

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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The Common Africa Agro-Parks (CAAPs) Implementation to Boost Acceleration of the AfCFTA and Promote Continental Agro-Industrialization and Integration



The African Union Commission – through its Departments of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (ARBE); and Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining (ETIM) hosted a successful investor round table on the Common Africa Agro-Parks (CAAPs) Initiative at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Jointly organized by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), and the Africa Export, Import Bank (Afrexim bank) the event took place on 17th February 2023 in the margins of the 36th Ordinary Session of the African Union. A CAAPs Steering Committee meeting was held on the 16th February.

The event was convened in collaboration with key partners such as RECs, Africa Development Bank, AUDA-NEPAD, UNIDO, Pan Africa Farmer Organization, UNECA, Africa Business Council, Pan African Agribusiness Apex Chamber (PAAAC), International Food Policy Research Institution (IFPRI), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), Africa Business Council, FAO, and the private sector to mention a few...

In her welcome remarks at the investor round table, H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE), acknowledged all CAAPs program partners that were present during the roundtable and for the commendable actions taken by each institution. She emphasized that in the context of The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the CAAPs program has the potential to transform the continent's agriculture and boost **the continent's integration through trade and industrialization**. *“Implementing the CAAPs is no longer an option, and we shall not allow any distraction to the realization of this important vision of Africa”*. She gave special thanks to **Afreximbank** for the catalytic funding provided last year, which has facilitated engagement plans and activities of the CAAPs. She also appreciated the UN-FAO for providing Technical Cooperation Support this year to the CAAPs-Secretariat. She underscored the need for Public-Private-Partnership (PPP)-driven financing options for joint governance of the CAAPs.

Over the course of the 2-day event, delegates engaged in a productive discussion to sensitize PPPs on the CAAPs as an effective tool to boost agriculture. Additionally, the participants gathered feedback on how best to continue PPP engagement and obtain pledges from partners to support the implementation of the CAAPs. Dr. Yemi Akinbamijo, the Executive Director of FARA, asserted that we need to evade the bureaucratic inertia that may be hit if we do not move the continent to the next level.

On the other hand, Mr. Mansur Ahmed, the Executive Director, Stakeholder Management and Corporate Communications at Dangote, alluded that we need to promote action that will make the agricultural industry competitive, with a clear pathway to create hubs that will create sustainable linkages.

The event marked an important milestone for the Steering Committee of the CAAPs to endorse **CAAPs for consideration as a flagship program of Agenda 2063**. “The importance of the continent to boost production and processing is high. We stand ready to work with the member states and members of the Steering Committee to drive the process,” said Ms. Estherine Fotabong, AUDA-NEPAD Director of Programmes and Planning on behalf of H.E Nardos Bekele-Thomas, the CEO of AUDA-NEPAD. Also, taking the floor Mr. Themba Khumalo, Senior Advisor to the Secretary General of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, confirmed that the AfCFTA secretariat is

thrilled to join this partnership since the CAAPs will help deliver on the strategies to drive regional processes for boosting intra-Africa agricultural trade.

Dr. Beth Dunford, the Vice President of the African Development Bank's Agriculture, Human, and Social Development, also confirmed the bank's commitment to supporting the CAAPs implementation in collaboration with the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones programme.

The event ended with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the **African Union Commission, Afreximbank, and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa**, the key drivers of the CAAPs.

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