

Press Release

Agrifood processing is the “missing link” in reaching Africa’s development goals, new report finds

New report highlights importance of Africa’s processing sector in connecting farmers and urban consumers, with processed foods set to make up 73 percent of African diets by 2040.

October 25, Harare, ZIMBABWE – Food processing is the “missing link” in reducing poverty by half and ending hunger by 2025, a new report has revealed.

The authors of a new report on progress towards Africa’s continent-wide development agenda illustrate how the agrifood processing sector can deliver greater economic growth across the continent. The report highlights the rapid changes in Africa’s food system, with value chains becoming more complex and high-value food products accounting for larger shares of consumers’ diets.

The findings come from the 2022 Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) flagship [Annual Trends and Outlook Report](#) (ATOR), which outlines key developments and recommendations across the agrifood processing sector. The report will be launched during the 2022 ReSAKSS [conference](#) taking place in Harare, Zimbabwe, from October 25 to 27.

However, the report also finds that despite being the main bridge between smallholder farmers and domestic markets, Africa’s emerging processing sector faces a range of barriers to greater development, including limited access to finance, poor infrastructure, lack of skills, and more.

"The emerging agrifood industry sector is the main bridge today between smallholder producers and the rapidly expanding urban food markets. Without a competitive processing sector which is capable of innovations to meet the increasingly complex dietary preferences of the growing urban middle class, domestic producers will have little chance of capturing any meaningful share of the rising food demand across the continent," said **Dr. Ousmane Badiane**, Executive Chairperson, [AKADEMIYA2063](#). "Effective processing sector policies must be at the center of future smallholder agricultural and rural development strategies."

The emerging processing sector can better connect smallholder farmers and domestic markets, the report argues, with the distance between farmers and consumers no longer primarily a physical distance, but one of production sophistication.

“The agrifood processing sector in Africa has significant untapped potential to deliver greater prosperity and security for the continent’s smallholder farmers – while reducing the amount of food the region imports at the same time,” said **Dr. Anxious Jongwe Masuka**, Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Development, Zimbabwe.

The report shows that with greater support, Africa's agrifood processing sector can meet rising demand among consumers for higher-value-added products. For instance, the research points to the ongoing transformation of millet from a staple crop into a premium product due to the rise of the millet processing sector.

This transformation has opened new markets for smallholder millet producers, reversing declining trends in consumption, particularly among richer urban households, the report shows. Millet products' share of consumption among high-income earners in Senegal is now close to 30 percent, compared to 32 percent for imported rice.

The report also highlights the potential of other smallholder crops, such as tomatoes, which are also more flexible in producing a range of processed products, in addition to tomato products.

The introduction of improved production and processing practices could raise yields substantially and expand tomato production into the off-season, improving market conditions and incomes for small-scale producers, the report shows.

“With the right policies backed by scientific evidence, Africa's emerging food processing sector can grow to deliver a triple-win for small-scale producers, consumers, and economic development across the continent,” said **Her Excellency Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko**, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Development, African Union Commission.

The report notes that although Africa remains a net importer of food, particularly of processed varieties, the value of processed foods in intra-African trade has also grown from equal to the value of unprocessed foods in 2003, to twice their value in 2019.

About the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS)

Established in 2006 under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) supports efforts to promote evidence and outcome-based policy planning and implementation. In particular, ReSAKSS provides data and related analytical and knowledge products to facilitate CAADP benchmarking, review, and mutual accountability processes.

AKADEMIYA2063 leads the work of ReSAKSS in partnership with the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), and leading Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The mission of AKADEMIYA2063 is to provide data, policy analysis, and capacity-strengthening support to enable African Union (AU) Member States to achieve economic transformation and shared prosperity in support of the AU's Agenda 2063. As the main platform for monitoring CAADP implementation, ReSAKSS tracks the progress of core CAADP indicators through an interactive website and a flagship Annual Trends and Outlook Report (ATOR), the official CAADP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) report. In addition to tracking progress on CAADP core indicators, the ATOR



presents analysis on a feature topic of strategic importance to the CAADP agenda each year. For more information, visit: <https://conference.resakss.org/>; www.akademiya2063.org.

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