



EU AGRIFOOD RELATIONS WITH AFRICA: WHAT LIES AHEAD?

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SPECIAL REPORT

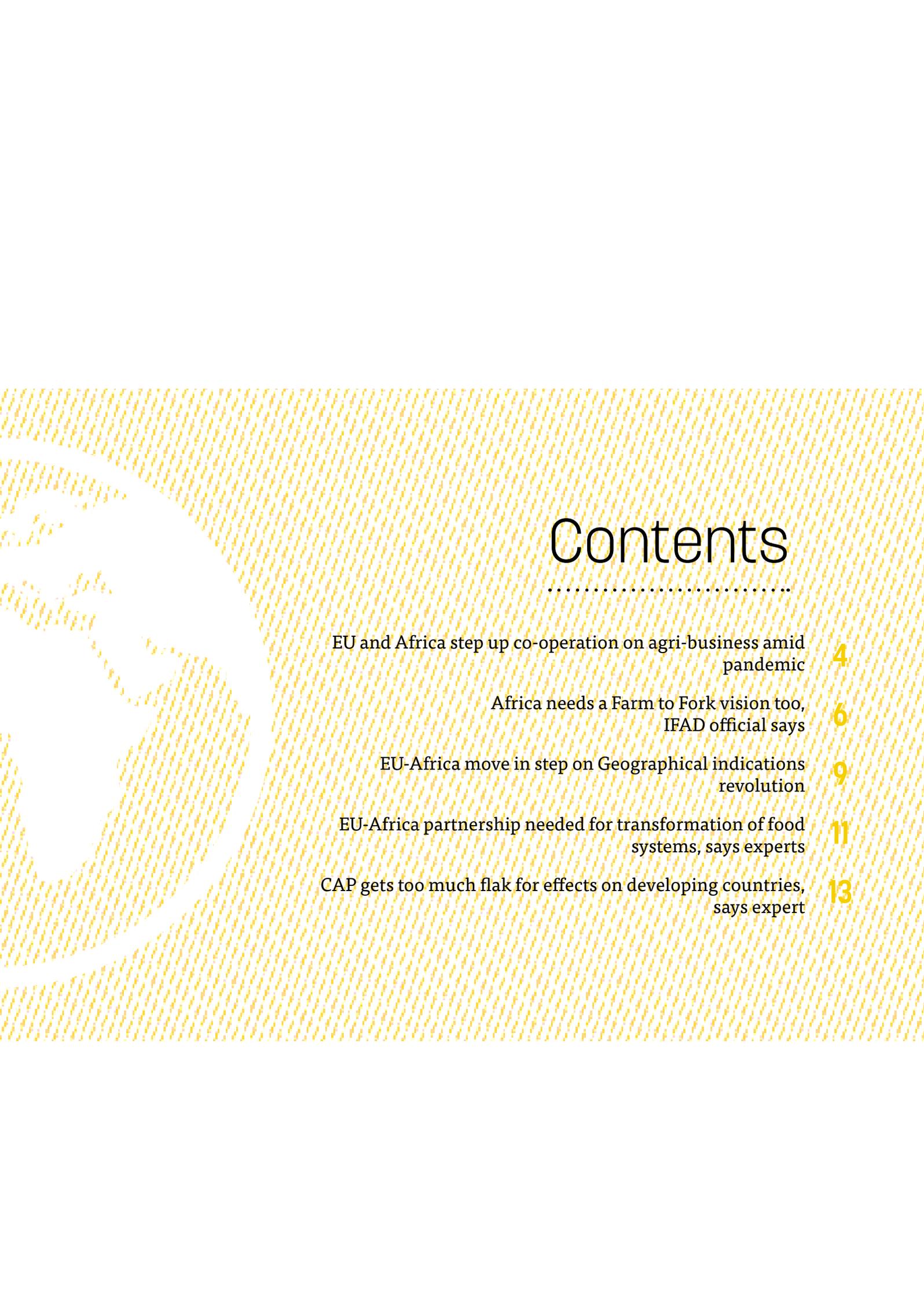
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The European Union is reshaping its approach to Africa, hoping to promote long-term sustainable food systems and help their people cope with the side-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ambitious climate goals embedded in the EU's flagship environmental policy, the Green Deal, have brought sustainability to the top of the EU-Africa agenda even when it comes to farming.

Challenges for rural people created by the pandemic and the need to better protect local foodstuffs are also in the spotlight of the EU's action in Africa.

In this special report, EURACTIV takes stock of the new priorities in the EU-Africa partnership and looks at what lies ahead.



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EU and Africa step up co-operation on agri-business amid pandemic

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By Benjamin Fox | EURACTIV.com



Rural farmers tilling land in Cabinda, Angola. [SHUTTERSTOCK/PINTO]

When the European Commission and African Union set up a 12-person joint rural Africa taskforce in May 2018, their priorities were to promote African food security, transferring skills, climate change adaption and investment in the continent's agri-business.

The taskforce's mandate was extended earlier this year and the work towards those aims in African agri-business has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In particular, the priorities of the taskforce were revised in order to take into account both the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the switch to more ambitious climate goals in the context of the EU's Green Deal.

When the pandemic first hit Europe and Africa in March, there were fears that African agricultural production would be badly hit by supply chain disruption.

At the first meeting of a taskforce on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition in Africa

convened by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the African Union in May, Wolfgang Burtscher, director-general at Commission's DG Agri, stressed the importance of trade and of governments ensuring that supply chains are not broken.

In April, the FAO and the African Union described the food supply system as 'an essential service that must continue to operate during periods of lockdown, emergency, curfew and other containment measures', in a bid to ensure that

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farming communities and food supply are protected.

However, anecdotal evidence from a number of African countries suggests that despite drops in agricultural production of up to 25%, they have used the pandemic, and its disruption to their supply of food imports, to prioritise domestic agricultural production and food security.

Ghana is one of a number of African countries reporting a recent boost to the national production of staple crops such as rice and maize.

“The COVID-19 pandemic provides a golden opportunity for Ghana to optimise food production to meet domestic needs, grow our exports and create jobs,” its agriculture minister, Owusu Afriyie Akoto, said earlier this year.

“We are seeing a lot more companies go into food production,” Botswana’s trade and investment minister, Peggy Serame, told EURACTIV in an interview.

Meanwhile, prices for staple crops have tended not to follow the price drops seen by other commodities and Africa has seen a slight rise in farm trade as countries try to keep their food stockpiles.

“The issue is not the supplies but the transport of those supplies,” Arif Husain, the chief economist for the UN World Food Programme, told EURACTIV earlier this year.

The World Bank warned that disruption to production and supply chains could ‘spark a food security crisis’ in Africa, forecasting a fall in farm production of up to 7% if there

are restrictions to trade, and a 25% decline in food imports.

The EU, meanwhile, has provided financial support and technical assistance.

Last week, the European Commission announced a €180 million support package for small farmers and fishermen in Tunisia.

In November, a similar €38 million funding stream was launched for Angola’s farming community for the purchase of corn, beans, sorghum seeds, as well as fertilizers, work tools and small equipment.

Elsewhere, initiatives such as the Europe-Africa Research & Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA), focus on Africa’s long-term agriculture sector, while in June, the EU and AU launched a joint agri-food platform which aims to link African and European private sectors to promote sustainable and meaningful investment in the agribusiness sector.

“Agriculture is biology, and our agriculture is as good as our science. FARA drives the AU’s mandate to strengthen the application of science and technology to accelerate agricultural transformation in Africa,” said Dr Yemi Akinbami, executive director of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa.

“As neighbours and, increasingly, as trading partners, Europe and Africa have many shared interests and much to learn from one another as our food systems face the challenges of the future,” he added.

INTERVIEW

Africa needs a Farm to Fork vision too, IFAD official says

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By Gerardo Fortuna | EURACTIV.com



Donal Brown is responsible for developing and managing the operations that IFAD supports through its loans and grants. [IFAD]

Africa needs a 'Farm to Fork' vision to change its food systems in a more sustainable way and the EU can be at the centre of this transformation, according to a senior official of the United Nations fund for rural agriculture.

Dr Donal Brown is associate vice-president of the Programme Management department at the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). He

spoke to EURACTIV's journalist Gerardo Fortuna.

With its [Farm to Fork strategy \(F2F\)](#), the Commission aims to make the European food system a global standard for sustainability. Could this F2F model be exported in Africa too?

In Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown just how dependent the world is on small-scale farmers, while

also highlighting the vulnerability of the food systems and of the lives and livelihoods of small-scale producers. A majority of them live in poverty and do not have food to put on the table.

Clearly, we need food systems in Africa that follow the Farm to Fork vision, that are sustainable, climate-adapted, that provide sufficient nutritious food for all, including those who produce it, and food systems that

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are efficient and resilient. Achieving this requires political will, knowledge and financial resources.

The Commission and the EU member states can be at the centre of the transformation of food systems in Africa providing leadership, transferring knowledge and nurturing local solutions, and providing ample financial resources to agricultural development, which would also contribute to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

What challenges for African rural people come from the pandemic?

While the health impact of the pandemic has been limited in African rural areas to date, the economic impacts have unquestionably led to an increase in poverty and hunger.

Rural communities in Africa are particularly vulnerable, as people live hand-to-mouth without economic safety nets. Restrictions in movement and other measures to contain the pandemic meant that many small-scale farmers couldn't sell their crops and had no income, while many day labourers and other informal workers lost their jobs. Women and young people were typically worst affected, as they are most often employed informally.

In this regard, what needs to be done to 'target' aid for the recovery?

While emergency relief agencies provide assistance so that hungry people can access food now, it is equally important to ensure that there are no more hungry people tomorrow. To respond to the challenge, IFAD provided assistance to small-scale

farmers in Africa to access the inputs, markets, information and finances they need to keep growing and selling food.

But more needs to be done. It is essential to invest in building the resilience to shocks of rural people in the poorest countries in Africa so that they can get through this crisis, rebuild their lives quickly when it is over and weather future shocks. Without assistance, African countries risk a lost decade, hunger and poverty could trigger further conflict and instability and push millions of young people to migrate.

What are the main difficulties for financial institutions like yours in coordinating the international response for the COVID recovery?

There have been perhaps two particular challenges. The first has been to react fast, flexibly and effectively. To do so, we've simplified many of our internal procedures to rapidly repurpose our existing investment projects. And we have also mobilised additional funding under a [Rural Poor Stimulus Facility](#) – €74 million thanks to the support of Canada, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland – to finance activities that enable small-scale producers to maintain their capacity to produce and market their produce.

A second challenge has been to understand precisely what the conditions are in remote rural areas and ensure that our efforts respond to the real problems faced by poor small-scale producers. Here, we've drawn less on data – because that simply hasn't existed – and more on the local knowledge of our in-country staff and the managers of IFAD-supported projects.

What has been your experience of cooperating with the EU in Africa?

Over the last seven years, IFAD and the EU have joined forces in emerging areas of mutual and strategic interest, such as pro-poor agricultural research, remittances for development, support to farmer organization networks, public-private sector partnerships and agricultural risk management. As a result of the joint cooperation, there are 17 ongoing agreements for a value of €246 million.

Working together, the EU and IFAD are driving innovation in these areas, and have developed new approaches, particularly in Africa but also beyond, which are now recognised as critical to achieving the SDGs.

Can you mention one initiative of this kind?

One of the initiatives is the [Yield Uganda Investment Fund](#), a partnership between public and private investors set up with EU funds through IFAD. It offers innovative and tailored financial solutions, using equity, semi-equity and debt, to small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises and farmer cooperatives, which are generating impact by facilitating the establishment of new companies or product lines in Uganda, creating markets and providing services to small-scale producers, while also generating employment for women and youth.

The EU and IFAD also cooperate in the Agri-Business Capital (ABC) fund in Africa. How is it going?

The ABC Fund is an independent impact fund investing in smallholder farmers and rural small and medium-

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sized enterprises which consistently encounter difficulties to access funding to develop their operations.

Since it started investing in late 2019, it has provided funding to three farmers cooperatives in Ivory Coast, three small-and-medium agribusinesses in Burkina Faso and Ghana and two financial institutions operating in Ecuador, Kenya and Uganda which on-lend to smallholders, for a total value of around €10 million across the various investments.

In Burkina Faso, for instance, the loan to a cashew nuts processor exporting to Europe and the US has ensured market access and premium prices due to organic and fair-trade certifications to over 1,200 producers, most of them women.

Which kind of agri-innovation African rural people require?

Small-scale producers need a whole range of innovations – from on-farm agricultural technologies to finance to market organization – to become viable market-oriented producers and rural entrepreneurs. They also need to be able to access information about these and develop the knowledge and skills to use the opportunities these provide. ICTs can play a critical role in providing this bridge.

Mobile phones – even those without access to the Internet – can enable farmers to access advisory services that offer tips on increasing

productivity, keeping livestock healthy, and up-to-date weather information. Mobile money has opened up new ways for rural people to access financial services. The M-Pesa initiative has nearly 146 million active users in sub-Saharan Africa and accounts for a full 10 per cent of the region's GDP flows.

EU-Africa move in step on Geographical indications revolution

By Gerardo Fortuna | EURACTIV.com



The EU is considering to give the Geographical indications (GIs) status to Cameroon's Penja pepper. It would be the first sub-saharan GI approved in the EU and the first African one non-originating in South Africa.

The enormous tradition and diversity in African agricultural products may benefit from the use of the intellectual property tool for food protection that Europeans have been held most dear.

Over the years, EU countries have mastered the concept of Geographical indications (GIs) which are designed to protect the names of specific products to promote their unique characteristics, linked to their geographical origin as well as to the know-how embedded in the region.

European citizens can find these

products on their supermarket shelves labelled with specific labels for local food specialities such as PDO (protected designation of origin) and PGI (protected geographical indication).

These product names are included in the EU system of intellectual property rights, legally protecting them against imitation and misuse.

A recent [European Commission study](#) that collected economic data from 3,207 GI protected products from across the EU, found that GIs represent a sales value of €74.76 billion.

GIs represent a success story that Europe wants to promote and export globally and particularly in Africa.

The African Union (AU) has requested the support of UN food agency FAO to establish a continental strategy for GIs, a call that was picked up by other global institutions including the European Commission, the French Agency for development (AFD) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

The [strategy for GIs in Africa](#) was finally endorsed in October 2017,

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receiving the immediate support of the EU which considers GIs as part of the intellectual property rights protocol of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a major AU flagship project to which the EU has committed to provide full support.

A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

The protection of GIs could help preserve and promote Africa's rich agricultural tradition, creating a legal framework on intellectual property and at the same time contributing to rural development in African countries.

"It is a very long process but GIs represent a real tool for development and, if they are successful, they can bring value to the whole food value chain, including smallholders," Sibylle Slattery, project coordinator in the Food and Nutrition division at FAO, told EURACTIV.

She added that GIs can also contribute to preserving African biodiversity since these traditional products might disappear without the added boost given by this form of protection.

On the environmental side, a strong reliance on certain GI products could increase monocultures and, therefore, the FAO is supporting good practices to produce these foodstuffs with methods such as agroecology that have less impact on the environment.

According to FAO's Slattery, GIs are also good for socialising. Since they promote traditional products, the farming community takes even greater pride in what they are producing, also rebalancing the role of women who are crucial for farming practices in

developing countries.

EU EFFORTS

In view of the upcoming 6th AU-EU summit in 2021, the Commission's Directorate-General for agriculture (DG AGRI) has proposed some concrete actions on GIs that are all supported by the EU Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) responsible for managing the trademarks in the common market.

One includes the direct registration as a GI in the EU of Penja pepper from Cameroon. It would be the first sub-Saharan GI approved in the EU and the first African one not originating in South Africa.

Another action forecast will be the launch of a manual on GIs in Africa co-sponsored by the AU and the Commission.

Since the launch of the AU GIs strategy in 2017, a consultative committee has been established the DG AGRI to guide the implementation of the strategy. It is composed by the African Union Commission (AUC), the two African Intellectual Property Offices (OAPI and ARIPO) and the European Commission. FAO, WIPO and EUIPO are invited as observers.

The implementation of the strategy constitutes an opportunity to address the shortcomings of international protection of GIs by enforcing convergent rules and practices at the continental level.

This would encourage trade and improve the positioning of African products on regional, continental and international markets.

The EU executive have also allocated funds to launch together with the EUIPO an international cooperation project called [AfrIPI](#) aiming at creating, protecting, and enforcing intellectual property rights across Africa.

EU-Africa partnership needed for transformation of food systems, says experts

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By *Natasha Foote* | EURACTIV.com



[Shutterstock_423820603]

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the need for EU-African collaboration is more important than ever in the drive to strengthen and transform food systems, but care must be taken to make it an equitable partnership, experts have stressed.

Speaking during a recent [event](#) on the potential role of a sustainable Europe-Africa research and innovation (R&I) platform in addressing food systems resilience, Lindiwe Sibanda, head of mission of the food, agriculture and natural resources policy analysis network (FANRPAN), stressed that

Africa and Europe are both “facing unprecedented challenges with COVID-19, which has negatively affected our food systems for which our collaborative role is very much needed”.

Overcoming these challenges, as well as those which await the food sector in the future, cannot be done alone, she stressed, highlighting the need to foster global partnerships to support the transformation of the agricultural sector.

“Together working with Europe,

our closest neighbour in research and innovation, we will be able to jointly address all the bottlenecks and issues of food insecurity and improve the nutrition in our continent,” said Adipala Ekwamu, executive secretary of the regional universities forum for capacity building in agriculture (RUFORUM), who added a plea for support from the African Union Commission and the European Commission to move on this matter to make it a reality.

These sentiments were shared by Hans-Jörg Lutzeyer, senior policy

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officer at the Commission's DG Research and Innovation, who highlighted the importance of the EU-AU Research & Innovation (R&I) partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA), the 10 year roadmap and the envisaged platform for long-term collaboration.

This platform is designed to bring stakeholder groups together who will contribute to more resilient food systems through R&I.

The event comes on the back of the advent of the first-ever EU-AU research and innovation ministers' meeting earlier this year, hosted by EU Innovation Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, and Sarah Agbor, the AU Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology.

Lutzeyer also underlined that EU funding will focus on further investment through Horizon Europe, for example on plant health, agroecology and malnutrition, emphasising the need to strengthen innovations in African food systems by sharing research in both continents.

"I think we should also use opportunities if we build networks of European universities to link them up," he said, adding that this is expected to be on the agenda for years to come.

However, Philippe Petithuguenin, research and strategy deputy director of Leap 4 FNSSA, the long-term EU-AU research and innovation partnership, stressed that this partnership goes both ways, highlighting that there is an added value for Europe and Africa to work together on those issues.

"We learn from each other, and each continent learns from the other continent," he said.

Stressing that this is not an aid programme, Petithuguenin highlighted that while challenges and circumstances might be different, the two parties must be aligned in a common goal.

"For this platform to be efficient and a partnership, which is not an aid program, we have to have an alignment of visions and work together. But key to this is going to be both continents need to be on board and all stakeholders on board," he said.

In particular, voices of small farmers, consumers and civil society organisations (CSO) must be at the table, he emphasised.

His comments come on the back of criticism that CSOs are being [shut out](#) of discussions between the EU-AU, who warn that the process must not be just a top-down exercise between political elites.

CAP gets too much flak for effects on developing countries, says expert

By *Natasha Foote* | EURACTIV.com



The effect of the CAP on developing countries is often overestimated and rooted in historical issues which are no longer relevant, according to the CAP expert. [SHUTTERSTOCK]

Critics of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy's (CAP) for its effect on developing African countries have an exaggerated view of its importance outside Europe, although some specific areas and particular products remain a cause for concern, according to a CAP expert.

At a global level, the EU accounts for about 15% of global trade so it is "by no means a dominant player," Alan Matthews, formerly a professor of European agricultural policy at Trinity College in Dublin, told EURACTIV.

He highlighted that exports are mainly growing to Asia rather than to Africa but pointed out that the EU has

a closer relationship with West Africa, where EU products account for about 50% of imports.

His comments come on the back of intense scrutiny of the CAP over the past few years, with critics saying that the CAP penalises small farmers in developing countries by exposing them to unfair competition.

But these issues are often overestimated or misunderstood, according to the CAP expert.

"Looking at it from that global perspective, the criticisms around the CAP focus first of all on a small handful of products," he said, highlighting

milk powders, frozen poultry, onions, and tomato paste, which he explored in depth in his 2019 [report](#).

"This suggests that we're looking at very specific issues around those products and around that region, rather than a general criticism that somehow the CAP is subsidising EU exports more generally," he said.

CAP MISCONCEPTION IS OUTDATED

Much of this misconception related to the CAP is outdated and dates back to the period when the EU used export subsidies, Matthews added.

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Although criticism at that time was “fully justified”, it is no longer the major issue, he stressed.

However, Matthews, who describes himself as an outspoken critic of the CAP, added that there are still some specific areas which are a cause for concern in the EU’s agricultural policy.

In particular, he noted that the EU’s ongoing use of coupled support for the dairy sector, which, despite not amounting to much in real terms, is a “legitimate source of criticism”.

Reducing or removing these coupled supports would be a step in the right direction, he said but cautioned that he does not foresee this being on the agenda any time soon.

In other areas, such as internal convergence, Matthews was more optimistic, although much rests on the outcome of the ongoing negotiations on the future of the CAP between the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission.

POTENTIAL FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

For Matthews, however, it is still important to keep a focus on the impacts of the EU’s action elsewhere, especially given that, with the COVID-19 pandemic, there is likely to be a significant increase in the number of hungry people and that countries with less capacity to react to the shocks have been hit hardest.

“There is no doubt these countries have been hit more adversely. I’m just not really convinced that the CAP is all that relevant an instrument for this,”

he said, noting that African countries already have completely tariff-free access to the European market.

“It is development assistance which is probably needed, rather than anything we can do in the CAP,” he pointed out.

Matthews added that the development of public-private partnerships could also be a more effective avenue for change than then CAP, although he warned that this must be approached with caution as poverty is not necessarily the focus of investors in Africa.

“Nonetheless, if you can leverage the business expertise of private companies and add to that some public money, they can actually develop an outreach program,” he said, taking the example of dairy giants such as the Irish dairy processor Arla and nutrition group Glanbia, both of which have operations in Nigeria.



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