

Harnessing science and innovation for increased agricultural productivity and competitiveness in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

Senior Officials Meeting 26-28 March 2024

Theme: Resilient agrifood systems and inclusive rural transformation



The Issue:

Given Africa's well know problems related to poor performance of its agriculture and the consequent dire state of food and nutrition security, it is widely believed that Science and Innovation are key drivers of agricultural productivity and competitiveness, especially in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which aims to create a single market for goods and services across the continent.

Key actions on harnessing science and innovation

Invest public sector research and development (R&D)

Improve access market to information & resources such as inputs, credit and other advisory services

Embrace science-based technologies

Establish smart regulatory environments

Increase opportunities for value addition and Regional Value Chains

Key actions on harnessing science and innovation

Promote access to quality inputs

Improve storage to ensure food safety

Enhance Investments in productive, market and trade-related infrastructure

Improve digital trade corridors

Improve linkages between agricultural education and research

Actions by member states

Science and innovation policies that prioritize investment in public science and innovation

Leverage foresight analysis to anticipate and prepare for the future

Promote collaboration between government agencies and private companies

Reform land ownership and business environment with inclusiveness as a driver for women and youth

Science and innovation policies that support the implementation of the AfCFTA.

Regional funds at REC level for science and innovation

Actions by FAO

FAO's Science and Innovation Strategy guides action across country, regional and global levels

FAO provides capacity-building support to strengthen public-private collaboration

FAO promotes digitalization and innovation

Apps co-created by FAO and partners harness the benefits of science and innovation

Knowledge programmes and partnerships with research institutions

Collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat

Policy implications

African member states should focus on the following key actions:

Focus on high-impact innovations

Prioritize investment in science and innovation

Improve access to resources and services for smallholders

Enhance efficient use of inputs

Increase opportunities for value addition of local and underutilzed agricultural products

FAO is available to guide and support member states in harnessing science and innovation

Matters brought to attention of the Regional Conference

Members to:

- recognize that science and innovation plays a crucial role in boosting agricultural productivity, competitiveness and food security for a successful implementation of the AfCFTA.
- encourage experience sharing and mutual learning regionally within Africa as well as among regions using FAO's and relevant partners' platforms.
- reassure member states and RECs to fully implement the recommendations given in the paper.

