



Commission for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Mines (ETTIM)
Directorate of Industry, Minerals, Entrepreneurship and Tourism

THE FOOD & ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY CHALLENGE

**“ROOTED AND POWERED IN RESILIENCE”:
Securing Africa’s Future in a Shifting Global Order**

CALL FOR SOLUTIONS

April 2026

Breakthrough Innovations to Significantly Advance African Food and Energy Sovereignty

Issuing Body: African Union Commission – ETTIM Department

Challenge Topic: Food and Energy

Date Open: 11 May 2026, 9:00 am

Deadline: 25 May 2026, 11:30 am

Background

For decades, Africa’s economic trajectory has been defined by reactive adaptation to external geopolitical shocks and the structural vulnerabilities of asymmetrical integration into global value chains.

The escalating security crisis in the Gulf and the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, a corridor vital for nearly 30% of global hydrocarbon and agricultural trade, constitute a definitive inflection point. This instability exposes the terminal limits of import-dependent food and energy security models, necessitating an urgent transition toward endogenous resilience.

In alignment with the strategic imperatives of Agenda 2063, this "Call for Solutions" serves as a catalyst for a sovereign industrial shift and a paradigm shift from reactive scarcity management toward active resilience. Its mandate is to deploy African technological innovation to architect self-sufficient food and energy systems, transforming local technological dynamism into a resilient growth engine capable of substituting imports and ensuring the continent’s resilience against global supply chain disruptions.

The Food & Energy Sovereignty Challenge

This Call for Solutions constitutes a large-scale industrial mobilization aimed at propelling African technological ingenuity to secure the continent’s food and energy future. We are mobilizing the “Sovereignty Builders”: an elite cohort of high-growth SMEs, Startups, and Deeptech companies possessing the technical maturity to transform proof-of-concepts into structural pillars of the African continental market.

We aim to create change by:

1. Incentivizing innovators to identify and address major structural bottlenecks in Africa’s food systems and energy autonomy.
2. Sourcing and scaling innovative, industrial-ready solutions for continental adoption, replication, and expansion.

3. Fostering strategic innovation partnerships involving industrial leaders, research institutions, governments, and financial stakeholders.
4. Supporting policy dialogue and structured engagement between innovators and governments to promote the alignment of national industrial plans with AfCFTA and Agenda 2063 priorities.
5. Assisting Member States in leveraging emerging technologies, including AI and robotics, to optimize resource management and strengthen the "Soil and Energy" nexus.

Focus Areas

The 2026 Call particularly welcomes innovations in the following two focus areas:

Focus Areas	Potential Approaches
Track A: Innovation for Food Sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bio-Input Revolution: Industrial production of bio-fertilizers and organic pesticides derived from local minerals and biomass. • Seed Autonomy: Multiplication and preservation of indigenous and climate-resilient seed varieties. • Circular Bio-Economy: Industrial-scale nutrient recovery systems (“waste-to-value” solutions). • Post-Harvest Resilience: Solar-powered cold chains and modular storage systems to cut post-harvest losses. • Precision Ag-Tech: AI and IoT-based tools for optimized resource management and last-mile distribution.
Track B: Innovation for Energy Sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed Renewable Power: Modular renewable energy systems (solar, wind, micro-hydro) for industrial clusters. • Advanced Storage & Green Hydrogen: Battery solutions using African minerals and green hydrogen for heavy industry. • E-Mobility & Resilient Logistics: Electrification solutions and infrastructure for commercial and rural transport. • Smart Grids & Peer-to-Peer: Digital platforms enabling community-based energy sharing and industrial efficiency. • Sustainable Industrial Heat: Renewable thermal solutions for agro-processing and manufacturing industries.

Eligibility and Scorecard

Eligibility

Applications will be accepted from citizens of AU Member States leading an organization that meets the following mandatory requirements:

1. **Nationality and Ownership:** The company must be at least 51% owned by African citizens (whether residing on the continent or part of the diaspora).
2. **Legal Standing:** The entity must be legally registered.
3. **Technological Maturity:** The solution must have a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of 6 or higher (proven prototypes or market-active solutions).

4. **Sector Alignment:** The innovation must strictly focus on either Food Sovereignty or Energy Sovereignty as defined in the Challenge tracks.

Selection Criteria

Submissions will undergo a comprehensive technical review by the Selection Panel based on the following weighted scorecard:

1. **Innovation and Distinctiveness (30%):** Uniqueness of the solution within the African context and its immediate deployment capacity (TRL 6+).
2. **Economic Viability and Scalability (20%):** Robustness of the business model, growth plan, and capacity for large-scale continental expansion.
3. **Socio-economic Impact and Nexus Focus (20%):** Job creation potential, contribution to climate resilience, and proof of a direct synergy within the “Soil and Energy” nexus.
4. **Intellectual Property (20%):** Proof of patents (filed or pending) and protection of intangible assets.
5. **Team and Execution Capacity (10%):** Technical expertise of the founders and a proven track record of successful implementation.

Application Process

The deployment follows a rigorous, digitized pathway:

Eligibility Check	Automated screening for basic criteria (Nationality, Legal Registration, Track, TRL 6+).	Week 1-2
Shortlisting	In-depth evaluation by the Joint Selection Panel; shortlisting of top innovations.	Week 3-5
Final Selection	Final review by institutional partners to ensure balance and merit.	Week 6-7

Submission Requirements:

To ensure a standardized and efficient evaluation of the expected volume of applications, all submissions must adhere to the following strict constraints:

- **Problem Statement (300 words max):** Concise definition of the specific food or energy sovereignty bottleneck being addressed.
- **Innovation & Implementation (500 words max):** Detailed description of the solution's functionality, revenue model, and explicit alignment with the "Soil and Energy" nexus.
- **Impact & Outcomes (500 words max):** Report on verifiable performance, job creation potential, and contribution to climate resilience.
- **Technical Documentation:**
 - **Pitch Deck (PDF): Max 5MB (optimized for 10-12 slides).**
 - **Video Demonstration: Max 50MB (strictly 3 minutes)** or a secure external link.
 - **Legal & IP Proof: Max 2MB per file).** Scanned copies of operating licenses and patent/IP certificates

Benefits for successful applicants

Selected innovators will gain access to an unprecedented growth engine to transform their solutions into continental champions:

- **Industrial Scalability:** Dedicated support to expand production capacity from current stages to robust, continental-scale industrial output.
- **Market Access:** Institutional support to facilitate the acquisition of national and regional public procurement contracts to anchor solutions in public infrastructure.
- **Influence and Finance Networking:** Targeted matchmaking with Venture Capital (VC) firms, institutional investors, and privileged access to high-level government decision-makers for strategic deal-making.
- **Trade and Industry Missions:** Inclusion in official African Union delegations for premier international business, trade, and innovation forums.
- **High-Level Visibility:** Featured publication in the "Africa Food & Energy Sovereignty Catalog 2026".

Deadline for submissions: 25th May 2026 by 23:00 EAT (GMT+3).

Inquiries may be sent to: FoodEnergySovereignty@AfricanUnion.org

[Apply for this opportunity](#)

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