ECONOMY AND ECOLOGY 24.10.2024 | Kamo Sende

# Green fields, empty coffers

## As COP29 nears, global climate negotiators have an opportunity to address a critical oversight: the neglect of food security and agricultural finance

As COP29 approaches, global climate negotiators are once again presented with an opportunity to address a glaring oversight — the lack of prioritisation of food security and agriculture within climate finance negotiations. This upcoming conference, touted as the 'Finance COP', presents a unique opportunity to finally establish a dedicated fund for agriculture and food security.

While recent climate negotiations have made strides in addressing adaptation and loss and damage, the absence of a dedicated Agriculture and Food Security Fund leaves millions of farmers, particularly in Africa, struggling to adapt to shifting climate conditions without the necessary resources. Targeted financial support would enable the agricultural sector to better navigate the mounting challenges posed by climate change.

## Great risks, but also great potential

Across Africa, the impacts of climate change on agriculture are already evident and intensifying. Farmers are grappling with unpredictable weather patterns, extended periods of drought and increasingly frequent flooding events. These environmental challenges imperil food production and threaten the livelihoods of millions, cascading into risks for economic stability and social cohesion. African communities are now facing increased vulnerability to hunger and malnutrition, underscoring the urgent need for targeted interventions.

Yet, within this crisis lies an opportunity often overlooked by policymakers and financiers. Armed with generations of traditional knowledge and an innovative spirit, African farmers are not merely victims of climate change. They are potential leaders in developing climate solutions. The key to unlocking this potential lies in sustainable practices, particularly agroecological approaches that are deeply rooted in traditional farming systems across the continent.

Consider the agricultural practices in my home state of Benue, Nigeria. Here, farmers – from across the Benue River in my home region of Sankera to the lush lands in Guma and Agatu – have long employed methods that work in harmony with natural ecosystems, enhancing soil health, preserving biodiversity and improving water retention. These time-tested practices represent an experiential understanding of local ecosystems refined over centuries.

The potential of these agroecological methods extends far beyond individual farms. When implemented on a larger scale, they offer a pathway to enhance both climate resilience and food security at regional and continental levels. However, realising this potential will require targeted support and investment — precisely what a dedicated Agriculture and Food Security Fund could provide.

## Benefits far beyond individual farms

Such a fund would serve multiple critical functions. Primarily, it would support the widespread adoption and scaling up of climate-smart farming techniques, with a particular emphasis on agroecological practices. This could involve funding for farmer education programs, demonstration plots and technology transfer initiatives that bridge traditional knowledge with modern scientific insights.

In addition, the fund could play a crucial role in improving market access for smallholder farmers. In many African countries, farmers struggle to connect to markets, leading to post-harvest losses and reduced incomes. By investing in rural infrastructure, storage facilities and digital platforms that link farmers to buyers, the fund could help create more resilient and efficient food systems.

The benefits of such a fund would extend beyond the farm gate. By bolstering local food systems, it would enhance community resilience to climate shocks. Communities with diverse, locally-sourced food options are less vulnerable to disruptions in global supply chains or extreme weather events that might affect a single crop.

Some might argue that existing climate finance mechanisms are sufficient to cover these needs. However, the unique challenges facing African agriculture demand a more targeted approach. The intersection of climate change and food security in Africa is complex and multifaceted, requiring specialised attention and resources that a dedicated fund could provide.

*African agriculture stands at a crossroads: with the right support, it could transform into a cornerstone of climate resilience. Without it, the sector risks being overwhelmed by mounting climate pressures.*

Moreover, the creation of such a fund aligns with broader trends in international development and climate policy. There is growing recognition of the need for integrated approaches that consider the interconnections between climate, trade and food systems. A dedicated agri-food fund could serve as a model for how to effectively operationalise these interconnected approaches.

The window for effective action is narrowing, as global temperatures continue to rise. African agriculture stands at a crossroads: with the right support, it could transform into a cornerstone of climate resilience and food security for the continent. Without it, the sector risks being overwhelmed by mounting climate pressures.

As COP29 draws near, it is crucial that the voices of groups like The African Financial Alliance on Climate Change (AFAC) and Climate Policy Initiative (CPI), which are advocating for prioritising climate finance, are amplified. However, the issue goes beyond securing financial commitments; it's about reshaping the narrative around climate finance to fully recognise the central role of agriculture and food security in climate resilience. While literature on the importance of this approach exists, what is now needed is decisive action to translate these insights into concrete policy measures that incorporate agriculture into climate finance strategies.

The journey from academic research to policy implementation is often long and complex. However, the urgency of the climate crisis demands that we bridge this gap with unprecedented speed and commitment. By bringing academic insights into the public discourse and policy arena, we can catalyse the changes needed to secure a resilient and food-secure future for Africa. This means not just producing more literature, but actively engaging with policymakers and stakeholders to ensure that existing research translates into tangible outcomes at COP29 and beyond.

*The proposed Agriculture and Food Security Fund is an investment not just in farms, but in communities, ecosystems and future*

The proposed Agriculture and Food Security Fund represents more than just another financial mechanism. It embodies a holistic approach to climate resilience that recognises the intrinsic link between environmental sustainability and human well-being. It's an investment not just in farms, but in

*generations.*

communities, ecosystems and future generations.

As the negotiations for COP29 unfold, the global community has an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to truly comprehensive climate action. By championing the creation of a dedicated Agriculture and Food Security Fund, we can ensure that African agriculture isn't left behind in the fight against climate change. This will require sustained advocacy, rigorous research, and a willingness to bridge the gap between academic insights and practical policy. But because the stakes are so high and the potential benefits so significant, it's a path we must pursue with urgency and determination.

The time for action is now — let's ensure that COP29 delivers the comprehensive climate finance that Africa's farmers and communities so urgently require.

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