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Press release

Africa's food systems need to be redesigned. Here is how: the experience of 4 countries that are already working on it.

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A new report by the Malabo Montpellier Panel is calling on policymakers to rethink and reorient African food systems. Africa was making significant progress in reducing hunger, malnutrition and poverty, but amid COVID19 this progress has recently stalled, and in some cases reversed.

Nearly [one in five Africans](#) were undernourished in 2019. Then came the COVID19 pandemic. "COVID-19 has dramatically exposed the interlinkages and shared vulnerability of different sectors, including food and agriculture, nutrition and health, and environment. Business as usual is no longer an option, neither in how we understand the sectors nor in how we recover from this systemic shock." said **Prof. Sheryl Hendriks**, member of the Malabo Montpellier Panel and Head of Department, and Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development at the University of Pretoria.

The report argues that the next level of policy-making will require a more holistic and nuanced approach - one that operates within the interlinkages of policy domains that have been historically dealt with separately, such as agriculture, health, education, and the environment. Drawing upon the experience of four countries - Ghana, Malawi, Morocco and Rwanda - the report [Connecting the Dots: Policy Innovations for Food Systems Transformation in Africa](#) presents five recommendations to elevate policymaking and institutional change to the next level in order to resume momentum towards reducing hunger and malnutrition.

2021 has been labeled the "super year", playing host to several large global meetings on issues relevant to food security and improved nutrition. They include the first ever UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UN Biodiversity Conference, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP 15. There is therefore a very timely opportunity to align ambitions and targets.

"This report provides key recommendations for policymakers and their advisors to address the challenges in Africa's food systems and the opportunities of scaling investment for innovation in rural Africa to overcome the food problems." said **Prof. Joachim von Braun**, Malabo Montpellier Panel Co-chair, Director at the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn and Chair of the UNFSS Scientific Group.

"The UN Food Systems Summit is an ideal moment for stakeholders to coalesce around a shared understanding of Africa's food systems to provide opportunities that align to ambitions and targets. There is already a lot of energy in the discussions, but the momentum must be maintained well beyond the Summit in order to ensure follow through on the commitments and targets that are being set and on stakeholders' shared ambitions." **Dr. Godfrey Bahigwa**, Director at the African Union Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, the Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment.

Drawing on lessons learned in the four country case studies, the flagship report begins by setting out the challenges and threats to African food systems transformation, including increased malnutrition in all its forms, high unemployment especially among young people, climate change and environmental degradation, conflict and protracted crises, and the persistent gender gap.

The report goes on to provide evidence on the crucial role that food systems transformation can play in substantially reducing poverty and improving livelihoods in Africa, especially in rural areas.

It emphasizes in particular the benefits and opportunities of increasing agricultural productivity sustainably; the promising prospects of expanded agro-processing, infrastructure development, agriculture, and food trade; new technologies and digitalization; the importance of social protection; and the emerging African science and research agenda. Deploying a systems approach thus offers policymakers a platform for creating optimal and coherent policies, which can deliver positive spillover effects and manage trade-offs.

“The energy around the Food Systems Summit offers the opportunity for the African Union and its member states to reaffirm the commitment they have made under Malabo and the Agenda 2063 and take a non-complacent look at the progress that has been accomplished and where they have come short. That would be a good starting place to forge a coordinated post summit course of action to sustain and accelerate the progress of the last two decades.” added **Dr. Ousmane Badiane**, Malabo Montpellier Panel Co-chair and Executive Chairperson of Akademiya2063.

This year’s report was launched at the 8th edition of the [Malabo Montpellier Forum](#) at the [Science Days](#) of the UN Food Systems Summit. It was co-convened with the UNFSS Scientific Group, The African Union Commission and the Rockefeller Foundation.

“Together, we can transform food systems to protect and improve our health, sustain and regenerate the environment, and build a more equitable future,” said **Roy Steiner**, Senior Vice President for the Food Initiative at the Rockefeller Foundation. “This is a critical moment to advance policy, science, and market innovations that ensure everyone can eat a quality diet that nourishes people and planet.”

About the Malabo Montpellier Panel

The Malabo Montpellier Panel convenes 17 leading experts in agriculture, engineering, ecology, nutrition, and food security to facilitate policy choices by African governments to accelerate progress toward food security and improved nutrition. The Panel identifies areas of progress and positive change across the continent and assesses what successful countries have done differently. It identifies the most important institutional and policy innovations and program interventions that can be replicated and scaled by other countries. The related Malabo Montpellier Forum provides a platform to promote policy innovation by using the evidence produced by the Panel to facilitate dialogue among high-level decision-makers on African agriculture, nutrition, and food security.

The Malabo Montpellier Panel is the successor to the Montpellier Panel, created in 2010, it puts greater emphasis on African initiatives, such as the Malabo Declaration's expanded Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). It is hosted [by Imperial College London](#), the [Center for Development Research](#) (ZEF) at [the University of Bonn](#) and [AKADEMIYA2063](#).

To download the report, please click [here](#).

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