

ACAT 2023 Joint Communique



The African Conference on Agricultural Technology (ACAT)

30th October to 3rd November 2023

In line with objective five of ACAT, a communique was developed reflecting the key observations, resolutions and call to action emanating from the conference deliberations. The Communique will serve as a basis for developing action plans for implementation to address the gaps identified during the conference.

Convened by the Government of Kenya and the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) with support from partners, the first African Conference on Agricultural Technologies (ACAT) was held at the Safari Park Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya from **October 30th to 3rd November 2023**.

Themed “Agricultural Resilience through Innovation” the ACAT provided a platform for high-level conversations on how to reposition the development and scaling of agricultural technologies and innovations to drive economic growth and development in Africa;

Recognizing the aspirations for Africa's agricultural transformation as elaborated in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP); as re-affirmed in the commitments of Malabo Declaration in 2014 and further mainstreamed in Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want, and aligned with the Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024;

Acknowledging with deep concern, the low level of Africa's investment in research and development as a proportion of GDP which stands at 0.5%, way below the world average of 1.8 % and which consequently translates into a slow pace of research in critical sectors such as agriculture;

Appreciating the critical role that the agricultural sector, including livestock production plays in supporting livelihoods, industrial and economic growth across the continent;

Recalling the centrality of science and technology in driving agricultural productivity hence pivoting socio-economic development and rural transformation translating to national prosperity and Africa's collective food and nutrition security;

Further recalling the commitment made during the second Africa-wide conference on Science Technology and Innovation (STI) convened in partnership with the Government of Rwanda and AUDA-NEPAD in Kigali, Rwanda in April 2022 towards intensifying efforts on commercialization and deployment of technologies for the benefit of local communities;

Recognizing the many challenges that the youth, women, and people living with disabilities engaged in agriculture on the continent face, including limited access to opportunities, technologies and productivity enhancing resources;

Noting that Africa spends substantial amounts of financial resources importing food, yet through adoption of technologies, there is great potential for increasing productivity to reduce the import burden while also facilitating intra-Africa trade;

Equally noting the urgent need to build farmer resilience in Africa, considering that agricultural production and food systems in the continent are highly vulnerable to climate change, armed conflict, social and political instability as well as commodity-supply related shocks such as fertilizer, foreign exchange and fuel crises;

Regretting that the face of African agriculture outlook is still characterized by rudimentary traditional tools as such as the handheld hoe and the abysmally low penetration of agricultural mechanization that has stagnated at below 10% of its full potential, one of the factors discouraging the youth from engaging in agriculture;

Mindful of the lessons gained from past and present efforts and the compelling need to forge an African-centered approach to transformation through development and deployment of technological solutions adapted to local conditions;

Appreciating the good progress made on the continent in establishing policies, strategies, plans, laws, regulations and institutional arrangements to facilitate technological advancement in the agricultural sector, including slow but on-going efforts at domestication and implementation of policy instruments;

Appreciating also that substantial resources have been invested in research and development of agricultural innovations, through which multiple products and crop varieties are aligned for release in readiness for deployment and commercialization;

Concerned that in addition to the less friendly regulatory environment for technology release, the commercialization, deployment, and adoption of crop varieties is extremely slow due to limited funding for scaling of technologies;

Appreciating the important role that the private sector can play in driving agricultural research and development, which has not been fully exploited given the challenging operational environment and insufficient incentives;

Noting that the world is entering the fifth industrial revolution that will be driven by great technological innovations where quantum computing, artificial intelligence, machine learning, the Internet of Things and systems, advanced biotechnology, big data analytics, precision farming, robotics, nanotechnology, 3D printing and 5G network connectivity;

Noting also the huge potential of biotechnology innovations such as genetic modification (GM) and genome editing in enhancing agricultural production and productivity and improving the health and wealth of our people; yet the development and commercialization of related applications continues to be derailed by prohibitive regulatory environments and resistance fueled by disinformation;

We, participants of the Inaugural African Conference on Agricultural Technologies:

1. **Encourage** African governments, regional economic communities, continental bodies and organs to sustain the dialogues and actions to fast-track agricultural technology deployment while integrating STI in their respective development frameworks.
2. **Appeal** for funding commitment to support STI as affirmed in 2016 by African Heads of State in the Lagos Plan of Action to increase science and technology budgets to at least 1% of Gross Domestic Product(GDP) by 2025 and the commitment to increase the budget allocation to the agricultural sector to at least 10% of the budget in line with the **Malabo Declaration**.
3. **Call** for concerted efforts to urgently address the negative impact of some those opposing novel technological innovations including genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Africa through constructive dialogues and objective engagements, supported by scientific evidence. There is need to navigate away from defending science and instead embrace strategic and transparent communication to effectively counter dis-information.

4. **Commit** to collaborate towards identifying and engaging a critical mass of high-level agricultural technology ambassadors to serve as the voice of the continent on matters related to the development and deployment of agricultural technologies.
5. **Call** for consistent and strategic engagement of all critical stakeholders especially the private sector, farmers and gender groups towards co-creation of innovations and participatory policy making processes, technology development, commercialization and deployment of agricultural technologies.
6. **Stress** the importance of creating a functional enabling environment and sufficient incentives to facilitate research, development and commercialization of agricultural innovations and establishment of a functional private sector.
7. **Reiterate** the need for investment in functions that are critical for supporting commercialization and adoption of agricultural technologies including reinvigorating extension services, creating efficient markets and elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers.
8. **Urge** Africa Union member states, regional economic communities, and other key stakeholders to nurture political will to drive technological advancement in the agricultural sector towards food self-sufficiency and intensified intra-Africa trade in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area - AfCFTA.
9. **Call upon** the AU to formally recognize and engage institutions that have excelled in the field of development and deployment of agricultural technologies as their technical arms on agricultural technology matters.
10. **Endorse** the recognition and adoption of ACAT as the continent-wide biennial forum that will showcase emerging technologies and innovations, promote networking and knowledge, to unlock access to technology and its delivery.
11. **Commit** to sustain engagement on agricultural technology in between ACAT editions through organizing and engaging in Strategic Dialogues in Agricultural Technology in Africa (SDATA) to foster discussions and appropriate actions within and across the following strategic groups: youth, ministers, researchers, private sector, farmers and policy makers including ministers.
12. **Resolve** to meet again in Kigali, Rwanda from 9 - 13 June 2025 to take stock of the progress made against the commitments herein agreed to.

Finally we, ACAT participants recognize and appreciate the commitment of the former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and AATF Goodwill Ambassador for Agricultural Technologies, H.E Dr. Goodluck Jonathan; and also fully appreciate President William Ruto and the people of Kenya for their hospitality and hosting the ACAT 2023 edition.



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