UN system that includes a clear, autonomous and self-organised mechanism for civil society and Indigenous Peoples' participation, the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSIPM), with priority voice for organisations representing those most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition. Its sidelining was a de-facto rejection of legitimate civil society participation, and opened the door to cherry-picking and undemocratic processes for selection of CSOs to participate. While the CFS is a prime example of inclusive multilateralism, the modality chosen for the UNFSS was a multistakeholder one, developed by the WEF.

Despite claims by Summit organisers that everyone had a seat at the table, the private sectors' increasing power in decision-making structures manipulated the concept of inclusiveness to legitimise and institutionalise the corporate capture of global food governance. When the different roles, responsibilities and interests of different actors are ignored and power

imbalances disregarded, it is the most powerful—the corporations—who prevail and the most marginalised sectors who are excluded. The UN intergovernmental process, with all of its weaknesses and defects, operates within a human rights framework that identifies governments as duty-bound to defend, protect and promote the rights of the marginalised. Including powerful economic interests in what ought to be a public domain of policy and rulemaking fractures this framework and weakens the basis of governmental accountability.

Having sought unsuccessfully to raise these concerns with the secretariat of the UNFSS, the CSIPM [launched a campaign](#) in October 2020 which culminated in a counter-mobilisation in July 2021. As noted earlier in this report, the African counter-mobilisation adopted a [Declaration](#) that was signed by dozens of organisations.

As part of the preparations for the UNFSS, UN member states were invited to organise national multistakeholder dialogues. These dialogues were expected to produce national pathways that would set out agendas for how local and national governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders would transform food systems. Particular attention was supposed to be given to ["those sections of society who have the least resources and influence, and tend to be hardest to reach"](#), but feedback the CSIPM received from people's organisations at national level indicated that, in most cases, the dialogues were not inclusively organised. 47 African countries are listed on the [UNFSS website](#) as having engaged in this process, whose outcomes this report seeks to assess.

During the same period, the African Union (AU) and the AU Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) developed an ['African Common Position on Food Systems'](#), intended to be delivered to the UNFSS. The preface to this document states that "the common position has also benefited from the wealth of information generated from robust conversations and inputs from African Regional Economic Communities; civil society organisations, farmers' organisations, including groups of women and youth; the private sector; academia; African multilateral institutions; and UN agencies".

However, the broad group of POs and CSOs participating in the African counter-mobilisation were not aware of the draft's existence until a leaked copy was obtained in early 2021. A formal request to access it for comment received a reply through official channels that the document would be made publicly available only after it had been finalised and adopted. In response, a coalition of CSOs and POs drafted an open letter to the AU, shared through a [webinar](#) in September 2021. 125 organisations and networks endorsed the [open letter](#), which critiqued the Common Position both for its lack of transparency and inclusivity in the development process, and for its content, which was perceived as promoting industrial agriculture, private sector-driven “improved” seeds and genetic engineering, bio and industrial food fortification, blue growth initiatives and digitalisation.

The follow-up to the UNFSS continued to elude multilateral oversight and to highlight the growing role of corporate agribusiness and public-private partnerships in the food domain. A [Coordination Hub](#) was established within the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which has tightened its partnerships with major agribusiness multinationals under its Director-General. The Hub is accompanied by a Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Advisory (SENA) Group whose members are selected by the Hub, contravening the right to self-organisation that protects the autonomy of the CSIPM in its interactions with the CFS. Reporting flows from the country level, where FAO leads UN country teams in promoting further development of the national pathways, through the Hub to the Secretary-General, bypassing intergovernmental oversight and creating a dangerous new parallel structure and competitor to the CFS.

The Secretary-General's [Statement of Action](#) envisioned convening a global stocktaking meeting every two years, with no collective political oversight. The first of these meetings, the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) was hosted by FAO in July 2023. Once again it followed a multistakeholder approach, with no intergovernmental decision-making, and once again it was [denounced](#) by numerous civil society organisations and social movements from across the globe. In the run-up to UNFSS+2, a preparatory meeting of African government convenors of the national dialogues took place in February 2023. African small-scale producer organisations were neither informed nor invited, while a [presentation by AGRA](#) was included in the programme.

The main Africa-focused moment of the UNFSS+2 was a [special event](#) on ‘Building Africa's Food Sovereignty and Resilience through Sustainable Investment’, co-opting a term pioneered by small-scale producers and CSOs who were not even present at the event. Perhaps the most pertinent comment was made by the AU Special Envoy for Food Systems, Ibrahim

Mayaki, who [advocated support](#) for small-scale food producers: “Those who invest the most in our agri-food systems are the small-scale farmers, who produce 80% of the food we eat. They invest more than governments; they invest more than all [international financial institutions] put together... This is a fundamental political solution. It's not technical, it's political”.

The Dakar 2 Summit process

It is important to recall that the concept of national and regional compacts in Africa originated from the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), promoted by the African Union and implemented at regional levels by Regional Economic Commissions (RECs). The compacts vary in orientation, largely influenced by the institutions financing the process and the degree of effective participation by organised small-scale producers in their formulation. A uniting element is the AU's and CAADP's emphasis on the Maputo and Malabo Declarations, committing states to devote at least 10% of their national budget to agricultural and food systems development. The Dakar 2 Summit compacts evoke the CAADP processes at national and regional levels and engage to support their implementation, but they aim at giving greater space for private sector participation and influence in food systems. In fact, the Dakar 2 Summit is essentially about redesigning the national and regional compacts to open them up to the private sector and the technology and investment-led recipes they propose.

The Dakar 2 Summit took place in January 2023, attracting the participation of 34 heads of state, 70 government ministers, and a number of international agencies and development partners. It was hosted by the then President of Senegal, Macky Sall, and convened by the African Development Bank (AfDB), whose President, Akinwumi A. Adesina, was a former vice-president of AGRA, illustrating the links between key actors of both the UNFSS and the Dakar 2 Summit.

The slogan of the Summit, ‘Feed Africa: Food Sovereignty and Resilience’, represented the latest in a long series of co-optation of social movement language. In reality, there was a total lack of participation by small-scale food producers. The path to food sovereignty traced by the organisers was effectively the opposite of what is advocated for by people's organisations that have built the food sovereignty movement from the ground up.

According to [AfDB's recipe](#), “[t]he aim is to move from traditional subsistence agriculture to a modern and competitive African agro-industrial sector that can feed the entire African continent and even compete on international markets”.

In stark contrast to the vision and principles advocated by grassroots organisations, increasing private investments and industrial agricultural production take centre stage. Special Agricultural Processing Zones (which differ little from the widely known Special Economic Zones, other than focusing on the agricultural sector), are given particular attention. These successors to the earlier agropoles, highly critiqued by small-scale producers and civil society organisations, are implemented through public-private partnerships and pose a [series of problems](#), ranging from land grabbing to the reduction of biodiversity.

41 countries presented National 'Food and Agriculture Delivery Compacts' at the Summit. The connection between the Dakar 2 Summit compacts and the UNFSS national pathways remains uncertain, as does the extent to which their hurried preparation involved an inclusive approach. The [Declaration adopted by the Summit](#) refers to USD 20 billion pledged by donors for investment in the compacts, in addition to USD 10 billion by the African Development Bank. However, it is unclear whether these funding pledges were intended specifically for the compacts, or rather refer to financial support provided to projects already in place. Another important question remains unanswered: what would be the impact of financing the compacts on the [external public debt of African countries](#), whose interest payments in 2022 amounted to USD 44 billion?

Despite these ambiguities and open questions, the AU has welcomed the outcome of the Summit. Amidst a backdrop of policy and practice incoherence, the pan-African institution concurrently promotes agroecological and organic agriculture programmes while also pursuing contentious initiatives. These conflicting efforts include the promotion of biotechnology and chemical fertiliser programmes, the advancement of seed harmonisation instruments favouring industrial seed systems, and other projects that run counter to the principles of agroecology. There is a strong need to address these contradictions through robust mobilisation efforts by POs and CSOs within the continent.



5. Country case studies

- Five national case studies (Zambia, Morocco, Mali, Kenya and Republic of the Congo) have been developed to collect concrete data on the ground related to various dimensions relevant for the autonomous assessment of the UNFSS national pathways and Dakar 2 Summit compacts by POs and CSOs. A comparison of these countries, each from the five sub-regions of the continent and with their own specificities, has made it possible to identify common concerns. The following summaries of the five national reports all examine 1) the context of the country, 2) the demands and proposals that are being put forth by producer and civil society organisations, 3) the processes by which national pathways and compacts were developed, 4) a critical analysis of the process and content of the pathways and compacts, and 5) conclusions and recommendations.

5.1 ZAMBIA

Context

[Zambia faces severe challenges](#) concerning malnutrition and hunger, increasing biodiversity loss, soil erosion and degradation, structural rural poverty, and gender inequity. These issues are compounded by the climate crisis, with more extreme weather events like droughts, rising temperatures, and shifting, shorter rainy seasons. The agriculture sector is the critical nexus of this burgeoning crisis and offers the most worthwhile solutions.

Food and farming are the basis of social-cultural life in Zambia and, like many African countries, is something to be celebrated. Agriculture is also the backbone of the Zambian economy and has been prioritised for achieving inclusive economic growth. Food system-related activities support the livelihoods of [85%](#) of the population. Key agricultural activities include crop farming, livestock rearing, fisheries and wild food harvests. Maize remains a political and principal cash crop, as well as an important cultural staple crop across the country. 98% of smallholder households cultivate it and maize attracts at least 60% of public spending ring-fenced for agriculture.

Approximately 1.6 million smallholder family farmers, 60% of total Zambian households, depend on the agriculture sector and the rural economy. Most smallholders use traditional technologies and cultivation practices to produce staple foods such as maize, groundnuts, roots, tubers, and leafy vegetables, mostly for their own consumption and sale as markets allow. Many smallholders' agricultural activities are overlooked, especially women, since they do not transit through the commercial supply chains whose flows are recorded in official statistics.

Proposals and demands from CSOs/POs

Civil society groups in Zambia have consistently and effectively shown that supporting a transformation of the food system based on agroecology and food sovereignty is the most effective approach to addressing multiple development challenges. An enabling policy environment must prioritise diverse, locally-produced healthy food, fair pricing through supported, and supportive territorial markets, as well as legal mechanisms for the realisation of farmers' rights and broader human rights. This includes addressing current gender inequities and preventing elite land and resource capture.

National food sovereignty groups and social justice coalitions have been actively engaging with local ministries at multiple levels in Zambia over decades. These are registered and legitimate food and agriculture stakeholders, representative CSOs, farmers, consumers, faith and environmental groups with longstanding respected relationships with communities and local government offices. Through convened processes in 2021, and again 2023, recommendations were developed through participatory processes and endorsed and presented to government and so-called cooperating partners. National prioritisation of agroecology and its guiding principles is offered as the primary basis for just food systems transformation in Zambia, supported through the bottom-up development of a cohesive integrated food policy.

CSOs and POs further call on the government to:

- Prioritise public financing for agrarian development and public benefit infrastructure for smallholder farmers and peri-urban agriculture (e.g., irrigation for smallholder production systems, local processing and marketing hubs, landscape scale,

- integrated and community centred biodiversity, soil fertility and water management)
- Diversify public services including services for live-stock, soil and plant health, agroforestry, fisheries and aquaculture
- Redirect training and extension services to agro-ecology, from production through to marketing and local livelihood creation
- Recognise, support and actively provide for farmers' seed rights, and make provisions for supportive marketing measures of both seed and the diverse produce it provides (e.g., market support beyond Food Reserve Agency hybrid maize purchases)
- Support public interest research and development in line with farmers' rights, especially in locally adapted farmer seed systems)
- Immediately halt all considerations to join UPOV91 and harmonise the Plant Breeder's Act of 2007 accordingly
- Uphold the ban on live genetically modified organisms (LMOs) and halt the undemocratic ongoing revision and foreign interference in Zambia's biosafety policy framework
- Recognise and support gendered land rights

National pathway and compacts process

Following the call made by the United Nations Secretary-General, Zambia conducted national dialogues according to the roadmap developed for broad-based country consultations on the food systems. The Zambian government, in collaboration with various ministries, the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute, and the National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC), conducted dialogues with support from various UN agencies, NGOs and CSOs. These dialogues took place at the national, regional, and district levels, involving stakeholders from across the food system. The dialogues and Zambia's participation in the UNFSS is recorded in the governments' Feed Zambia-Zero Hunger report, published in June 2022. The official document submitted to the UNFSS was structured around five official UNFSS pathways.

In 2023, NFNC, with support from the FAO office in Zambia and international cooperating partners, held a one-day Pre-Summit National Stakeholders Dialogue, with the concept note's stated objectives to:

- Review Zambia's progress towards implementation of the pathways including coordination
- Launch the food systems position paper and corresponding implementation strategy
- Demonstrate alignment of the food systems posi-

tion paper to other policy documents and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Create awareness on the country's participation in the UNFSS
- Present various food systems initiatives

The process in Zambia ended with the production of a document called the National Pathways, drafted during a one-day Pre-Summit that did not provide time for different key actors, mainly POs and CSOs, to adequately contribute to the national position.

Critical analysis

The national CSO Review of UNFSS 2021 and the 2023 processes in Zambia note the following points:

- No representatives from recognised civil society and farmer associations were involved in, nor made aware of, the dialogues at national and sub-national levels in selected districts, which were reported to have been held in the lead-up to the Summit and in development of Zambia's roadmap
- The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) facilitated regional dialogues, which were open to the public to join, and characterised by academic presentations by regional development consultants, with limited provision for dialogue

Regarding the period following the UNFSS in 2021:

- The Zambia report outlining the national dialogue processes, Zambian situational analysis and identified national pathways was only published and made available to stakeholders in June 2022, in the report *National Dialogue on Transformation of Food System: Feed Zambia-Zero Hunger*
- Little to no public information is known or available regarding Zambia's action tracks
- The Zambia node of FANRPAN, which was included in pre-Summit engagements and mandated to provide national-level consultation to stakeholder groups, has not been made aware of any regional-level follow up by FANRPAN, nor of any national-level processes
- No members of key registered national agro-ecology CSO networks (ZAAB and PELUM), the National Smallholder Farmers Union, and allied local NGOs operating in the agriculture, nutrition and food systems sectors in Zambia, have been included in, nor been made aware of any follow-up processes to the 2021 Summit

Regarding the preparation for the UNFSS+2 Stocktaking Moment, held in Italy 24–26 July 2023:

- No recognised civil society or farmer associations were included in, or had heard of, the preparatory meeting, held on 10 July in Lusaka, which had the stated objective to discuss the country's progress towards food systems transformation and adequately prepare for the country's participation
- Officers of FAO Zambia and the NFNC have made subsequent efforts to include Zambia civil society representatives in information sharing and further engagement

The process in Zambia has been exclusive and opaque. This lack of information did not allow the food sovereignty movement to include their agenda in the process as key priorities for the country. Despite efforts made by some international institutions to involve more CSOs, the challenge of non-transparent procedures remains a critical hurdle.

The real context and underlying policy agenda

In 2021, Zambian civil society, human rights, and farmer groups, joined international expressions of concern over the undemocratic convening of the UNFSS and its sidelining of established mechanisms for rights holders' representation in UN processes. Most critically, Zambian POs and CSOs objected to the election of Agnes Kalibata, former President of AGRA, as Special Envoy for the Summit. AGRA is a highly contested agency in Zambia due to its well-known support for pushing pro-GMO markets in Africa, inappropriate harmonised seed regimes and other controversial programmes.

Civil society concerns were then obstructed by the exclusive 2021 dialogue processes, misrepresentation in regional dialogues facilitated by unmandated groups, and the lack of public information follow-up after the Summit. Despite this, CSOs continue to engage government agencies at all levels to support the fulfilment of Zambia's democratic policy processes and to work towards a viable future. Civil society organisations agreed that positive outcomes can be drawn from the national pathways, and committed to supporting the NFNC, with which many CSOs are positively engaged, as well as with the newly appointed National Food Systems Focal Point, to ensure positive outcomes are realised for the benefit of all.

However, this resolve has been hampered by the unmasking of an underlying policy agenda. In February 2023, Zambia presented a [Country Food and Agriculture Delivery Compact](#) at the Dakar 2 Summit.³ The compact outlined commitment to ongoing national efforts to diversify the Farm Input Subsidy



Programme and linked this to the long awaited second National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP-2).⁴ The Compact references this as the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme / NAIP-2. Zambians were surprised to learn that the NAIP-2 was, instead, [Agriculture Transformation Support Programme](#) (CATSP). This much broader transformation framework was presented by FAO and AGRA-supported consultancies. The proposed framework presented a “compendium of 90 policy statements” to transform Zambia's agriculture system.

Zambian civil society organisations have undertaken a review of the development and potential impacts of CATSP and submitted it to relevant authorities. CSOs have voiced how CATSP will facilitate the forfeit of Zambia's food sovereignty. It centres the role of the private sector through a flawed theory of change, positioning the private sector to deliver on public services with public benefit objectives and sidelining the role of the state and its responsibility and accountability mechanisms.

The proposed private sector-led agriculture sector will be enabled through implementation of a web of new policy instruments. Public financing will be redirected to subsidise export commodity value chains and facilitate corporate financialisation and digitalisation of material resources and Zambia's food systems at large. Importantly, CATSP will forfeit the hard-earned progress against GMOs, dismantling Zambia's rigorous biosafety framework, a long-fought policy issue in Zambia known for being driven by foreign interests and in favour of the introduction of agricultural biotechnology. The intellectual property regime will be revamped with a bias to corporate agribusiness through specific reference to joining UPOV91, undermining national efforts to transition to sustainable food systems, climate mitigation and adaptation through agroecological farming systems.

Conclusions and recommendations

It is becoming increasingly obvious that vested corporate interests have hijacked public policy spaces to impose their own agendas, aimed at benefiting the bottom line. As a result, democratic processes are being derailed, along with farmer-led solutions that can address the multi-faceted crisis of poverty, hunger, social injustice and environmental collapse. This is not a new development in Zambia, or globally. However, this trend has received new and alarming impetus and political position since the corporate-driven 2021 UNFSS and the insidious role of AGRA.

Despite the national pathways reporting and public relations spin, the participation of CSOs in the process has been very weak. The roadmap that emerged from the process clearly shows the minor role that CSOs will play in the design and implementation phases. In fact, their role is limited to information-sharing on local products consumption and contributions to extension services where interventions by other players are more difficult.

In Zambia, the imposition of CATSP is especially damaging, forfeiting potential opportunities to make meaningful progress through the pathways towards more sustainable food systems transitions.

Following the 2023 UNFSS+2 Stocktaking Event, Zambian national stakeholders including local rightsholders, farmers, consumers, faith and community-based groups convened the National Food Systems Insaka on 6-7 September 2023 to consider ongoing food systems positions and processes in Zambia, as well as review national commitments.⁵ They concluded that:

- CATSP is not only undemocratic, but also based on a flawed theory of change, directly undermining national food sovereignty, human rights and Zambia’s capacity to address the critical crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and rising hunger and malnutrition
- None of the actors present at the Insaka had been part of, nor invited, to national processes of the UNFSS in 2021 or 2023
- Multilateral agencies, particularly FAO, at both international and national levels, need to address concerns of legitimacy and ensure they fulfil their mandate and respond to the needs and demands of rightsholders, not corporations
- AGRA’s involvement in Zambian, and African, policy processes must be addressed and revoked
- Clear, bottom-up solutions have been presented by CSOs and POs, and the development of a national food systems policy for the people, by the people, is essential



5.2 MOROCCO

Context

The agricultural sector plays a crucial role in Morocco's economy, accounting for [13%](#) of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and employing nearly 31% of the workforce. The sector is characterised by a few large commercial farmers and many small-scale producers, and a high level of agricultural imports involving mainly large agribusinesses.

Morocco faces increasing dependency on grain and energy imports. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, agricultural production covers 100% of national needs for meat, fruit and vegetables, 78% of milk needs, and only 62% for cereals. Low income Moroccans experience high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. Although food self-sufficiency has been a core principle of Morocco's development strategy since gaining independence in the 1950s, the nation's rising reliance on subsidised food imports poses a growing threat to its socio-economic stability.

In the aftermath of independence, two fundamental pillars of the sectoral strategy emerged: modernisation and rationalisation. Moroccan authorities implemented agricultural policies based on the central choice of an import-substitution policy to ensure food security. These policies were promoted in economic and social development plans and were centred around the launch of irrigation programs and dam construction, the modernisation and intensification of agriculture through the adoption of techniques such as mechanisation and fertilisers, and the implementation of incentive measures such as subsidies and taxation adjustments. Additionally, a set of complementary economic and institutional actions were undertaken, such as reclaiming land from official colonisation, establishing technical oversight structures for the sector, and implementing an agricultural investment code.

However, from the 1980s onwards, Morocco saw a shift in the orientation of agricultural policy from an interventionist model geared towards food self-sufficiency to an increasingly neoliberal model that gave space to market forces. Open to international trade, the new model favoured land appropriation and investments in the sector, particularly to the benefit of large-scale producers and at the expense of ecosystems and small-scale producers.

Since 1985, the country has complied with the directives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The decline of state interventions and submission to market mechanisms ushered in new policy directions, including the abolishment of customs duties on exports and Morocco's

participation in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), now the World Trade Organization (WTO). Subsequent abolition of state subsidies for factors of production were accompanied by gradual price liberalisation.

Ultimately, Morocco's agricultural policies encourage exports rather than food self-sufficiency or food sovereignty. Moroccan agriculture is also hard hit by climate shocks and drought, and the situation is set to worsen in the years ahead, with the country's limited water resources further strained due to water-intensive industrial farming practices.

Proposals and demands from CSOs/POs

"Can we afford a model that is so destructive of natural resources in a country where their degradation is already so worrying?"

- Louis Malassis in 2016, quoted by Najib Akesbi in 2021

POs and CSOs are struggling to advance a food sovereignty agenda in Morocco. The current model embraced by political leaders promotes private sector participation in agriculture and food systems to the detriment of local communities.

Land rights, access and tenure security are a key priority for farmer and civil society organisations. Family farmers are being gradually dispossessed from their lands, with a new wave of land-grabbing by private companies. Companies, large landowners and individuals with political influence are consolidating power through land transfers at low prices, excluding medium-sized or small farmers and graduates of agricultural institutes, including engineers and technicians.

Other demands are related to [organising against exploitation in export-oriented megafarms](#), defence of farmers' seed systems, the promotion of public investments in family farming systems and the development of local processing structures that limit the control of agro-industries. Establishing local seed banks for the conservation and protection of peasant seed systems is an imperative, especially given the loss of genetic biodiversity and the gains in private-sector control of seed systems in Morocco.

The Green Morocco Plan and Generation Green

Morocco has developed neither a national pathway in the context of the UNFSS, nor a national compact for the Dakar 2 Summit. Instead, it has highlighted, on both occasions, agricultural development plans in which it is already engaged.

In 2008, the Green Morocco Plan (known in French as Plan Maroc Vert, PMV) was launched, with a sharp increase in public funding for the agricultural sector, approximately DH 63.4 billion (USD 6.3 billion). The plan is comprised of two pillars:

- » Pillar I: Aggregation of productivist policies with subsidies for the private sector and large-scale farmers
- » Pillar II: Solidarity for small and medium-sized farmers

The budgets allocated to the first and second pillars are 84% and 16%, respectively. This disparity demonstrates how public funding is facilitating the monopolisation of investment by private sector and large-scale farms.

In 2020, following the PMV, a new plan entitled Generation Green provided a roadmap for Morocco's agriculture until 2030. The aim is to:

- Double the agricultural sector's share of the country's GDP
- Almost double the value of agricultural exports from DH 34.7 billion in 2018 to DH 60 billion in 2030
- Create agricultural jobs by mobilising 1 million hectares of collective land
- Provide professional agricultural training

The Green Morocco Plan [has been criticised](#) for its misaligned strategic vision, technicist nature, productivist excesses, mode of governance and, above all, scant attention paid to the issue of the country's food security. Drafted in just five months by the international consultancy firm McKinsey, the plan was hastily and unilaterally prepared without any consultation or participation from ministry officials, independent experts, or civil society and trade unions. Concerningly, even government administrators, especially those serving outside the country, had no documents on the study, while the main beneficiaries of the program's public funding, private sector enterprises and large-scale farming outfits, had access to the plan.

Critical analysis

Morocco is faced with a strategy that has been developed [offshore](#). Based on false assumptions and class politics, the Green Morocco Plan fails on its claims to go beyond the dualistic vision of agriculture, with one "modern" sector and another "traditional". By building itself on two pillars, the first devoted to "high productivity and high added value" agriculture and the second to small-scale producers, it enshrines this dualism. The beneficiaries of Pillar 1 are clearly prioritised, while Pillar 2 remains marginalised. This is further evidenced by the projected allocation for each: per farmer benefitting, the difference can be as much as 1 to 9. Subsidies for commercial farmers reached up to 100% of that group, while family farmers received less than 40% of supposedly available funds.

Despite using the language of agroecology and food sovereignty, no effort is being made in this area. This was made clear, among others, by the non-participation of Morocco's Ministry of Agriculture in FAO's [2nd International Symposium on Agroecology](#) in 2018. CSOs and POs are putting in place activities to mobilise and encourage the practice of agroecology. For example, the *Syndicat National des Eaux et Forêts* (SNEF/FNSA/UMT), a key labour union organisation in the sector, organises practical training courses for producers and smallholder farmers.

The introduction of the Green Morocco Plan in 2008 has had various negative consequences, including the financial and economic crisis within global capitalism, the shift of investment away from the agricultural sector, the acquisition of land by transcontinental corporations for hydrocarbon extraction and production, the monopolisation of seeds, a substantial increase in food prices, and a rising prevalence of food insecurity, notably affecting access to staple items like bread.

Since its launch, Morocco has seen an increase in water-intensive export crops. After 12 years of the Green Morocco Plan and two years of Generation Green, Morocco's agricultural sector is now export-oriented, serving a group of powerful players.

The intensive industrialisation of agriculture has resulted in:

- Widespread exploitation of farm workers, both men and women, with no respect for labour laws, under the pretext of reducing production costs and boosting competitiveness
- Loss of livelihoods for a significant number of small farmers due to unfair and insurmountable competition
- Depletion of natural resources, particularly water, increased pollution and contamination by dangerous chemicals

Conclusions and recommendations

The Green Morocco Plan prioritises large-scale agriculture, undermining traditional peasant farming by allowing multinational corporations to monopolise local resources. The state's export-driven strategy lacks reference to a rights-based approach, opening the way for private investment and enriching large-scale farmers and export companies to the detriment of local communities.

Food sovereignty cannot be achieved so long as there is no self-sufficiency in cereals, oil and sugar. The Moroccan people's pursuit of self-determination in their food system requires popular agricultural reform to ensure access to land, water and productive resources by small-scale farmers. Policies should reflect the principle that the land belongs to those who steward it, not those who exploit it.

Civil society and trade unions have been excluded from participation in agricultural development plans and strategies. The agroecological transition is hindered by a lack of enabling policies, and strategies in favour of export-oriented, high-yield practices. Simultaneously, there is a noticeable absence of strategies aimed at preserving local seeds, which are gradually disappearing. Instead, subsidies encourage imports of monohybrid, water-intensive seeds that demand extensive use of chemical inputs. Indeed, through the privatisation of the seed sector, multinationals are beginning to play a very important role in seed production. The destruction of peasant seed systems continues to be of key concern.

The Green Morocco Plan is leading to the impoverishment of small farmers. Agricultural policies aimed at inclusive food sovereignty are essential and must be developed in consultation with civil society, trade unions, professional organisations and consumers. Stronger dialogue and collaborative platforms for civil society and trade unions are also necessary to ensure good governance of the sector. Local administrative departments are also needed to better engage in consultation around systems change and food sovereignty, from producer to consumer, and to help provide guidance and build capacity towards an agroecological transition. To this end, increased budgets to finance research and participation in food sovereignty and agroecology are necessary.



5.3 MALI

Context

Promoting food sovereignty and food security is a top priority for national political authorities in Mali. The country possesses significant assets and potential, including approximately 43.7 million hectares of land suitable for agriculture and livestock, with 5.2 million hectares (11.9%) cultivated annually. Additionally, Mali is intersected by two major rivers, the Niger River and the Senegal River. The nation's economy is mainly based on the primary sector, including agriculture, livestock and fishing, which employs nearly 80% of the working population, approximately 13 million people, largely within the informal sector. However, the number of farmers is declining primarily due to youth migration and rural exodus. This reality requires greater attention to ensure the heritage of Mali's family farming system.

Mali's GDP growth has slowed from 6% annually in the late 90s to 4.1% annually from 2008-2015. Agriculture is the largest sector of the Malian economy, contributing around 41% to national GDP. The agriculture value-add increased from 4.3% to 11.7% between 2008-2015, while Mali's industrial sector remains limited at just 4% of GDP. In fact, Mali has experienced the highest agriculture growth in West Africa since 2008, with an inflation around [1.4%](#).

Despite these gains, food insecurity in Mali remains high. 25% of Malian households, representing 4.5 million people, are food insecure, with more food insecure households in rural areas (27.7%) than in urban areas (14.6%).

The increasing influence of public-private partnerships in Malian agriculture is gradually reshaping the landscape of agricultural financing. More and more money is coming from private donors to support private "enterprises" rather than POs and CSOs. This shift imposes a model that further marginalises family farmers, who lack the means to effectively make their voices heard. Since 2017, the Malian state has devoted more than 15% (around CFA 360 billion, or EUR 550 million) of the national budget to agriculture. POs and CSOs have also voiced concerns about the misuse of funds, supporting mainly export products and the Green Revolution model by subsidising chemical inputs.

Proposals and demands from CSOs/POs

The demands of POs and CSOs in Mali have been articulated and coordinated by various actors who participate in the agroecological platform of the *Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes* (CNOP), a socio-professional coalition of farmers' federations in Mali. Their demands and proposals are structured around the following and constitute the basis for negotiations at different levels of decision-making in the medium and long-term:

- Support family farming and agroecological approaches, instead of supporting the Green Revolution model promoted by foreign instruments, and prioritise public investment accordingly
- Promote farmers' seeds systems in the national seed policy and the seed law ready for adoption at the time of writing of this report. This law was drafted during an inclusive process and involved the Minister of Agriculture with all the other key national players
- Fully implement the Agricultural Land Law and its related Agricultural Land Policy, drafted and adopted after a lengthy, inclusive and dynamic process
- Reorient public resources towards sustainable food systems, supporting food sovereignty and its principles, family farms and peasants' agroecological approaches as a baseline for all actions in the sector
- Support the creation and/or consolidation of existing food stocks with priority to supply through local production
- Ensure a better organisation of territorial (local, sub-regional and regional) cereal markets through, among others, cereal exchanges which link producers and consumers, and which are not speculative exchanges
- Set up funds for the processing and valorisation of local products, ensuring the promotion of these products through organised circuits from the local to international levels
- Set up participatory research programmes and integrate them into the national research system, ensuring that the sovereignty of research is asserted and valued
- Provide training and support to young farmers, fisherfolk and pastoralists generating wealth around peasant agroecology and ensuring the continuation of Mali's family farms

National pathway and compact process

In November 2020, Mali organised a national conference on food systems to prepare for UNFSS 2021. Under the theme “Capitalising on Mali’s experience of integrated human resource management in connection with strengthening food systems”, representatives of various government departments, civil society organisations, the private sector, academics, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and technical and financial partners came together for the launch of Mali’s decentralised preparation of a national road-map.

A national steering committee, facilitated by the focal point hosted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, was set up under the technical coordination of the FAO country office. Consultation events took place in different regions. The declaration made by the Minister of Agriculture during UNFSS came out of these consultations and was supposed to serve as the starting point for the sustainable transformation of the food system.

The national pathway process included a participatory approach, largely thanks to POs having already gained their seat at the table during previous processes related to the Agricultural Orientation Law (AOL), the Agricultural Land Policy and the Agricultural Land Law drafting processes, an annual meeting of farmers and the Malian president entitled “Malian Farmer Day”, and the Mali National Seed Policy drafting process.

Following the decentralised national workshops, there has been a decline in momentum of the national pathways process, largely due to funding shortages. Implementation measures have been sorely lacking. The UNFSS process has stagnated and is perceived by many stakeholders as “yet another initiative” that overlaps with existing national efforts and policies.

In contrast, CNOP-Mali has taken the lead in establishing a comprehensive national platform on agroecology. This platform actively addresses various initiatives aligned with the concerns and priorities of CSOs and POs, and tackles critical issues such as land, seeds, and access to organic inputs.

Compact process

There is neither a Malian national pathway linked to the UNFSS nor a national compact drafted after the Dakar 2 Forum. Different national actors under the leadership of CNOP and other NGOs have lobbied for the government to focus instead on existing frameworks, mainly the AOL and its implementation instruments and the Agricultural Development Policy.

The AOL was established in 1992 as a comprehensive agricultural policy framework. It has served as the basis for Mali’s agricultural development efforts, guiding many policies and laws including, among others: the Agricultural Development Policy, the Agricultural Land Policy, the Agricultural Land Law and the National Seed Policy currently in development. The AOL promotes partnerships and the creation of common markets within major sub-regional, regional and international economic groupings.

Based on eight major strategic orientations, the AOL aims to: i) ensure food and nutritional security for all Mali’s population and contribute to that of the sub-region; ii) ensure institutional development and capacity building for all actors; iii) preserve the environment and better manage natural resources; iv) develop investments in the agricultural sector; v) improve the competitiveness of agricultural and agro-industrial products on the domestic, sub-regional and international markets; (vi) develop an agricultural research and advisory system for sustainable and competitive agriculture; (vii) train all actors in the sector and provide them with the levels of knowledge and skills required to play their roles and accomplish their missions; (viii) mobilise financing and substantial and accessible resources for agricultural development.

Building upon these eight major strategic orientations, the National Policy for Food and Nutrition Security (PoINSAN, as per its acronym in French), was introduced to address specific food security and nutritional challenges and align with Mali’s broader development goals. PoINSAN aims to achieve sustainable food security, enhance the well-being of vulnerable groups and support the achievement of the country’s SDGs by 2030. This involves increasing sustainable food availability, bolstering resilience to shocks and crises, improving food access, enhancing nutritional status, and strengthening governance in food security.

For the first generation of compacts related to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mali met targets set by the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) from 2004-2010. However, public agricultural spending dropped to 5% in 2015, down from 8.7% from 2008-2014. The government has stated a desire to expand funding, with almost 16% of the budget allocated to agriculture. The Government of Mali’s National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) proposes a 20% of expenditure in agriculture, and several major donors support the government’s commitment to the sector.

Critical analysis

From CNOP's view, the new instruments promoted by the UNFSS and the Dakar 2 Forum have no added value to the policy landscape in Mali. As mentioned during the national agroecological platform meeting and consultation on the autonomous assessment of the national pathway, "the problem is not a new instrument, but the weak implementation of the existing ones".

According to the various agricultural stakeholders convened for this study, Mali has been able to resist the interference of some external players pushing for parallel initiatives in the country after the UNFSS and the Dakar 2 Forum. The focal point for the UNFSS, hosted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, has been trying to organise a working group on the process, however, members of the national agroecology platform have declined the invitation in favour of supporting existing structures.

POs and CSOs are satisfied with the existing normative framework, in whose design they had strong participation. Efforts made, most notably by AGRA, to introduce Green Revolution technology into Mali have been blocked by strong PO/CSO action. The persisting problems lie with implementation due to the lack of transparency of government funding and the tendency for outside funders supporting their own priorities rather than funding the implementation of democratically determined public policies.

Despite many attempts to destabilise farmers' organisations and agricultural civil society, UNFSS and its advocates have had little influence on changes in the trajectory of Malian agriculture. According to the President of CNOP, "AGRA is only one of the very visible approaches to an aggressive industrial push and we need to decide where to put our energies and prepare for the strategies that will be put forward by AGRA and the like to divide us. They have all the financial means to divide us. We have to hold on or we will be in trouble for generations".

Conclusions and recommendations

The proclaimed benefits of public-private partnerships, such as promoting growth, employment, and addressing food insecurity, are often used to justify the false narrative of Green Revolution solutions put forward by AGRA and other powerful players in the food domain. However, due to the lack of regulation and implementation of existing policies and initiatives, the so-called advantages are far from reaching local communities and small-scale producers. Witnessed across various sectors, including infrastructure, extractive industries, and agriculture, these investments lead to the destruction of the rural social fabric—mostly through land grabbing.

Even more concerning, some agricultural investments directly undermine food security by promoting cash crop monocultures, with adverse social and environmental consequences. Faced with projects initiated by multinational corporations, affected populations have no effective recourse.

Despite political commitments to allocate 15% of the national budget to food and agriculture (more than the 10% dictated by the Maputo and Malabo Declarations) and to apply a food sovereignty model based on strong family farms (smallholders, fisherfolk, pastoralists groups, etc.), there is still a long way to go. Initiatives like the national pathways and compacts, largely based on private sector investments, continue to destabilize the policy environment. Above all, POs and CSOs, united on a common front behind CNOP-Mali in the National Agroecological Platform, are struggling to resist, confronting ongoing hurdles in their fight for people-centred food systems supported primarily by public funding.

A structural transformation of the Malian agriculture sector and food system is required to build an economic model that prioritizes public resources over foreign investments. The role of the State should be redesigned in partnership with food sovereignty and agroecological movements to reshape its economic model and combat its corporate-led approach.

The recommendations and demands put forward by POs and CSOs, stated above, provide a clear roadmap to true food systems transformation in Mali, highlighting the key role of family farms and small-scale producers.



5.4 KENYA

Context

Kenya's economy is agriculturally driven, with the agriculture sector directly accounting for 33% of the country's gross domestic product. More than 40% of the total population is employed within agriculture, and over 80% of Kenya's population rely on it for their livelihoods. Importantly, the sector is a crucial source of livelihoods for the majority of poor households.

Rural poverty in Kenya remains prevalent and food insecurity affects over half of the population. Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a 4% increase in the number of severely undernourished Kenyans. The country faces growing challenges due to climate crisis and other factors, including drought, widespread flooding, and a devastating desert locust invasion in recent years, posing significant threats to food security for millions. Pastoralists and Indigenous Peoples have been particularly affected.

Kenya remains one of Africa's leading recipients and implementers of agricultural research for development in sub-Saharan Africa, ranking third in spending on agricultural research. The majority of [funding is directed toward projects favouring industrial agriculture](#), often supported by philanthropic foundations. Kenya is also host to AGRA's headquarters. A Green Revolution narrative still dominates in Kenya among many donors, private sector players and national policy actors.

Since 2022, allocation to agriculture has been decreasing in the national budget, despite the sector's position as the backbone of the country's economy. In the financial year 2022/23, agriculture was allocated 49.9 billion Kenyan Shillings (equivalent to roughly 317 million euros at the time of writing) of the total 2.11 trillion national budget, falling far short of Kenya's international Maputo Declaration commitment of 10%.

Despite the Green Revolution approach and the budget support, there has been no increase in incomes for farmers or even a reduction in hunger. Each political regime has devised different programmes and policies like the Big 4 Agenda, which aimed to achieve 100% food and nutrition security but was never realised.

The Kenyan context is characterised by a proliferation of policies and initiatives, mainly led by outside actors, with different incoherencies and contradictions. The primary source of frustration is related to the weak achievement of goals and the disconnect between a significant portion of the initiatives and the priorities of peasant movements. A Kenyan farmer leader summarised the complex situation well: "The key players we are, are lost in the forest of policies and programmes supported by outside players".

The key challenge within Kenya's current food system is the lack of coherence among the numerous national-level policies. It is imperative to harmonise these agricultural policies to establish clear and straightforward strategies for agricultural development.



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Proposals and demands from CSOs/POs

While food systems dialogue processes throughout Kenya have reinforced the actions needed to reach the country's Vision 2030 goal of 100% food and nutrition security, CSOs have urged for:

- Increase in the number of young people receiving school-based agricultural education
- Increase in the uptake of digital agricultural solutions in making it more relevant for family farm systems and in line with the Kenyan territorialized food systems
- Promote culturally-appropriate foods and improve diversity of diets including fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, and fish, as well as grains, coupled with consumer education on dietary diversity to improve nutrition and inform sustainable eating habits
- Promote diversity in farmer-managed seed systems and diversify with nutrient-dense crops
- Recognize and promote farmers' seed systems and reject genetically modified seeds
- Heighten climate action to further build resilience
- Support irrigation facilities, also at the sub-county level, to address increasing dry conditions
- Greater government support for food producers by investing in roads and other critical infrastructure to reduce post-harvest losses, including investments in preservation, processing, and packaging structures to reduce food waste and address food insecurity challenges when production is low
- Protect land rights for farmers, fisherfolk and pastoralists groups
- Protection of domestic food markets against importation
- Investment in farmer-led research and production of biopesticides and biofertilizers to support a transition to agroecology
- Promotion of agroecological transition and its implementation instruments deeply rooted in food sovereignty
- Inclusion and participation of youth, women, and people with disabilities in the realisation of an equitable food system, with ownership rights and access to sources of production including land, capital, training, and appropriate research and digital tools

These points constitute critical components of the POs/CSOs political agenda in Kenya. Most organisations, even in a scattered way, are fighting against the same problems and defending others in line with their vision for the country's food systems transformation.

National pathway process

To date, there is no finalised document related to a national pathway for Kenya. The process is ongoing and there is little information available to CSOs concerning the status of its development.

According to [official documents](#) related to the UNFSS, "the national pathways process initiatives generally work by fostering collaborations among diverse stakeholders (government, civil society, private sector) to develop strategies and action plans for sustainable and resilient food systems. This includes identifying priorities, setting goals, implementing specific projects, and monitoring progress towards agreed-upon targets". From the same sources, officially in Kenya, the national pathways and compact processes are initiatives aimed at "transforming the food system and promoting sustainable and inclusive agriculture". These initiatives focus on various aspects, such as policy development, stakeholder engagement and implementation strategies.

The development of national pathways in Kenya has involved a series of consultations and engagements with stakeholders from across the country. These stakeholders include government officials, selected farmers and civil society organisations, academia, private sector representatives, and other actors. CSOs report some involvement in face-to-face meetings and webinars as part of the process. However, many agroecology and food sovereignty movements have not been included.

Following the UNFSS dialogues in 2021, Kenya adopted four pathways to sustainable food systems: (1) youth involvement in food systems transformation, (2) harnessing the power of digital innovation, (3) women empowerment and (4) nourishing all Kenyan people with diverse diets.

Despite the weak participation of social movements and many active members of CSIPM in Kenya, some key proposals related to these movements' agenda have been proposed for inclusion in the final document. Owing to the lack of transparency in the follow-up process, there is no clear information on whether these propositions have been taken into account.

Compact process

Kenya had a compact document that was designed prior to the Dakar 2 Summit. The Kenya Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) was a result of the Maputo Declaration in 2003. The Government of Kenya, in collaboration with development partners, developed the CAADP as a strategy document to implement a common agricultural development agenda as described by the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy.

The process, like many others, has been open to very few CSOs, despite their calls to be fully involved. Participation has been weak and very few of the concerns expressed by grassroots organisations have been included. Nonetheless, the existing document has led to little progress, despite various commitments from donors. This compact relies on donors' commitments for its implementation, including organisations like AGRA and other privately-led foundations with a vested interest in the program. As a result, the Dakar 2 Forum did not have an impact on the status of the CAADP process.



Critical Analysis

In both of these policy processes in Kenya, the participation from various POs, CSOs and food sovereignty movements has been very weak. This is due to the lack of an inclusive approach to the designing of the process and the framing of the content upstream and downstream. The lack of transparency in the process has provided very little information to allow for a better assessment of the process and its content.

A position paper was prepared by CSOs and the Kenyan government in the run up to the UNFSS. It identified actions to build on the country's commitments to transforming food systems. These included:

- The Government's Big Four Agenda making food and nutrition security for all Kenyans as a national priority through new and innovative initiatives to reduce cost of food, enhance large scale production and drive-up smallholder productivity
- Vision 2030 sets the agenda for inclusive growth and people-driven sustainable development, particularly under the economic and macro pillar, which prioritises agriculture
- The Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy presents the government's commitment to reforming the sector by increasing output and productivity, boosting incomes in

agribusiness, and ensuring household resilience and food security

The national pathways and CAADP compact seem to be running parallel to each other. Yet each has been handled by different mechanisms within the Ministry of Agriculture with little collaboration. This adds to the policy incoherence and adds to the risk of negative impacts on the promotion of food sovereignty in Kenya.

The CAADP process is heavily funded by AGRA and shuns critical CSOs. This raises significant concerns over the influence of AGRA on the process. This cause for concern is further evidenced by AGRA's involvement in seed policy reform. Following intense criticism and public pressure, the Ministry of Agriculture has begun a review of the seed laws. Alarming, AGRA is funding the process and CSOs have not been involved in the review. The current seed laws review is a smokescreen to control farmer-managed seed systems and to advance AGRA's Green Revolution model, despite its failure to improve food security outcomes. This represents another in a long line of AGRA's false promises.

Funding from AGRA carries implications that extend beyond program priorities and significantly impact power dynamics in the food domain. An increasingly greater emphasis is placed on the private sector and the Green Revolution model, characterised by extensive chemical fertiliser imports and the use of industrial seeds (including hybrids and GMOs). CSOs face an uphill battle to challenge and correct the direction of food systems in Kenya.

Some of the key CSOs and initiatives contributing to this fight include BIBA Kenya, the Inter-Sectoral Forum on Agrobiodiversity and Agroecology and others. Calling on political leaders to incorporate a clear food agenda into their manifestos, they drafted [The Food Manifesto - Putting Food on the Table](#). The document is intended to inform political parties with insights collected from various food system actors and guide solutions towards achieving the right to adequate food for all.

CSOs and POs like the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa have also made appeals to AGRA donors, urging them to cut funding for AGRA in favour of supporting and funding agroecology. In response, AGRA has made some superficial changes, such as dropping the "Green Revolution" title while maintaining its name.

The two processes illustrate the weak and insufficient inclusion of POs and CSOs in shaping the approach, vision and content of the national pathway and compact. More space has been given to the private sector, increasing its power in Kenya's food system.

Conclusions and recommendations

The prevailing narrative of food systems transformation in Kenya is based on the Green Revolution model. Areas of interventions continue to neglect agroecological approaches and tools, lending little support to the food sovereignty vision put forward by peasant organisations and civil society.

CSOs and POs continue to call for a focus on a transition to agroecology, citing the failure of industrial agricultural model to nourish Kenyans and its role in the loss of livelihoods for small-scale producers.

At present, Kenya's food and agriculture sector is burdened with a plethora of policies and programs. The solution lies not in adding more layers and further complexities but in seeking ways to harmonise existing instruments and effectively mobilise public resources to implement action plans.

Several key points emerge from the Kenyan case study. Despite all the promises and billions of investment dollars poured into supporting the Green Revolution model, little progress has been made. There is a growing pro-business policy shift taking place within the Kenyan government, mirroring trends in other African nations. Within the African Union, there are concerning shifts in legislation aimed at promoting fertilizer subsidy programs, which predominantly benefit multinational corporations and elevate them as primary beneficiaries in the agricultural sector.

Despite attempts by powerful players to prevent a balancing of the scales, CSOs and POs via food, agroecological and food sovereignty movements continue to fight for structural changes centred on agroecological approaches and rooted in a vision of food sovereignty. While there is a long way to go, POs and CSOs mobilisation remains instrumental in creating conditions for an equitable and sustainable food systems in Kenya.

The following recommendations for decision-makers have been compiled:

- In line with the Kenyan constitutional requirement for public participation in processes of policies and laws development, redesign the participation scope to the pathways process and the implementation of the compact to involve more POs/CSOs groups, placing their agenda as key priorities for sustainable and localised food systems
- Invest more public resources in agriculture and food systems around the key priorities presented by POs/CSOs and Kenyan consumers and their organisations
- Continue to focus on policies to support a transition from the input-intensive Green Revolution model to agroecology, with multi-level policy development and policy coherence
- Support territorial markets rather than agribusiness-led value chains, to advance food sovereignty



and women's economic inclusion, and strengthen rural economies by retaining the value-added in the territories.

5.5 REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO*

Context

The Republic of the Congo (RoC) is a resource-rich, lower-middle-income, food imports-dependent country. RoC produces only 30% of its national food needs, with just 2% of its arable land cultivated. The country has experienced a prolonged recession since 2015, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased pressure on vulnerable families and worsened food insecurity, particularly in urban areas. The socio-economic impact of the global pandemic was confounded by the war in Ukraine, which led to a surge in food prices and additional strain on vulnerable households.

The latest national food and nutrition security assessment [found that](#) 33.3% of the population is food insecure, 29.3% moderately and 4% severely. It revealed a significant deterioration between 2014 and 2021: the number of people with an acceptable food consumption score dropped from 90.7% to 60.1%. Among children under five, global acute malnutrition is estimated at 5.2%, and chronic malnutrition at 19.6%.

Insufficient agricultural production stems in part from the RoC's high rate of urbanization, at around 70%. The new National Development Plan (NDP) for 2022-2026 identifies the "development of agriculture in a wider spectrum" as the first strategic lever in the economic diversification process. This reflects government's renewed commitment to sustainably increase agricultural productivity and the supply of agricultural products from both smallholders and agro-industries.

Proposals and demands from CSOs/POs

Demands from POs/CSOs in the Republic of the Congo revolve around several key issues related to land access and security, protecting and advocating for farmer seeds system, pesticides and their impacts on soil quality and concerns over public-private partnerships in food systems.

Land pressure is much more acute in urban and peri-urban areas, forcing farmers to go further into landlocked areas where agricultural tracks and security of production remain a concern. Urban sprawl poses a threat of expropriating peri-urban agricultural land, in addition to policies facilitating a new wave of land grabbing by private companies as part of public-private partnerships.

Concerning seeds, a new seed policy is in the early stage of implementation. Its implementation is becoming a problem due to pressure from different companies. Support programs for the agricultural sector are currently being implemented, with seed

production at the centre of their action plans. Currently, farmers are experiencing difficulties in accessing good quality, locally produced seeds. Meanwhile, imported seeds are not only very expensive and difficult for small farmers to access, they are also structurally damaging to the national seed system.

The RoC depends on importation for more than 60% of food products consumed in the country. With the exception of cassava, bananas and other fruits and vegetables, the nation has massive imports of frozen cereals, oilseeds and protein crops, constituting serious threats to Congo's efforts towards food sovereignty. RoC's dependence on imports has been further aggravated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Alongside the still timid promotion of agroecology, the use of pesticides is poorly controlled, both by producers and the government agencies. Congolese POs and CSOs are fighting against pesticides and corporate control over its promotion in the country.

A crucial element of the PO/CSO agenda in Congo is financial support to POs and their members. Different organisations in the country are struggling to promote farmers' access to public resources for production, transport, processing and marketing.

National pathway process

The Government of Republic of the Congo has produced a national roadmap for the sustainable transformation of food systems in alignment with the UN's sustainable development agenda. This national roadmap is the result of an inclusive process, led by a national coordination committee for consultation on food systems, with the support of FAO. A Congolese delegation, composed of government officials, the private sector, and CSOs, participated in the UNFSS in 2021. However, the debate around food systems has slowed, largely due to a lack of resources at the national level.

Public policies for transformation towards sustainable, equitable and resilient food systems in the climate crisis context are based on the following short and medium-term actions:

- Industrialise the agricultural sector to reduce post-harvest losses and act as a decisive lever for the development of national production, value chains and job creation in young people
- Set up a system for supplying, distributing, and preserving foodstuffs and products, in particular from rural production basins to urban consumption centres, with well-maintained and durable rural roads and tracks

- Allocate a substantial share of the national budget to agriculture and food and nutritional security, and regulate the financing of agricultural development with the State's own funds, while encouraging young people to take up jobs in the various links of the food system and guiding foreign agricultural investors
- Set up a permanent capacity-building system for professional players in the food processing, distribution, and preservation sectors, with sustainable rural trails
- Strengthen the legislative and regulatory framework relating to food systems
- Systematise school feeding and social protection for vulnerable groups
- Strengthen institutional capacity to collect, control and process data and information on food systems

Several official initiatives and social movements have been engaged since the launch of the process. These activities have included sensitising the government through local coordination with the United Nations system, appointing a national dialogue coordinator, forming a technical group, developing a methodological approach and identifying key stakeholders. Additionally, they have involved raising awareness among various stakeholders, organising workshops for consultations with disadvantaged groups, conducting an independent dialogue on food systems with the engagement of producers' organisations, the media, and NGOs, and actively participating in international summits. Furthermore, a focal point has been designated for the process, headed by the Director General of Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and the organisation of independent monitoring of the implementation of the national roadmap.

While Congo's national pathway was approved by all stakeholders, to date the process has laid dormant. The monitoring of its implementation, while set out in the roadmap, has not been effective. A lack of ownership of the process by the new government team, the demobilisation of some expert delegates and focal points from key institutions due to changes in ministerial departments, the non-institutionalisation of the process and a lack of financial resources to implement associated actions are key factors in the lack of movement in the process.

Compact process

Since February 2023, the RoC has begun implementing a new Compact for Agriculture and Food. This process has been guided by specific projects and plans, notably in the form of direct support (financial,

non-financial and in the form of equipment providing) for small producers and small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and indirect support (improving the business environment, the institutional framework, opening up production basins, developing basic infrastructure and agropoles, etc.), with particular emphasis on the promotion and development of agroforestry operations.

Critical analysis

The delay in institutionalising these two processes has prevented the mobilisation of external resources at the desired scale. However, within the framework of Congo's 2022-2026 National Development Program (NDP), the actions outlined in the national pathway and compact have been incorporated into the budget.

The national pathway process facilitated inclusive consultations that led to the drafting of a national roadmap. Various food systems actors were involved, including small producers and processors, transporters and traders, MSMEs and the private sector, and NGOs.

Since the validation of the national roadmap, a number of actions have been taken to institutionalise it. However, these actions urgently need to be strengthened and accelerated. Many of the actions included in the national roadmap and the compact are being taken into account as part of the implementation of 343 projects and six NDP strategic programs. This highlights the links between the national pathway and compact processes and Congo's overall programming framework. However, the implementation of these projects requires feasibility studies (technical, economic, financial and environmental), which are currently underway.

Some progress towards the transformation of RoC's national food system has been made, albeit insufficient, as a result of direct support from the state and through the actions of civil society:

- Support for the promotion and strengthening of value chains and the modernisation of the agro-industry through assistance with structuring and equipping players in the various links, in the form of productive agro-industrial and commercial alliance dynamics, territorialised thematic value chains, the development of agropoles under the concept of protected agricultural zones
- Support for improving the determinants/factors of competitiveness for food systems actors
- Support for youth entrepreneurship through skills training and financial support for the launch or consolidation of economic initiatives in the food system

- The opening up and rehabilitation/maintenance of rural roads with the support of the State and specific projects, particularly in basins with high production potential
- The reform of the legislative framework, supported by a variety of initiatives currently underway (notably in the field of land tenure, seed policy, etc.)
- The implementation of several measures as part of the food crisis reliance plan, including the promulgation and implementation of a circular note and customs exemptions on imports of agricultural inputs and basic foodstuffs
- The reinforcement of the food price and quality control system, with the support of the ministry in charge of trade
- CSO-led advocacy campaigns, notably concerning the reduction and control of the traceability of meat product imports, the involvement of small-scale producers in the implementation of seed policy as agri-multipliers, and the organisation of national campaigns for the promotion and consumption of local products

Despite these areas of progress, it is crucial to note that both civil society and public sector players have limited ownership of the process. Additionally, investment funding in the agricultural sector falls significantly below the 10% of the total budget recommended by the African Union (NEPAD/CAADP 2003), accounting for less than 5% of the budget, with an annual target of 6% of agricultural GDP. The implementation rate for this funding remains consistently low, typically below 50% of all public expenditure.

Conclusions and recommendations

The information gathered for this study indicates that there has been visible progress in the national pathway and compact processes. However, there is an urgent need for greater and sustained participation from relevant government authorities.

Given the major role played by family farms in food systems transformation, it is essential to consistently prioritise the factors influencing their competitiveness. To this end, the following recommendations have been formulated.

To the state actors of Congo:

- Ensure a gradual increase in the budget for the agricultural sector up to 8%, with an implementation rate of at least 60% by 2025
- Strengthen ownership of the process by the country team
- Develop and operationalise a legislative and land tenure framework (access and investment security) adapted to sustainable and competitive family farming and agribusiness
- Improve the current food safety control system, by overhauling the legislative, institutional and operational framework
- Accelerate the operationalisation of the seed and plant policy with the involvement of smallholders as agri-multipliers, and development of protected agricultural zones specialised in seed production at the level according to the vocation of each terroir

The participation of civil society in the national pathway process has been a key factor in its success so far. The recommendations proposed and the involvement of some CSOs as key players in the implementation of the RoC's have been considered.

Successful implementation of the country's roadmap depends on its institutionalisation and translation into a program, without which resource mobilisation and monitoring mechanisms will not live up to expectations. The alignment of the national pathway and the compact within the 2022-2027 national development program reflects the coherence of these two processes with the overall programmatic framework. However, the implementation of projects linked to these two processes requires a technical coordination and monitoring mechanism to channel and enhance synergies between different projects, as well as to put in place sustainable mechanisms for the appropriation and perpetuation of the achievements of these different projects.



6. Key findings

- The five case studies contribute evidence from the ground regarding the process and content of the national pathways and the compacts, as viewed by the people who produce and consume most of the continent's food. They point to key issues that need to be urgently addressed in order to take the right route to African food sovereignty.



According to many PO and CSO leaders, as well as some officials from different ministries interviewed in the course of the studies, the national pathways and compacts have added additional layers to the already confusing situation of multiple national policies and programmes. In fact, all the case study countries already have different instruments in place to guide their food processes, whose implementation should be supported. Instead, a range of new initiatives is still arriving, making it difficult to build coherence.

The fact that most of the current initiatives are promoted by external actors is an additional source of concern for many CSOs and POs. External actors—the UNFSS Coordination Hub, FAO, AGRA, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and others—are playing an undue role in guiding and shaping policy processes in many countries, and to make it worse, the nature of their involvement in decision-making is not always clear. Lack of information and transparency about this involvement, and about the processes and mechanisms by which POs and CSOs can participate in decision-making processes, can create confusion and instability. In some cases, for example in Zambia and Morocco, it appears that policy decision-making is being outsourced to external experts and consultants. Those guiding the process are most often under pressure to produce rapid results, a factor that always works against the patient involvement of the most marginalised sectors of the population that was exhorted in the rhetoric of the UNFSS organisers when they launched the national pathways.

The confusing spaces and institutional structures created in the context of each meeting or event

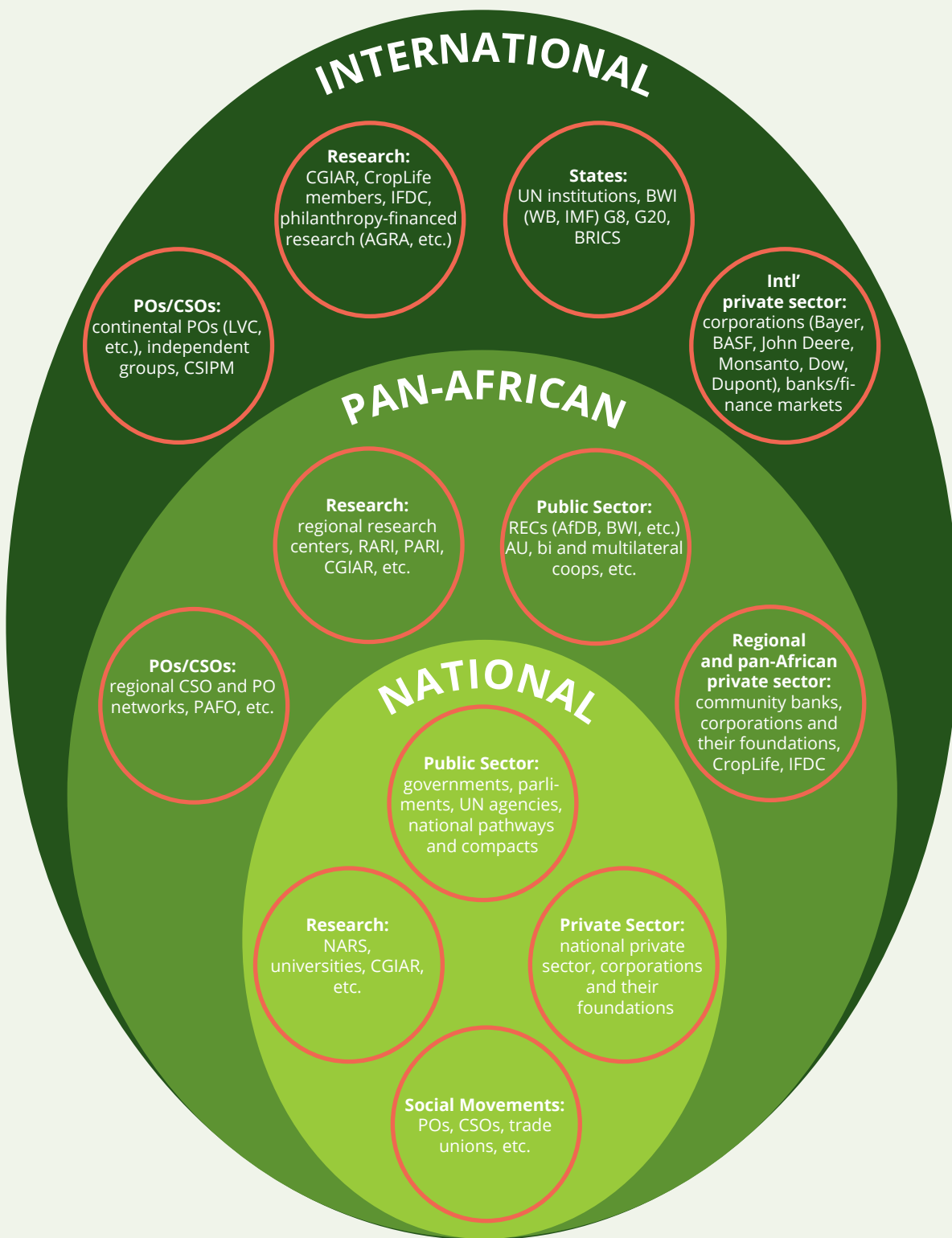
organised by institutions and funded by private and public donors (including philanthropic foundations) are inhibiting the growing process of autonomous networks of POs, CSOs and Indigenous groups. Yet, the evidence from the case studies shows that strong people's organisations with a practice of interaction with government, as in the cases of Mali and the Republic of the Congo, are a key factor in defending national food sovereignty from external intrusion. In other countries, processes initiated in the context of the national pathways and compacts tend to run counter to the interests and demands of CSOs and POs by privileging recipes of "modernisation" which intensify the exploitation of marginalised groups and deny their rights over their resources. These underlying trends towards exploitation and dispossession are key drivers of the different challenges faced by people's organisations all over Africa. It is essential to build popular communication that can challenge the narrative of "modern" corporate-led industrial agriculture, recall that it is small-scale family farmers who feed Africa, and highlight people's agroecology as the way forward.

While CSOs and POs are increasingly aware of these threats and the ways in which private corporations shape policymaking from behind the scenes in order to guarantee their access to African markets, there is still a great deal to be done to ensure that states fulfil their role of exercising control over private interests and defending the right to food of their peoples. Connections of African political and financial elites with corporate agendas need to be unveiled and dismantled. Militarisation of governmental responses to food issues, with police firing on crowds of the hungry, is an intolerable show of force that should, instead, be directed against the causes of hunger. A deep change is needed at the level of policymaking to ensure that policies are shaped by people and their governments, rather than corporations and their allies.

The enormous complexity and number of actors involved in policymaking today complicates this task. Looking at the national pathways' documents of different countries in Africa, the following players act at different levels (Box 3):

BOX 3

African food systems: between hammers and anvils



Other key points related to the findings

In terms of process:

- Three scenarios of PO/CSO participation in formulating the national pathways have been identified: (1) POs and CSOs have been recognised as key players by the governments and their allies; they have been invited to participate and have contributed fully to the drafting of the roadmap and/or the National Pathway, but they have been excluded afterwards (Kenya); (2) POs and CSOs consulted in the course of this research were completely ignored during the process, while other CSOs which lack a legitimate mandate to represent the views of people's organisations working on food systems have been invited instead (Morocco, Zambia); (3) POs and CSOs were invited and participated in the process, but their concerns were ignored in the final document and in the follow-up (RoC and Mali for the roadmap).
- In all cases studied except for Mali and RoC, POs and CSOs advocating a rights-based approach were completely omitted from the section of the national pathway action plan regarding monitoring and evaluation systems, with governments foreseeing no role for them in implementation of the pathway.
- In all countries studied except for Morocco and to some extent Kenya, the pathway process foresees increased financing for agriculture, but this funding is dependent on external support. Autonomous decision-making is reduced as a result, and most processes are blocked at the present time due to lack of donor funding.

In terms of content:

- Although the majority of the governments make reference to agroecology and sometimes food sovereignty, they have drafted documents which are rooted in a technology-oriented 'Green Revolution' model of production with no reference to a rights-based approach (e.g., Morocco, Kenya) and with the corporate private sector presented as a key actor in food system transformation. In most cases (Zambia, Morocco, RoC, Kenya), the content of the national pathways/programmes are disconnected from the social movements' agenda regarding both the priority actions they feature and the attribution of responsibilities they foresee, excluding POs and CSOs from the key activities, including policy reforms.
- Gender equity and youth's access to opportunities is still problematic in all the countries reviewed, even though they are taken into account in the documents. The implementation mechanisms are not clear.



7. Conclusions

- This analysis of the current situation reveals there is much to be done to ensure inclusive processes for food system transformation, and to realise the vision of CSOs and POs for food sovereignty and a just and sustainable food system.

According to many PO and CSO leaders, African peasant organisations and civil society organisations have their own proposals for food system transformation. Within their diverse national contexts, they have made concrete proposals for measures that can build robust and flourishing food systems, focused around providing healthy food for all, supporting rural livelihoods and building social justice and peace.

Supporting farmers' seed systems and farmer-led agroecology, guaranteeing access to land, defending the full inclusion of women and youth in food systems, strengthening territorial markets and making sure that small-scale farmers can access them, strengthening social protections like crop insurance or minimum support prices, and deepening participatory and democratic policy-making processes, among others, are vital building blocks of a better food system.

The UNFSS national pathways and the compact processes have been rushed and often exclusionary. In consequence, the vital proposals of POs and CSOs are reflected weakly, if at all, in the resulting plans of their governments. In many cases, international and donor support is being sought for initiatives which often reinforce problematic "Green Revolution" models of agricultural development.

While the UNFSS and the Dakar 2 Summit adopted some rhetoric around "food sovereignty", "agroecology" and "transformational change", the national-level processes following up on these problematic international Summits have not delivered on promises of transformational change.

Building genuinely just and sustainable food systems requires that fundamental economic assumptions be questioned, human rights be protected, and power be rebalanced. Across the African continent, millions of peasants, family farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, Indigenous communities, and agricultural labourers are actively engaged in feeding the majority of the population and aspiring to biodiverse, climate-resilient and community-managed food systems. What is required now is to support and listen to these communities. Putting transformation, food sovereignty and agroecology into practice will mean confronting corporate power and building the strength of people's movements.

POs and CSOs commit to publicising the evidence contained in this report. They will use it in their advocacy at all levels, in their popular education efforts to deepen local communities' understanding and mastery of the challenges they face, and to help build a united force for people's food sovereignty.



8. Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
AGRA	Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa
AU	African Union
AUDA-NEPAD	AU Development Agency
BWI	Bretton Woods Institutions
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CFS	United Nations Committee on World Food Security
CSIPM	Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism
CSO	Civil society organisation
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GMO	Genetically modified organisms
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science & Technology
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NARS	National agricultural research systems
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PAFO	PanAfrican Farmers Organization
PARI	Program of Accompanying Research for Agricultural Innovation
PO	Peasant organisation
RARI	Rajasthan Agricultural Research Institute
REC	Regional Economic Community
RoC	Republic of the Congo
SAPZ	Special Agricultural Processing Zones
SAP	Structural adjustment programmes
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SENA	Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Advisory
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNDF	UN Decade on Family Farming
UNDROP	UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants
UNFSS	United Nations Food Systems Summit
UNFSS+2	United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Event
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

9. Endnotes

1. The target of the 2003 Maputo Declaration, confirmed by the Malabo Declaration ten years later, was for each African country to allocate a minimum of 10% of the national budget to agriculture and food system.
2. For more on the topic of investments for small-scale producers, see: CSIPM's Connecting Smallholders to Markets, TNI's Reclaiming Agricultural Investment, and FAO's State of Food and Agriculture 2012.
3. Zambia's Dakar 2 compact is vague about who is funding this process, noting only that USD 5 billion has been made available over the next five years from the National Treasury, co-operating partners and the private sector.
4. NAIP-1 ran from 2014-2018, with comprehensive government and civil society review and recommendations for a better serving and context responsive NAIP-2.
5. Insaka is a Bemba word for "place to gather" or "a place to come together". In Zambia, community leaders gather under the Insaka to discuss community matters.



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FAO Headquarters
128 Via delle Terme di Caracalla
Rome, Italy