



Thematic area 1: Africa's new harvest: Preparing Africa's agriculture and related sectors to feed and grow the continent's economy.

Agriculture plays a key role in Africa's economy accounting for about a third of the African Continent's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is a source of livelihoods for about half of the population and feeds hundreds of millions of people on the continent and beyond every day. According to the African Development Bank,¹ the low productivity of Africa's agricultural sector makes it uncompetitive, with major producer agro-ecologies having high rates of poverty, subjecting 232 million people to undernourishment. Previous studies show that, gross domestic product (GDP) growth originating from agriculture productivity improvement, catalyses up to 40% more income growth among the poorest and is three times larger than growth originating from the rest the economy². To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 12), increasing agricultural productivity is essential. Agricultural growth is a foundation for equitable and sustainable growth, because as it also supports food systems that produce nutritious, safe and affordable food. Additionally, considering that the agriculture employs over 60% of rural African populations, including smallholder farmers, it must expand in order to create jobs and unlock opportunity for millions of Africans. Growth however must be sustainable and well-integrated into the broader economy and major agrifood systems. Extended abstracts in this thematic area should therefore cover:

1. Regenerative agriculture³

Africa has 60% of the worlds remaining land for increasing agriculture productivity. While productivity increased mostly due to expansion of acreage, total factor productivity is reported at the 1960's levels when the population was 257 million compared to 1.4 billion in 2022. With the potential threat of a shrinking cereal production under the predicted climate change scenarios, Africa must farm smartly. Papers are invited under the following topical areas:

- a) Agro-ecology and sustainable intensification.
- b) Soil health, water, energy and environment
- c) Advanced genetics for production
 - i Crop improvement: new resilient demand-driven crop varieties/new species
 - ii Livestock improvement: new resilient demand-driven livestock breeds/species

¹ AfDB, 2016. Feed Africa. Strategy for agricultural transformation in Africa 2016–2025. African Development Bank, Abijan, Côte d'Ivoire

²Christiaensen, L. and Martin, W. 2018. Agriculture, structural transformation and poverty reduction: Eight new insights. World Development, 109: 413-416. doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.05.027.

³ Regenerative agriculture is an evolution of conventional agriculture, reducing the use of water and other inputs, and preventing land degradation and deforestation. It protects and improves soil, biodiversity, climate resilience and water resources while making farming more productive and profitable. www.syngentagroup.com/en/regenerative-agriculture#bookmark1.





2. Reducing food losses, evening food supply and creating market opportunities for Africa’s food systems.

Africa imports annually food worth 40 billion USD annually but also exports food worth about 35 billion USD according to Brookings Institute⁴. These imports fill the vast calorie needs created by the low productivity, and post-harvest loses that can be up to 37%, with cereals accounting for up to 21% according to FAO. As Africa’s population grows and gets richer, the demand for food, especially high-value crops and livestock products, will continue to grow. The African development Bank estimates that Africa’s processed, food and beverage markets currently worth US\$ 313 billion will reach US\$ 1 trillion by 2030. This will create jobs and unlock opportunity for reducing hunger, and integrating African farmers and entrepreneurs into Africa’s growing urban and modern markets. African Universities must be part of the ongoing revolution that will create new opportunity for Africa to prosper, while improving food and nutrition security. Extended abstracts in this sub-thematic area should cover:

- Food processing for Africa’s growing and urbanizing populations
- The nutrition challenge (Under nutrition, over nutrition, food safety and health)
- Policies: Taking stock of progress made against key food systems continental supportive policies (Trade, UN Food System summit of 2021 etc.)
- Shrinking supply chain gaps using digital and financial solutions (Fintec etc.)

3. Africa’s Blue Economy⁵: Sustainable marine and fresh water exploitation

Africa’s future economic and sustainable development may be fuelled by its blue economy if it is managed in a sustainable manner. According to African Union, marine capture fisheries currently stands at 7 million tons and will only reach 13 million tons by 2030, leaving a supply gap of 6 million tons by 2030⁶. Fresh water fisheries the largest sector of Africa’s blue economy, employs nearly 12 million people. Over 200 million Africans depend on these aquatic resources for food security and the sector generates an estimated value added of more than \$24 billion, or 1.26% of the GDP of all African countries⁷. Given the gap in supply of fish and the overall potential of other sectors of the blue economy (currently valued at US\$300 billion and, creating 49 million jobs), it is imperative that strategic studies be undertaken to inform policy, investments and sustainable management. Papers to be presented under this thematic area include those on

1. Aquaculture:
2. Marine resources of food and fibre.
3. Conservation of both aquatic and marine biodiversity, and sustainable strategies for ecosystem services.

⁴ Fox L. and T.S. Jayne 2020. Unpacking the misconceptions about Africa’s food imports. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2020/12/14/unpacking-the-misconceptions-about-africas-food-imports/>

⁵ The Blue Economy refers to sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources in both marine and freshwater environments. It includes oceans and seas, coastlines and banks, lakes, rivers and groundwater. It also includes economic benefits that may not be marketed, such as carbon storage, coastal protection, cultural values and biodiversity.

⁶ <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/future-marine-fisheries-african-blue-economy>

⁷ <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2018-march-2019/blue-economy-can-be-lifeline-africa>

