

THE ADDIS ABABA DECLARATION OF AN AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY POSITION ON CLIMATE ACTION IN FOOD SYSTEMS AND AGRICULTURE TOWARDS COP31 AND COP32

7–9 September 2026

Preamble and mandate

We, African civil society organisations and movements from over 30 countries representing farmers’ and pastoralists’ organisations, women, children, people living with special needs and youth networks, faith-based organisations, Indigenous Peoples, fisherfolk, researchers, academia, representatives from government, inter-governmental organizations and allied partners participating in the Continental Convening on Strengthening African Civil Society Climate Action on Food Systems and Agriculture Towards COP31 and COP32 in Addis Ababa, affirm a shared position, that “Africa’s climate future cannot be separated from its food future, and decisions about that future must be shaped by the people who produce, trade, prepare and consume food. This statement distils the lived realities, evidence and priorities articulated during the Addis Ababa convening on strengthening African civil society climate action on food systems and agriculture, held from 7th – 9th September 2026, and translates them into a focused agenda for COP31 and COP32.

Why this matters now

Across Africa, climate change is experienced through floods, droughts, heat stress, soil and ecosystem degradation, water scarcity, livestock losses, damaged infrastructure, food-price volatility and rising cost of living. The convening repeatedly stressed that smallholder farmers do not experience climate change as an “implementation gap” or a negotiating acronym; they experience crop loss, water stress, persistent conflicts declining soil fertility, livestock stress, increasing debt burdens, hunger and reduced income. African civil society therefore has a dual duty; to carry community realities into negotiating rooms and to bring the meaning of global decisions back to communities.

Africa’s food systems are also a question of agency and power, where seeds, land, water, fertiliser, technology, markets and finance determine what is produced, who can produce food, at what cost, and

who captures value. Food sovereignty is based on the fundamental right to food as nourishment, and on valuing sustainable livelihoods for food producers, local food systems, ecosystem improvement and the knowledge and skills of Indigenous peoples, peasant communities, young people and women. It is grounded in democratic decision-making by affected communities. Food sovereignty consequently requires more than adequate food supplies; it requires greater African and community agency over production, distribution and consumption.

The Addis Ababa convening on strengthening African civil society climate action on food systems and agriculture identified four persistent gaps that must define the road to COP31 and COP32: 1). ambition and implementation; 2). adaptation needs and available finance; 3) pledged climate finance and delivered; 4). global rules and the daily realities of people on the front line. *Ambitious frameworks without the flow of finance do not build resilience and finance that communities cannot access does not constitute delivery.*

At the same time, Africa is a continent with many solutions, for example smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, women, youth, local and Indigenous communities are conserving seed and livestock, restoring soils, managing water, protecting biodiversity, adapting production systems, building local markets and sustaining knowledge systems. Agroecology as a science, practice and social movement provides an important framework for linking ecological resilience with food sovereignty, local knowledge, dignified livelihoods, nutrition, biodiversity and inclusive control of food systems.

Our position

We re-affirm that Africa needs productive, nutritious, resilient, inclusive, culturally appropriate, humane and increasingly low-emission agriculture and food systems while safeguarding socio-economic development and preventing transition costs from being shifted onto small producers. Adaptation must remain central because it protects lives, livelihoods, water, food sovereignty and security, animal welfare and health, nutrition, biodiversity and development gains already under climate stress. This is consistent with Article 2 of the convention, the Paris Agreement's adaptation objective and the evolving Global Goal on Adaptation architecture (UNFCCC, 2026; AUC, 2025; FAO, 2024).

Climate action in African agriculture and food systems must be measured by whether it expands the agency, resilience and wellbeing of African people - not merely by whether it generates new projects, markets, metrics or technologies.

Climate resilience must be understood as the capacity of communities to anticipate, absorb, adapt and transform in responses to shocks without surrendering rights, and assets on food sovereignty.

We therefore ground this Call in the following principles;

1. Food sovereignty and inclusive governance of food systems, including meaningful community sovereignty over seed, land, water, production, markets and food choices.
2. Agroecology and ecological resilience, building on biodiversity, healthy soils, animal welfare, farmer managed seed systems, farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR), and diversified production systems.

3. Climate justice and equity, recognizing Africa's high vulnerability, development needs and limited historical responsibility for the climate crisis.
4. Locally led and nationally determined action that respects diverse farming, pastoral, livestock and fisheries systems
5. Human rights, gender justice and intergenerational justice, with meaningful participation of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities and vulnerable groups.
6. Recognition and protection of African technologies, Indigenous and local knowledge and practices alongside appropriate science and research.
7. Just transition that protects livelihoods, African defined development space and community rights while fairly distributing the costs and benefits of change.
8. Accountability, transparency and direct access so that climate commitments can be traced from global decisions to resources, institutions and outcomes on the ground.

Adaptation policies should therefore produce benefits that can be recognised in the village, pastoral landscape, fishing community, local market and household, not merely in reports or conference declarations. We call for a progression from global frameworks to national action, indicators to outcomes, commitments to finance, and targets to implementation.

Our key demands and priorities for COP31 and COP32

From political recognition to financed, community-level delivery

1. Put adaptation agriculture, food security and food systems at the centre of implementation

COP31 must treat adaptation as a political priority equal to mitigation and ensure that agriculture and African food systems are integrated across adaptation, loss and damage, just transition, technology, gender, nutrition and finance. The Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Implementation of Climate Action on Agriculture and Food Security should be updated and renewed. The future joint work on agriculture should move decisively from knowledge exchange towards implementation; identifying country needs, connecting them with support, and strengthening integration into NDCs, National Adaptation Plans; transforming technology and capacity needs assessment into investment programmes and ensure inclusive participation and benefit of smallholder farmers and vulnerable groups. The 2026 UNFCCC process already places implementation and access to means of implementation at the centre of the Joint Work and COP31 should convert that opening into practical support. (UNFCCC, 2026).

2. Make climate finance accessible, grant-based and locally accountable

The finance question is not only how much is announced, but what kind of finance is provided, who can access it, how quickly it arrives and what reaches frontline actors. COP29 set a new collective quantified finance goal (NCQG) of at least USD 300 billion annually for developing countries by 2035, alongside a broader effort to scale finance from all sources towards USD 1.3 trillion annually. Yet there is still a gap and the barriers created by complex accreditation, fiduciary and compliance requirements, weak project-preparation capacity and debt pressures (UNFCCC, 2024; UNEP, 2025)

We therefore call for a substantial expansion of grant-based and directly accessible adaptation finance for agroecologically based agriculture and food systems, including dedicated windows and mechanisms capable of reaching smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, women's cooperatives, children and youth enterprises, local organisations and community institutions.

Finance providers should ease accreditation and transaction barriers, fund project preparation and institutional strengthening, and use patient, context-sensitive capital where appropriate. Private finance can complement public finance, but it must not substitute for grant-based public support for adaptation and other public good functions.

3. Fund African led agroecology and seed sovereignty

African civil society calls for public policy and public benefit investment that recognise agroecology as a proven, locally grounded pathway for building resilient, nutritious and sustainable food systems alongside other nationally determined and context appropriate approaches. Support should include community seed banks and farmer-managed seed systems, soil health and ecosystem restoration, water harvesting and recycling, integrated farming systems, Indigenous foods and knowledge, and resilient local infrastructure.

Markets must be treated as part of adaptation while building value web not production alone, through territorial local market intelligence, processing and value addition, cooperative organisation, fair pricing, appropriate labelling and affordable quality assurance. Public procurement and consumer awareness measures should strengthen demand for locally produced nutritious and agroecologically produced foods.

4. Support a people centred just transition on rights and African development

A clear and direct integration of agriculture and food systems into the Just Transition Work Programme and its implementation arrangements, with attention to smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, food workers, processors, traders and rural communities should be inevitable. A just transition in African agriculture and food systems must be bottom up, development centred and farmer centred. It must protect land and seed rights, recognise Indigenous knowledge systems, strengthen local institutions, create dignified economic opportunities for smallholder farmers, women, children and youth, and share the costs and benefits of transition fairly. African civil society rejects prescriptive pathways that disregard national circumstances or shift mitigation and adjustment burdens onto smallholder farmers and pastoralists. A transition is not just if the people living through it are excluded from designing it.

5. Make nutrition, health, gender and pastoralism visible in climate implementation

The resilience of African food systems must be measured not only by yields, but also by dietary quality, food safety, affordability, health, income security and dignity. Climate policy should connect resilient production with safe water, livestock health and resilience, healthy diets within planetary boundaries based on healthy and Indigenous foods, school feeding, public health and social protection.

Women whose labour, knowledge and care work underpin many food economies must have meaningful access to land, finance, technology, extension and decision-making. Pastoral systems, especially in arid

and semi-arid regions, require explicit attention in adaptation plans, land tenure, and rangeland protection indicators and finance rather than being absorbed invisibly into generic agriculture categories.

6. Build an African accountability architecture from Addis to communities

COP32 should establish a practical delivery and accountability compact which aligns NDCs, NAPs, agricultural strategies, development plans and public budgets, strengthens national and local project pipelines, links nationally and locally identified priorities to appropriate finance windows including GCF, GEF, Adaptation Fund, LDCF among other financing opportunities, and publish periodic information, reports and data on resources promised, approved, disbursed and delivered and reaching farmers and communities.

Our collective commitments as African civil society

1. Coordinate

We aim to maintain a set of shared African civil society demands and strengthen regular liaison with relevant state and non-state institutions including but not limited to the African Group of Negotiators, African Union , national ministries and development partners.

2. Connect

We must create a continuous evidence environment linking farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolks, women, youth, researchers and local organisations with national, continental and UNFCCC policy processes.

3. Create space

We must ensure that frontline communities participate meaningfully not symbolically in policy design, finance decisions, implementation and review.

4. Resource Mobilisation

We shall aim at mobilising for public investment, grant-based climate finance, research, technology and enterprise support around African led solutions.

5. Communicate

We shall ensure that we report publicly on promises, finance, implementation and outcomes, using community networks and media to close the distance between COP decisions and everyday life.

The Addis Ababa call for Just, resilient and sovereign African food systems

We call upon African governments, Parties to the UNFCCC, the COP31 and COP32 Presidencies, the African Union, the African Group of Negotiators, climate funds, development partners, research institutions and responsible private actors to work with African civil society and frontline communities to deliver a decisive shift from promises to implementation.

We call for a protection of farmers' seed systems, rights to land and water for rural and local communities and the indigenous communities

We call for climate action that protects rather than dispossesses, one that strengthens rather than replaces local knowledge, one that reduces rather than deepens inequality and dependency, that finances rather than merely measures adaptation, and one that places the rights, agency and wellbeing of African people at the centre of food system transformation to sustainability.

We call for food production pathways that strengthen smallholders, pastoralists, fisherfolks and other food producers, rather than industrial agriculture, including industrial livestock models that concentrate production and increase carbon footprints, deepen dependence on external inputs and supply chains, undermine livelihoods, ecosystems and livestock health, and lock the continent into a more climate-vulnerable food future.

Africa's food systems cannot remain in the shadows of global climate action, they are central to our adaptation, livelihoods, economies, health, cultures, biodiversity, sovereignty and future. The test of COP31 and COP32 will not be the number of declarations adopted, but whether a farmer can withstand the next failed rainy season, whether a pastoralist can access water and grazing resources without losing a livelihood, whether fisherfolk can respond to changing conditions, whether a woman trader can move and preserve food safely, whether young people can build dignified livelihoods in resilient local economies, whether a child can grow up nourished rather than stunted by drought and whether families can access healthy, culturally acceptable and affordable food.

We leave Addis Ababa with a common conviction that the journey from COP31 to COP32 must be a journey from ambition to implementation, from indicators to outcomes, from pledged finance to real access, and from decisions made about African communities to decisions shaped with and by them.

"Africa must not wait for its food and climate future to be designed elsewhere. Our evidence must influence decisions, our solutions must be recognised, and climate finance must reach the people and places where adaptation is already happening."