



European Confederation of NGOs working on sustainable development and international cooperation

# CONCORD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN THE AU-EU PARTNERSHIP

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Everyone has the right to an affordable, healthy, nutritious diet. Fulfilling this obligation requires just, sustainable and resilient food systems that are defined by people, rooted in food sovereignty, and shaped by planetary boundaries. The foundation for such systems already exists, in the family-based, territorially embedded, small-scale, diversified food provisioning modalities that feed the majority of the world's people, especially in Africa.

However, their potential is thwarted by the dominance of a corporate and industrial, globalised food provisioning model which receives disproportionate political attention and support. Climate change, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine have exacerbated the existing structural defects and inequalities of the globalised food system. They have underlined its oligopolistic nature, fragility and unsustainability, particularly for countries in Africa which need to reduce land use for the production of commodities for international markets, break their dependence on food imports, and promote, instead, their local domestic production of food and agricultural inputs. They have also highlighted injustices that the globalised food system perpetrates through action such as hampering the access of small-scale family farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk to land and finance, peasants' seeds and other natural resources that constitute the basis of their livelihoods.

Small-scale producers, local food production and distribution systems, and indigenous knowledge have been marginalised as 'backward' by the modernisation narrative that accompanies the globalised, industrial mode of food provisioning while being neglected by policies, research and investment. In fact, not only are they the basis of the world's food supply; they offer the roadmap to end hunger, fight poverty, achieve food sovereignty, build climate resilience, restore the environment and improve social justice.

Hunger in today's world results from the design of the current global food system, not from scarcity of food. In a world of plenty, where more than enough food is produced to feed everyone, it is outrageous that 828 million people still live in constant hunger and that malnutrition is responsible for nearly half of all deaths of children under five. Pursuing the economic and geopolitical

interests of the powerful few - corporations and countries - and permitting food speculation are contributing to and exacerbating the current food crises at the expense of the basic human right to food of all people no matter where they live.

The EU has a central role to play in addressing global food insecurity both through its policies and programmes affecting Africa in particular, including within the AU-EU Partnership, and through its influence and leverage at various international and multilateral forums.

Key challenges identified by our African partners on which the EU can impact - positively or negatively - include:

- adapting to climate change and fighting malnutrition, notably by promoting diversified domestic food production with agroecological approaches rather than investing in the agro-industrial development model;
- blocking land and water grabbing and guaranteeing people's access to and control over natural resources;
- promoting seed laws that protect farmers' rights to their seeds;
- reducing African dependency on food imports and promoting territorial exchanges and food sovereignty;
- adopting approaches to the management of migration, conflicts and terrorism that address their structural causes.

Building an equal partnership between Africa and Europe requires a decolonisation of the relationship between the two regions and a full recognition of the African agency.

While it is broadly recognised that agriculture and the rural economy play a fundamental role in building a peaceful and prosperous future for Africa, the AU-EU Summit held in February 2022 did not result in a strong, inclusively defined strategy for food and agriculture as a key plank of the Partnership. The fifth AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference in June 2023 in Rome represents one opportunity for the African Union and the European Union to agree on a common, long-term vision and strategy to address food security and systems.





**Solutions to the problems of our current food systems** require the following actions at the EU level and in the AU-EU Partnership.

**RESPECT DEMOCRATIC POLICY DECISION-MAKING ROOTED IN A HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK.** The European Commission and EU Member States should play their part in ensuring democratic policy-making in the AU-EU Partnership, with a bottom-up approach. Specifically:

- The EU, in collaboration with the AU, should support the establishment of an autonomous mechanism for African and European civil society engagement in the AU-EU Partnership. The next AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference provides an opportunity to set a precedent for a meaningful engagement with African and European civil society, to ensure accountable, inclusive and gender-sensitive decision-making and monitoring processes by using and supporting the mechanisms that civil society is currently proposing.
- The AU-EU Partnership should treat food as a public common good (not as a commodity) and take a human rights approach. This should translate into EU and AU-EU Partnership decision-making processes with the following principles:
  - policy-making on food systems is a matter for governments, as duty-bearers, and the citizens to whom they are accountable, as rights-holders;
  - the corporate private sector should not be involved in making policy choices. Public policy should guide investment and ODA, not the other way around;
  - multistakeholder platforms (such as the Global Gateway governance structure) should set in place robust safeguards against conflicts of interest on the part of the most powerful.
- The EU should defend and reinforce the role of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) - the foremost inclusive intergovernmental forum addressing food issues - in improving coordination and governance of the global food system.
- The EU should set up a permanent complaint mechanism for African civil society and family farmers, fishers and pastoralists in order to allow those groups and organisations to alert and hold the EU accountable regarding the impacts of EU policies and practices on their human rights and inclusive and sustainable food systems.

- The EU through its Delegations in African countries should carry out meaningful engagement with local civil society and social actors to design, implement and evaluate policies supporting the reform of food systems to achieve greater equity, gender equality, sustainability and resilience.

**SUPPORT THE AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITION.** The European Commission and EU Member States should promote the agroecological transition both in Europe and Africa. Specifically:

- Adopt a comprehensive vision of agroecology, based on the FAO's 10 principles and the 2015 Nyeleni Declaration on Agroecology.
- Promote and incentivise agroecological methods of production that maintain and restore biodiversity and ecosystems and enhance farm resilience.
- Promote sustainable land use planning to eliminate deforestation and take a landscape approach based on agroecology.
- Prioritise EU investments and funding (NDICI-Global Europe) for practices based on agroecological principles. This should include repurposing existing agricultural finance flows over time, and promoting policy coherence and reform in other relevant sectors like trade, creating the necessary enabling environment for such a transition.
- Prioritise agricultural research to meet small-scale farmers' needs, improve nutrition, develop innovative agroecological methods that address climate change and restore the environment in direct collaboration with food producers, paying special attention to women's participation.
- Prohibit the production and exports of pesticides and other hazardous agro-chemicals banned in the EU, which cause devastating impacts on both human health and the environment. Instead, the EU should support a localised production of green, nature-friendly fertilisers thus cutting dependence on chemical pesticides and fertilisers.

**PROMOTE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, FAMILY FARMING, TERRITORIAL FOOD SYSTEMS AND HEALTHY DIETS.** The European Commission and EU Member States, in collaboration with the AU, should:

- Support family farmers, fishers and pastoralists in their key functions of ensuring Africa's food supply, maintaining biodiversity, and creating jobs



and wealth. Promote data collection and analysis led by small-scale producers' organizations themselves as a basis for developing supportive policies and programmes.

- Support the access to and control over land and natural resources by the hundreds of millions of Africans who rely on it, particularly women and girls; Impede investments and policies that promote land and resource-grabbing.

- Promote the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNFFF).

- Support and strengthen farmer-managed seed systems, in line with the claims of African civil society and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food's recommendations. They should reinforce producers' associations, the solidarity economy and community organisations that aim at enhancing the rights of small-scale producers and other constituencies and which can protect natural resources.

- Support the role of women in agriculture and food processing and marketing by promoting and securing their access to land, finance and credit, technical information and training and decision-making over resources. Adapting systems to their needs and priorities can help to right unbalanced gender relations, increase production and health and improve resilience at household and community level.

- Prioritise local economies and trade that can support local producers to meet the growing and changing demand of city dwellers, particularly those most affected by food insecurity, and systematically reduce post-production food losses. International trade rules must protect countries' policy space to support livelihoods and jobs where people live and ensure food is produced and available locally at a fair price.

- Ensure stable and fair food prices by using policy tools which help to stabilise food markets, for example by supporting African governments' capacity to take measures against import bill surges, and price spikes, and to establish strategic food reserves.

- Commit to improving policies on public procurement in the direction of sourcing healthy food produced by local small-scale farmers.

- Help to ensure that consumers have access

to information on healthy nutrition, food safety, health and environmental risks related to food production (deforestation, pollution, overexploitation of natural resources, use of hazardous pesticides), for example by supporting information and marketing campaigns by African producers organizations.

- Support the AU Member States in respecting the Malabo Declaration of devoting at least 10% of their national budgets to the agriculture sector. The funding should go to benefit small-scale producers, placing women farmers and the integration of youth at the centre of development efforts. This should be a key objective of the AU-EU Partnership and the programmes and policies it promotes.

**STRENGTHEN EU SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS AND REDESIGN EU INVESTMENT POLICIES** including the “**Global Gateway Investment Package - Sustainable food systems**”) in order to:

- Scale up financial support to sustainable agriculture and food security and facilitate access to finance and credit for smallholder farmers. The upcoming mid-term review of the NDICI-Global Europe is an opportunity to prioritise financial support to agroecology and sustainable food systems. Focus EU development finance and investment policies on the provision of public goods that complement farmers' own investments by providing infrastructure, research and extension services and access to finance that meet their needs rather than facilitating foreign private sector investment that risks legitimising land and water grabs and promoting corporations' interests and products. The EU should align its ODA and other financial instruments with the objectives of food system reform supporting the transition to agroecology, food sovereignty, and localisation of food production and supply chains.

- Develop and scale-up modalities for channelling funding directly to small-scale producers through their organizations, networks and cooperatives, including adaptation and loss and damage funding that are essential to ensure the resilience of small-scale farmers in the face of climate change. Funding should be flexible, gender-sensitive and adapted to farmers' needs and context.



## **RESPECT THE PRINCIPLE OF COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (PCSD).**

Specifically, the European Commission and EU Member States should:

- Ensure that EU policies and practices do not undermine food security in any partner countries. This applies, in particular, to the areas of climate, trade, agriculture and fishery policies and corporate due diligence. But it also applies to food security initiatives themselves - the EU should refrain from promoting “false solutions”, such as industrial agriculture, “climate-smart agriculture”, and reinforce their investments in the deployment of sustainable alternatives to chemical fertilisers and pesticides for the long run.
- Make sure that initiatives with short-term objectives, designed as an immediate response to the food crisis, do not undermine sustainability or participatory democratic decision-making processes, women’s leadership, or take political attention and resources away from long-term real solutions, like upscaling investments in the agroecological transition.
- Ensure that the external dimension of EU policies and practices regarding climate and green transition drive an effective and much-needed global just transition towards inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems. Make sure that the still-awaited EU legislative framework for sustainable food systems keeps environmental and social sustainability at its centre and sets a clear path for the transition by including all the actors in the food supply chain.
- Lead the way in the cancellation of African debts in order to free up the fiscal space necessary for African governments to be able to put in place adequate social protection and to promote domestic food provisioning. It must be acknowledged that the unsustainable debt accrued by low-income countries is the result of inequitable and unjust international trade rules, import dependencies, extractive management of natural resources and illicit financial flows, and the impacts of the climate crisis.

CONCORD seeks to tackle inequalities and works for a world with just and sustainable food systems. It does this by advocating for changes in EU policies, programmes and positions – knowing that this is only one piece of a broad range of actions that need to be taken across the world and seeking to play our part. As a wide Confederation of NGOs, we recognise it is essential for us to act in solidarity with the self-organised movements of people most affected by hunger, including networks of small-scale food producers who feed the majority of the world’s people. This requires us to support their claims to the right to be part of decision-making at all levels, and to act in solidarity with them in advocacy, asking our lead from their positions.



# Our members

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Network of NGOs in Europe per lo sviluppo e l'emergenza <b>CONCORD ITALIA</b>	<b>LAPAS</b> Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation	<b>Cercle de coopération</b> des ONGD DU LUXEMBOURG	<b>SKOP</b> Solidarjetät u Koperazjionj	<b>PAR TOS</b>	ZAGRANICA	<b>ONGD</b> PLATAFORMA PORTUGUESA
<b>FOND</b> Funders Organiza for Regeneramenta e per lo Crecita de l'Europa	<b>Ambrella</b> Platform for Development Organisations	<b>SLOGA</b> Slovenian Global Action	<b>LA COORDINADORA</b> DE ORGANIZACIONES PARA EL DESARROLLO	<b>CONCORD</b> SWEDEN	<b>bond</b>	<b>NETWORKS</b>
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<b>CIDSE</b> together for global justice	<b>euCORD</b> European Children's Organizations for Relief and Development	<b>GNDR</b>	<b>Habitat for Humanity</b>	handicap international humanity & inclusion	<b>IPPF</b> International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network	<b>LIGHT FOR THE WORLD</b>
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