AFSA

ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA



From **Commitments** to **Delivery**

Enhancing climate action on food systems and agriculture through agroecology

POLICY BRIEF

COP31 TÜRKİYE ANTALYA

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Background and context

This policy brief is based on the collective Addis Ababa declaration of African civil society on climate action in food systems and agriculture towards COP31 and COP32, adopted on 9th September 2026 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The declaration emerged from the continental convening on strengthening African civil society climate action on food systems and agriculture, organised by AFSA with the Ministry of Planning and Development of the Government of Ethiopia held from 7th – 9th September 2026.

The convening brought together more than 130 participants from 33 countries, including farmers' and pastoralists' organisations, Indigenous Peoples, women and youth networks, faith-based organisations, researchers, government representatives, climate negotiators and development partners.

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is a broad coalition of over 40 network organisations representing about 200 million small-scale food producers, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, youth, women, fisherfolk, faith-based organisations and the broader civil society across 50 African countries, advocating for food sovereignty, climate justice and agroecology. AFSA's engagement at the 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), taking place from 9th – 20th November 2026 in Antalya, Turkiye, builds on its sustained advocacy from the national level to the global levels in the previous years.

AFSA actively engaged in COP30 which happened in Belem, Brazil and the SB64 earlier in June while pushing for the institutionalisation of agroecology in agriculture, adaptation, climate finance and just transition negotiations.

For agriculture, the four year mandate of the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Agriculture (SSJWA) concludes this year 2026, and Parties will look to decide future of agriculture within the UNFCCC negotiations. The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) also continues without agreed text after the SB64 Bonn talks, the Just Transition Mechanism agreed in Belem and progressed at the SB64 still needs to be made operational, and the call to triple adaptation finance by 2035 requires a baseline and progress.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that Africa's food systems are among the most vulnerable globally, and the World Meteorological Organization's latest State of the Climate in Africa report shows that rising temperatures, erratic rainfall and extreme weather are already undermining livelihoods, with climate-related disasters affecting at least 13 million people across the continent in 2025 alone (WMO, 2026). Agriculture employs over 60% of Africa's workforce and remains predominantly rain fed. Across the continent, climate change is experienced as floods, droughts, heat stress, soil and ecosystem degradation, water scarcity, livestock losses, damaged infrastructure all causing food price volatility and a rising cost of living.

> Smallholder farmers do not experience climate change as an implementation gap or a negotiating acronym but rather experience it through crop loss, water stress, persistent conflict, declining soil fertility, increasing debt, hunger and reduced income.

At the SB64, the SJWA's second workshop addressed progress, challenges and opportunities related to identifying needs and accessing means of implementation, and an enhanced Sharm el-Sheikh online portal was launched. However, the conclusions agreed by Parties did not include the key messages from the workshop.

The GGA negotiations ended without agreement where the entire text remained bracketed and was forwarded to SB65, with the reference to tripling adaptation finance at the heart of the deadlock. The African Group, the Least Developed Countries, AOSIS and the G77 and China sought to anchor the tripling commitment in the GGA text, while several developed countries resisted.

For the just transition negotiations, SB64 adopted terms of reference for the review of the Just Transition Work Programme and agreed to keep working on how the new mechanism will function, with a synthesis report due by COP31.

On a brighter side, the COP31 Presidency included supporting food security and developing sustainable agricultural systems among the Presidency's priorities. This opens a political space that governments, development partners and other actors can leverage on to push for clear decisions on food systems and agriculture at COP31.

> This brief therefore outlines AFSA's strategic positions, policy recommendations and advocacy priorities for COP31, drawing on the outcomes of COP30 and SB64, the evolving negotiations and Africa's food system and agriculture realities.

AFSA's climate intervention



AFSA's position is anchored in the shared conviction of the collective African civil society actors in food systems and agriculture in the Addis Ababa declaration 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."

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.

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, on sustainable livelihoods for food producers, on local food systems and on the knowledge and skills of Indigenous Peoples, peasant communities, young people and women, grounded in democratic decision-making by affected communities.

Smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, women, youth, and 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, a practice and a social movement, provides the framework that links ecological resilience with food sovereignty, local knowledge, dignified livelihoods, nutrition, biodiversity and inclusive control of food systems. It promotes diversification, reduces dependence on synthetic inputs, strengthens territorial markets and fosters community-led resilience through farmer networks, seed systems and inclusive governance (FAO, 2018; HLPE, 2019; IPCC, 2023).

Climate action in African agriculture and food systems must be measured by whether it expands the 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 response to shocks without surrendering their rights and assets.

AFSA rejects food production pathways built on industrial agriculture, including industrial livestock models, that concentrate production, 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. It equally rejects prescriptive pathways that disregard national circumstances and climate action that replaces rather than strengthens local knowledge.



Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Agriculture (SJWA)

The Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Implementation of Climate Action on Agriculture and Food Security was established at COP27 through Decision 3/CP.27 as a four year work programme. Its roadmap, agreed at SB60 in June 2024, provided for annual in-session workshops, annual synthesis reports by the secretariat on agriculture related work across constituted bodies, and the Sharm el-Sheikh online portal. The first workshop, at SB62 in June 2025, addressed systemic and holistic approaches to climate action on agriculture, food systems and food security and the second, at SB64 in June 2026, addressed identifying needs and accessing means of implementation.

Despite these activities, Parties have not been able to reach substantive conclusions, divisions persist over the term food systems, over finance and over trade related issues. The joint work's mandate concludes at COP31, where the Subsidiary Bodies will report on its progress. For Africa, allowing the only dedicated agriculture stream under the UNFCCC to lapse would be a serious setback.

After four years of the joint work, the farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk most affected by climate change are yet to see real support on the ground. COP31 must therefore deliver a clear decision on climate action for food security and food systems and move beyond dialogues and workshops to action.

> The decisions must mainly focus on implementation, identifying what countries and communities need, connecting them with finance, technology and capacity support, integrating food systems into NDCs and National Adaptation Plans, and making sure that smallholder farmers and vulnerable groups take part in and benefit from it.

Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)

As most of the continent's farming depends on rain, and food producers are already facing droughts, floods and heat that destroy crops, livestock and incomes, 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 GGA architecture.

The Global Goal on Adaptation was established under Article 7.1 of the Paris Agreement to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change. The UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, adopted at COP28, set 11 thematic targets, including target 9(b) on attaining climate resilient food and agricultural production and supply and distribution of food, and increasing sustainable and regenerative production and equitable access to adequate food and nutrition for all. At COP30, Parties adopted the 59 Belem Adaptation Indicators, though at SB64, parties could not agree on the GGA text.

AFSA calls upon parties at COP31 to agree on the GGA without further delay and that the food and agriculture indicators should measure what matters to communities, such as soil health, seed and crop diversity, nutrition and income, and not only yields, and farmers and communities should be involved in deciding how progress is measured. Measuring adaptation must also come with the finance to deliver it, so the commitment to triple adaptation finance should be included in the GGA decision.

Climate Finance

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 Goal (NCQG) of at least USD 300 billion a year for developing countries by 2035, within a broader effort to scale finance from all sources to USD 1.3 trillion a year. COP30 called for efforts to at least triple adaptation finance by 2035. Developed countries reported a record USD 136.7 billion in climate finance in 2024, but adaptation remains poorly underfunded.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Adaptation Gap report 2025 estimates that developing countries will need over USD 310 billion a year for adaptation by 2035. International public adaptation finance, however, fell to USD 26 billion in 2023 from USD 28 billion in 2022, leaving a gap of about USD 284 billion a year and the Glasgow goal of doubling adaptation finance to about USD 40 billion by 2025 is not on track to be met (UNEP, 2025). For African farmers, these gaps are exacerbated by complex accreditation, fiduciary and compliance requirements, weak project preparation capacity and mounting debt pressures.

The Article 9.1 work programme agreed in Belem is also contested and its place on the COP31 agenda was still unresolved after SB64.

At the Addis Ababa convening, African civil society was clear about the finance it wants to see, adaptation finance must come as grants, not loans. Many African countries are already burdened by debt, which limits what they can invest in agriculture and food systems, and climate finance must not make this worse. Debt and limited fiscal space must therefore be addressed so that governments can invest in resilient food systems.

This finance must be public, predictable and easy to access. It should reach smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, women's cooperatives, youth enterprises, local organisations and community institutions directly, and support agroecology, farmer-managed seed systems, soil and water restoration and local markets. Private finance can add to public finance but must not replace it. **There must also be transparency on how much finance is promised, approved, disbursed and actually reaches farmers and communities.**



Just Transition

COP27 established the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) through Decision 3/CMA.4 to promote pathways that integrate social and economic justice into climate action across all sectors, including agriculture, food systems and land use. At COP30, Parties agreed to establish a Just Transition Mechanism, a long standing demand of civil society and which was also referred to as the Belem Action Mechanism (BAM).

At SB64, Parties adopted terms of reference for the review of the JTWP, which will take place at SB65 to inform decisions on its continuation, and agreed to continue work on the elements needed to operationalise the mechanism. Views still diverge on its form, its support functions and the role of non-Party stakeholders where COP31 is expected to take decisions on both.

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.

> As the African civil society actors Addis Ababa declaration states, "a transition is not just if the people living through it are excluded from designing it."



Key Asks

AFSA urges parties, and development partners at COP31 to;

- **Agree on the future of agriculture negotiations beyond the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Agriculture**, with a clear decision that moves from dialogues to action on the ground and recognises agroecology.
- **Consider adaptation as a priority for Africa**, and recognise agroecology as a viable approach for climate adaptation especially in agriculture and food systems
- **Agree on a roadmap for tripling adaptation finance by 2035**, mainly as grants rather than loans that add to debt, with funding that smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, women and youth can access directly.
- **Ensure that the GGA indicators relating to food and agriculture measure what matters to communities,** such as agroecology, nutrition, pastoralism and income, are linked to finance, and are never used as conditions for accessing funds.
- **Ensure that the Just Transition Mechanism bears a clear focus** on agriculture and food systems, protecting land and seed rights and involving affected communities.
- **Fund African-led agroecology and seed sovereignty,** including community seed banks, soil and ecosystem restoration, water harvesting, integrated farming, Indigenous foods and local markets.
- I**ntegrate agroecology into NDCs and NAPs** and fund it through public finance for example national budgets



ANNEX 1

Why agroecology is holistic and systemic in building resilience to African agriculture against climate change

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.

Policy momentum

A growing number of African governments are slowly but steadily recognising agroecology as a vital approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation, which has seen countries like Kenya, Benin, Burkina Faso Togo develop and launch National Agroecology Strategies, where as Senegal, Mali, Togo, Zimbabwe, and Uganda are in advanced stages of developing their national agroecology strategies.

AFSA has played a catalytic role in facilitating multi-stakeholder consultations that have informed these strategies for example, the Agroecology for Climate Action (A4CA) campaign, involving over 10 African countries, has seen the continued engagement of and collaboration between non state actors and governments to adopt and institutionalise Agroecology as a vehicle for climate change adaptation and mitigation in agriculture policies across Africa.

Strong social movements and community resilience

Agroecology fosters strong community networks among farmers, enhancing their collective resilience and cohesion in the face of climate shocks. Agroecology strengthens the cohesiveness of farmer groups by fostering community-based knowledge sharing, reciprocal practices, and mutual support systems in the face of climate shocks. After Cyclone Idai hit Zimbabwe in 2019, agroecological farmers in eastern and southern regions quickly mobilized and demonstrated remarkable solidarity by engaging in widespread seed exchanges. Through these relationships, communities exchanged local seeds and knowledge, enabling rapid restoration of food production and demonstrating the social resilience embedded in agroecological systems (Chikukwa et al., 2023).

Practical evidence on ground

Drawing on comprehensive research conducted across more than ten African countries, national-level consultations with diverse stakeholders, and over 100 documented case studies on agroecology, it is critical to recognize the transformative potential of agroecology in addressing the continent's escalating climate vulnerabilities. These findings are reinforced by global scientific consensus, including reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which show that extreme weather events will increase food insecurity risks, food price rises, reduced food diversity, and reduced income for agricultural and fishers' livelihoods

Agroecological practices such as composting, mulching, crop rotation, and the use of green manure significantly enhance soil fertility. Studies from Malawi show that agroecological techniques like legume intercropping restore nitrogen levels in the soil, reducing the need for expensive synthetic fertilizers (Snapp et al., 2010). In Tanzania, farmers reported access to more than 30 different food crops annually, enhancing nutrition and food sovereignty (Biovision Foundation, 2022).

Agroecology minimizes dependence on external inputs like synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. In Senegal, farmers reduced their production costs by up to 60% after switching to agroecological practices, allowing them to reinvest in local savings and cooperatives.

As the climate crisis continues to threaten pollinators, reducing agricultural production, agroecological landscapes support pollinators, pest predators, and microbial biodiversity. A study in Burkina Faso recorded a 25% increase in bee populations and native flora after farmers integrated agroforestry and organic farming techniques (IFOAM, 2020).

Agroecology emphasizes inclusive, community-led development where African women play a central role in seed saving, local food markets, and household nutrition. In Uganda, female-led agroecology groups documented improved access to land and decision-making at village level (PELUM Uganda, 2021).

With Africa being a continent with the highest unemployment rates, agroecology provides economic viability and accessibility to markets for the youthful continent through agroecological entrepreneurship. In Zimbabwe, farmers practicing agroecology have better access to territorial markets that favour organic, indigenous, and healthy agricultural and food products. This ensures minimal food miles, waste reduction, and shorter value chains (AFSA, 2023).

Knowledge sharing is critical for Africa and agroecology integrates traditional agricultural knowledge that has sustained communities for generations. In Sahelian countries, knowledge of drought-resistant crops and soil restoration techniques has been successfully integrated into agroecological programs (Practical Action, 2019).

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