



*President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda interacts with other heads of state and AU officials during the AU Summit held in Kampala early this year. PHOTO CREDIT: UGANDA PRESS SERVICE.*

# Kampala Declaration: the path forward for Kenya and Africa

By Boaz Blackie Keizire

**T**he recent Kampala Declaration on agri-food systems represents a significant milestone with the potential to reshape Africa's approach to sustainable development. It calls for renewed commitment from African governments to drive forward essential initiatives focusing on agriculture, environment, climate, health, education, and social stability. As we delve deeper into the implications of this declaration for Kenya, it is crucial for the government to embrace its tenets to foster an inclusive and resilient transformative growth, especially in the critical agri-food systems.

Kenya's agri-food systems could propel the country towards food security

and the attainment of sustainable development goal (SDG) 2. However, the success depends on a number of factors, including climate change, technology, youth, and policy. Agri-food systems, though made up of small farms and vibrant small markets, are the mainstay of Kenya's economy and contribute significantly towards employment of the more than 40 percent of the country's total population. A critical mass of the over 70 percent of Kenya's rural population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods.

Coming right on the heels of Malabo Declaration, executed in 2014, which set ambitious targets aimed at improving food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture across Africa, the Kampala Declaration makes a new

clarion call that African governments must respond to. Whereas the ambitious nature of the Malabo Declaration is commendable, the challenge lies in its implementation, an area that the Kampala Declaration aims to address.

Kenya cannot achieve this alone without the cooperation of other African governments. The declaration stresses the need for stronger partnerships between governments, civil society, and the private sector, hence the need for continental cooperation and dialogue. Kenya, for example, trades with most countries in the region.

Kenya's Vision 2030 emphasises sustainable economic growth through the promotion of agriculture





and land management. However, historical challenges rooted in policy inconsistency, corruption, and inadequate investment in the agricultural sector often hinder these aspirations.

The Kenyan government has the opportunity to align with the Kampala Declaration by investing in agricultural and youth-driven technology, research and development, and innovative practices such as digital solutions that increase production and resilience. This can effectively mitigate the impacts of climate change, which threatens the very fabric of food security and food systems in the region.

Achieving the aspirations of the Kampala Declaration demands robust engagement from multiple stakeholders, including young people, governments, NGOs, private sector actors, development partners, and communities. Grassroots participation can lead to transformational change. Engaging young women and men, local farmers and communities in decision-making processes ensures that agricultural policies are tailored to meet the actual needs of those it intends to serve.

Additionally, partnerships with private sector players can stimulate investment in agribusiness, driving further innovation and market access for smallholder farmers. A collaborative effort can help scale successful models and unlock the potential of young entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector.

The Alliance for a Green revolution in Africa (AGRA), which exists to support stallholder farmers, is committed to supporting the Kampala Declaration. AGRA is ready and willing to leverage its expertise in seed systems, sustainable farming, regenerative agriculture, last-mile delivery, extension services, fertiliser application, and markets and trade integration.

We will help countries design flagship programmes and bankable investment

plans to attract both public and private sector funding. Additionally, we have strengthened our youth and gender programmes to ensure inclusivity, creating targeted initiatives that integrate young people and women into agricultural value chains. Beyond policy design, AGRA is investing in domesticating these policies to drive real change at the farm level—boosting farmer incomes, creating jobs for youth, and ensuring women's participation in the sector.

For the Kampala Declaration to be effectively internalised, a focus on education and capacity building is vital. By fostering a new generation equipped with the skills necessary to engage in sustainable agricultural practices, Kenya can build a resilient economy that leverages its abundant resources.

Promoting scientific research and technological advancement in agriculture will also ensure that Kenyan farmers adopt effective methods that align with the changing climatic conditions. Upskilling existing farmers in modern techniques, such as precision farming, can lead to increased yields and enhanced food security.

The Kampala Declaration also addresses the pressing issue of food security and malnutrition in Kenya as well as across the entire continent. According to the World Bank, Kenya has made strides in improving food security, yet significant gaps remain. Embracing initiatives that promote diverse and nutrition-rich agricultural production can help combat malnutrition, often exacerbated by poverty and food scarcity.

Therefore, Kenya should take a leading role in promoting agricultural diversity and nutritional education as part of its commitment to the Kampala Declaration. Youth and women involvement in agriculture should also form part of the priority areas for Kenya. Agri-food systems offer an array of opportunities to channel the formidable capacities of the country's youthful population. This can help increase involvement and reverse the

evidence that suggests that many young people are leaving the sector. In Kenya, for example, youth agricultural labour has fallen dramatically—declining from 58.9 percent of total youth employment in 1990 to 28.5 percent in 2020. This trend can and should be reversed, as the prospects for youth employment in African agri-food systems are positive.

In an increasingly digital world, technology plays a crucial role in transforming agriculture and is an enticement for youth involvement. In Kenya, where mobile technology has revolutionised various sectors, leveraging technology for agricultural solutions can create efficiencies and foster accessibility.

Using platforms that connect farmers with buyers can minimise post-harvest losses, ensure fair pricing, and enhance income opportunities. Moreover, innovative solutions such as satellite imagery, remote sensing for crop monitoring and data analytics can equip farmers with the tools needed to make informed decisions.

The Kampala Declaration stands as a clarion call for renewed dedication and action in the face of global challenges. As Kenya reflects on its implications, there is an undeniable opportunity to frame a new narrative for sustainable agricultural practices, food security, and resilience against climate change.

Kenya must embrace this declaration not merely as a policy measure but as a comprehensive approach that necessitates collaboration across all sectors of society. It is time to capitalise on this momentum, moving from declarations to tangible results that will uplift communities, bolster economies, and indeed, secure a prosperous future ■

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