

CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRODUCERS ORGANISATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE 6th AU-EU AGRICULTURE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, ROME, 27 JUNE 2025

Introduction

Food Sovereignty through Agroecology: A People's Agenda for AU-EU Cooperation

The 6th AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference in Rome (June 27, 2025) offers a critical opportunity to reshape Africa-Europe cooperation in agriculture and food systems. As the climate crisis intensifies, hunger deepens, and inequality grows, business-as-usual approaches are no longer acceptable. Africa, the continent with the youngest population, dynamic food cultures, and rich resources, stands at a crossroad: **Will its future be defined by industrial models driven by corporate interests or by resilient, inclusive, and locally rooted food systems?**

We, representatives of African and European civil society, family farmers, fishers, pastoralists, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, communities, and researchers, declare with a united voice: **the AU-EU Partnership must prioritise agroecology, food sovereignty, and public investment in environmentally sustainable and just food systems.**

The conference's agenda focuses on **investment, sustainability, innovation, and trade**, but these themes are often framed through the lens of extractive economic models. **We urge a different path:**

1. Investment/Finance

- Strengthen Family Farming and Territorial Food Systems
- Promote Gender Equality and Youth Inclusion

2. Sustainable Practices/Climate Resilience

- Redirect Finance Toward Agroecology
- Stop Land and Ocean Grabbing

3. Innovation, and Technology

- Protect and Promote Farmer-Managed Seed Systems
- Eliminate Toxic Inputs and Ensure Safe Work Conditions for Farmers and Workers

4. Market Access/Trade

- Regulate International Trade to Support Food Sovereignty
- Ensure Policy Coherence and Uphold Human Rights

Civil society has consistently voiced concern that the *EU Global Gateway strategy* prioritises European strategic interests, infrastructure corridors, and private sector returns over local food security and ecological sustainability. Moreover, **we note with alarm the creeping influence of genetically modified crops, synthetic inputs, and intellectual property regimes** that threaten the very basis of African seed and food sovereignty — sometimes enabled, directly or indirectly, by EU-funded programs.

As African governments start on a new 10 year *Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme* (CAADP) period and Europe redefines its global role, **now is the moment for a reset**. One that builds a genuine, equitable, and sustainable agricultural partnership between Africa and Europe — rooted in **the principles of policy coherence, justice, ecology, and dignity**.

We propose the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1 Make Food and Agriculture Central to the AU-EU Partnership

Food and agriculture are the foundation of Africa's development and must be prioritised in all AU-EU cooperation frameworks.

- Elevate agriculture, sustainable food systems, and rural livelihoods as a top-tier priority in the AU-EU agenda.
- Make sure that climate, trade, energy and development cooperation policies promote and support sustainable, diverse and inclusive food systems.

2 Support Democratic, Coherent, and Human Rights-Based Food Policies

Food systems policy must uphold human rights, promote coherence across sectors, and be shaped through democratic processes led by food producers and local communities.

- Guarantee the right to food, land, and seed sovereignty in all AU-EU agricultural initiatives. Align AU and EU policies across agriculture, trade, energy, and climate with the goals of food sovereignty, environmental justice, and social equity.
- Uphold international obligations under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Living in Rural Areas* (UNDROP), the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW). Support the *UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights* and reinforce the role of the *UN Committee on World Food Security* (CFS) as the most inclusive global forum for deliberating food policy within a right to food framework.
- Ensure that all AU-EU agriculture-related investments and agreements are subject to *ex-ante* human rights and environmental impact assessments to prevent harm and strengthen accountability.

3 Redirect Finance Toward Agroecology

Current investment flows benefit corporations over communities; a people-centred approach requires public finance to support agroecology and food sovereignty.

- End public support for fossil fuel-intensive, export-oriented industrial agriculture, and for de-risking of big corporate private sector investments.
- Implement the *Kampala Declaration's* 10% public agriculture investment target and allocate at least 30% of agricultural funding to agroecological approaches, including women, youth, and pastoralist communities, with a transparent mechanism to track where funding goes.
- Cancel unsustainable debt and ensure that climate and development finance reach communities that need it.

4 Protect and Promote Farmer-Managed Seed Systems

Seeds are life and culture; protecting farmer-managed seed systems ensures biodiversity, resilience, and farmer autonomy.

- Legally recognise, protect and promote farmer-managed seed systems as distinct from so-called "*formal*" commercial systems.
- Reject the imposition of UPOV-aligned laws, GMOs, and IP regimes that undermine seed sovereignty.
- Ensure public investment in and preservation of local seed production, seed exchanges, and indigenous crops.

5 Support fair and Inclusive International Trade to Support Food Sovereignty

- Reduce Africa's food import dependency, rather than promoting cash crops for external markets.
- Introduce market regulation measures to protect African producers from unfair competition with imported EU products and to ensure fair, remunerative prices for producers and affordable prices for consumers.
- Review the current *Economic Partnership Agreements* with Africa to ensure that they protect and support smallholder farmers.
- Reevaluate the *Global Gateway* strategy to ensure it delivers positive social, environmental, and developmental impacts for local communities in partner countries, rather than primarily focusing on the EU's geopolitical interests.

6 Eliminate Toxic Agrochemicals and Ensure Safe Work Conditions for Farmers and Workers

The health of farmers, workers, and ecosystems is undermined by dependence on harmful chemicals and hazardous working conditions.

- End the double standard on pesticides and stop all exports from the EU to third countries of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) that are not approved for use in EU agriculture on the basis that they can harm people or the environment.
- Phase out imported chemical fertilisers and support agroecological soil restoration, composting, and production and use of biofertilisers.
- Ensure safe, healthy, and dignified working conditions free of exploitation for all agricultural workers, including seasonal, informal and migrant labourers.

7 Stop Land and Ocean Grabbing

Land and water are core to food sovereignty; extractive land deals must end, and communities must retain control over their natural resources.

- Ban large-scale land acquisitions by public finance and development banks and enforce the right to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) for communities affected by land deals.
- Protect customary land tenure systems and ensure gender-equitable access to land and aquatic resources.
- Establish legal mechanisms for restitution and redress for communities displaced or harmed by agribusiness or infrastructure projects.
- Reject land-based false climate solutions, such as carbon offsetting, that risk deepening already alarming levels of land inequality, competing with food production, and increasing pressure on land and food security.

8 Strengthen Family Farming and Territorial Food Systems

Family farmers and local food economies feed most of Africa — they need public support, not global market exposure.

- Support local, diverse, and resilient territorial markets with public investment in market infrastructure.
- Prioritise public procurement from agroecological, smallholder, and women-led producers.
- Shield territorial markets from harmful imports, dumping, and supermarket-driven standardisation.
- Support the UN Decade of Family Farming by delivering and implementing national and regional action plans for family farming.

9 Promote Gender Equality and Youth Inclusion

Women and youth are central to food production and must be granted equitable access to resources, leadership, and livelihoods.

- Require that all AU-EU agricultural investments pass a gender and intersectional equity analysis.
- Guarantee equal access to land, finance, training, and leadership for women and youth.
- Invest in rural education, agroecological entrepreneurship, and land rights for the next generation.

10 Address Root Causes of Conflict and Forced Displacement

Food insecurity, dispossession, and rural poverty are driving instability — the AU-EU partnership must tackle these root causes, not just the symptoms.

- End the use of EU development funds for restrictive migration policies or border management, or to externalise migration control.
- Invest in resilient rural livelihoods, including pastoralism, artisanal fishing, and community-managed commons.
- Support peacebuilding by strengthening local food systems and land rights, not extractive investment models.



The organisations listed above are the initial promoters of this joint position. The position and its recommendations are open for endorsement by civil society actors and producer organisations who wish to express their support.

If you are interested, please complete this Google Form: <https://forms.gle/SLCeQN279XXkRWop6>.
The form will remain open for endorsements until September 2025.