



POLICY BRIEF 008 | JUN 2025

Strengthening German-African Partnerships for Sustainable Agrifood System Development in Africa

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By Kingstone Mujeyi





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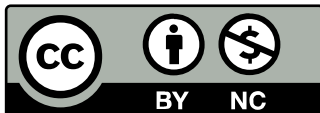
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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
APD	Agricultural Policy Dialogue
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BMEL	German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BTF	Bilateral Trust Fund
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CAADP DPCG	CAADP's Development Partner Coordination Group
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FSDP	Food Systems Development Program
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICP	International Cooperating Partner
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC	International Finance Corporation
NAIP	National Agricultural Investment Plan
RAVCs	Regional Agricultural Value Chains
REC	Regional Economic Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa



Executive summary

African economies have recorded notable progress in food production, processing and distribution. However, significant challenges and failures persist in the continent's agrifood systems, leading to an alarmingly poor state of food and nutrition security across the region.^{1,2} The continent's agrifood systems remain susceptible to various shocks and stressors due to climate variability, economic volatility, political instability and public health threats – factors that have continued to pose significant risks and challenges. Relatedly, there has been growing concern over Africa's slow progress towards achieving targets set under key continental policy frameworks such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

In recognition of Africa's latent agricultural potential, implementation challenges and funding difficulties, international cooperating partners (ICPs) continue to support the agrifood sector through aid and foreign direct investment (FDI). These endeavours focus on research, capacity building, technology transfer and facilitating market access. Germany, one such ICP, has expressed its commitment to making African agrifood systems crisis-resilient through its different institutions. For instance, Germany supported the development of the CAADP strategy and the participation of African civil society in this process. In addition, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) have expressed their commitment to ensuring that Africa becomes food secure and experiences growth in its agricultural sector (BMEL, 2021; BMZ, 2023a).

Furthermore, since 2004, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has been a reliable and trusted partner across selected African Union (AU) member states, supporting the promotion of inclusive growth and sustainable development on the continent in line with the AU's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. The GIZ-AU partnership cooperates with the African Union Commission at continental, regional and national levels, with footprints in more than 35 member states (GIZ, 2020). The partnership collaborates with the AU's specialised institutions and agencies to promote development in key areas, including agrifood systems transformation.³

While these commitments are commendable, Germany's policy, focus, scale and engagement approach towards Africa's agrifood system is still unclear: data on this is not coherently available online. Consequently, through a desk review and informant interviews with key stakeholders, this study identifies key actors and policy frameworks and their roles in Germany's partnership with Africa in the area of agrifood systems transformation. The study explores the focus and scale of the partnerships and concludes by proposing mechanisms for strengthening any new partnerships that may evolve, particularly under the new Kampala CAADP Declaration and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Findings show that Germany's commitment to African agrifood systems is embedded in global (e.g. the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals), regional (the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States, and the Southern Africa Development Community) and national policies that guide, govern and shape the partnerships.

Germany engages with Africa mostly through aid. The role of the private sector in transforming agrifood systems has not been adequately promoted and supported under the current Germany–AU engagements. Germany spends an estimated EUR 2 billion each year on global food security and rural development programmes, which are priority areas for bilateral cooperation across the African continent under the special initiative on the Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems (deutschland.de, 2022). However, these financial resources remain inadequate in relation to the scale of what is needed to meet the requirements for effective transformation of the continent's agrifood systems.

As a way forward, this study recommends that current collaborative efforts between German and AU member states be deepened to scale mutually beneficial initiatives that are aimed at addressing limited investments into the continent's agrifood systems. Particularly in aspects of local value addition, agricultural research and development (R&D), knowledge exchange and climate-resilient infrastructure. Co-funding for these initiatives can come from the AU member states meeting their commitment to contribute at least 10% of their national budgets to agriculture, as already agreed under the CAADP.

As the AU prepares to implement its new agenda under the Kampala CAADP Declaration, a 10-year strategy and action plan for the period 2026–2035, there is a need to craft and sign a comprehensive partnership agreement with development partners, including Germany. German actors (e.g. the BMEL, BMZ and GIZ) should also collaborate with other donors and ICPs to support the implementation of the new Kampala agenda by the AU and its agencies, regional economic communities (RECs) and member states. Coordination among these actors should take place within the CAADP's Development Partner Coordination Group (CAADP DPCG).

Secondly, the new partnership approach between Germany and African countries should focus more on scaling private sector engagement along the entire agrifood value chains to ensure that agrifood systems are private-sector-led and market- and export-oriented. The partnership should also be refocused from aid provision to investment in value addition and trade.

Finally, African stakeholders should harmonise the various national and regional policies and provide incentives for RECs and member states to accelerate the transformation of national value chains into regional agricultural value chains under the AfCFTA. The incentives could be in the form of supporting the private sector to establish and operationalise agro-industrial parks, which are critical in agro-processing, and diversify and export value-added agricultural and food commodities.

1. Background

Agriculture remains the backbone of most African countries' food systems. Over half of the continent's population derives their livelihoods from agriculture, which is the largest contributor to the gross domestic products (GDPs) of the majority of AU member states. If existing resources are optimally utilised, there is great potential for agricultural growth. However, Africa's agrifood sector continues to be plagued by the challenges of climate change, food insecurity, post-harvest losses and limited investment (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa [AGRA], 2024). Agricultural productivity levels have broadly remained very low and stagnant for over four decades despite recent efforts aimed at promoting increased investments into the sector (AGRA, 2018). The vulnerability of the continent's agrifood system has been compounded by the conflicts in Eastern Europe (the Russo-Ukrainian war) and the Middle East (the Israeli occupation of Gaza) and the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Policy-wise, African states have agreed to implement the African Union's (AU) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), through which member states are seeking to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty by raising economic growth through agriculture-led development. However, there has been concern about Africa's slow progress towards achieving the targets set under the framework of the CAADP, coupled with emerging threats to the continent's agrifood systems (AGRA, 2023). These concerns led to the development of a post-Malabo CAADP agenda that was endorsed by heads of states at an AU summit held in January 2025 in Kampala, Uganda (AU, 2025).

The new CAADP agenda, dubbed the 'Kampala Declaration', is a 10-year strategy and action plan for the period 2026–2035 that will focus on incorporating the lessons learnt over two decades of CAADP implementation to address existing and emerging challenges and build resilient and sustainable agrifood systems. The Kampala agenda will be implemented within the AU's continental policy and strategy framework for transforming the continent's agriculture. The CAADP is being implemented primarily at the country level and at the level of the regional economic communities (RECs). The effectiveness of this continental flagship initiative will depend largely on the extent to which it succeeds in closing the gap between continental policy-making and implementation processes at the country level.

The degree to which the CAADP goals are integrated into national policy processes will be especially critical. At the beginning of the 'Malabo decade',⁴ the Country Agribusiness Partnership Framework was created to mobilise private sector investments into the National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs) of the CAADP country processes. Globally, the continent also subscribes to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals



(SDGs), which seek to end poverty in all its forms and eliminate hunger everywhere by 2030 through inclusive agricultural growth and transformation.

However, despite the Kampala CAADP Declaration and project interventions, the continent's agricultural sector has been growing at a pace marginally lower than the global figure: 2.6% per year against 2.7% (AUC, 2020). Thus, the growth of the continent's agricultural sector has remained far below the targeted 6% per annum set under the CAADP agenda. A closer look into the RECs reveals that only the member states of the Southern Africa Development Community have managed to surpass the 6% CAADP growth target (8.23% as of 2022). The other RECs achieved annual growth rates of only 1–2.6% (AGRA, 2022).

From a trade perspective, African countries have continued to rely significantly on food imports from outside the continent. According to the *2024 Africa Agricultural Trade Monitor Report*, the continent has yet to attain its target of tripling the share of cross-border trade among AU member states (Odjo et al., 2024). It is estimated that African countries obtain less than a quarter (22.9%) of their import demand for food from other African countries, far below the likes of the European Union (EU), Asia and Latin America, which obtain over 50% of their import demand from intra-regional trade (UNECA, 2022).

In the context of the abovementioned challenges and in recognition of Africa's latent agricultural potential, international cooperating partners (ICPs) continue to support the sector through aid and foreign direct investment (FDI). These endeavours focus on research, capacity building, technology transfer and facilitating market access. Germany, one such ICP, has expressed its commitment to making African agrifood systems crisis-resilient through its different institutions. Accessible information sources show that regarding post-colonial cooperation, the earliest recorded development partnerships happened during the 1950s and 1960s, when newly independent African countries established formal diplomatic and economic relations with West Germany.⁵ The source indicates that the focus of these early partnerships was on development aid, technical assistance and trade.

Since then, the partnerships have evolved to include security, strengthening the policy framework for the effective implementation of the right to nutritious food, the role of women and youth, sustainable agricultural production, adaptation to climate change, and nutrition-sensitive solutions for food loss and food waste reduction. For example, Germany supported the development of the Kampala strategy and the participation of African civil society in this process.

The German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) have expressed their commitment to ensuring that Africa becomes food secure and experiences growth in its agricultural sector (BMEL, 2023; BMZ, 2023a). While this is commendable, it is still unclear what Germany's policy, focus, scale and engagement approach towards Africa's agrifood system is, since data on this is not coherently available online. Against this background, this study explores the actors, current partnership approaches and focus and scale of Germany's engagement in the agrifood systems of African economies. It goes on to recommend pathways to a new approach that is beneficial for both parties.

The study's methodology involved a desk analysis of partnerships and projects in African agrifood systems, specifically those supported or implemented by the BMEL, BMZ and GIZ. Thus, the projects were selected for analysis because of their focus on agrifood systems in Africa. The data gathered were critically assessed through qualitative analytical techniques for authenticity and selected for incorporation into the report. A meta-aggregation technique was utilised to synthesise the study's findings and avoid unnecessary repetition. To provide a comprehensive review and presentation of the compiled findings, the meta-aggregation technique synthesised the relevant themes drawn from all the studies included in the literature review (Mensah et al., 2025).

This methodological approach presented some challenges. Firstly, some key data and information sources were only available in German; they required translation to English using online translation services. Secondly, some of the 32 targeted key institutions and organisations did not respond to the request for online interviews, thereby limiting the number of interviews to only 15. Of these, none could provide adequate data to comprehensively answer the questions.

The third challenge pertains to the accessibility of data and information sources on the subject matter which were not readily available online. In the absence of data, particularly those on the amount and scale of financial resources involved in the Germany–Africa partnership, the study relied on reports published by the BMEL, BMZ and GIZ. A mixed methods approach (triangulating data and information sources) helped to mitigate this challenge, but some details of spatial, temporal and amount dimensions of the events and investments of the partnership approaches remain scant. In addition, historical data regarding the involvement of Germany in the African continent's agrifood systems were found to be lacking and fragmented, a situation that made it very challenging to put together a coherent story along the thematic areas of the research study.

There are many German actors involved in agricultural development in Africa.⁶ However, this research paper focuses only on the activities of the BMEL,⁷ BMZ⁸ and GIZ. The major challenge in analysing the focus, scale and partnership approaches used by these three entities is that there are multiple ways through which they cooperate with Africa in agrifood systems. For example, individually through bilateral cooperation with selected AU member states, collaboratively through joint cooperation with each other in implementing certain initiatives and through multilateral partnerships with international organisations such as the UN, the EU and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). In some instances, the three German entities simply provide funding; in others, they also partner through direct involvement in the implementation of projects (e.g. GIZ).

These kinds of partnership arrangement made it difficult to decipher the specific contribution of and outcomes attributable to German actors. The limited availability of data and information on the details of the agreements and partnerships also made it challenging to authoritatively attribute certain processes and outcomes to the contribution of German actors. Finally, although numerous other German actors play roles in other EU countries' cooperation with Africa, these were not considered for analysis because their foci are neither primarily nor directly concerned with agrifood systems.

2. Actors and policy framework in Germany's partnership with Africa on agrifood systems transformation

As discussed in the previous section, this research paper focuses on the activities of the BMEL, BMZ and GIZ since they are directly involved in agricultural development with African partners. In the area of agrifood system transformation, the German government mainly collaborates with Africa through the Bilateral Trust Fund (BTF) and the Bilateral Cooperation Programme and through research in the field of global food security. On the African side, the actors involved are the AU and its agencies, RECs, member states, civil society organisations (CSOs), research and development organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), ICPs and locally based organisations.

Germany has adopted a deliberate development policy that prioritises agriculture and sustainable development (BMZ, 2023a). This commitment is embedded in global, regional and national policy frameworks as follows:

- **Global policy frameworks:** Germany has committed to and supports the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025). The AU's quest to transform the African agrifood systems is in line with Germany's commitment to align the global agenda for agrifood systems transformation with local initiatives in Africa. The goal is 'to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda key sustainable development goals and thus secure access to food and promote growth' (BMEL, 2020).
- **African continental policy frameworks:** Germany supports the AU's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the CAADP and the African Green Stimulus Programme. Strengthening the resilience of African agrifood systems is also a priority on the development agenda of the German government and many of its partners towards the objectives of the AU's Agenda 2063. The BMZ and BMEL activities in African partner countries align not only with continental policy frameworks but also with the corresponding national frameworks (e.g. the NAIPs), development strategies, plans and programmes, visions and policies for the respective countries' agricultural sectors. In line with its Africa Policy Guidelines, the Federal Government of Germany has established a framework for a coherent, inter-ministerial African policy through which it has reaffirmed its commitment 'to cooperate with Africa on a partnership basis' (BMEL, 2020).
- **EU policy frameworks:** Among EU member states, Germany is the leading donor and subscriber to the renewed Africa–EU Partnership and the EU–AU Partnership on Agriculture and Rural Development. As well as the EU's European Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy, European Consensus on Development, External Investment

Plan, Climate Adaptation Strategy, Global Gateway Strategy and Team Europe Initiatives. In addition, the Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement: the Samoa Agreement (which is between the EU and the members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States).

- **Multilateral contributions:** Germany is a donor to multilateral sustainable agricultural initiatives such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program. The country also provides funding to international cooperation partnerships with organisations that play critical roles in African agrifood systems. Such as the EU, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the IFAD, the World Food Programme of the United Nations and the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research.
- **Regional partnerships:** Germany has a Compact with Africa, which was launched during Germany's G20 presidency in 2017 to promote improved conditions for private investments into the agrifood systems of 12 African countries. One key objective of Germany's cooperation with Africa is to ensure adequate and balanced nutrition for vulnerable groups. This goal is to be achieved by tapping into the success stories of Germany and the EU in improving the 'productivity, quality and sustainability of the agrifood sector while promoting food safety [and] animal and plant health as the bedrock for Africa's participation in international trade' (BMEL, 2020).
- **German national and bilateral strategies:** Germany's bilateral engagements with the AU and its member states are guided by the federal government's updated Africa Policy Guidelines and climate action strategies, as well as BMZ's Strategy for Development Cooperation with Africa, 2030 Strategy and special initiative on the Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems. The BMEL also maintains healthy bilateral relations with many African countries at different levels, supported by 'dialogue based on partnership' (BMEL, 2024).

3. Focus and scale of Germany–Africa partnerships in agrifood systems

Germany's partnership with Africa in transforming agrifood systems aims to address various barriers to mutual growth and development (BMEL, 2025). For instance, the BMEL's German Agriculture and Food Strategy for Africa 2025 emphasises reducing unnecessary dependencies and fostering mutually beneficial partnerships, empowerment and agroecology (GermanWatch, 2025). The focus of these partnerships has expanded over the years from focussing merely on promoting food security. The BMEL's (2024) partnership focusses on several key areas including but not limited to the following:

- **Sustainable agriculture:** Germany supports selected African countries in promoting sustainable agricultural practices such as climate-resilient farming methods, reducing post-harvest losses and ensuring food security.
- **Policy dialogue:** Germany and the AU have initiated an Agricultural Policy Dialogue (APD) to strengthen policy frameworks and implementation guidelines for transforming agrifood systems. The APD aims to enhance the inclusivity, equity, sustainability and resilience of the agrifood systems.
- **Empowering women and youth in agribusiness:** The partnership emphasises the importance of empowering women and involving young people in the agrifood sector. Initiatives such as the Africa Youth Agribusiness Forum and the Agri-Business Facility for Africa's Matching Grant Fund are promoted by GIZ and create opportunities to economically empower women and the youth through agriculture.
- **Knowledge sharing:** Germany shares its expertise and knowledge with African countries to help them expand their agricultural activities in a sustainable and locally adapted manner. This includes creating platforms for collaboration, exchange and sharing technical know-how from science and research.
- **Climate-smart agriculture:** The partnership focuses on promoting climate-smart agriculture and resilient food systems. Germany supports climate-resilient breeding and seed systems, agroecology and climate-resilient production methods.

The exact levels (total value) of Germany's funding towards African agrifood systems is not explicitly mentioned in any available sources. Not all African regions and countries are covered. What limited support exists is channelled through various initiatives and programmes that are endorsed particularly by the BMEL, BMZ and GIZ (GermanWatch, 2025). One such initiative between the BMEL and the AU is the APD, which aims to accelerate the transformation of African agrifood systems by strengthening policy frameworks and implementation guidelines (BMEL, 2024). The APD initiative has seen

increased funding over the years to address the growing challenges in African agrifood systems (Rural 21, 2023).

In addition, Germany has been actively involved in providing climate-related development finance for agrifood systems. For example, the Food Systems Development Program (FSDP) is funded by the BMEL under the 'One World – No Hunger' initiative to the tune of EUR 21 million (IFC, n.d.). The FSDP contributes towards sustainable rural transformation in Africa by targeting smallholder producers, farmer organisations and rural Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The FSDP focusses on agricultural value chain development and enhanced access to finance. This includes supporting climate-resilient farming practices and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Although the specific funding details are not explicitly outlined in the available sources, it is clear that the level of financial support in this area has increased over the years, reflecting Germany's commitment to addressing climate change and its impact on agrifood systems (IFAD, 2022). For instance, the IFAD (2022) reports that Germany, through BMZ, contributed EUR 30 million in support of the IFAD's response to the global food and energy crisis.

Furthermore, BMZ invested EUR 22 million in financial services and products designed to strengthen the agricultural business sector in poor communities, particularly in Africa (IFAD, 2022). The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) also reports that the establishment of the African–German Centre for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems and Applied Agricultural and Food Data Science was supported by BMZ, with funding of up to EUR 6.5 million allocated until 2029 (DAAD, 2024). Overall, Germany's financial support to African agrifood systems has grown significantly, with a focus on promoting sustainability, resilience and inclusivity (GermanWatch, 2025).

The following subsections outline the projects and partnership interventions of the three key German actors in African agrifood systems: the BMEL, BMZ and GIZ. The projects and partnerships reviewed were selected using the meta-aggregation technique. Keywords related to the study's topic and thematic areas were searched for on Google, and the results were assessed and selected for critical appraisal. The review and synthesis of the selected online literature constituted the interventions categorised by the key actor, as outlined below.

3.1 Selected BMEL interventions in African agrifood systems

In recent years, the BMEL has made cooperation with Africa a priority of its international work (BMEL, 2024). The food and agriculture ministry seeks to help bring the federal government's updated Africa Policy Guidelines to life and contribute towards implementing the recommendations of the EU's Task Force Rural Africa and the resolutions of the AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference. This would enable the government to contribute to achieving Agenda 2030's sustainability goals through coherent cooperation between all stakeholders (BMEL, 2025).

The main foci of BMEL projects in agrifood systems are: enhancing Africa's participation in international trade, achieving the SDGs and attaining food and nutrition security. In the area of enhancing Africa's participation in international trade, the BMEL supports

interventions that improve the productivity, quality and sustainability of the African partner country's agrifood systems (BMEL, 2023). Here, the BMEL (2020) supports:

strengthening the structural conditions required for the market-based development of a modern agrifood sector, thereby creating employment and prospects for Africa's young men and women in both rural and urban areas.

The ministry is actively involved in supporting 28 reform-oriented African countries, including reform partner countries, where Germany is implementing the G20 Compact with Africa initiative (BMEL, 2021).

In the area of food and nutrition security, projects are designed to ensure increased agricultural production and productivity for the attainment of food and nutrition security. Since these African states have shown particular enthusiasm for reforming their policy frameworks, the projects technically support them to improve their policies for engagement with the private sector, with the ultimate goal of creating more decent jobs (BMEL, 2024). The BMEL also supports the creation of suitable policy framework conditions as well as training and capacity building through demonstration projects.

In addition, the BMEL 'promotes and maintains intensive research cooperation and a practice-oriented exchange of knowledge with African partner organisations, including in the areas of food safety, [and] animal and plant health' (BMEL, 2024). This technical cooperation is particularly strong with Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa and Zambia.

Furthermore, the BMEL finances: (a) bilateral cooperation projects within the framework of the Bilateral Cooperation Programme at EUR 20 million per year; (b) the food security projects of the FAO at EUR 10 million per year; and (c) international research cooperation projects at EUR 10 million per year (BMEL, 2024). The interventions supported by research cooperation focus on agriculture and nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa.

Since 2002, the BMEL has also been supporting the FAO with projects promoting agriculture development and food security as well as overcoming hunger and malnutrition through the BTF (FAO, 2024). According to the FAO (2024), many BTF projects are being implemented on the African continent, with thematic priorities being to:

- Strengthen policy framework for effective implementation of the right to food and access to natural resources, especially land and water;
- Implement strategies for sustainable food security and education on nutrition issues, with particular emphasis on the role of women and young people;
- Promote sustainable agricultural production and adaptation strategies in the agricultural sector for climate change and its impact on food security; and
- Generate solutions to reduce food loss and food waste.

The major aim of these BTF projects is to support African partner countries to become food secure and to ensure quantitatively and qualitatively balanced diets for their citizenry.

At the multilateral level, the BMEL cooperates with African countries through the AU, the EU, the IFAD and the FAO. The main objectives of the ministry's cooperation with the AU are to enhance food security for the continent's rapidly growing population and to support the development of a productive, entrepreneurial, modern and sustainable agriculture,

food and forestry sector as an engine for economic growth and employment (BMEL, 2023).⁹ For instance, during the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture in Berlin in January 2023, the federal minister of the BMEL and the commissioner of the AU's department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment signed a memorandum of understanding for close cooperation on key issues of agrifood systems transformation.

To that end, the BMEL initiated an 'Agricultural Policy Dialogue' with the AU. The APD's aim is to make agriculture and food systems on the African continent more crisis-resilient and climate-smart by supporting the framework for a common continental climate policy for transforming agrifood systems. A policy dialogue platform is provided for effective engagement among policy-makers and experts from academia, the private sector and civil society. The platform also promotes the exchange of scientific and technical knowledge and experience between Germany and the AU member states. At the centre of the partnerships are climate-resilient seed systems, strengthening the role of women in agrifood systems, promoting the dissemination and adoption of agroecology principles, and introducing measures to reduce post-harvest losses (Rural 21, 2023).

Recently, the FAO and the German federal government signed another six-month project to support the transition of African youth agribusinesses to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems by promoting responsible investment among young people (FAO, 2024). The project is designed to scale up the already existing Agri-accelerator, which is focussed on stimulating responsible investment into agrifood systems by young agri-entrepreneurs (FAO, 2024). According to the FAO (2024), the Agri-accelerator initiative was piloted in Tunisia in 2019 and is now being implemented in Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Senegal with the support of the German government.

Based on its proven success, the project has begun scaling out and adapting its model to The Gambia by unpacking its main components related to the incubation and acceleration of agri-entrepreneurs. There is a need to expand the project to other regions of the continent and to grow its activities to focus on strengthening the capacities of agribusiness mentors who work with young agri-entrepreneurs in order to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

In June 2023, Germany partnered with the IFAD to accelerate private sector investment into the business models of inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems in Africa. The partnership, which is being implemented under the Private Sector Financing Programme, sought to complement the IFAD's private sector strategy (2019–2024). This strategy was created to facilitate access to markets for smallholder farmers and increase private sector investments to strengthen agricultural value chains (IFAD, 2023). Germany has been partnering with the IFAD in Burkina Faso to promote the rice value chain to become more inclusive by enhancing small-scale rice farmers' access to markets and finance. Another Germany-IFAD partnership supports 87 500 marine and inland artisanal fisheries to produce and process fish for the market (IFAD, 2023).

3.2 Selected BMZ interventions in African agrifood systems

Through BMZ, Germany funds cooperation in African food systems by fostering sustainable development and supporting African economies to unlock their huge potential in agrifood systems and become more resilient (BMZ, 2023b). It also cooperates closely with other federal ministries and aligns its Africa Strategy with the German government's Policy Guidelines for Africa (BMZ, 2023a). Guided by the BMZ Africa Strategy, key areas of engagement include private sector development, capacity strengthening CSOs, and investment in research and innovation. For instance, through regional programmes such as the Agri-Business Facility for Africa, BMZ promotes business development and expansion by implementing tailor-made measures and facilitating access to investments and partnerships for growth in the continent's agrifood systems (BMZ, 2023b).

Under the framework of German and European policies on Africa, BMZ implements its Africa Strategy to support the realisation of the development goals of the AU and its member states, including in the area of agrifood systems. The Africa Strategy is part of BMZ's mandate to drive the 17 SDGs of the UN's 2030 Agenda. The BMZ special initiative seeks to improve the incomes of at least 3.2 million farming households across Africa (BMZ, 2023b). Already, the initiative is collaborating with over 150 partners in agrifood systems from the private sector, CSOs, academia, producer associations and research institutions (Rural 21, 2024).

In June 2021, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and BMZ launched a new programme to leverage private sector investments to support the development of food value chains across the African continent by enhancing access to finance for farmers and agribusinesses (Food Business Middle East & Africa, 2021). The EUR 21 million Food Systems Development Program is focused on providing more opportunities to value chain actors to improve their incomes. The technical assistance from the IFC is meant to bring comprehensive solutions for entire food value chains (from farm to market) and strengthen them by leveraging the IFC's strong relationships with commercial agribusinesses and financial institutions. The programme also supports the digitisation of financial transactions and payments, thereby helping to achieve financial inclusion by expanding access to a wide range of financial services.

It is estimated that some EUR 2 billion is invested each year by BMZ in the areas of global food security and rural development programmes (GIZ, 2023a). About one third of this investment is channelled through the 'One World – No Hunger' special initiative, now known as the 'Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems' special initiative, which was launched in 2014 by BMZ.¹⁰ The initiative supports 25 African countries in agrifood systems in the following aspects: food and nutrition security, fisheries and aquaculture, enhanced resilience, green innovation centres, agricultural finance, value addition and sustainable land management (BMZ, 2021).

These issues are priority areas for bilateral cooperation in BMZ's partner countries across the African continent. Approximately one third of this funding is invested through the 25 participating African countries. In Africa, the special initiative partners with countries that are severely affected by famine and malnutrition. Globally, the initiative encompasses about 300 projects whose focus is on strengthening smallholder family farms, including

those in Africa. By the end of 2023, the initiative had improved the nutritional status of over 7.5 million people, particularly women and children (GIZ, 2023a).

Between 2014 and 2022, BMZ achieved the following overall successes through the Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems special initiative (BMZ, 2023b):

- More than 10 million people, especially women and children, were better nourished;
- About 3 million hectares of degraded soil and forests were restored and sustainably managed;
- Over 4 million people were supported in coping with the effects of climate change;
- More than 1.4 million agricultural enterprises were provided access to financing;
- 3.3 million smallholder households increased their income;
- 189 000 smallholder families secured land rights;
- More than 1.8 million rural people benefitted from better qualifications; and
- Over 4 million rural people had new knowledge about agriculture and nutrition.

Across Africa in particular, the special initiative assisted over 2 million people in adapting to climate change, ensured restoration and sustainable management of 1.7 million hectares of degraded land and forests, and established secure land rights for at least 120 000 farming families across Africa (GIZ, 2023b).

Since 2022, BMZ has been implementing a sector programme on food and nutrition security titled 'Food Systems in Transition: Ensuring Healthy Diets for All'. In the 25 selected African countries, the programme's aim is to push their agrifood systems towards enhanced resilience, gender equality, better health and sustainability.¹¹ The programme uses experiences, strategies and positions that draw on rights-based approaches to advise BMZ on how to position itself and make sound decisions in the field of food and nutrition security. It also takes into account cross-cutting issues such as climate change and agro-ecology. The programme is mostly active in the areas of agrifood systems transformation, fisheries for food and nutrition security, and responsible fishing and aquaculture development.

Worth mentioning here is the Digital Africa Initiative launched in 2015 to support projects that make use of digital technology to achieve development goals. According to the new 'BMZ 2030' reform strategy, digital technologies will continue to play a critical role in the institution's value-based and forward-looking development cooperation (BMZ, 2023a). One focus area is promoting home-grown start-up digital innovations that target agrifood systems across eight African countries.¹² Although it has not yet reached significant scale, the digital innovations are already addressing some of the challenges related to service provision, agro-processing, logistics and market access (GIZ, 2021).

Another core theme under the 2030 reform strategy is 'Living without Hunger – Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems', which focuses on three fields of action: food security, rural development and agriculture (BMZ, 2023a). According to the BMZ (2023b), these three fields are strengthened by implementing the special initiative on Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems to:

- Combat hunger and malnutrition;
- Enforce the right of all people to healthy food;

- Contribute to a global structural policy at the multilateral and international level;
- Promote gender equality;
- Develop and test innovative approaches to promoting practical research; and
- Integrate into ongoing cooperation with partner countries to develop sustainable agrifood systems.

3.3 Selected GIZ interventions in African agrifood systems

GIZ is a federal enterprise and a global service provider for the German government. The agency supports BMZ and many other German (as well as non-German) public and private sector clients in over 120 countries to achieve their objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development (GIZ, 2023a). The main foci of GIZ's projects are enhancing the accessibility of agricultural finance by value chain actors, supporting the sustainability of African agricultural systems and providing support for improved policy implementation by AU member states (GIZ, 2023b).

Since 2004, GIZ has been supporting the AU at the multilateral level to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development on the continent in line with the AU's Agenda 2063, dubbed 'The Africa We Want'.¹³ The GIZ-AU partnership has more than 200 staff members who support its cooperation with the African Union Commission (AUC) at continental, regional and national levels. The partnership has footprints in more than 35 member states and collaborates with the AU's specialised institutions and agencies such as the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development (GIZ, 2023b). GIZ cooperates through the AUC but selects specific AU member states to benefit from its support.

The key areas for engagement under the GIZ-AU partnership include health and social development, peace building and conflict prevention, sustainable economic growth and employment, and governance and migration. However, agri-food systems transformation often features in its discourses (GIZ, 2023b).

According to the GIZ (2023b), some of the key areas of the agency's financial support that are focused on agrifood systems include:

- **Improving access to agricultural finance:** GIZ has been working to enhance access to suitable financial services for agricultural and agri-based enterprises in African rural areas. Since 2016 (and with a projected plan up to 2027), GIZ has been working with nine African countries¹⁴ to implement the EUR 74.2 million project (GIZ, 2023b). The initiative includes providing investment loans that are tailored to the needs of agricultural stakeholders and promoting the combination of financial and agricultural insurance products. It works with local financial institutions and agricultural enterprises, providing them with funding and needs-orientated training for improved access to suitable financial services by smallholder farmers and agro-processors.
- **Supporting sustainable agricultural systems:** GIZ advises BMZ on strategies for transforming agricultural and food systems through enhancing productivity, improving market access and promoting climate-smart and biodiversity-friendly

agricultural practices. Under the project, the agency works with eight African partner countries¹⁵ to transform their agrifood systems through the three priority areas of agriculture, agricultural policy and climate-smart agriculture.

- **Policy support:** On behalf of BMZ, GIZ has been involved in drafting policy recommendations on agricultural finance in the aforementioned eight African countries. It works with stakeholders to develop and implement policies that support agricultural finance and improve access to financial services for smallholder farmers.

Besides providing financial support to African countries and institutions, GIZ also provides technical assistance, capacity building, knowledge exchange and research in sustainable agriculture. These efforts aim to promote sustainable, resilient and climate-friendly agriculture in Africa while empowering smallholder farmers and rural enterprises to thrive (GIZ, 2023b). On behalf of the German government, the GIZ–AU partnership has also been implementing agrifood-systems-related programmes and projects under the Sustainable Economic Growth and Employment initiative in a number of African countries¹⁶ (BMEL, 2020). One of the objectives of the partnership is ‘to promote sustainable and healthy eating and prevent food losses in order to reduce the number of people who are suffering from hunger and malnutrition’ (BMEL, 2020).

3.4 Summary

To sum up the discussions in this section, specific figures to help in systematically tracking the growth trajectory of support received from the three major German actors over the years are not coherently available online. However, a study of new partnerships shows that Germany’s commitment to supporting African agrifood systems through the BMEL, BMZ and GIZ has been growing over the past two decades, with an increase in funding, new initiatives and active policy support. The focus and scale of the Germany–Africa partnership in agrifood systems are predominantly in agricultural finance, policy support and the implementation of transformation strategies.

While there are some initiatives targeting private sector participation and value addition, particularly in the area of investment into agro-industrial processes and trade promotion of value-added agricultural products, they remain inadequate. This is problematic because value addition can significantly boost the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and SMEs by increasing their income, reducing post-harvest food losses and waste, improving market access, creating employment and enhancing food security. Overall, investment and trade have immense potential to transform the continent’s agrifood systems and economic development.

According to the International Trade Centre’s Trade Map,¹⁷ Africa-to-German trade in agrifood is currently estimated at USD 6 011 560 in exports per annum (based on 2024 figures). Almost all exports from Africa are in the form of raw materials, and they account for only 7.8% of German imports of agricultural products. Available estimates show that transitioning from exporting raw materials can transform the livelihoods of smallholder farmers by raising productivity, increasing food and nutrition security, accelerating growth, increasing trade, reducing poverty and hunger, and enhancing resilience to climate variability.

4. Recommendations for sustainable agrifood systems partnership and development in Africa

The first potential entry point for establishing a mutually beneficial partnership between Germany and Africa is strengthening the policy and partnership aspects of engagement. Crucial here is a deliberate paradigm and policy shift from aid provision to investment and trade promotion initiatives that can have higher multiplier effects on income generation and employment creation. Two potential initiatives are the new Kampala CAADP Declaration and AfCFTA.

Here, the focus should be on supporting and scaling private-sector-led, market-oriented and climate-proofed initiatives along the entire agrifood value chains. National governments, RECs and AU institutions would play only facilitatory roles or work as joint partners under public-private partnership arrangements. This is because while there are significant business opportunities for the private sector to unlock the immense potential in the continent's agrifood systems, the assessment above has shown that the new *CAADP Strategy and Action Plan: 2026–2035* and the AfCFTA are going to be of paramount importance (AU, 2024, 2025).

Interventions should also focus on de-risking private sector engagement in agro-industrial processes and trade in value-added products and connecting these to the AfCFTA. A first and crucial step in this direction would be to support initiatives that facilitate the harmonisation and implementation of regional policy strategies and regulatory frameworks that foster ease of doing business and incentivise private sector investments, particularly in developing Regional Agricultural Value Chains (RAVCs).

The implementation of the EU's unified European market¹⁸ and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which allows for a free movement of agricultural commodities based on common prices in the EU, can be a key lesson for AU member states. Particularly regarding how financial support can be provided to farmers in member states. While Germany and other EU member states have managed to significantly invest in agriculture and offer guaranteed minimum producer prices to their farmers, resulting in the surplus production of agricultural commodities in which they have comparative advantage, this is not yet the case in Africa. Platforms that promote the engagement of the private sector (agribusinesses) and other non-state actors, such as the German-African Business Association, are key to the envisaged Germany-Africa partnerships.¹⁹

Despite the growth in the focus and scale of the multi-country partnership, this study has noted that it remains inadequate to transform the African continent's agrifood systems. This is not Germany's responsibility to fix but it is worth scaling existing initiatives by the BMEL, BMZ and GIZ if they want to have a transformative impact. For most AU member states, significant investments are still required in the areas of agricultural research,

education and training, infrastructure development and local value addition (agro-processing), particularly in the aspect of agro-industrial development. For example, the creation of the AfCFTA should go hand in hand with the development of RAVCs.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), in collaboration with the AUC and AU member states, institutions and development partners, developed the *Guidelines for the Development of Regional Agricultural Value Chains in Africa*. This document was endorsed at the AU's 3rd Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment in October 2019. The guidelines also support the implementation of the AU's *Framework for Boosting Intra-Africa Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services*, as endorsed by the specialised technical committee. The development of RAVCs is expected to contribute to improving intra-African trade in two major ways: (1) attaining efficiency gains in production; and (2) helping African enterprises move along global value chains while retaining more value at national and regional levels (UNECA, 2020). Germany's partnership support can strengthen human capacity in key state institutions to deliver this mandate.

Another area of focus that needs to be scaled is knowledge and Green Innovation Centres. Already established by BMZ in 14 African countries,²⁰ these centres are aimed at enhancing the productivity of millions of smallholder farmers as well as boosting employment and food and nutrition security in selected rural areas. Five knowledge centres for organic farming have been put in place in all five African regions (West, East, Southern, North and Central Africa). In these centres, good practices in agro-ecology and organic farming are being shared within relevant networks and organisations, with strong participation from local state and non-state institutions. In addition, the German institutions should promote systematic harmonisation of digitalisation initiatives under the Digitalisation for Africa project to provide digital solutions in agrifood systems, particularly in agricultural value chain financing.

As mentioned above, there are key lessons to be learnt from Germany's experience with implementing the EU CAP for the attainment of food and nutrition security, particularly in how to support farmers to achieve high levels of agricultural productivity and ensure stable production and supply of affordable and nutritious food. In relation, as African countries seek to prioritise key areas to accelerate the progress of implementation under the newly endorsed Kampala CAADP Declaration, German partnerships could support the building of adequate technical and institutional capacities to sustain the progress made under the CAADP agenda to date.

On the African side, there is a need for the timely implementation of policy and programmatic commitments by AU organs, member states and RECs to meet the CAADP targets and commitments. This can be achieved through capacity building of state, REC and AU institutions in policy and programme implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation. There is also a need to provide incentives for RECs and member states to accelerate the transformation of food value chains in member states into RAVCs under the AfCFTA. The incentives could be in the form of supporting the private sector to establish and operationalise agro-industrial parks, which are critical in agro-processing and the diversification and export of value-added agricultural and food commodities.

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Annexure:

List of key informants consulted

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Dr Mark Korir	African Economic Research Consortium	Manager
Mr Pardon Njere	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa	Value Chain Expert
Dr Antony Chapoto	African Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes	Executive Director
Dr Vine Mutyasira	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa	Senior Programme Officer
Mr Udo Volz	German Embassy Zimbabwe	Ambassador
Dr Chogbo Uchendu	Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (Southern Africa)	Coordinator
Dr Florence Nakayiwa	Regional Universities Forum	Deputy Executive Secretary
Mr Dagmore Tawonezvi	Southern Africa Development Community	Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, and Stakeholder Engagement Expert
Dr Babafemi Oyewole	Pan African Farmers Organization	CEO
Mr. Ishmael Sunga	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions	Chief Executive Officer

Endnotes

- 1 The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defines agrifood systems as referring to 'all the interconnected activities and actors involved in getting food from field to fork'. These systems encompass a range of activities: 'primary production of food and non-food agricultural products, as well as [...] food storage, aggregation, post-harvest handling, transportation, processing, distribution, marketing, disposal and consumption' (FAO, 2021).
- 2 The challenges in African agrifood systems have also led to issues of the availability, accessibility, utilisation and stability of food.
- 3 Collaboration is with the AUC, the African Union Development Agency for the New Partnership for Africa's Development and other specialised agencies and organs of the AU.
- 4 The 10-year period in which the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth was applied (2015–2025).
- 5 See <https://www.deutschland.de/en/region/africa>
- 6 Within the German federal government, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the Federal Foreign Office also contribute their respective expertise to the design and strategic direction of the funding programme. Meanwhile, the country's Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy is responsible for the overall coordination. Activities of the Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (International Climate Initiative) are carried out in close consultation with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and are aligned with the government's Strategy on Climate Foreign Policy. Examples of project implementation with agrifood systems on the African continent are available here: <https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/project/growing-greener-restoration-and-sustainable-use-of-agro-pastoralist-systems-in-open-arid-landscapes-across-southern-africa-22-iii-124-sub-saharan-africa-g-open-arid-landscapes/>
- 7 For the BMEL, the aim of the Africa Strategy is 'to support its African partners in developing a site-adapted, sustainable and economically viable agricultural sector in Africa' (BMEL, 2023).
- 8 For the BMZ, the Africa Strategy is 'part of the mandate to drive forward the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals' (BMZ, 2023a).
- 9 The countries of focus for German cooperation with Africa are Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, and Zambia.
- 10 In 2014, the title was 'One World, No Hunger'. It was later changed by the current government to 'Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems'.
- 11 While the BMZ collaborates with numerous African nations, it prioritises the following 25 official partner countries for long-term development cooperation: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda.
- 12 Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia.
- 13 One of the aspirations spelt out in the AU's *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* is modernising the continent's agriculture for 'increased production, productivity and value addition to contribute to farmer and national prosperity and Africa's collective food security' (AU, 2014).
- 14 Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Togo and Zambia.
- 15 Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria, Togo and Zambia.
- 16 Including Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya and Lesotho.
- 17 <https://www.trademap.org/>
- 18 While intra-African trade is around 15%, intra-EU trade is above 50%.
- 19 The German agricultural sector is market-oriented, private-sector-driven and organised along value chains. The federal government promotes the functioning of agricultural value chains to work as systems through which agribusinesses cooperate with producers to supply and serve markets with products that are in demand.
- 20 Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Togo, Tunisia and Zambia.



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APRI – Africa Policy Research Institute is an independent and nonpartisan African think tank. It researches key policy issues affecting African countries and the African continent. APRI provides insights into the German and European Union policy-making processes on Africa. In addition, APRI provides policy options to African policymakers and civil society actors.

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