

**Economic Commission for Africa****Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

Seventh session

Brazzaville (online), 1–4 March 2021

Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

**High-level panel on transformative action and investment
to better build forward from the COVID-19 crisis
towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve
the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063****Background paper on ending hunger and achieving food
security in Africa¹****I. Introduction and overview**

1. Sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition lie at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;² the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union; the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (2016–2025); and the Science Technology Innovation Strategy for Africa frameworks.³ Sustainable Development Goal 2 is indivisibly interlinked and coherently integrated through complex synergies and trade-offs with all other Sustainable Development Goals. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda⁴ recognizes enormous investment needs to revitalize the agricultural sector, promote rural development, and ensure food and nutrition security, notably in developing countries. Parties of the Paris Agreement⁵ recognize the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and the particular vulnerabilities of food production systems to the adverse impacts of climate change and the binding requirement for economic and social transformation.

2. Despite commitments at the highest political level, the joint report of FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and the World Health Organization (WHO) on the State of Food

* ECA/RFS/2021/1/Rev.1.

¹ This background paper was jointly prepared by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), with contributions from the African Union Commission, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

² General Assembly resolution 70/1.

³ African Union, "Continental Frameworks", n.d. Available at <https://au.int/agenda2063/continental-frameworks>.

⁴ General Assembly resolution 69/313.

⁵ FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1.



Security and Nutrition in the World 2020,⁶ and the joint report of FAO, ECA and the African Union Commission on Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2020⁷ found that hunger is on the rise in Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa

3. Several African countries find themselves on the front line of a pending hunger crisis driven by COVID-19.^{8,9} Current levels of food insecurity are being worsened by measures to control the pandemic and overlapping shocks such as conflicts, droughts, floods and pests, including desert locusts and fall armyworms.¹⁰

4. COVID-19, along with these hazards of the region, threatens to reverse the development progress of Africa in recent years. It is threatening its ability to meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 2 by 2030. The pandemic is driving up acute hunger in countries already experiencing food and nutrition crises, with compounded challenges to already-fragile food systems.

5. In 2021, the United Nations Secretary-General is convening a Food Systems Summit¹¹ to launch bold new actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, delivering progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. He has called for tackling all the food security and nutrition challenges, including those recently posed by COVID-19 crisis by working together across sectors and borders, making food production and consumption aligned with sustainable development, including preserving critical humanitarian food, livelihood and nutrition assistance.

6. The African Union has established an Africa Taskforce for Coronavirus, through which the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for the COVID-19 outbreak¹² was launched. The African Union Commission–FAO task force¹³ was subsequently launched to inform and coordinate the recommendations of African Ministers of Agriculture on food security and nutrition. The African Union Nutrition Champion, King Letsie III of Lesotho,¹⁴ also issued a call to ensure that nutrition is a core component of country resilience plans and social bonds in response to COVID-19. In addition, The 11th Africa Day for Food Security and Nutrition called for strengthening resilient food systems through multisectoral approaches.

7. Understanding the regional hazards and assessing case-specific impacts on food security and nutrition offer transformative opportunities towards improving the

⁶ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (Rome; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO; 2020). Available at www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/online/ca9692en.html.

⁷ FAO, ECA and African Union Commission, *Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2020* (forthcoming).

⁸ FAO and WFP, *Early warning analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots* (Rome, FAO and WFP, 2020). Available at www.fao.org/3/cb0258en/CB0258EN.pdf.

⁹ ECA, “Africa UN Knowledge Hub for COVID-19”, 2020. Available at <https://knowledge.uneca.org/COVID19>.

¹⁰ By the end of 2020, all African countries reported cases of COVID-19, with more than 2,650,000 recorded cases and more than 62,000 deaths, and numbers are rising exponentially.

¹¹ United Nations, “2021 Food Systems Summit” (forthcoming). Available at www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit.

¹² African Union and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, “The Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19”, 2020. Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38264-doc-africa_joint_continental_strategy_for_COVID-19_outbreak.pdf.

¹³ Members of the task force include: African Union Commission, African Union Development Agency–New Partnership for Africa’s Development, FAO, IFAD, WFP, European Commission, African Development Bank and World Bank.

¹⁴ African Union, “African Union Nutrition Champion calls on leaders to embed nutrition within the COVID-19 response and recovery”, 17 September 2017. Available at <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20200917/au-champion-embed-nutrition-covid-19-response-recovery>.

resilience and efficiency of the African food system for “building forward better towards a resilient and green Africa”.

II. Implementation progress

8. Sustainable Development Goal target 2.1 – “By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.”

9. The prevalence of undernourishment¹⁵ in Africa increased from 17.6 per cent in 2014 to 19.1 per cent in 2019, and about 250 million people Africa-wide suffer from hunger. The adequacy of people’s access to food¹⁶ in 2019 shows that one in two people in Africa is experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity. Approximately 248.5 million – one in five – suffer from severe food insecurity.

10. Africa-wide impact assessments of COVID-19 on national and local food security and nutrition unveiled a compounded effect on hunger prevalence. Preliminary estimates made by FAO indicate that, globally, an additional 83 million to 132 million people may be undernourished in 2020. Assuming Africa will continue to host about 37 per cent¹⁷ of the world’s undernourished, an additional 30 million to 48 million Africans may be undernourished in 2020, enough to increase the prevalence of undernourishment above the 20 per cent mark. Food insecurity rates appear to be significantly higher among women than among men. The prevalence of undernourishment is 39 per cent in countries experiencing protracted crises, compared with 15 per cent in all other developing countries.

11. The rise in the prevalence of undernourishment in sub-Saharan Africa over the 2014–2019 period could be attributed to conflict, climate extremes and economic slowdowns and downturns, as indicated in the past three editions (2017–2019) of the Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition.¹⁸

12. Sustainable Development Goal target 2.2 – “By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.”

13. Although progress has been made, achieving good nutritional outcomes has been challenging, specifically in the context of Africa. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 2.2 is only possible with the achievement of several other Sustainable Development Goals.

14. The regional child malnutrition estimates of UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank¹⁹ of 2020 reveal that Africa is still far from being a region without malnutrition, further indicated in the Cost of Hunger in Africa series, conducted jointly by the African Union Commission, WFP and ECA. The series continues to reveal the burden malnutrition is having on economies, with the cost ranging from 1.9 to 16.5 per cent of GDP annually.

¹⁵ Sustainable Development Goals indicator 2.1.1.

¹⁶ Sustainable Development Goals indicator 2.1.2.

¹⁷ This figure represents a three-year average between 2017 and 2019.

¹⁸ FAO, ECA and African Union Commission, “Africa regional overview of food security and nutrition: containing the damage of economic slowdown and downturns to food insecurity in Africa”, 2019.

¹⁹ UNICEF, WHO and World Bank, “Levels and trends in child malnutrition: Key Findings of the 2020 Edition of the Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates” (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2020). Available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1273507/retrieve>.

15. Stunting²⁰ affected an estimated 29.1 per cent or 57.5 million children under 5 years of age in Africa in 2019. About 40 per cent of all stunted children in the world live in Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa is the only region of the world which has seen a rise in the number of stunted children over time. The devastating effects of stunting hinders sustainable human capital development in Africa. The continent is not on track to achieve the 2030 target of a 50 per cent reduction in the number of stunted children.

16. Wasting²¹ continued to threaten the lives of an estimated 6.4 per cent or 12.7 million children under 5 years of age in Africa in 2019. About 27 per cent of all wasted children in the world live in Africa. A moderately or severely wasted child has an increased risk of death, but treatment is possible. Africa is not on track to meet the regional target, reducing and maintaining wasting below 5 per cent. Further, an estimated 132 million children under 5 in Africa suffer from deficiencies in vitamins and other essential nutrients.²²

17. Overweight²³ affected an estimated 4.7 per cent or 9.3 million children under 5 in Africa in 2019. Also, adult overweight and obesity rates have risen dramatically in many African countries. For Africa as a whole, the prevalence of obesity stands at 12.8 per cent. Overweight increases the risk of diet-related non-communicable diseases later in life.

18. By 2022, COVID-19 could result in an additional 9.3 million wasted and 2.6 million stunted, 168,000 additional child deaths and 2.1 million maternal anemia cases.²⁴

19. There is, therefore, dire need to increase investment on proven cost-effective and sustainable strategies and programmes, such as food fortification, biofortification, and promoting the development of food safety systems.

20. Sustainable Development Goal target 2.3 – “By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.”

21. The available evidence is limited to a few countries. However, it suggests a clear pattern: the productivity of small-scale producers is systematically lower on average than for larger food producers. In most countries, small-scale food producers’ incomes are less than half those of larger food producers. As maize is produced, primarily, by small-scale farmers in most African countries, maize yield has been selected as a proxy indicator for small-scale producers’ productivity and incomes. Despite an increase of about 5.75 per cent between 2013 and 2019, compared with the global average of about 7.5 per cent, the maize yield of Africa was only 35 per cent of the global average in 2019.

22. As the productivity of small-scale farmers in Africa remains low, little surplus is available for sale at markets. This undermines financial security and exacerbates food insecurity of small-scale farmers. Therefore, African countries must take rapid action to improve yields to boost the incomes of small-scale farmers. This is even essential to

²⁰ “Stunting” refers to a child who is too short for his or her age. The child can suffer severe irreversible physical and cognitive damage that accompanies stunted growth.

²¹ “Wasting” refers to a child who is too thin for his or her height. Wasting is the result of recent rapid weight loss or the failure to gain weight.

²² UNICEF, *State of the World’s Children, 2019*.

²³ “Overweight” refers to a child who is too heavy for his or her height. This form of malnutrition results from energy intakes from food and beverages that exceed children’s energy requirements.

²⁴ Research Square, “The potential impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on maternal and child undernutrition in low and middle income countries”, 11 December 2020. Available at www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-123716/v1.

help mitigate the food security impact of COVID-19, which has hit vulnerable groups hard, including smallholder farmers, essentially the poor.

23. Sustainable Development Goal target 2.4 – “By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.”

24. Whereas agriculture is indispensable for food security and nutrition, growth in agriculture requires balancing trade-offs, considering impacts on natural habitat, soil fertility and biodiversity. If managed sustainably, agriculture can contribute to essential ecosystem functions. These include climate change resilience and mitigation, water quality maintenance, erosion control, biological pest control and pollination.

25. While internationally comparable data on progress towards sustainable agriculture in Africa are scarce, related indicators suggest that the continent is not on track to meet this target. Today, 33 per cent of the land is moderately-to-highly degraded, and conditions are getting worse in far more cases than in which they are improving. An estimated two thirds of the population in Africa live in areas with severe water shortages for at least one month each year. A growing number of regions are facing water scarcity due to excessive water use in agriculture. The regional extent of wetlands is estimated to have declined 64–71 per cent in the twentieth century, and wetland losses and degradation continue Africa-wide.

26. As African agriculture stands to experience a significant rise in temperature and extreme weather conditions, smallholder farmers in most African countries are the most at risk, as their resilience to extreme events is usually low. The likelihood of increased weather variability and extreme events means that management of risk, in addition to those not driven by climatic hazards such as COVID-19, is crucial.

27. Sustainable Development Goal target 2.5 – “By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.”

28. Biodiversity is vital to food security and nutrition, and ensuring sustainable increases in agricultural production. Genetic resources provide the material for selection on higher productivity and lower use of chemical inputs. It is essential to adapt food production to climate change effects.

29. The indicator for plant genetic resources addresses the state of ex situ conservation, which is most comfortable to measure because of well-documented gene banks, and assumes that gene banks are a sufficient representation of the diversity found in farmers’ fields. Virtually all regions of the world increased their gene bank holdings, totalling about a 1 per cent increase on the previous year, between 2018 and 2019, including North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

30. For animal genetic resources, progress is measured by the number of local breeds for which sufficient material is stored in gene banks and the risk status of reported breed populations in the field. There is an alarming scarcity of data for both these indicators. There are only 19 local livestock breeds across Africa reported with sufficient material stored to reconstitute the breeds in case of extinction. Of the approximately 917 local breeds across Africa, more than 80 per cent have no risk assessment. For the small proportion of breeds with an assessment, most can be considered at risk of extinction. The high degree of uncertainty in these results shows the urgent need for improved national livestock census data on breed level.

31. Sustainable Development Goal target 2.a – “Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene

banks, in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular, least developed countries.”

32. Accelerated growth in the agricultural and rural economies is essential for breaking the vicious cycle of extreme poverty, undernourishment and malnutrition. Economic growth and public investment in agriculture are strongly interconnected. Those parts of Africa where agricultural capital per worker and public investments in agriculture have stagnated are the centres of extreme poverty and hunger today. Farmers are the largest investors in agriculture in Africa, and must be central to any strategy for increasing investment in the sector.

33. The gap between agriculture’s contribution to the economy and its share of government expenditures is increasing: the agriculture orientation index – which measures agriculture’s share of government expenditures relative to its share of GDP – fell from 0.64 in 2001 to 0.16 in 2013 and 0.15 in 2018 Africa-wide.

34. Agriculture in Africa has continued to receive the lion’s share of agricultural official development assistance (ODA) allocated to developing countries globally, despite substantially declining. The continent’s share of global ODA allocated to agriculture has, however, decreased from 42 per cent to 31 per cent between 2013 and 2017.

35. ODA cannot offset the widening gap between agriculture’s contribution to the economy and its share of government expenditures. ODA to the agriculture sector in Africa has recently been decreasing, by about \$160 million, between 2013 and 2017. The downward trend of ODA allocated to agriculture should encourage national governments to count more on domestic resource mobilization for financing agricultural transformation to foster sustainable development.

36. Sustainable Development Goal target 2.b – “Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round.”

37. Estimates on agricultural producer support as a measure of protection reveal a slow move towards less support to agriculture, paving the way for a levelling of African agricultural trade. Due to COVID-19, some countries have re-embarked on subsidies and protection measures, banning either exports and/or imports of agricultural commodities.

38. Commencing 1 January 2021, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) entered into force, providing substantial untapped potential for African economies to drastically increase intraregional and extraregional trade in agricultural commodities. African countries, however, need to embark on dismantling trade barriers, notably non-tariff trade barriers. Harmonization of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS), and improving regional infrastructure and transport networks are essential to boost intra-Africa trade in agriculture commodities and services.

39. The associated indicator of “growth rate of the value of trade of agricultural commodities and services within Africa”, which is based on the Malabo biennial review²⁵ commitment 5 – Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agriculture Commodities and Services – shows that 7 of 38 member States (18 per cent) reported being on track, compared with 10 per cent, or 3 out of 29 member States, that were on track in the previous biennial review cycle.

²⁵ African Union, *Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Biennial Review Report, 2015–2018* (Addis Ababa, African Union, 2020). Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39744-doc-caddp_br_2015-2018_english.pdf; and African Union, “Second Biennial Review Report of the African Union Commission on the Implementation of the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods”, 12 February 2020. Available at <https://au.int/en/documents/20200212/second-biennial-review-report-african-union-commission-implementation-malabo>.

40. Sustainable Development Goal target 2.c – “Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility.”

41. Improved functioning of markets and access to markets are being addressed by strengthening existing data collection tools and improving availability of dissemination of information. This includes World Trade Organization monitoring and mandatory notifications on domestic support. Monitoring of food prices is provided by publicly available sources, including the FAO food price index.²⁶

42. Extreme food price movements threaten agricultural markets, food security and livelihoods, especially of the most vulnerable. In 2017–2018, the proportion of countries in Africa experiencing abnormally high and moderately high food prices declined. High food prices persisted in nearly one third of the region’s countries during the 2017–2018, due to production shortfalls, currency depreciation and the impact of conflict and civil insecurity. The FAO Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS) Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) suggests recent high food prices in several African countries may negatively affect food security.

III. Challenges, constraints and emerging issues

43. The extent and magnitude of impacts of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition vary from country to country, depending on the infection rate and subsequent policy responses, including in, notably, containment measures. The impacts include investment, labour markets, processing and trade (cross-border and informal).

44. As COVID-19 started at the onset of the main growing season in many parts of the continent the distribution of essential farm inputs and the provision of extension services and labour availability were compromised, due to restricted movement; As countries started lockdowns, challenges related to the response to ongoing pest crises – such as locust, particularly in East Africa desert locust; fall armyworm; and mango mealybug – have increased, thereby severely further affecting crop production and rangeland conditions. Agricultural production was also negatively impacted by poor availability of agricultural inputs. Reference to research data in Ethiopia confirmed that conventional crops’ agricultural production might have dropped by 30 per cent.

45. Access to production capital was negatively affected due to uncertainty undermining financing institutions’ interest to fund farmers and operators along the food value chains

46. In both export and local markets, fruit and vegetable production has suffered due to disrupted domestic distribution systems for perishable commodities. As a consequence, the price of farm produce experienced decline in many parts of the continent. Key horticultural exports were adversely impacted by the ban of international flights and cargo shipping, reduced demand in the export market, and restriction of cross-border movement of goods and services.

47. Border closures, quarantine measures and other restrictions disrupted trade flows, further affecting food supply.

48. The impacts of COVID-19 were further compounded by recurrent extreme weather conditions, persistent instabilities and conflicts, and economic slowdowns and downturns. As of the end of December 2020,²⁷ 94.7 million people in East and Central Africa, 79.1 million people in Southern Africa and 124 million in West Africa did not have sufficient food consumption. Without urgent action, natural and human-made hazards will continue to prevent progress toward achieving Sustainable Development

²⁶ FAO, “World Food Situation”, n.d. Available at www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation.

²⁷ Regional data aggregated from HungerMap LIVE. Available at <https://hungermap.wfp.org/>.

Goal 2. On the other hand, early indicators show that Covid-19 has compounded effects on conflict. Indeed, key hotspots in the Sahel region for food insecurity highlighted by the Cadre Harmonise (CH) analysis are first driven by conflict.

49. Ending hunger in Africa must be achieved in the context of increasingly complex and protracted humanitarian needs. Conflict, pandemics, climate change and growing inequality amplify these challenges, disrupting food systems, economies and societies, as well as increasing people's vulnerability. Current trends – particularly amid the COVID-19 pandemic, point to continued disruption over the short, medium, and long term.

IV. Opportunities and transformative actions

1. COVID-19

50. As the impact of COVID-19 is not limited to one sector, the solutions and recovery cannot be limited to one sector, or region. It should cut across sectors, agencies and mandates. The African Union and the member States, international financial institutions, United Nations agencies and development partners are all required to work together, not just to continue to respond to and recover from COVID-19, but also make progress in Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals – making cross-context progress, particularly in food security, nutrition and livelihoods.

51. The crisis offers opportunities, including repurposing public expenditure to improve the efficiency of public spending, reinvesting funds to maximize the “triple wins” from the food system: (a) productivity and incomes, (b) resilience and climate-friendliness, and (c) nutritional outcomes.

52. Expanding and strengthening social protection measures presently in place are a must to save lives and livelihoods in light of the high prevalence rates of hunger, malnutrition and poverty due to the outbreaks of the desert locust, fall armyworm, and natural hazards such as drought, floods, conflict and insecurity, which continue to be a challenge in Africa. To improve nutrition outcomes, social protection systems should be nutrition-sensitive.

2. Reducing trade-related transaction costs

53. Some of the ways to reduce trade-related transaction costs are to: refrain from imposing measures that would restrict trade and mobility of commodities; reduce food waste and losses; resolve logistics bottlenecks; review trade and policy options and their likely impacts; reduce import tariffs on agriculture inputs as appropriate; and temporarily reduce value added taxes and other taxes.

54. Another way to reduce such costs is to harness the opportunities presented by AfCFTA by dismantling non-tariff barriers, the major obstacle to cross-border trade of agricultural and food goods.

55. COVID-19 impacts on global trade should incentivize African countries to undertake aggressive trade facilitation to improve trading regimes' efficiency.

56. Intra-Africa trade should continue to be promoted by fostering the adoption of national AfCFTA strategies and the African Union-endorsed guidelines to develop regional agricultural value chains. More focus should be given to value addition and integrating household farmers, who produce the bulk of the agricultural product in Africa.

3. United Nations Development System reform and partnership

57. The United Nations Development System reform²⁸ provides opportunities for integrated approaches and cross-sectoral synergies to deliver interlinked and transformative results at the country level towards ending hunger and malnutrition and achieving food security for all.

58. Improving nutrition in Africa, especially for the most vulnerable segments of the societies, requires effective and sustained multisectoral nutrition programming over the long term. Many countries are moving in the right direction.

59. Moreover, African countries, African Union regional economic communities, the United Nations Development System, and international and regional development partners should ensure the coherence of their programmes in the collective interest of achieving food and nutrition security in Africa, while leaving no one behind.

60. With 10 years remaining in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is time for renewed action to end hunger and malnutrition, and achieve food security, in all its forms, everywhere, and for everyone, especially children, youth and women. Partnership is essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 and the Malabo targets.

61. African countries, with support from development partners, are encouraged to adopt and adapt appropriate technologies, specifically those proven effective in mitigating the impact of COVID-19, climate change and other shocks on food security. Governments are also encouraged to domesticate relevant regional and continental frameworks with the contextualized application of science in food systems.

4. Transforming food consumption

62. Investing in resilient agrifood systems addresses multiple risks, including climate change and disaster-proof agrifood systems infrastructure.

63. Governments and development partners should create enabling policy environments for encouraging more private sector investment in promoting production and supply of affordable healthy foods to become more available and accessible. They should also strengthen existing data collection mechanisms, leading to accurate, reliable and valid information for making a compelling case for investing more in nutrition and food systems, and increasing production and productivity.

64. Home-grown school feeding programmes should be promoted to enhance learning and improve child nutrition, while providing markets to smallholder farmers.

65. Gender outcomes in child nutrition interventions should be mainstreamed, and gender transformative interventions should be promoted, that involve tackling child undernutrition in the continent.

5. Transforming food production

66. Capacities should be built to anticipate and act on food system risks and opportunities by, among others, strengthening the Africa Foresight Academy and

²⁸ United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Available at <https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/africa>.

galvanizing the community of foresight practice to advance the application of foresight techniques.

67. The implementation of AfCFTA should be prepared for by incentivizing African agricultural productive capacities, facilitating access to African markets for African agri-allied goods produced by Africans in Africa, strengthening the local food systems actors in the agriculture value chains, and fast-tracking implementation of the framework for Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services.

68. Sustainable agricultural development and sound food systems will help reduce poverty, increase youth employment, and empower women and smallholder farmers.

69. Secure land property rights and well-functioning land markets are recognized as potentially important factors in stimulating investment, productivity and higher farm incomes, as well as reducing the potential for conflict. Effective land governance and management, therefore, significantly affect agriculture, not only incentivizing farmers to adopt productivity-enhancing technologies, but also facilitating responsible large-scale land-based investments, and enhancing engagement of private sector actors.

70. Women in several countries have limited access to land and other productive resources, as access to these resources is greatly determined by the broader environment, including sociocultural norms, policy/legal frameworks and intrahousehold dynamics. Empowering women, including through greater access and control over land and productive resources, is therefore an essential step towards closing the gender gap in agriculture, leading to considerable gains in productivity and production. Enhancing women's income opportunities would improve the welfare of children and improve food security and nutrition, in addition to attaining enhanced health and education outcomes.

6. Transforming trade

71. Trade should be kept open and measures taken to protect the food supply chain against disruptions, to ensure a smooth supply of farming inputs and food.

72. Trade facilitation efforts should be targeted to sustaining export diversification, expanding intra-African trade by further opening countries to extraregional trade flows. In addition to strengthening markets and institutions, technology and infrastructure should receive more attention and investment.

73. Policymakers must monitor trends and avoid accidentally tightening food supply conditions. Digital technologies play a role in anticipating problems, smoothing temporary shortages and building food chains' resilience, to avoid similar occurrences in the future.

74. Intra-Africa trade of agricultural commodities is still low. Implementing AfCFTA to increase intraregional and extraregional trade is vital to the agricultural transformation of Africa. This would be enhanced by reducing non-tariff measures and other regulatory and administrative barriers, and developing regional value chains. Improving infrastructure and trade services would facilitate trade significantly, as well as agro-industry, to make agriculture more sustainable.

7. Transforming/invigorating financing

75. African countries should commit to CAADP financing. African Union member State and Governments should mobilize financing institutions and private sector actors to invest in agriculture, and to stimulate sustainable, affordable financing to agriculture.

76. Bilateral and multilateral partners should align their programmes with countries' priorities, as indicated in the national agriculture investment plans that best respond to country-specific priorities, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Decade of Action and the Paris Agreement.

77. Although significant progress has been made towards implementing the 2014 CAADP Malabo Declaration, more needs to be done,²⁹ including committing to financing targets, to ensure targets are met by 2025 and reverse the observed declining growth trend of African agricultural economies. This has to be done in full recognition of the new and disruptive challenges of COVID-19; rising debt; heightened climate variability; desert locust infestations; natural disasters; conflict, especially in fragile States; and humanitarian emergencies, which have all adversely affected African agrifood systems and distracted the implementation of Malabo–CAADP commitments on many fronts.

8. Cross-cutting transformative measures

78. There is a need for innovative financing and risk mitigation mechanisms. Enhancing investment in public and private finance to agriculture is critical to transforming African agriculture.

79. There is a compelling need to create and enhance necessary appropriate policy and institutional conditions, and support systems, that facilitate private investment in agriculture, agribusiness and agro-industries. Agricultural transformation can be achieved by implementing appropriately designed long-term inclusive strategies, good governance, establishing innovative public–private partnerships, and ensuring strong political will for better results.

80. Support should be scaled up for food processing, agro-industrial zones/parks, transport and local food markets, and a trade corridor should be advocated for.

81. Adequate strategic food reserves and storage facilities should be promoted that reduce post-harvest food loss and waste.

82. Regular data collection is critical to monitor and analyse country, regional and global progress going forward. The disaggregation by age, sex, employment and income status is essential to prepare evidence-based policies that will leave no one behind. Data, monitoring, evaluation and analysis, such as the biennial review reports, are fundamental for the coordination of different agricultural efforts and interventions in Africa.

V. Key messages

83. Slow progress is being made on the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 2. Even the marginal progress was wiped out by the COVID-19-induced disruptions of production, trade and market services, further worsening nutrition and food security in Africa, especially for the vulnerable.

84. Political commitment at the highest level of government is critical to improving food security and nutrition through the aligning of budgeting processes with the 2030 Agenda and Malabo Declaration, based on (a) well-designed national investment plans, (b) enabling policy environment, and (c) long-term actions across multiple systems – food, health, water and sanitation, education and social protection – to facilitate sustained access to nutritious affordable foods, essential nutrition services and practices in all contexts.

85. Guaranteeing national leadership is critical in advancing the food security agenda by putting in place evidence-based policies and strategies that enhance institutional capacities and capabilities for accelerated transformation to sustainable food and nutrition systems. Indeed, transforming agriculture in Africa would essentially require transforming existing food systems into efficient, green, resilient and

²⁹ African Union and FAO, “Declaration on Food Security and Nutrition during the COVID-19 Pandemic”, Meeting of African Ministers for Agriculture, 2020. Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38439-doc-ministerial_declaration_en.pdf.

sustainable systems. Improving nutrition outcomes calls for African leadership to prioritize nutrition governance.

86. The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded existing vulnerabilities in food systems, revealing fragilities in how food is produced, delivered and consumed. The COVID-19 challenge is also an opportunity and catalyst for Africa for a renewed and stronger commitment to reconfigure and implement strategies and approaches – making necessary shifts from “business as usual” – to integrate better prevention and treatment of malnutrition and undernourishment, and better bridge development and emergency, and to reposition the vulnerable, especially children, youth, women, refugees and internally displaced persons at the forefront of adapted policies and interventions.

87. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitates transforming African food systems in a way that supports more diverse, affordable, sustainable and healthy diets with strong food safety and resilient ecosystem considerations. This would need the adoption of holistic, multisectoral approaches working towards food systems that acknowledge and address both underlying issues of food insecurity, as well as acute protracted factors, such as climate hazards and conflicts.
