

The Evidentiary Base for Investment in Agricultural R&D

A review of recent evidence (see text box) shows the importance of technical innovation driven by research, development, and extension (R&D&E) as drivers of agricultural productivity growth, and further, the catalytic role of agricultural productivity-led growth in poverty reduction, food systems resilience, and economic transformation. Investments in agricultural R&D&E generate among the greatest impacts on agricultural productivity growth and poverty reduction per dollar spent, though most African governments invest less than 1% of agricultural GDP in agricultural research.

Key Points and Actions for Policy Makers

Panelists from public and private sector, research, and development communities called for priority actions to ensure sustained support for agricultural research and development. Calls to action include:

1. Demonstrate sustained government commitment for national agricultural R&D&E investments, leveraging and building on international donor and CGIAR investments.
2. Increase investments in locally relevant, adaptive national level agricultural research and development, including the investments in improved institutional and absorptive capacity and ownership at National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) and improved education for innovation actors, including on-farm actors.
3. Identify opportunities to further strengthen cooperation between national and international research systems and partnerships with the private sector.
4. Prioritize rule of law, governance, and more favorable enabling trade, policy, infrastructure, and security environments to drive productivity growth and support private sector investment. As an example, implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) will provide expanded markets for African farmers and provide incentives for the adoption of farm technologies that increase productivity; technologies must be developed and adapted to highly varied farming conditions in Africa in order to realize these benefits, underscoring action point 2.
5. Integrate inclusive, demand-driven, and adaptive agricultural research prioritization and technology development across all agricultural research and development efforts, including social sciences and policy research, ensuring R&D investments reflect choice and actively and meaningfully include smallholder farmers and innovators, women, and youth. Ensure that innovation systems are adaptive to environmental changes and local context.

Three recent reports build the evidence base for change:

USAID Board for International Food and Agriculture Development (BIFAD) report, [Agricultural Productivity Growth, Resilience, and Economic Transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)

World Bank publication, [Harvesting Prosperity: Technology and Productivity Growth in Agriculture](#)

African Development Bank Group publication, [Building Resilience in Food Systems and Agricultural Value Chains](#)

Building Momentum

The co-organizers of this session—the World Bank, the African Development Bank / African Development Institute (AfDB/ADI), the Regional Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes (ReNAPRI), the Alliance for African Partnership, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD)—are committed to championing and broadly disseminating these important themes and messages to policymakers, including at the **UN Food Systems Summit**.

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