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promoting climate resilient futures”

Lessons from and for the AU-EU food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture (FNSSA) roadmap

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Abstract

The African Union–European Union Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) Roadmap 2016–2026 has guided a decade of cooperation in research and innovation on agrifood systems, nutrition and sustainable agriculture. As the roadmap comes to an end, this paper reflects on key lessons and identifies priorities for the next phase (2027–2036). The analysis draws on documents from African and European institutions, selected peer-reviewed literature, and project reports funded under AU, EU and joint AU–EU programmes.

Agri-food systems are shaped by interacting societal, economic and environmental pressures. Climate change is the dominant cross-cutting factor, linked to biodiversity loss, resource degradation, demographic growth, urbanisation, changing diets, and market and geopolitical instability. Although African and European agri-food systems face similar pressures, they differ in their starting points as well as in regional needs and demands.

Programme implementation and governance represent a distinct set of constraints related to how cooperation is organised and delivered. Responsibilities are dispersed across AU, EU and national levels, coordination between institutions and funding streams is weak, and programming cycles are poorly aligned. Administrative complexity, limited follow-up and low interoperability of results reduce the effectiveness and visibility of investments. Research-driven instruments dominate, while coordination, stakeholder engagement and support mechanisms remain comparatively underdeveloped within the partnership architecture.

Capacity and participation highlight who is able to engage in cooperation, under what conditions, and whose knowledge is recognised. Structural gaps in research infrastructure, co-funding, grant management and training limit participation, particularly in parts of Africa. Women, youth and holders of local and place-based knowledge remain underrepresented, affecting both the quality of collaboration and the relevance of outcomes.

Translating research into impact remains difficult. Knowledge exchange is often short-term and project-based, data systems are poorly connected, and links between research, policy and practice are weak. Regulatory fragmentation, limited investment, weak advisory systems and lack of support beyond project lifetimes constrain scaling and uptake.

Based on these findings, the paper outlines directions for a future FNSSA Roadmap that strengthen coordination, address capacity gaps, broaden participation, and guide digitalisation in ways that are inclusive, secure, interoperable and supportive of long-term resilience.

Keywords: AU–EU FNSSA roadmap, capacity building, climate, food and nutrition security, governance, Horizon Europe, participation, scaling, sustainable agriculture