THE 4TH BIENNIAL FOOD SYSTEMS CONFERENCE
MOBILISING AFRICAN FOOD POLICY
ACTION FOR HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS
28TH – 30TH NOVEMBER 2022 : YAOUNDÉ, CAMEROON

CONFERENCE REPORT
CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ......................................................................................................................... 3

1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE ........................................................................................................... 4
   1.1 BACKGROUND ............................................................................................................................... 4
   1.2 RATIONALE ................................................................................................................................ 4

2. CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES ............................................................................................................. 5
   2.1 AIM .............................................................................................................................................. 5
   2.2 OBJECTIVES ................................................................................................................................. 5

3. CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS ......................................................................................................... 6
   3.1 OPENING CEREMONY .................................................................................................................. 6
   3.2 LAUNCH OF THE ‘MY FOOD IS AFRICAN’ CAMPAIGN AND BAREFOOT GUIDE .................... 8
   3.3 THEMATIC WORKSHOPS .............................................................................................................. 9
   3.3.1 THEME 1: WHY ARE CURRENT MAINSTREAM FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY APPROACHES FAILING US? .............................................................................................................. 9
   3.3.2 THEME 2: HOW HEALTHY FOOD RESPONDS TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS ................................ 12
   3.3.3 THEME 3: WHAT FOOD POLICIES DO WE NEED TO TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY DIETS? ..................................................................................................................... 13
   3.4 EXHIBITION OF AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCE ...................................................................... 17
   3.5 FIELD TRIP TO MFOU .................................................................................................................. 18
   3.6 A CELEBRATION OF TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FOOD .................................................................... 19
   3.7 YAOUNDÉ 4TH BIENNIAL FOOD SYSTEMS CONFERENCE DECLARATION .................................. 21
   3.8 CLOSING ..................................................................................................................................... 23

LINK TO ALL THE VIDEOS OF THE EVENT

LINK TO ALL THE PRESENTATIONS GIVEN

See more links to individual presentations and media throughout the report.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 4th AFSA Biennial Food Systems Conference was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 28-30 November 2022 under the title “Mobilising African Food Policy and Action for Healthy Food Systems.” The conference brought together 170 participants from 27 countries.

Held in the African Union Year of Nutrition, the conference aimed to mobilise African citizens and governments to demand a change in food policies and implement urgent actions for healthy, nutritious and inclusive food systems.

The event was held under the patronage of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Cameroon. Altogether, around 500 participants attended different phases of the event: conferencing, field visits, exhibitions, culinary activities, and a cultural evening.

Keynote presentations by nutrition and food systems experts, followed by debates, group work and plenary feedback, led to a series of recommendations:

- African Governments should become strategic partners in strengthening the institutional capacities of farming communities to pursue agroecology, which enhances food production, improves incomes, and provides nutrition security for local communities at low costs.
- African governments should prioritize agroecology to build resilience in food systems in the face of crises such as the covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.
- The African Union Commission should prioritize the development of a Food Systems Policy anchored on African cultural foods and dishes, recognizing their value to people's health and nutritional security.
- Donors should direct funding towards upscaling the My food is African campaign, aligning policies and programmes towards the transition to agroecology.
- Health experts, teachers, citizens, religious leaders, traditional leaders, institutions of learning, performing artists, media, fishers, pastoralists, MPs, state actors, academics, entrepreneurs, cooperatives, dieticians and consumer associations should help ensure more people embrace healthy and culturally appropriate food.

The event officially launched the “My Food Is African” campaign to inspire African people to demand traditional foods, dishes, diets and cuisines. The conference also marked the publication of the new barefoot guide, “My Food is African: Healthy Soil, Safe Foods, and Diverse Diets.” The guide aims to spark people’s interest in learning about Africa’s unique, delicious, and healthy foods and cultures and foster a safer, healthier, and more sustainable path to food sovereignty.

In addition, press and social media communications mobilised food policy actors in the host country, across Africa, and beyond.

AFSA, through the success of this conference, demonstrated its capacity to mobilise a diversity of actors to constitute a movement for the improvement of food systems in Africa and to challenge politicians to elaborate more sovereign and healthier food and nutrition policies.

SEE A 12 MINUTE VIDEO OVERVIEW OF THE EVENT HERE
1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

1.1 Background

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is a broad group of civil society actors who are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology. AFSA’s members represent smallholder farmers, pastoralists, hunter/gatherers, indigenous peoples, faith-based institutions, and environmentalists across the continent. AFSA is a network of networks with members active in 50 African countries.

AFSA and its partners launched a programme of biennial food systems conferences for the African continent in 2016. The inaugural conference focused on "Changing Food Systems in Africa: Agroecology and Food Sovereignty and their Role in Nutrition and Health". The conference called on the African Union, national governments, civil society, development partners and the international community to provide the political will, leadership and support to establish policies, programmes and plans to create sustainable food systems based on agroecological and organic principles, values and practices for the health and well-being of current and future generations.

The second conference in 2018 focused on African Food Systems and the SDGs. It was facilitated through art and called for unity across sectors and constituencies. The call to action was to strengthen and sustain social movements at the community, national and regional levels and involve CSO Alliances in AU/continental policy meetings. The participants agreed on a strategic campaign focus for AFSA: 'Agroecology as a Solution to Climate Change'.

The third conference was held virtually in October 2020 to discuss the future of African food markets. Territorial markets were identified as AFSA's primary focus through research, advocacy, mobilisation, and education.

In 2022, AFSA and its partners planned this 4th Biennial Food Systems Conference under the theme: "Mobilising African Food Policy and Action for Healthy Food Systems."

1.2. Rationale

The move towards healthy and sustainable food systems in Africa faces several challenges.

- Undernutrition is a major cause of death among children under five years and a source of increased susceptibility to infectious diseases and NCDs in adulthood. The stunting of children, overweight and obesity, and other risk factors such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory diseases, and type II diabetes are increasing.
- Zoonotic and other pathogenic infectious diseases, epidemics, and pandemics can significantly worsen African food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Climate change, agriculture, food systems, diets and nutrition are interconnected, with increases in temperature, heat waves, droughts, floods, cyclones, forest fires, and land degradation negatively impacting agriculture.
- Degradation of biodiversity is rampant in Africa, and enhancing biodiversity for food and agriculture enhances food systems' sustainability and resilience and safeguards healthy diets for current and future generations.
• Profound dietary changes are caused by socio-economic and environmental factors, such as migration to urban centres, changing food systems and environments, increasing purchasing power and preferences of newly middle-class consumers, and changing consumer choices and lifestyles.

• To address the issue of micronutrient deficiency, current policy is leaning towards biofortification, which is seen as a cost-effective life-saving solution to malnutrition. However, this technical solution ignores the role of healthy diets comprising diverse foods naturally containing the micronutrients we need.

These challenges are primarily related to food system policies and governance, as there is currently no joined-up food policy. AFSA aimed to commemorate the African Union Year of Nutrition 2022 by mobilising its members, citizens and African governments to shape the narrative and direction of nutrition and food systems from an African perspective at the 4th Biennial Food Systems Conference. The conference showcased innovative and creative ways to explore and celebrate African food cultures, foods, diets and cuisines for the transition to agroecology.

2. CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

2.1. Aim

Mobilise African citizens and governments to demand a change in food policy and implement urgent actions for healthy, nutritious and inclusive food systems.

2.2. Objectives

1. Create space for African citizens to showcase, discuss and generate strategies for protecting and promoting African nutrition and food systems for a healthy and food-sovereign continent.

2. Call on African governments to develop strategies, policies and institutions that promote African food systems for healthy, inclusive and sustainable development.

3. Mobilise and rally African citizens to deliberate, speak out, generate demands and take action to shape the future trajectory of food and nutrition in Africa.
3. CONFEREECE PROCEEDINGS

3.1. Opening ceremony

The official opening ceremony took place at Yaoundé City Hall.

H.E. Mrs Elisabeth Atangana, President of CNOP-CAM, welcomed all participants in Cameroon and commended AFSA for its dedication to the struggle for food sovereignty. She mentioned the COVID-19 epidemic, the Ukraine conflict, and the climate issue as examples of why Africa needs innovative methods for processing, distributing, and marketing food.

Dr Chris Macoloo, Chair of AFSA, expressed gratitude to Cameroon for agreeing to host the meeting and expressed his expectation that the participants would respond adequately to the issues outlined in the concept note.

Dr Ayele Kebede, Programme Director, Regional Development Cooperation for Africa, Environment and Climate, SIDA, Ethiopia, congratulated CNOP-CAM for the organisation and called on African politicians to mobilise to implement and ensure healthy food security. Dr Kebede welcomed Cameroon’s commitment to building a better food system, saying, "Cameroon is the next breadbasket that will feed the continent tomorrow".
Dr Million Belay, AFSA General Coordinator, provided contextualisation of the food systems policy framework. He urged the participants to strongly commit to promoting agroecology and the institutionalisation of territorial markets. He highlighted the need to renew and strengthen the use of traditional seeds and advocated for mobilising African actors, awareness-raising among decision-makers, and developing research and disseminating results. He also encouraged the participants to deconstruct the dominant narrative of nutritionism, which glorifies imported food and has harmful consequences for health. He stated, "We live in a period of increased unpredictability of new and emerging crises, from the pandemic to war and climate catastrophes. Only if we invest in boosting our capacity to respond to various crises will Africans be able to survive and thrive. Agroecology is the best and most efficient way to build a food system that increases community resilience to climate change, provides healthy and sustainable diets, and protects the environment."

Dr Laila Lokosang, Senior Technical Advisor - Food Systems, AU DARBE, speaking on behalf of the AU Commissioner, Ambassador Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, commended AFSA for its efforts in promoting agroecology and food sovereignty across Africa, and for leading civil society networks in food systems transformation. He had worked with AFSA for the past three years on building a concept and providing evidence of the need for an Africa Food Policy Framework. This process has resulted in concrete outcomes, with key preliminary documents submitted to AU policy organs for endorsement.

Dr Lokosang emphasized that the Africa Food Policy Framework is the missing link between the continent’s aspirations for a food and nutrition secure, sovereign, and sustainable Africa, and the transition of these aspirations to results and impact. He further highlighted the ongoing project by the AU Commission and the African Union Development Agency to launch and operationalize a Strategy for Transformation of Africa Food Systems. He believes that the Food Policy Framework provides the enabling environment for the application of the Strategy for Transformation of Africa Food Systems. Dr Lokosang expressed a desire to work more closely with AFSA and its partners to continue the work started, as he believes Africa needs it. He also emphasized the need for a food policy to safeguard countries such as Cameroon against predatory exploitation of their abundant resources. In conclusion, Dr Lokosang saluted the initiative for launching the "My Food is African" Campaign in the capital city of Cameroon.
H.E. Gabriël Mbaïrobe, Cameroon’s Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, acknowledged the importance of the conference theme and its relevance to the current realities and demands of African food systems. He identified how existing pressures have undermined and compromised the capacity of food systems to meet local demand and provide nutritious food and stressed the need to rethink food systems to improve efficiency and market capacity in local and rural contexts. He reminded the participants, “The war in Ukraine hugely impacts Africa’s food security, and it is time for Africa to start looking for ideas and strategies to produce our food with lower prices that guarantee healthier, accessible and sustainable food.”

3.2. Launch of the ‘My Food is African’ campaign and barefoot guide

H.E. Gabriël Mbaïrobe, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, and his peers from the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises, and the Ministry of External Relations cut the ribbon and signed the roll-up banner bearing the campaign's launch message. See the My Food is African barefoot guide.
3.3. Thematic workshops

Several themes were discussed. Experts made introductory presentations, and participants were divided into working groups to discuss the themes and finally present the results of their work in plenary.

3.3.1. Theme 1: Why are current mainstream food and nutrition security approaches failing us?

The aim was to understand the challenges surrounding this central issue. To untangle the problem, three sub-themes were analysed.

3.3.1.1. Presentation 1: Africans Deserve Better - Food Security to End Malnutrition.

Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Senior Advisor at Khazanah Research Institute and Boitshepo Bibi Giyose, Senior Nutrition and Food Systems Advisor, AUDA NEPAD

The presentation focused on malnutrition, its socio-economic and health consequences, its main challenges and the outline of solutions to address them.

Malnutrition results from two main problems: insufficient consumption of macronutrients leading to ever-increasing hunger, and the deficit of micronutrients, which leads to undernourishment resulting in obesity, stunted growth of children and the explosion of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The speaker demonstrated that famine is a global scourge with a significant socioeconomic cost (5% of world income) and a social divide in which women and young girls suffer much more.

The solution lies in a diversified, sustainable diet thanks to agroecology, which preserves the environment and allows plants to retain the best micronutrients. African food systems are failing because they are influenced by the false solutions proposed by agribusiness multinationals. To address the malnutrition challenges of macronutrient use and micronutrient deficiencies, African states must make their food policies coherent and harmonised and put them into practice quickly.

Jomo concluded that sustainable development is based on food systems with overlapping socio-economic and environmental impacts, hence the need to dynamically transform our food systems.
3.3.1.2. Presentation 2: Systems fault lines: Unwrapping AU strategic options and game-changing solutions.

Dr Laila Lokosang, Senior Technical Advisor - Food Systems, AU DARBE.

Dr Lokosang highlighted nine shortcomings of African food systems, which include lack of resilience or poor adaptation to climate change, residual social impact due to poverty and vulnerability of populations who are malnourished and lack the means to produce on a large scale, the phenomenon of youth migration, lack of adequate investment in aquaculture, low mechanisation of agriculture and use of digital technology, low adoption of productivity and production innovations, and a huge energy deficit. Concerns were raised about AU enforcement measures for the implementation of recommendations within African states, the incoherence of African policies, public-private partnerships in the promotion of agroecology and local development, and the need for targeted innovative financing for the food systems transformation programme in Africa.

Recommendations included harmonising food systems policies in Africa, stopping rural exodus and out-migration of young people through targeted innovative financing, and strengthening and harnessing Africa's growth by developing local food markets/territorial markets.

3.3.1.3 Presentation 3: Addressing the Global Food Crisis: Structural Dimensions and Policy Imperatives.

Jennifer Clapp, Research Chair in Global Food Security and Sustainability at SERS, University of Waterloo.

The video conference presentation aimed to shed light on the issues surrounding the food crisis, draw lessons from it and share the views of some experts.

Prof. Clapp stated that the world's food crisis has been going on for the last seven years and that COVID-19 is an aggravating factor, not to mention the Russian-Ukrainian situation. Several triggers are behind the disruption of the staple grain market, including sensitivity to rising oil prices, rampant speculation on commodity markets, climate vulnerability, and growing world hunger, all of which are moving us further away from the goal of achieving SDG2. 345 million people are facing...
hunger due to the crisis, 828 million are undernourished, and 2.3 million are food insecure. The structural characteristics of the global food system that make it so vulnerable are summarised in the concentration of problems at several levels:

- **Field level**: the concentration of staple crops using industrial inputs highly dependent on fossil fuels.
- **National level**: the concentration among grain exporting countries. African food systems are dependent on food imports.
- **The world market level**: characterised by a high degree of market concentration, where a few companies dominate the grain and agricultural input markets, making huge profits in times of crisis.

This concentration contributes to enormous ecological damage, which triggers crises (climate change, biodiversity loss, water stress, soil degradation, and pollution). Therefore, it is imperative to adopt policies for resilient and sustainable food systems. The need for a broader understanding of food security that integrates Agency and Sustainability. Agroecology contributes to the sustainability of food systems, to the development of territorial markets, and contributes to limiting the influence of corporate and financial actors at the global level.

**Recommendations** were that food security policy must integrate sustainability and that policies should support territorial markets and reduce the influence of financial and corporate actors.

### 3.3.1.4. Group Work on Why current mainstream food and nutrition security approaches are failing us.

The participants were divided according to their field of activity: farmers, pastoralists, youth, women, entrepreneurs, local seeds, and land tenure. The results of the work were presented in plenary as a series of ‘sketch’ performances.

**Group 1: Pastoralists (indigenous people)**

The pastoralists’ sketch highlighted the difficulties encountered daily, including the conflicts between farmers and herders, while evoking the remarkable contribution of their activity to the protection of the environment and the fight against climate change. They called for the protection of indigenous peoples’ livelihoods and increased support from government.

**Group 2: Women**

The women presented a sketch to show they have difficulty being heard, especially in raising community awareness for adopting agroecological practices. They called for their voices to be heard in decision-making processes. They advocated for strengthening their economic and social capacity and for gender equality, which will favour the promotion of agroecology and healthy food.

**Group 3: Entrepreneurs**

The entrepreneurs' performance demonstrated the impact of insufficient financing on the promotion of agroecological practices and principles. The entrepreneurs strongly urged financial institutions and public authorities to support small producers in the practice of agroecology for the well-being of society.
Group 4: Local seeds
This group emphasised the dangers of reliance on imported seeds, the criminalization of farmers' seeds through laws and policies enacted by African governments, and the restrictions on the freedom of use of farmers' seeds. The group's members have started an advocacy campaign to protect, promote, and conserve local seeds.

Group 5: Farmers
In their sketch, the farmers demonstrated the dangers of chemicals destroying their health, environment, and biodiversity. They called for the rational use of chemicals (seeds and pesticides, chemical fertilisers) and the adoption of a law on farmers' rights.

Group 6: Land
The land group demonstrated the importance of women in food production, but also highlighted the problems of land grabbing by multinationals and elites and insecure land tenure that undermine family farming and agroecological practices. They called for agrarian reform and equitable land redistribution.

Group 7: Young people
The young people highlighted that communication about local products does not give an attractive image and urged people to turn away from the dominant narrative of imported food and adopt traditional eating habits for a healthy and sustainable quality of life.

3.3.2. Theme 2: How healthy food responds to the climate crisis

3.3.2.1. Presentation 1: What impact will the outcome of COP27 have on the relationship between food and climate?

Sena Alouka, Director, Young Volunteers for the Environment

Sena Alouka presented the outcome of COP27, which focused on Mitigation, Adaptation, Finance, Loss and Damage.

The major challenges are working together to ensure agricultural development provides increased food security and reduces emissions, addressing mitigation and adaptation appropriately, and developing a work programme and funding to support this.
3.4.2.2. Group Work on How healthy food responds to the climate crisis.

The objectives of the group work were to identify the link between food and climate, the impact of climate on traditional African food, which solutions are wrong, and the role of agroecology in adaptation. The feedback showed that:

- Climate change negatively impacts food systems, especially in Africa;
- Irregularity of climate parameters (variation in rainfall, temperature, etc.) significantly impacts traditional food;
- Existing solutions to these challenges include agroecology, soil regeneration, and promotion of local seeds;
- False solutions include the use of synthetic fertilisers, GMO seeds, pesticides, and antibiotics;
- Agroecology contributes to the resilience of stakeholders, contributes to the recycling of waste, and strengthens sustainability.

3.3.3. Theme 3: What food policies do we need to transition to sustainable and healthy diets?

3.3.3.1. Presentation 1: Why do we need an African food policy?

Dr Laila Lokosang, Senior Technical Advisor - Food Systems, AU DARBE.

Dr Lokosang explained the reasons for an African food policy, including the absence of a comprehensive, coherent and visionary African food policy, the emergence of new trends and challenges for Africa's food supply, and the evolution of new thinking and initiatives for sustainable food systems approaches. The process so far includes forming the concept, meeting the main stakeholders in food and nutrition security, using evidence to inform the development of a policy framework for sustainable and healthy diets, and obtaining stakeholder buy-in. The results of the consultations conducted so far have proposed a set of recommendations for the development of a strong and meaningful African food policy, an agreed structure and plan for the policy, and a roadmap leading to the full launch and dissemination of the policy document.

There was concern about the roles of the African Union Commission (AUC) and AFSA in implementing the food systems policy in Africa.

Recommendation: The AUC and AFSA should agree a Memorandum of Understanding defining their respective. (AU to lead the process and AFSA to provide and mobilise technical and financial resources).
3.3.3.2. Presentation 2: Revitalising indigenous and traditional food cultures: from policy to action.

Boitshepo Bibi Giyose, Senior Nutrition and Food Systems Advisor, AUDA NEPAD

The presentation showed that two billion people lack essential micronutrients such as iron and Vitamin A. Overall, 2.1 billion adults are overweight or obese, 149 million children are stunted, 40 million children are overweight, and appropriate dietary diversity that includes native, traditional and locally neglected species/varieties is essential.

Challenges include weak data and information systems, lack of investment in nutrition data, difficulties in formulating, planning, and programming evidence-based policies, resistance to introducing new indicators and their adoption/implementation, and repositioning and transforming attitudes towards data.

3.3.3.3. Presentation 3: Building international black food sovereignty: linking Africa to the diaspora.

Mr Malik Yakini, Co-founder and executive director of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network and co-founder of the National Black Food and Justice Alliance

Malik explained that the two organisations are working to build black food sovereignty in the United States, pan-African solidarity, and introducing many young people to agriculture. Malik, a long-time Pan-Africanist adamantly opposed to the systems of white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy, explained his organisation’s role as part of the larger movement for building power, self-determination, and justice for African people.

Watch a [two minute video of Malik explaining why agroecology is the best solution for equitable food systems in Africa](#).
3.3.3.4. Presentation 4: Agroecological transition in Grand Kloto, Togo: challenges and prospects for local food systems.

Mrs Adzo Esther Meseko, Secretary General of the Commune of Danyi, and Hon Kazia Tchala, President of the Agro-Pastoral Commission of the National Assembly of Togo.

Agriculture employs nearly 60% of the Togolese population and represents 40% of GDP. The climate crisis is pushing farmers to adapt to increase their agricultural production yield. They are working on agroecological training, the promotion of a national legal framework favourable to sustainable agriculture, banning the import and use of glyphosate and any product containing it in Togo. The Greater Kloto region has many assets, including access to subsidies from organisations involved in promoting agroecology, creating wealth and employment within the communities, and promoting and enhancing traditional farming practices. Plans in Grand Kloto include the development of an agroecological transition programme, the mobilisation of funds, the establishment of medicinal forests, education in sustainable agriculture in schools, and the establishment of biofertiliser production.
3.3.4. Presentation: "My Food is African" Barefoot Guide

John Wilson, AFSA member, Zimbabwe

John explained that AFSA’s ‘My Food is African: healthy soils, safe food and diverse diets’ barefoot guide (BFG) came from a collective writing process with contributors from around the continent. The process clarified AFSA’s understanding of ‘agroecological nutrition’, emphasising traditional foods, dishes and diets as the basis for healthy eating, along with growing food on healthy soil without chemicals and eating a diversity of foods.

The aim of all barefoot guides is to make complex information accessible to any reader. Discussion of ‘nutrition’ has often been stuck in the academic world.

BFGs use various communication methods - stories, illustrations, fact sheets, information boxes and quotes. The ‘My Food is African’ book also has a strong emphasis on being a resource to catalyse behaviour change towards healthier eating. The session carried out an exercise with participants to illustrate how the stories in the publication can be used as discussion starters with groups.
3.4. Exhibition of agroecological produce

The conference showcased agroecological produce from Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Ethiopia.

An exhibition of local produce accompanied the official opening ceremony. These included cassava, plantain, aubergine, plums, leafy vegetables, cocoa, turmeric, pepper, potatoes, oils, soybean, tamarind, neem, pineapple, ginger, sorrel, honey, and yams.
3.5. Field trip to Mfou

The field trip to the town of Mfou was marked by a warm welcome by the mayor, who expressed his expectations of AFSA and its partners, hoping for assistance and support in improving productivity and food quality. The objectives of the field visit were to enable conference participants to experience the benefits of healthy soils, safe food and diverse diets, and to catalyse behaviour change towards healthier eating. The participants were divided into three groups for the field trip phase: Group I went to an agroecological farm. Group II visited the CHASAADD-M training centre. Group III visited the market in Nkol Anga.

Feedback from the visit to the agroecological farm and CHASAADD-M Agroecological Training Centre showed the advantages and opportunities of complementary plants, crop rotation, mulching, and soil recovery practices. The market visit revealed a diversity of natural agricultural products, and farmers were encouraged to maintain agroecology and use farmers’ seeds for healthy food. At the end of the visit, it was agreed to promote exchange trips between the CHASAADD-M Centre and other promoters of Agroecology Training, including those in Uganda.
3.6. A celebration of traditional African food

Ten country delegations prepared traditional dishes to share techniques and recipes:

- Cameroon = Eru (dish based on okok or nietum africana, water leaves, skin and meat of beef and water fufu)
- Senegal = thieboudienne (rice, vegetables and fish)
- Togo = Ebassi with corn (corn flour, spices, fish, tomato fruit, salt, tarot leaves, egg)
- Ghana = ampassi and ham taro leaf, plantain and yam, palm oil, salt, red onion tomato fruit
- Liberia = jolof rice chicken, oil, tomato fruit, spice
- Zimbabwe = mutakura and sadza
- Kenya = millet and cassava, beef
- Tunisia = couscous
- Uganda = ground nuts
- Ethiopia = coffee

See a [two minute video of the food preparation and celebration](#).
CHASAADD-M organised a cultural evening for networking and entertainment with the bonus of tasting traditional African dishes to the rhythm of the Mvet (traditional music).
On the final day of the conference, Mrs Joséphine Atangana, the coordinator of the Local Organizing Committee, presented a declaration of Pan-African civil society organisations and citizens calling for a change in food policies and the implementation of urgent actions for healthy, nutritious and inclusive food systems.

We, the delegates to the 4th Biennial Food Systems Conference organized by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), convening in Yaoundé, Cameroon, under the theme ‘Mobilizing African Food Policy and Action for Healthy Food Systems’ to discuss and generate strategies for the protection and promotion of African nutrition and food systems for a healthy and food sovereign continent;

CONCERNED about the marginalization of African food diets, unsustainable food production, fragmented land holding, increased population pressures, weak climate resilience, frequent climatic shocks and damages, rising costs of production and soaring food prices, transportation and distribution problems of food, inadequate food buffer stocks and decreasing food diversity and low awareness to address food and nutrition security;

COGNISANT that since 2019 the number facing acute hunger in the world has risen to 345 million, that 828 million people face chronic undernourishment, 2.3 billion are facing moderate or severe food insecurity and that the world is slipping further from SDG Goal #2;

AWARE that the current dominant industrialized food production system is increasing the triple burden of hunger, malnutrition and obesity while worsening the climate catastrophe;

CONCERNED about the changing food consumption habits skewed in favour of imported foods that undermine dietary diversity and nutrition security, particularly among the youth and urban populations leading to a rise in non-communicable diseases;

COGNISANT THAT smallholder farmers who produce 80 per cent of Africa’s food were not put at the centre of agricultural and adaptation discussions even as they bear the brunt of the effects of the climate emergency every day;

KEEPING IN MIND the existing policy incoherence on the relationship between human and soil health in Africa;

OBSERVING that the proliferation of industrial agriculture in Africa, which is highly dependent on fossil fuels, has undermined society’s efforts to firefight rampant emissions of greenhouse gases responsible for causing rising sea levels, warmer oceans and extreme weather and climate events;
CONCERNED about the continued blackmail by transnational corporations coaxing African governments to wholesomely embrace the green revolution characterized by large tracts of land on a single crop, a package of hybrid seeds which responds to chemical fertilizers, WHICH NEED LOT OF WATER and which need protection by chemical herbicides and pesticides which are detrimental to human and biodiversity health;

COGNIZANT that the current dominant corporatized, export-oriented, mechanized, and capital-intensive food system is worsening the climate crisis without feeding the world;

NOW, this conference:

- Calls on African Governments to become strategic partners in strengthening the institutional capacities of farming communities in their continued pursuit of economically and ecologically viable farming practices, including agroecology that enhances increased food outputs, improves income for farmers and provides nutrition security for the local communities at low costs while delivering huge returns on investment, both socio-economic and for the environment.

- Urges African governments and the international community to channel funding towards agroecology which builds resilience in food systems in the event of unpredictable events such as the novel covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the potential uprising in China, China’s war with Taiwan which holds food availability and food accessibility hostage in Africa;

- Calls on the African Union Commission (AUC) to anchor the development of the emerging Food Systems Policy anchored on Africa’s diverse cultural foods and dishes and recognize their great value to people’s health and nutritional security;

- Calls donor communities to direct funding towards upscaling the My food is African campaign, aligning policies and programmes towards the transition to agroecology which supports the consumption of healthy and culturally appropriate food and increased investments in agroecological investments:

- Calls on health experts, teachers, citizens, religious leaders, traditional leaders, institutions of learning, performing artists, media, fisher folks, pastoralists, MPs, state actors, academics, entrepreneurs, cooperatives, chefs, dieticians and consumer associations to join us in the movement to ensure more people embrace the consumption of healthy and culturally appropriate food through appropriate food policies.
AFSA Chair, Dr Chris Macoloo, gave a closing address in which he observed that the current conventional food system is flawed. The food system based on the industrial agriculture narrative has failed to feed the world and Africa by generating toxic foods, polluting the environment, and fuelling climate crises. By giving an Afrocentric roadmap to healthy diets and sustainable food systems, this conference provides hope and optimism for a much-needed alternative solution to food insecurity, mounting public health disorders, and the climate catastrophe.

In her closing remarks, Mrs Elisabeth Atangana, Special Ambassador of Cooperatives for FAO and President of CNOP-CAM, recalled the context and objectives of the 4ème Biennial AFSA Conference on Food Systems and the launch of the pan-African campaign "My food is African." She congratulated the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa for the event's success and thanked them for their trust in Cameroon.

She thanked the African Union and SIDA for their commitment to the organisers, the Government of Cameroon for supporting the event's success, and the Minister of Agriculture for his sponsorship.

Before closing, the President of CNOP-CAM thanked all the committees, teams and participants who contributed to the success of this event.