



**African Food
Changers**

Nourishing Africa and Changing Global Narratives



**Community Action
for Food Security**

COMMUNIQUE

of the Strategic Dialogue on CAADP 2026-2035

Theme:

From Policy to Enterprise: Translating
CAADP into Agribusiness
Opportunities in Nigeria

2026



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INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

On April 15, 2026, African Food Changemakers (AFC), in partnership with Community Action for Food Security (CAFS) Africa, convened a high-level Partners Roundtable Dialogue in Abuja, Nigeria.

The convening brought together a diverse group of stakeholders across the agrifood ecosystem, including development finance institutions, donor agencies, government representatives, private sector actors, and agribusiness leaders, to address a critical and persistent gap:

How can Africa translate agricultural policy into scalable, profitable agribusinesses?

This question sits at the heart of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) 2026–2035 agenda. While CAADP has long provided a strong policy framework for agricultural transformation, stakeholders acknowledged that implementation has not kept pace with ambition, particularly at the enterprise level.

As Ebere Okoh noted:

“Africa does not lack frameworks. What we are struggling with is execution—especially where it matters most: at the level of businesses.”

The dialogue was therefore positioned not as another policy conversation, but as a deliberate effort to bridge the gap between policy and enterprise execution.

WHY THIS DIALOGUE MATTERS

Over the past two decades, more than \$300 billion has been invested in the implementation of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). Yet nearly 280 million Africans still face hunger, underscoring a critical disconnect between policy ambition and real sector outcomes.

As Africa enters a new phase under the CAADP 2026–2035 Strategy, the urgency is no longer in defining frameworks, but in delivering measurable, inclusive, and scalable results. Experience has shown that policy commitments alone do not automatically translate into enterprise growth, job creation, or improved access to finance—particularly for agribusinesses, and even more so for youth and women-led enterprises.



The cost of delay is high. Without a decisive shift toward execution-focused collaboration, Nigeria and the wider continent risks repeating a familiar pattern: strong frameworks with limited impact, falling short of the ambitions of CAADP 2026–2035.

Kachi Nwachukwu

The Roundtable Dialogue was therefore convened to respond to this urgency, creating a platform not for reiterating policy commitments, but for translating CAADP priorities into practical, scalable opportunities for agribusiness development.





aration (2025)

Next phase of CAADP (2026–2035).

Stronger emphasis on private sector, youth, and agribusiness.

Providing recommendations for competitive agricultural policies



CAADP was never intended to remain a policy framework; it was designed as a call to action for transforming Africa's agrifood systems. As we move from Maputo to Malabo and now into the Kampala phase, the real opportunity lies in translating these commitments into scalable, investment-ready agribusiness solutions that can drive jobs, reduce hunger, and unlock Africa's economic potential.

Azeez Salawu





DIALOGUE THEMES

Four Conversations That Shaped a Shared Agenda

The roundtable was structured around four thematic areas designed to address the full arc from macro-policy to enterprise-level implementation. Each theme surfaced both the persistent challenges and the emerging models that are beginning to work.

1 Financing Agribusiness Growth: Bridging the Capital Gap

The cost and conditions of capital remain a primary barrier to agribusiness growth across Africa.

Stakeholders emphasized that while funding exists within the ecosystem, it is often misaligned with the realities of SMEs, particularly those in early and growth stages. For many businesses, access to finance is constrained not just by availability but also by rigid requirements, high-risk perceptions, and limited understanding of agribusiness models.

Drawing on models such as IFAD's Public-Private-Producer Partnerships and the Mastercard Foundation's blended finance approaches, stakeholders explored practical pathways to de-risk agricultural lending, align financing with business stages, and build clear pathways to bankability.

Particular attention was given to women in rural areas, who continue to face disproportionately stringent financing conditions despite their critical role in agrifood systems.

Olumide Thompson, Head of Entrepreneurship Development at the Mastercard Foundation, emphasized the need for a more structured and inclusive financing approach:

“There is a need to adopt blended finance models that combine domestic, private, public, and international capital to better support agribusinesses at different stages of growth. Businesses must understand where they are and the type of financing required at each stage.”



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Olumide Thompson

Stakeholders further highlighted the importance of ecosystem coordination in unlocking capital.

A participating SME representative, Ngozi Rowland, underscored the financing constraints faced by rural women entrepreneurs, noting that existing bankability requirements remain disproportionately restrictive. She called for more inclusive financing approaches tailored to rural realities, including alternative instruments such as equipment financing as targeted incentives.

She further emphasized the need for less stringent and more accessible financing mechanisms, alongside strengthened partnerships with financial institutions. In her words:

“We need less stringent and more accessible financing mechanisms, alongside stronger partnerships with financial institutions. These collaborations should be intentionally structured to reduce procedural barriers and enable rural women farmers and agripreneurs to access capital under more flexible and context-appropriate conditions.”

2 Market Access & Trade: From Production to Competitive Markets

Market access emerged as a critical bottleneck in the growth of agribusinesses.

While production capacity continues to expand across the continent, many businesses struggle to connect to structured, reliable, and competitive markets. This disconnect is driven by fragmented value chains, weak logistics systems, and limited compliance with quality and certification standards required for regional and global trade.

Participants emphasized that closing the gap between producers and markets requires structural solutions, not just introductions.

The dialogue spotlighted practical models already showing promise, including productive alliances, aggregation centers that absorb compliance costs, and export readiness programs that connect agribusinesses directly with international buyers through facilitated business-to-business linkages.

Improving market access requires stronger coordination between farmers, processors, aggregators, and supporting institutions. Participants highlighted the importance of integrating market access support with practical tools such as storage and preservation systems to reduce post-harvest losses and improve product quality. Strengthening collaboration among actors, including leveraging institutional knowledge and appropriate technologies, was noted as critical to closing existing gaps in the value chain and enabling farmers to reach markets reliably.



“There is a need to cluster farmers into organized groups and deliberately transition from a project-based mindset to a structured business framework. This includes strengthening formal farmer organizations and supporting them to move from subsistence-oriented production to commercial agriculture. Ultimately, the focus should be on building organizations that function as businesses capable of evolving, scaling, and attracting investment.”

Temí Adegóroye

There was strong consensus on the need to strengthen aggregation and clustering systems, improve coordination across value chains, and build more intentional pathways linking agribusinesses to both regional and global markets.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was identified as a significant opportunity to unlock intra-African trade. However, stakeholders emphasized that realizing this potential will require targeted support for businesses to meet quality standards, certification requirements, and export readiness benchmarks.



One approach to addressing the growing cost of compliance is the establishment of aggregation centers, as seen in Uganda and other contexts. These centers absorb compliance-related costs and provide structured pathways for farmers to align their produce with standardized systems for quality and quantity. By forming clustering associations and productive alliances, farmers can access these centers more efficiently. The aggregation centers, which possess stronger institutional leverage, can then engage regulators and manage compliance requirements on behalf of farmers, including bearing the associated costs.

Dr. Winnie Lai-Solarin

A background photograph showing a group of people in a meeting. A man in a dark green shirt and glasses is looking down at a document. A woman in a red patterned dress and glasses is speaking and gesturing with her hand. A purple water bottle is visible on the table. The word "oriented" is partially visible in the background.

oriented

3 Scaling SMEs & Youth-Led Enterprises

Young agripreneurs continue to face compounding structural constraints, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, and persistent logistics inefficiencies that erode margins even before products reach markets. The roundtable underscored the urgency of shifting from fragmented, individual-level burden to coordinated, system-level solutions that empower aggregators, processors, and enabling ecosystem actors to drive scale.

A central theme of the dialogue was the need to transition from participation-driven programming to structured, outcome-oriented enterprise acceleration. While many agribusinesses have benefited from training and support initiatives, a significant gap remains in the systems and pathways required to enable sustainable scale.

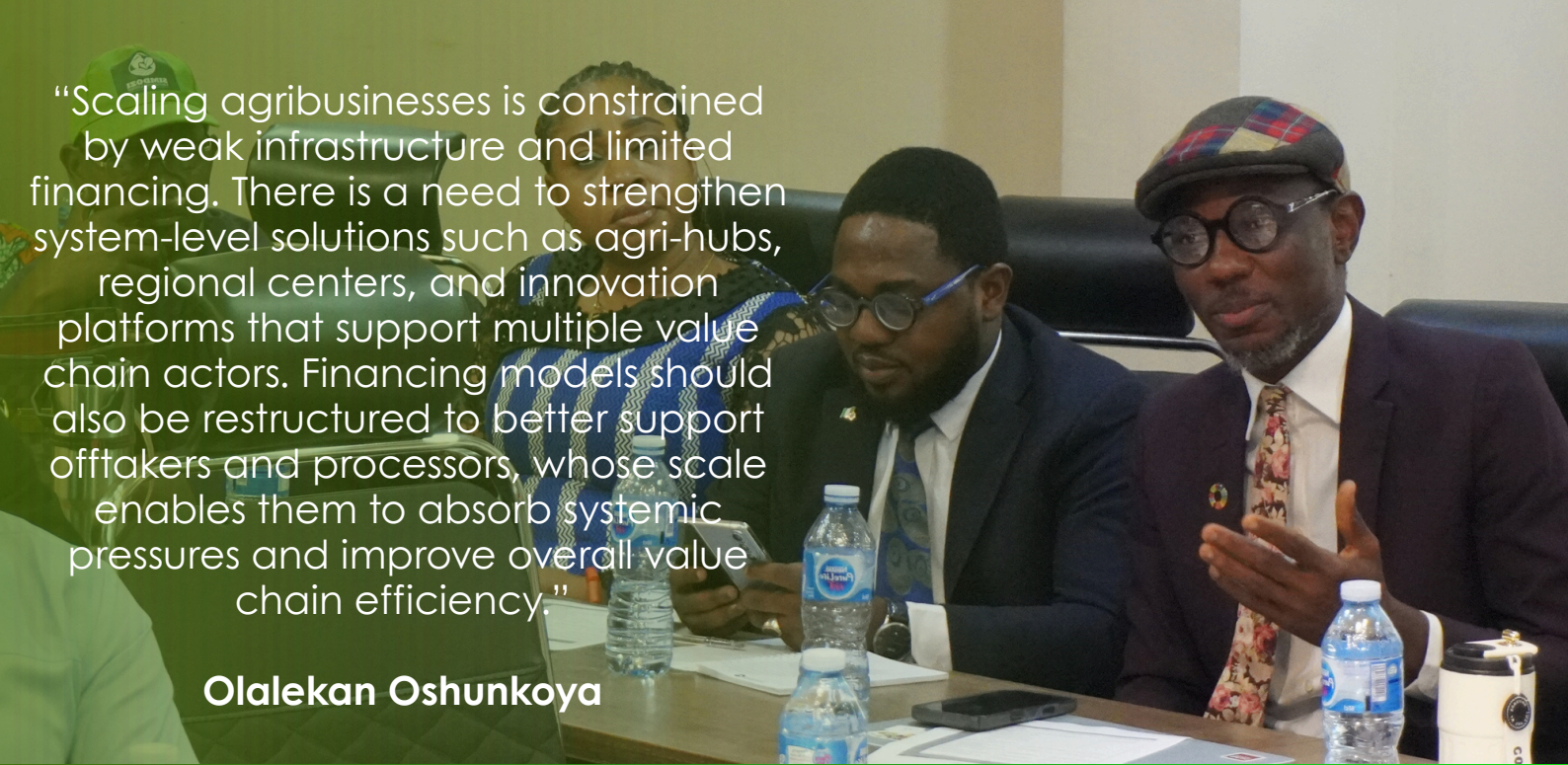
Participants emphasized the following priorities:

- Establishing long-term enterprise development pathways that extend beyond short-term interventions
- Strengthening access to technical assistance, mentorship, and advisory support services
- Deliberately building investment-ready enterprises, rather than focusing solely on trained entrepreneurs



“A stronger focus on grassroots and rural farmers is essential to ensure inclusivity in agricultural transformation. Community cooperatives can enhance bargaining power, and access to markets for rural farmers, while reducing dependence on middlemen. Complementary measures such as grain banking facilities and policy engagement are critical to protecting farmers’ interests and improving pricing fairness within the value chain.”

Azubike Nwokoye



“Scaling agribusinesses is constrained by weak infrastructure and limited financing. There is a need to strengthen system-level solutions such as agri-hubs, regional centers, and innovation platforms that support multiple value chain actors. Financing models should also be restructured to better support off-takers and processors, whose scale enables them to absorb systemic pressures and improve overall value chain efficiency.”

Olalekan Oshunkoya

**Africa doesn't lack
agricultural policies.**

**It lacks scalable
agribusinesses.**



“Improving farmer capacity through structured cooperatives remains key. This includes supporting formal registration, strengthening organization, and providing targeted inputs such as seeds and technical support to enhance productivity and enable better integration into agricultural value chains.”

Dr. Daniel Aihebor

4 Governance & Ecosystem Coordination

A consistent insight across all sessions was the urgent need to strengthen coordination across agrifood ecosystem actors. Despite significant investments in the sector, misalignment between policy frameworks, financing systems, and enterprise support mechanisms continues to constrain impact and limit effective implementation.

Participants emphasized the importance of improving data sharing and knowledge management systems, strengthening accountability frameworks, and fostering more intentional multi-stakeholder collaboration to ensure alignment across the ecosystem.

This was captured by one stakeholder who noted:

“Good intentions alone cannot transform food systems. Without coordination, even the biggest investments fall short.”

Nkriku Okonkwo added that;

“Non-state actors must be deliberately positioned as advocates, researchers, and accountability partners working alongside state actors. There is a need to strengthen alignment across sector players by creating platforms that deepen understanding of CAADP commitments, facilitate structured engagement with government, and ensure grassroots-level dissemination. Regular convenings where ministries share progress and stakeholders provide feedback can help bridge implementation gaps and improve coordination across the system.”



“Efforts are underway to strengthen coordination through the Agricultural Sector Working Group, which brings together state and non-state actors every quarter to support reforms and enhance accountability. A ten-year national agricultural strategy aligned with CAADP is currently being developed with support from IFPRI, alongside broader policy reforms and sensitization efforts. In addition, an agribusiness strategy with a strong focus on youth has been approved to drive sector transformation further.”

Emmanuel Onojighofia



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Nkriku Okonkwo



CROSS-CUTTING INSIGHT

Climate Resilience

Climate risk was identified as a growing and unavoidable challenge for agribusinesses.

Participants emphasized that climate resilience must move from being an add-on intervention to a core business strategy.

This includes:

- Adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices
- Investment in resilient infrastructure
- Diversification of production systems

As one participant noted:

“We cannot wait for climate shocks to happen. Resilience must be built into the way businesses operate.”



KEY FINDINGS

What the Dialogue Confirmed

1. COORDINATION IS THE MISSING VARIABLE

Across all four themes, weak coordination emerged as the common constraint. Despite active programmes, actors continue to work largely in silos, duplicating efforts, missing complementarities, and failing to convert dialogue into durable action. Coordination cannot remain informal; it requires ownership, timelines, and a process that moves from planning to implementation.

2. CAPITAL IS AVAILABLE — BUT MISALIGNED

The problem is not an absence of investment. First-loss capital mechanisms, blended finance instruments, and co-funding arrangements that align risk and returns were identified as more effective pathways than new investment vehicles built from scratch. Financing must move from generic capital provision to tailored, stage-specific support that enables agribusinesses to grow, scale, and compete.

3. AGGREGATION IS THE STRUCTURAL LEVER

Whether in financing, market access, or compliance, aggregation emerged as the organizing principle for change. Farmer associations, cooperative models, and aggregation centers that pool voice, volume, and accountability give smallholders the institutional weight needed to engage with regulators, processors, and financiers on viable terms.

4. NIGERIA'S GOVERNMENT MUST LEAD, NOT JUST PARTICIPATE

Formal government-led coordination, supported by partners, is the most preferred mechanism. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security's Agricultural Sector Working Group and the in-development ten-year strategic plan aligned with CAADP signal readiness. The government needs to convert readiness into formal coordination mandates with clear accountability structures.

5. RURAL WOMEN, YOUTH AND INFORMAL ACTORS MUST NOT BE LEFT BEHIND

Several participants cautioned against an agribusiness transformation that concentrates benefits among already-commercial actors. ActionAid's community cooperative model and IFAD's engagement with the poorest producers underscore the importance of designing inclusivity into the system architecture rather than adding it as an afterthought. Youth and women are not just beneficiaries but key drivers of innovation, productivity, and transformation across agrifood systems.

COMMITMENTS & ACTION PATHWAYS

From Dialogue to Coordinated Action

The dialogue concluded with a strong consensus on the need to transition from fragmented discussions to coordinated, measurable action across the agrifood ecosystem. Participants aligned around the following priority areas for implementation:

1. ESTABLISH A NATIONAL COORDINATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLATFORM

A standing National Food Systems Coordination Platform will be established to drive alignment across policy, financing, and enterprise support systems.

- Operationalize a coordination platform with clear KPIs, reporting structures, and accountability mechanisms
- Anchor coordination within the CAADP Agricultural Sector Working Group and formally integrate non-state actors as accountability partners
- Institutionalize periodic national roundtables to track implementation progress, resolve bottlenecks, and strengthen cross-sector collaboration

2. DEVELOP AN INTEGRATED INVESTMENT AND ENTERPRISE READINESS PIPELINE

Actions will be taken to strengthen enterprise readiness systems and improve access to structured financing.

- Develop and scale aggregation centers and agri-hubs to reduce compliance burdens and provide shared services for SMEs and farmers
- Expand export readiness and market linkage programmes connecting agribusinesses to buyers, logistics systems, and trade facilitation support
- Deploy blended finance instruments, including first-loss capital and equipment financing, with deliberate targeting of women-led and rural enterprises

3. STRENGTHEN INCLUSIVE VALUE CHAIN AND MARKET SYSTEMS

Actions will focus on improving efficiency, equity, and coordination across agricultural value chains.

- Scale farmer clustering and cooperative models to improve organization, bargaining power, and market access
- Establish structured aggregation systems to reduce reliance on intermediaries and improve price transparency
- Align processors, aggregators, and offtakers within coordinated value chain frameworks that fairly distribute compliance and market risks

4. ENHANCE GOVERNANCE, DATA SYSTEMS, AND POLICY COHERENC

Implementation actions will strengthen institutional coordination and evidence-based decision-making.

- Establish interoperable data sharing and knowledge management systems across ecosystem actors
- Define and operationalize clear roles for state and non-state actors, with strengthened catalytic leadership from government and enabling roles for development partners
- Formalize non-state actor participation as accountability partners within national agricultural planning and implementation processes
- Align national, state, and local agricultural strategies with CAADP commitments and ensure cascading implementation frameworks

5. CROSS-CUTTING IMPLEMENTATION COMMITMENTS

All stakeholders commit to advancing:

- Blended finance and innovative financing mechanisms for agribusiness growth
- Structured SME acceleration and enterprise development pathways
- Expanded market access, trade facilitation, and export competitiveness initiatives
- Strengthened ecosystem coordination and multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms
- Integration of climate resilience and sustainability into agrifood system investments



CLOSING REFLECTIONS

“The path from CAADP’s promise to Nigeria’s plate runs through coordination, enterprise, and the will to act together.”

This Partners Roundtable was not an end in itself. It was a deliberate signal from AFC, CAFS Africa, and all stakeholders present that the CAADP agenda in Nigeria must now move beyond policy architecture into enterprise-driven reality.

The CAADP 2026–2035 agenda sets a clear direction for Africa’s agrifood systems; one that is more integrated, inclusive, and resilient. Yet, its success will not be measured by frameworks alone, but by the strength and scale of the businesses it enables.

This dialogue marks an important step toward closing the gap between policy and enterprise. It reinforces a shared responsibility across ecosystem actors to align efforts, strengthen coordination, and translate ambition into measurable outcomes.

The path forward is no longer uncertain. What is required now is intentional collaboration, where fragmented efforts converge, and systems are built to support agribusinesses not just to survive but to scale.

