

Meeting report of the informal roundtable discussion Investments, policies and innovations for the adaptation of agrifood systems to climate change: improving cooperation towards the Fifth AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference

April 4th, 11.00-13.00 CET Rome, CGIAR, Via di San Domenico 1

Summary

On the 4th of April 2023, ECDPM brought representatives from African and European Delegations to the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) together with representatives from the RBAs (World Food Programme [WFP], Food and Agricultural Organization [FAO], International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research [CGIAR]¹), the European Commission (EC), and other food-related organisations **to discuss how to coordinate on climate adaptation in food systems**. This meeting report provides a summary of the discussions, highlighting the key issues raised, and based on this, we develop the next steps for moving forward. The main message can be condensed as: *“The RBAs can be more integrated into climate adaptation policy processes, and co-facilitate greater coherence and synergies between policies and investments across the food-climate nexus”*. To achieve this objective, we present several ways to strengthen the food-climate nexus and involvement of the RBAs: 1) Enhancing the roles of RBAs at the country level for food adaptation policies, finance and Research and Innovation (R&I); 2) Developing a coherent narrative on the importance of the food-climate nexus and the roles of RBAs throughout the global policy milestones this year; 3) Rally international backing for an enhanced role and mandate for a joint work programme of RBAs on the food-climate nexus; and 4) Convey coherent African-European support, starting at the Fifth AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference, for a more prominent role of the RBAs in the food-climate nexus and better coordination among the institutions and African and European initiatives. We then provide ideas for stronger coordination between Africa and Europe at the RBAs, and end with putting forward options for possible deliverables on improved food-climate cooperation at the upcoming AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial.

Why focus on climate adaptation in food systems?

During the first session, the importance of addressing climate adaptation and the key role of the RBAs in this regard was introduced. The recent [AR6 Summary](#) is an alarm bell sounding the need for urgent climate adaptation. Climate change has hit food production and availability, particularly for the world’s poorest, exposing millions to acute food insecurity. Heat extremes are causing mass animal and plant deaths and widespread deterioration of ecosystems. The severe effects of climate change reach both Africa and Europe. In 2022, Europe experienced its worse drought in 500 years which lowered harvests at a time of turmoil in the international grain markets. But Africa is much more exposed. A record drought is pushing millions of people towards starvation in the Horn of Africa alone ([FEWS NET 2022](#)). Agricultural productivity growth in Africa has been reduced by 34% since 1961 due to

¹ Although the CGIAR is not typically classified as an RBA, we have included it in this report reflecting its increasing profile in Rome.

climate change, more than any other region ([IPCC 2022](#)). The time for adaptation is now: adaptation options that are feasible and effective today will become constrained and less effective with increasing global warming. International cooperation - including mobilising and enhancing access to finance - is a critical enabler for achieving ambitious climate change adaptation and climate-resilient development, particularly for developing countries ([IPCC 2023](#)).

While the energy sector is the main focus of current mitigation efforts, food systems are arguably the most important and difficult systems for adaptation, needing especially international R&I and catalytic investments and programmes. While progress has been made through the UNFCCC's Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture and adaptation, together with loss and damage, has become much more prominent on the agenda, COP27 was somewhat of a disappointment in linking food systems and the climate agenda ([D'Alessandro and Rampa 2022](#)). The RBAs are the most important conveners in the global agrifood governance system and support adaptation through numerous programmes. They are the go-to for technical assistance and programme implementation, including food system transformation ([EC 2022](#)). RBAs are critical institutions that must be fully integrated into global efforts to address the challenges of climate change: given their expertise and experience, RBAs have a vital role to play in advancing the climate adaptation agenda. While they are already engaged in significant work in this area, given the adaptation urgency it is essential to explore ways to further strengthen their contribution to the climate policy and programme processes. This includes identifying opportunities for collaboration and partnership while leveraging their resources and knowledge to achieve greater impact.

What are some lessons learned from Rome-based agencies?

During the second segment, three projects with different approaches were discussed, including SCALA² (FAO), the climate risk programme (WFP in collaboration with IFAD), and AICCRA³ (CGIAR). **SCALA** is designed to support twenty countries in building their adaptive capacity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to meet targets outlined in their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The project works closely with countries to identify bankable projects and enhance their attractiveness to the private sector, with the ultimate goal of mobilizing financing for implementation. Now that these countries have developed their climate plans, the focus is on translating these plans into action and securing the necessary funding to support their implementation. WFP's **climate risk programme** adopts proactive rather than reactive measures to address climate shocks. The organization leverages private-sector climate insurance, complemented by early warning systems and resilience-building efforts, to support countries in minimizing the impacts of climate shocks and facilitating swift recovery. However, given the increasing demand for such interventions, the current capacity of the project is insufficient to meet the growing needs. As such, WFP collaborates with other organizations such as IFAD and FAO to scale up efforts and expand the reach of their initiatives. **AICCRA** seeks to enhance the access and adoption of CGIAR innovations by millions of smallholder farmers in Africa by

² Scaling up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture through Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans.

³ Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa.

integrating various technologies and improving their uptake. While technology development is crucial to adapt food systems, the primary challenge lies in bridging critical gaps beyond technology, such as investment and integration of different technologies. Addressing this challenge requires capacity building at various levels in Africa, including continental, regional, and country-level efforts.

How to strengthen the climate-food nexus and the involvement of the RBAs?

Better integration of food and climate diplomacies, planning and financing is urgently needed for the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement and the UN Food Systems Summit, as well the AU Agenda 2063 and the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy. This is particularly important for accelerating the adaptation of African food systems. The sections above show RBAs can play a central role in this integration, and enhance their work and visibility around the food and climate nexus and within climate adaptation policy processes. This can be done in four complementary ways:

1) Enhanced role of RBAs **at country level** for food adaptation policies, finance and R&I. This can be based on respective comparative advantages and on the lessons each institution learned on their climate-food projects so far, and focused on stronger local capacity and implementation arrangements around this nexus. Indeed, many participants pointed to the fact that adaptation policies, finance and R&I are generally there, but is the lack of local capacity and effective/inclusive governance for implementation that severely limit their impact. RBAs have the experience and evidence base to improve such "last mile", including by helping the implementation of often-ignored policy statements and strategies, the coordination of the (too) many financial instruments and the accelerated uptake of often-unknown innovations.

2) Coherent narrative on the centrality of the climate/food nexus and the role of the RBAs therein throughout the **global policy milestones** in the coming year. Several international policy processes and high-level events will cover food systems and climate change and many participants recommended giving this nexus centre stage. Moreover given they stressed the importance of focusing on implementation and accelerating action rather than discussing the topics in general terms, the coming months could be described as a "stocktake journey on food-climate action", from the Fifth AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference (June), to the UNFSS Stocktaking Moment (July), from the Africa Climate Summit (September) to COP28 (November), but also targeting the ongoing Multilateral Development Banks-reform-process and the G7 2024 under Italian Presidency (traditionally giving food security and food systems high priority). While the first two takes place in Rome, it would be advisable for this whole journey to closely involve the RBAs to bridge the different processes and co-facilitate greater coherence and synergies between policies and investments across climate and food systems.

3) Widespread international backing is required for such an enhanced role of the RBAs at country and global levels. While they are already the most important conveners in the global agrifood governance system and have an already important track record on food adaptation policies, finance and R&I, participants pointed to ample room for better coordination and co-financing among the RBAs. A "stocktake journey on food-climate action" could thus

culminate in a **mandate from their member states** to create an outcome-based joint Work Program of the RBAs towards food/climate objectives. This would be based on respective mandates and added value but with a focus on nexus collaborations, better coordination among RBAs (including around climate-finance instruments), upscaled impact on food systems adaptation, as well as possibly a joint Trust Fund to finance the work program (while adopting joint strategies among RBAs was seen by participants as too time-consuming).

4) **Coherent African-European support**, starting at the Fifth AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference, for such role of the RBAs and for better coordination among the institutions and African and European initiatives. The previous three ways are all entry points to advance the cooperation RBAs-AU-EU: at country level, within the global policy processes and for such new mandate of RBAs on the climate/food nexus.

How can Africans and Europeans work better together in Rome?

The discussion of the projects highlighted the diverse range of adaptation initiatives being undertaken by the RBAs and showcased how these institutions are collaborating at both the project and country levels. However, coordination challenges persist beyond the project level. As one participant noted, while there is a constant dialogue around the need for coordination, there is often reluctance among stakeholders to be coordinated. The donor-funded nature of the RBA system creates a challenge in ensuring that everyone receives due credit for joint work, and differing programming cycles pose further difficulties in establishing joint work programs. Although NDCs provide a framework for action, securing the necessary funding remains a significant obstacle, especially given the possibility of reduced ODA due to shifting domestic priorities. Moreover, creating an enabling environment for private sector engagement requires aligning risk and returns, a difficult task.

These ideas for improving coordination between African and European countries with the RBAs are presented based on off-the-record discussions and follow-up interviews across two themes: 'Collaborate' and 'Governance and strategy'(Table 1). The '**Collaborate**' theme suggests the need for stronger coordination on common AU-EU topics at the RBAs. Currently, there is space for greater interaction between European and African Delegations at the RBAs, with currently ad-hoc meetings only taking place during relevant summits and conferences. Stronger AU and AU MS coordination is already underway and could be strengthened by FAO's recognition of an AU Ambassador. EU MS coordination seems already well established. By providing more spaces for open and frank dialogues, the areas of agreement and tension can be better fleshed out. The RBAs could take part in these dialogues, as one European participant noted that FAO, as setter of global standards, could do more to push for higher standards in their country. Additionally, while coordination at the leadership level within the RBAs has improved ([FAO, IFAD and WFP 2021](#)), there are still many opportunities left to coordinate strategies and approaches within and outside the RBAs. Each of the RBAs has its own climate strategy with an implementation plan, and there is no common position on many hot topics within the RBA system. To improve collaboration between the AU, EU, and the RBAs, it is important to intensify networking, experimenting, and learning. The RBAs could take a more proactive role in organizing meetings, workshops, and other events where AU and EU delegations can come together to share experiences, discuss challenges, and explore opportunities for collaboration. In addition to this, the AU

and EU could improve the visibility of the RBAs within their respective organisations, so more of the RBAs' expertise can trickle down into policy making.

Table 1. Ideas for better coordination of African and European countries at the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs).

Collaborate	
1	Coordination stronger on common AU-EU topics at the RBAs
2	Internal coordination within AU and EU Member States Delegations
3	Provide space for open and frank dialogues
4	Work on coordinating between strategies and approaches within and outside the RBAs
Governance and strategy	
5	Create strategic framework between the AU and the RBAs
6	Create strategic framework for AU-EU-RBA coordination
7	Link action at the RBAs into long-term AU and EU partnership agendas
8	Involve Rome-based delegations more into their countries' RBAs and global food security policies

The **Governance and strategy** theme outlines ideas for a more structured and powerful approach to coordination between the AU-EU-RBAs. Aligning African Union (AU) Member States' positions at the RBAs and enhancing the voice of African countries in Rome could be facilitated by a strategic framework between the AU and the RBAs. The European Union (EU) highlighted in its recent Council conclusions its relationship with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), but a comparable strong connection between the AU and the RBAs appears to be missing. A strategic framework could also contribute to better aligning the priorities of the AU with those of the RBAs, and identifying areas of mutual interest and possible cooperation. Over time, the enhanced coordination between AU-EU and AU-RBA could potentially result in a more strategic approach to AU-EU-RBA coordination, where joint AU-EU positions are formulated and executed with the support of the RBAs. The food system support aspect of the AU-EU Partnership could benefit from stronger integration of the RBAs, drawing on their wealth of expertise and experience. Finally, many countries formulate their RBA policies without sufficient input from their delegations to the RBAs. By involving the Rome-based delegations more actively in their countries' RBAs and global food security policies, the delegation's positions can be strengthened, and more meaningful dialogues can be held in Rome, while the respective capitals can benefit more from insights from the RBAs into their policies.

Options for the AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial

This section outlines possible objectives, topics, and deliverables of the Joint Ministerial around the climate/food nexus, taking into account different degrees of possible ambition/depth, from just discussions to a possible joint declaration:

1. EU-AU Ministers discuss commitment/proposals/interest by EU and AU for increasing political and financial support for more synergetic and coherent food and climate diplomacies, policies and investments, to improve the climate resilience of agrifood systems and in particular the adaptation of smallholder farmers in Africa.
2. This would entail that the EU and AU build partnerships, including coordinated engagement by AU and EU within the UN RBA processes and give consistent messages from this AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial to the UNFSS Stocktake Moment to the COP28, and beyond.
3. Europe, in cooperation with RBAs, leads an acceleration of public and private investments for the climate resilience of the food and agriculture sector in Africa; in particular of the implementation of the Climate Finance Delivery Plan, in line with [Council Conclusions ahead of COP27](#) and with a focus on food and agriculture. Another option would be to design and implement a Roadmap for doubling adaptation finance for African food systems, including rebalancing the proportion of adaptation to 50% of climate funding.
4. Africa, in cooperation also with RBAs, leads the design/implementation of national joint food & climate policy and investment plans, where finance can reward ambition in adaptation action for food systems
5. Ministers support a mandate to create an outcome-based joint Work Program of the RBAs towards Food/Climate objectives
6. EU, AU and RBAs jointly assess the interconnectedness of African and European food systems, and launch a process for more effectively exploiting the opportunities of African and European food strategies to jointly contribute to achieving the UNFSS and Paris Agreement goals

We warmly thank you all for your participation and inputs. We would like to hear from you! Please feel free to contact us if you have any comments or if you are interested in working together. You can reach us at kde@ecdpm.org and fr@ecdpm.org and follow us on Twitter [@ECDPM](https://twitter.com/ECDPM).