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## As Climate Change Imperils Food Production, Senior Officials Meet in Addis Ababa to End the Innovation Drought on African Farms

*Leaders from the African Agricultural Technology Foundation, African Development Bank, and key donor countries to pursue public-private partnerships to produce technologies targeting the needs of Africa's smallholder farmers*

**ADDIS ABABA** (13 December 2018)—With news from last week's global climate talks in Poland looking ominous for African farmers, a high-level group of African agricultural experts gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Thursday to accelerate farmer access to innovations that can sustainably increase food production—even as temperatures rise and weather extremes and crop pests become more common.

“We need to move decisively to disrupt the status quo that is denying African farmers access to potentially transformative technologies,” said Dr. Ousmane Badiane, chair of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF).

AATF hosted the event, which included senior government officials from Ethiopia, representatives from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and high-level representatives from the African Union and key donor countries. They discussed new options for generating public-private partnerships or PPPs that can deliver innovations—like disease and drought-resistant crop varieties—to African farmers.

The event, “**Catalysing African Agricultural transformation through PPPs**,” came on the heels of [a report released at a global climate summit](#) in Katowice, Poland last week that found carbon emissions from human activities hit an all-time high in 2018. The rise in greenhouse gases makes it more likely that stressful climate conditions, which already are [reversing progress against hunger and malnutrition in Africa](#), will intensify in the coming decades.

In the last few years, farmers in sub-Saharan Africa have seen a [sharp rise in severe drought](#) along with the emergence of a [voracious plant pest called fall armyworm](#) that threatens to decimate the region's most important food crop, maize. A [partnership led by AATF](#) is developing maize varieties that are both drought and pest-resistant. AATF is working closely with developers and regulators to make them accessible to African farmers.

“While these are times of great challenges, they are also filled with promising opportunities for African farmers,” Dr. Denis T. Kyetere, AATF's executive director.

According to the World Bank, with the right mix of technology and investments, “Africa's farmers and agribusinesses could create a trillion-dollar food market by 2030.”

One such initiative is the AfDB's Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) initiative that is providing US\$1 billion to make new technologies widely available to African farmers. A key feature of the program is an effort to introduce agricultural technologies



across large geographic areas that have similar farming conditions, as opposed to the cumbersome and costly country-by-country approach.

AATF's Badiane said there is a need for new approaches that can overcome obstacles that discourage agricultural technology developers from generating products that meet the needs of African farmers.

“We see public-private partnerships as the best way to stimulate innovations that are aligned with the way Africans produce food—which is largely on small, family farms—and target the unique mix of crop varieties and growing conditions on the continent,” he said.

Badiane said that a steady stream of farming innovations is crucial for the success of ongoing efforts to transform smallholder agriculture in Africa from subsistence to commercial production. He said new technologies can be especially beneficial for encouraging more young people and women to embrace careers in agriculture.

The discussions at the Addis event reviewed recent case studies highlighting efforts to commercialise agricultural technologies in Africa.

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**About AATF ([www.aatf-africa.org](http://www.aatf-africa.org))**

AATF is a not-for-profit organisation established to access, develop, adapt and deliver appropriate agricultural technologies for sustainable use by smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa through innovative partnerships and effective stewardship along the entire value chain. AATF provides expertise and know-how that facilitates the identification, access, development, delivery and utilisation of appropriate agricultural technologies. AATF works towards food security and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa, and its structure and operations draw upon the best practices and resources of both the public and private sectors. AATF is a registered charity under the laws of England and Wales and has been given a tax-exempt status in the USA. It is incorporated in Kenya and in the UK and has been granted host country status by the Government of Kenya where it is headquartered and is registered as a charity in Nigeria.