

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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The AU urges stronger policy coherence and Mult-sectoral approach to transform Africa's Agrifood systems within the context of the CAADP Kampala Declaration and 10 Year Strategy and Action Plan (2026 -2035).



The African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the Agriculture and Rural Development Directorate of the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission convened the Permanent Secretaries of Agriculture Leadership Dialogue in Lusaka Zambia from 10-12 April 2025. This was a strategic step towards the implementation of the CAADP Kampala strategy 2026 -2035, following the January 2025 Extraordinary summit that took place in Kampala, Uganda. The Heads of State, endorsed the Kampala Declaration and adopted the next ten-year vision for the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

Noting that the responsibility of Government's leadership for Agrifood Transformation lies with Permanent Secretaries (PS) of Agriculture who continuously lead key decision-making processes at national level, the role of PS is key in strengthening national systems, thereby creating an enabling environment in which institutional and policy imperatives are enhanced to deliver resilient agrifood systems results.

Dr. Janet Edeme, Head of the Rural Development Division and Acting Head of Agriculture and Food Security Division at the African Union Commission (AUC), emphasized the importance of policy coherence and inter-ministerial coordination in transforming Africa's agrifood systems. Speaking during the opening of the Leadership Dialogue for Permanent Secretaries of Agriculture in Lusaka, Dr. Edeme said the meeting comes at a defining moment in Africa's Agriculture development agenda.

“It is both an honour and a pleasure for me to deliver these opening remarks at this very timely and strategic Leadership Dialogue for Permanent Secretaries, which comes at a critical juncture in our collective journey to transform Africa’s agrifood systems,” she said. Dr. Edeme extended warm greetings from H.E. Moses Vilakati, the African Union AU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment and Dr. Godfrey Bahigwa, the Director for Agriculture and Rural Development who were unable to attend due to prior commitments.

She acknowledged the contributions of AUDA-NEPAD, Regional Economic Communities, Technical partners, research institutions, and independent experts in advancing the CAADP process during the Malabo era. She noted that the adoption of the Kampala Declaration in January 2025 had set the stage for a new era of transformation. “We gather here today in the wake of the historic Kampala Declaration..., which ushered in a new era for CAADP — one that places the transformation of agri-food systems at the very heart of Africa’s sustainable development agenda,” she said.

Dr. Edeme called on Permanent Secretaries of Agriculture to embrace their role as key drivers and leaders of national policy implementation. “You are the cornerstone of national policy coherence and implementation,” she said. “Your leadership is crucial in driving reforms, coordinating inter-ministerial action, and shaping the enabling environment for resilient and inclusive agri-food systems.” She also highlighted the relevance of the newly developed Food Systems Guidelines, designed to help countries integrate food systems transformation into their National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs) and broader national strategies.

“These guidelines are a vital tool developed to support countries, and your insights will be invaluable in ensuring they are practical, relevant, and responsive to country contexts,” she said. As the Dialogue progresses over the next two and a half days, Dr. Edeme urged participants to use the platform for reflection, peer learning, and strategic consensus. “I am confident that your deliberations will lead to concrete outcomes that would reinforce our shared commitment to food security, resilience, sustainability, and prosperity for our continent,” she concluded.

The high-level dialogue brought together Agriculture Permanent Secretaries, senior government officials, and technical experts from across Africa to align national actions with the CAADP Kampala Agenda (2026–2035) and accelerate the transformation of agrifood systems and to deliberate on ways to strengthen the national coordinating mechanism that plays a key leadership role in designing and implementing CAADP instruments, such as the National Agrifood Investment Plan (NAIP), and domestication of relevant technical implementation tools.

Speaking at the same meeting, African Union Development Agency’s CEO, Nardos Bekele-Thomas called for action from Africa’s top agricultural leaders, urging them to translate the Kampala Declaration into transformative action that will reshape the continent’s agri-food systems. Dr Bekele-Thomas emphasized that the meeting was more than just a forum—it was “a movement.” “Today, we do not gather merely for routine deliberation,” she said. “We gather to reimagine, reaffirm, and reignite Africa’s commitment to transform our agri-food systems through National Agriculture Investment Plans.” Dr Bekele-Thomas acknowledged progress made since CAADP’s inception in 2003, noting that agriculture has since been elevated to a top-tier development priority across the continent. However, she cautioned that major challenges remain.

“But let us be clear-eyed,” she said. “The 2023 CAADP Biennial Review reminds us that our pace must quicken. We have not yet met our Malabo targets. Over 250 million of our brothers and sisters remain food insecure. Climate threats, inequality, and economic fragility continue to weigh down the very sector that holds the key to our renewal.”

Mr. Patrick Kangwa, Zambia’s Secretary to the Cabinet for Agriculture also called for urgent and bold actions to accelerate the transformation of Africa’s agrifood systems, urging Permanent Secretaries and senior government officials across the continent to take ownership and drive implementation at national level.

Mr. Kangwa emphasized the importance of unity, inter-ministerial collaboration, and resilience in Africa’s food systems agenda. “At this stage, the people of Africa are focusing on how this meeting will proceed, with the trust that the Heads of State and Government have deployed their best men and women, experts and implementers uniquely qualified and experienced to get the job done—to secure Africa’s food and nutrition,” he said.

He underscored the significance of the Kampala Declaration adopted in January 2025, which set a bold ten-year vision for “building resilient agrifood systems in Africa.”

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