



ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA



AFRICAN-LED ADAPTATION, RESILIENCE AND MITIGATION THROUGH AGROECOLOGY

enhancing resilience of African
food systems and agriculture to the
climate crisis through agroecology

POLICY
BRIEF

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Introduction

This policy brief outlines the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa's (AFSA) strategic position on enhancing the resilience of African food systems and agriculture to the climate crisis through agroecology, ahead of the second Africa Climate Summit 2025 in Addis Ababa. It calls for urgent policy shifts and financial commitments that prioritize agroecology as a people-led, climate-resilient, and sovereignty centered alternative to industrial food system approaches.

Africa is on the frontlines of the climate crisis, experiencing rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, floods, and increased pest outbreaks, all of which have severely undermined food and nutrition security. Since 1961, climate change has reduced agricultural productivity growth in Africa by 34%, more than any other region in the world (Chebet, 2022). Looking ahead, if global temperatures rise beyond 2°C, yields of key staples such as millet, and sorghum could fall drastically, threatening the livelihoods of millions and intensifying hunger and poverty across the continent (Phys.org, 2022).

While the impacts are continent-wide, they manifest differently across Africa's five regions. West Africa faces worsening Sahelian droughts and erratic seasonal rains that threaten rainfed agriculture. Central Africa's humid tropics are experiencing shifting rainfall patterns that disrupt traditional cropping calendars and fisheries. East Africa is grappling with intensified drought-flood cycles linked to the Indian Ocean Dipole, severely affecting pastoralist communities and highland farmers. Southern Africa continues to face recurrent El Nino-induced droughts that devastate staple maize production. North Africa's irrigated systems are under mounting stress from water scarcity, salinization, and desertification (FAO, 2021; AU, 2022).

As African leaders, policymakers, and civil society and other stakeholders converge at the Africa Climate Summit 2025 in Addis Ababa, it is imperative to reimagine the continent's food systems and agricultural future. The time has come to move away from extractive, corporate-led models and prioritise public investments in agroecology as the foundation for a climate resilient, just, food secure, and sovereign Africa.

Key challenges in African Food Systems

Despite being a continent rich in biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and agricultural potential, Africa's food systems are confronted with a complex web of interlinked challenges that undermine their resilience and sustainability. These challenges are not merely technical or environmental; they are deeply structural, political, and systemic.

Vulnerability to Climate Shocks

Africa's agriculture is predominantly rain-fed and highly climate-sensitive. Droughts, floods, heatwaves, and erratic rainfall are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change, disproportionately affecting smallholder farmers who lack irrigation, insurance, and access to early warning systems (FAO, 2022). The result is increased crop failure, food insecurity, and livelihood loss.

Corporate Capture and Policy Bias

Food and agricultural policies across the continent

have increasingly favored large scale, input-intensive, industrial farming models. This has led to a concentration of power in the hands of multinational agribusinesses, eroding the autonomy of small-scale producers. Corporate-backed initiatives such as the green revolution in Africa have failed to deliver on promises of food security, while instead promoting monocultures, dependency on chemical inputs, and exclusion of farmer voices from decision-making spaces (AFSA & GRAIN, 2021; IPES-Food, 2023).

Soil Degradation and Biodiversity Loss

Industrial agriculture practices are driving soil health reduction and depletion, deforestation, and the erosion of agrobiodiversity all of which are critical to food system resilience. According to UNEP, more than 65% of Africa's arable land is affected by degradation. The widespread adoption of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, often promoted through externally funded programs to African governments, has damaged soil health and polluted ecosystems.

Inadequate Investment in people-centered and holistic approaches

Public and donor investments continue to flow overwhelmingly toward industrial agriculture and climate-smart agriculture (CSA) approaches that often fail to address structural inequities or empower farmers. Agroecology, despite growing evidence of its effectiveness, remains grossly underfunded. In 2020, less than 3% of global climate finance for agriculture supported truly transformative, farmer-led approaches (Biovision & IPES-Food, 2020).

Weak Policy Implementation and Institutional Coordination

Even where agroecology and resilience are recognized in policy frameworks and strategies in some African countries, implementation is often weak due to fragmented institutions, lack of capacity at the local level, and insufficient monitoring and accountability mechanisms. National adaptation plans (NAPs) and agricultural strategies rarely mainstream agroecological principles in practice.

Why Agroecology?

Agroecology is a science, a practice and a social movement that draws on ecological principles such as diversity, synergy, recycling, and many others to establish sustainable and resilient agriculture and food systems. According to the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE, 2019), agroecology which is endorsed by international bodies including the FAO through its Scaling up Agroecology Initiative (FAO, 2018) and acknowledged by the International Panel of experts on Climate Change (IPCC) enhances the capacity of farming systems to withstand shocks and adapt to changing environmental conditions and has potential to mitigate emissions and enhance climate resilience. Unlike industrial agricultural systems, it regenerates soil health, boosts agricultural biodiversity, strengthens community and grassroots movements, and reduces dependence on synthetic inputs.

For decades, Africa's food systems have been shaped by top-down, externally driven models under the guise of the green revolution, often backed by foreign multinational corporations and large agribusinesses. These models have promoted synthetic fertilizers,



hybrid and genetically modified seeds, and monocultures as silver bullet solutions. Yet rather than lifting African farmers' solutions and supporting building food sovereignty, this approach has deepened dependency, degraded soils, eroded biodiversity, and disrupted traditional knowledge systems, leaving a trail of ecological and social harm. The promise of productivity gains came at the cost of resilience, cultural integrity, and long-term sustainability.

Agroecology offers a holistic, African-led pathway for food system transformation in the face of a deepening climate crisis. It integrates indigenous knowledge with ecological principles and modern innovation, promotes diversified agriculture, and enhances the adaptive capacity of communities. This approach builds resilience of smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth, who are at the forefront of food production but most vulnerable to climate shocks, while restoring ecosystems, conserving water and

soils, reducing dependency on costly external inputs, and building local climate resilience (FAO, 2018; HLPE, 2019).

Agroecology is not just a technical fix, but a social, cultural, and political process that reclaims local control over seeds, land, and markets. It directly challenges the corporate domination of food systems, and instead re-centers agriculture around people, biodiversity, and planetary health (IPES-Food, 2016).

Momentum behind agroecology is rapidly building. At the recently held 62nd session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB62) held in Bonn in June 2025, African negotiators explicitly presented agroecology as a key holistic approach to building African agriculture to resilience. This marks a pivotal moment of recognition that agroecology is a viable and scalable response to the climate emergency and a foundation for achieving food sovereignty and just transitions in agriculture.

Key Policy Recommendations and Opportunities at ACS 2025

The Africa Climate Summit 2025 (ACS 2025) in Addis Ababa presents a pivotal moment for the continent to chart a transformative and local vision for climate resilient agriculture and food systems. It is an opportunity for African leaders through national governments and the African Union to move beyond the rhetoric of adaptation and take decisive action to institutionalize and scale agroecology as the backbone of food sovereignty, climate justice, and sustainable development. It is time to prioritize agroecology and sovereign, community-driven approaches that ensure resilience, sustainability, and justice for Africa.

We therefore urge African governments, the African Union, donor partners to:

1. Integrate Agroecology into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)

Many African countries are updating their NDCs and implementing NAPs. These processes must embed agroecology as a central strategy for adaptation and mitigation. Agroecology delivers co-benefits, it builds resilience, reduces emissions, restores ecosystems, and supports livelihoods, all while centering local knowledge and control (FAO, 2021). ACS 2025 can galvanize a coordinated continental push to ensure agroecological transitions are reflected in national climate plans.

2. Operationalize the Africa climate strategy and the African Union's Agenda 2063

The African Union's Climate Change and

Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032) recognizes the need for integrated, holistic solutions. Agroecology fits squarely within this vision and should be promoted as a flagship approach. ACS 2025 offers the African Union, and member states an opportunity to commit to regionally coordinated agroecological programming, backed by policy harmonization and capacity-building investments.

3. Redirect Climate Finance

Currently, less than 2.5% of global climate finance goes to small-scale producers, and even less to agroecology (Biovision & IPES-Food, 2020). ACS 2025 can be a turning point to demand targeted climate finance for agroecological transitions, particularly through direct access mechanisms for farmer organizations, women's groups, and youth-led enterprises. This includes pushing institutions like the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund, and African Development Bank to shift their financing models in support of community-led climate solutions.

4. Amplify Agroecology in climate negotiations

Africa's strong presentation at SB62 in Bonn, where agroecology was presented as a holistic climate adaptation pathway by African negotiators, must not lose momentum. ACS 2025 should reaffirm agroecology as a strategic African position heading into COP30, demanding its recognition in the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) framework and within the Sharm El Sheikh Joint Work on Agriculture and Food Security.

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