

# SYSTEMS 2025

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*Musalia Mudavadi, Kenya's Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, making his remarks at the FINAS 2025 Summit. PHOTO CREDIT: FINAS*

# FINAS 2025 Summit rallies Africa to rethink agri-food systems financing

By Murimi Gitari

The curtain fell on the Financing Agri-Food Systems Sustainably (FINAS) 2025 Summit in May, with speakers and participants calling for reforms in financing the agri-food systems sector. The three-day summit held at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC) in Nairobi, Kenya, brought together a diverse assembly of African and international stakeholders under the theme 'Taking Ownership: Rethinking Sustainable Financing for Africa's Food Systems'.

The summit decried the poor financing structures for the agri-food systems on the African continent.

It happened at a time when the continent's population is growing rapidly and technology penetration is fast reaching most farmers including smallholder farmers, who despite producing over 70 percent of Africa's food, still operate within highly fragmented and underdeveloped value chains.

"Too often, capital flows bypass smallholder farmers, overlook women producers, or are structured in ways that fail to reflect the seasonality, risk profile, and diversity of the agricultural sector. Financing remains fragmented, overly collateralised, and concentrated in a few high-value chains, leaving out the backbone of our food systems," noted Musalia Mudavadi, Kenya's Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, in his speech at the summit. →





## FINANCING AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS SUSTAINABLY-SUMMIT 2025

Taking Ownership: Rethinking Sustainable Financing for Africa's Food Systems

20-22 May 2025 | KICC Nairobi, Kenya



*From left: Simon Muchigiri, Head Fertilizer Unit, Kenya's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Dr Sophia Baumert, Project Manager, Sustainable Agricultural Systems and Policies AgSys Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Germany, Dr Hailemariam Ayalew Tiruneh, Research Fellow in the Development Strategy and Governance Unit, IFPRI and Peter Odhiambo Owoko, Director, Policy, State Department for Agriculture, Kenya during a panel discussion at the FINAS Summit. PHOTO CREDIT: FINAS*



FINAS 2025 Summit featured a series of vital conversations and strategic engagements pivoted upon a shared vision to revolutionise agricultural financing.

"The summit showcased significant progress, innovative solutions, and reinforced commitments toward fostering a robust, inclusive, and technology-driven agricultural finance ecosystem," said Dr Charity Mutegi, the Summit Director. "It is possible to close Kenya's, and I believe Africa's, agricultural financing gaps within ONE generation. The conversation must continue on critical issues highlighted at the summit including credit guarantee systems, crop and livestock insurance services, equipping leasing models, inclusive financial products, youth and women friendly financial products, and harnessing local financial initiatives."

Closing the conference, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Co-operatives and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Development, Wycliffe Oparanya said FINAS had moved from a national forum to the leading platform on food systems financing in Africa.

"It is clear that financing for Africa's food systems remain well below required levels to deliver sustainable transformative change in the sector," said Mr Oparanya. "We need to critically relook our policy landscapes. Adoption of the Kampala Declaration is a timely and welcome commitment."

"What we need now is not merely more financing, but smarter, more inclusive, and context-sensitive financing. Are we financing to empower or to extract? Are we building systems that include pastoralists

in Marsabit, women fish traders along Lake Victoria, and youth-led agri-tech start-ups in Kigali? Are our financial instruments designed to absorb risk, build resilience, and create value, particularly for those at the margins?" posed Dr Mudavadi. He added: "This is the shift we are called to make: from transactional to transformational financing, one that does not just react to crises, but anticipates opportunity. Financing that unlocks land, labour, and local knowledge—not in silos, but as part of a coherent strategy for sustainable, inclusive agricultural transformation."

The active participation and constructive exchanges have underscored a collective commitment to transforming agricultural financing landscapes across the region. Summit delegates engaged in dynamic discussions centered around key





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Showcasing innovation at the FINAS 2025 Summit. PHOTO CREDIT: FINAS



action areas towards sustainable agri-food system financing, inclusive finance, strengthening farmer cooperatives, policy and regulatory environment reforms, de-risking investments, leveraging technological innovations, digitalization, research partnerships, capacity building, and knowledge sharing among others.

Speaking on government's commitments to ensuring a thriving agri-food system, Mr Mudavadi said, "We are de-risking rural finance through credit guarantee schemes, scaling e-voucher systems to reach remote farmers, and co-investing in value-addition hubs across maize, dairy, horticulture, and fisheries."

The critical role played by Medium and Small-Medium Enterprises in financing Agri-food systems was emphasized as through such ventures most last mile farmers will be reached. "It is time that we onboard Bold Forward-Thinking Financing Approaches to unlock capital and catalyze transformation of the Africa's Food Systems," said CS Oparanya adding, "This cannot happen without recognizing the role of MSMEs such as co-operatives as they are the life blood of Kenya's economy. They drive job creation, innovation, and inclusive growth."

"The momentum generated at FINAS 2025 affirms our collective resolve to

revolutionize agricultural financing. Through innovation, collaboration, and unwavering commitment, we are paving the way for sustainable growth that empowers farmers, attracts investments, and substantially contributes to food security and economic development. We look forward to continued engagements as we shift gears to FINAS 2026 planning and implementing the recommendations of FINAS 2025," said Ms Charity Mutege, the Director, FINAS, adding, "FINAS must evolve beyond an annual dialogue forum to become a platform for continuous and measurable day-to-day conversations on financing Africa's Food Systems." ■