

## PRESS RELEASE

# Africa must rapidly transition to technology-driven agriculture to improve productivity

*Policy responses should facilitate access to farm inputs and Strengthen market efficiency*



**[Nairobi, October 12, 2020]:** Digital agricultural solutions have been identified as key solutions that offer opportunities for farmers to manage effects of COVID-19 challenges in agriculture to improve productivity. Digital solutions can help manage pest and diseases, facilitate seed production, improve market linkages, and manage records at farm level, a continental meeting heard.

Further, technologies that boost farm yields such as climate smart crop varieties and adaptable livestock breeds; resilience-enhancing technologies and non-seed technologies such as mechanization can help farmers to respond to threats brought about by COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in February in Africa, the pandemic has caused immeasurable disruption in the agriculture sector leading to restriction in movement of agricultural inputs, obstructions to the early commencement of the production seasons, collapse in transportation and poor performance of agricultural systems, said Dr. Emmanuel Okogbenin, the Director of Program Development and Commercialization at AATF.

Dr. Okogbenin made the remarks during the virtual 3rd Calestous Juma Executive Dialogue on Innovation and Emerging Technologies (CJED) held between 29th – 30th



September, where he spoke on the topic *COVID-19 Disruptions on African Agriculture: The Threats, Technology Opportunities and the Call to New Action*

The meeting was organized by the AUDA-NEPAD, the development agency of the African Union.

The CJED brought together experts across the continent to deliberate on ways to harness innovation and emerging technologies for the transformation of the African economy and to chart ways for recovery and sustainability of African economies post-COVID-19 pandemic.

“Owing to COVID-19, Africa is facing threats to its food security, health, economy and government development programmes including the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union’s Agenda 2063,” said Dr. Okogbenin, adding that COVID-19 pandemic has further brought to the fore the acute challenges that African farmers face in sourcing technologies to respond to food security.

To further cushion farmers from the effects of COVID-19, Africa must rapidly transition to technology-driven agriculture to respond to market needs and integrate value chain systems for robust agricultural sector development.

“There is need to enhance activities around value –addition to stimulate better income power and revenue streams in the value chain to mitigate poverty,” Dr. Okogbenin pointed out.

Critically, he noted that infrastructural development is key in minimizing post-harvest food losses during transportation and while in the markets

African governments were called upon to accelerate access, deployment, and availability of technologies to increase agricultural productivity for farmers during COVID-19 period.

“Policy responses should strengthen regulatory systems to improve consumer trust in the safety and reliability of the agro-food system and rapidly facilitate the transition of smallholder farmers to commercial agriculture for high outputs and returns,” he said.

AATF is empowering smallholder farmers across Sub-Saharan Africa with a wide choice of agricultural innovations and technologies that can generate wealth and health for their families and communities.

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

Founded in 2003 to address Africa’s food security prospects through agricultural technology, AATF believes that the agricultural sector is a key foundational pillar as



Africa consolidates its economic growth and carves out its new position as a major global economic powerhouse and the next growth market in the world. It was formed in response to the need for an effective mechanism that would facilitate and support negotiation for technology access and delivery and formation of appropriate partnerships to manage the development & deployment of innovative technologies for use by smallholder farmers in SSA:

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