Section 1: Introduction

1. Within the context of the United Nations Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, the World will come together at a Global Summit in September 2021 under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, preceded by the pre-Summit in July 2021. The Summit will focus on game-changing solutions to transform food systems across the globe to achieve all the 17 SDGs of Agenda 2030. In the African context, food systems transformation will help the continent to achieve all the 20 goals of Africa’s Agenda 2063.

2. The United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) and processes leading up to it offer an opportunity for Africa to examine and bring out practical solutions to challenges hindering achievement of the goals and targets in development frameworks, including the SDGs and the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

3. Africa is presenting a common position to the UNFSS that provides an aggregation of views on key issues that will shape Africa’s and the global food systems over the next decade. In 2003, Africa adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) as a continental policy framework for agricultural transformation to increase food security and nutrition and reduce poverty. It was reinforced in 2014 under the CAADP Malabo declaration on agricultural growth and transformation with an expanded set of goals and targets to be achieved by 2025. The vision for the 10 years of the CAADP Malabo declaration to position agriculture at the centre of driving inclusive growth and economic development to ensure wealth creation, food and nutrition security; economic opportunities for poverty alleviation and prosperity as well as ensuring resilience and sustainability. Through the CAADP agenda, African leaders envisioned a food systems approach to attain agricultural-led economic transformation for its Member States. The performance and progress made by AU Member States in the implementation of the commitments in the declaration is assessed every two years. The latest biennial review report of 2019 indicated that Africa was not on track to achieve the CAADP goals and targets by 2025. As such, Africa is searching for solutions that will help to accelerate the pace of implementation of the Malabo declaration. Therefore, the UNFSS has come at an opportune moment when the continent is also looking
for game-changing solutions to transform its food systems to attain its goals in the CAADP Malabo declaration.

4. The Africa common position on food systems has emerged out of wide and consultative and iterative processes with AU Member States’ perspectives, aspirations, priorities and experiences as the primary basis of the position – appreciating and as much as possible embracing the diversity and differences in priorities and identified pathways. Even more important is that the national and sub-national food systems engagements have provided views, ambitions and experiences of the frontline and grass root players and stakeholders who normally do not feature in dialogues and development decisions of this nature. Consultations and input from numerous specialized agencies and constituencies including universities, think tanks and research institutions and policy networks, ensured that the perspectives and views were, as much as possible, anchored on science and evidence as well as lessons from decades of concerted work on food security, nutrition and food systems transformation.

5. The ultimate objective of the Africa common position is to mobilize awareness and engage policymakers to galvanize global, regional and AU Member States’ individual and collective momentum and resolve towards achieving the development goals of AU’s Agenda 2063 and those of the UN 2030 Agenda through accelerating food systems transformation and to build consensus on a shared vision for African food systems transformation. Specifically, the position aims at: (i) providing an overview of Africa’s food systems; (ii) presenting challenges and opportunities of Africa’s food systems; (iii) examining the drivers and levers of Africa’s food systems; and (iv) presenting Africa’s game changing solutions under each of the five Action Tracks proposed by the UNFSS. Africa expects the momentum created by the UNFSS to result in mobilizing and galvanizing support for the implementation of its priorities in Agenda 2063, CAADP Malabo declaration, the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), and other continental frameworks that have the consensus of AU Member States.

6. The common position has also benefited from the wealth of information generated from robust conversations and inputs from Africa Regional Economic Communities, civil society organizations, farmers’ organizations including groups of women and youth, the private sector, academia, African multilateral institutions and pertinent UN agencies.

7. The common position has gone through review and endorsement by the AU Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment (ARDWE). The STC is composed of Ministers from AU Member States responsible for the portfolios under its mandate. The preparation of the Africa common position is led by the AUC Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), with technical support from several technical and multilateral agencies.

**Section 2: Overview of Africa’s Food Systems**
8. Africa’s food systems are rapidly evolving towards intensified production-driven systems. This pattern is being shaped by some key megatrends, including i) the rise of the African middle class; ii) rapid urbanization and consequent shifts in food demand and downstream modernization of the food systems; iii) a rapid shift in the labour force from farming to non-farm jobs; and iv) rising competition over African farmland.

9. By 2019, Africa expended US$43 billion in food imports, and it is projected that by 2030, this imports bill would reach US$90 billion, pointing to two contrasting realities: both existing opportunities for African farmers as well as a potential unsustainable dependence situation for the continent. Overall, the continent’s per capita food production declined partly because the region’s population has been increasing and food production has not been matching up, leading to a widening gap between production and the attendant consumption.

10. Africa’s retail is dramatically shifting to the ‘supermarket’ mode. While the grocery stores in the informal and peri-urban settlements labelled ‘supermarkets’ are not the true definition of the supermarket, they represent a growth mindset and a change in local purchasing and shopping habits. Despite this growth, it is important to note that most of the food is still passing through SMEs throughout the food value chain. It is estimated that 80% of all food consumed in Africa passes through the hand of an SME. They are a contextual representation of the changing African reality. The expansion of global retail with the movement of large retailers from developed economies to less developed ones and a shift from urban centres to small and rural towns of relatively larger retailers is the most recent trend in Africa. This is bound to intensify as the continent’s urbanization path intensifies, consumption patterns and preferences change, including a rise in consumption of processed foods. African smallholder farmers and retailers subsequently must compete with international agribusinesses for the expanding urban markets.

11. A key feature of African food systems is the role of women. Women play critical roles across African food systems from production, processing, selling and as consumers. They grow and process food, reduce food losses, make diets more diverse and produce marketable surplus along the agri-food value chains. Women comprise more than 50% of the agricultural workforce in the region and are also the predominant labour providers in agribusinesses and agro-industries. Yet, in many parts of Africa, women continue to face significant social and economic discrimination. They often lack access to productive resources, agricultural inputs, information, finance, services, markets, social protection. Africa recognises that closing the gender productivity gap would yield production gains of between 2 and 11 percent in most countries.

**State of food and nutrition security in Africa**

12. Globally, significant traction has been achieved by reducing hunger and poverty and improving food and nutrition security. However, with some 795 million people still suffering hunger and some two billion people suffering from micronutrient deficiencies and/or other forms of over-nourishment, the issue remains of great concern. From the Africa region, progress against hunger had been made but lost between the 2014-2018 period. This lag in addressing hunger and nutritional challenges has meant that
some 256 million people in the continent remain hungry, representing an increase of some 44 million people from the 2014 period. The AU CAADP biennial review report of 2019 revealed that Africa was not on track to meet its goal of ending hunger by 2025, noting a deterioration in food and nutrition security on the continent since the inaugural report in 2017.

13. However, as earlier mentioned, trade flows provide an interim opportunity to address emerging domestic food demand patterns, especially food deficits. This is a short-term measure to address Africa’s food security needs partly because the intra-continental flows continue to reveal an increase in the export shares of the emerging cash products and processed food products while the shares of more traditional export products are contracting. The rising flows in intra-continental exports in food products are important in closing continental food gaps in the areas experiencing astute deficits. Further, this intra-continental trade in agricultural products is larger than the official data showing that there is, for example, informal cross-border trade in staple food accounts for 30% of the total trade in West Africa.

14. Africa on average imports about 40% of its food under unfair terms of trade that have eliminated tariff protection at frontiers. Accordingly, African countries have neither a regional nor a continental market that is stable and which, therefore, persistently keeps smallholder farmers in the continent in perpetual ‘farming poverty’. In this regard, achieving intra-continental food security will begin by correcting these imbalances within the continent, and this could be the first and significant achievement that AfCFTA could deliver. This could allow locally grown food crops some level of protection as well as develop and build-up intra-Africa regional markets.

15. To promote nutrition-delivering food systems, investments must go beyond traditional main crops, and focus on traditional and indigenous crops that are nutritionally important in the food systems often managed by women, including vegetables, grain legumes, root crops and climate resilient crops such as sorghums, millets and cassava, which for a long time have suffered massive under investments. The fisheries and aquaculture sub-sectors provide affordable, nutritious food to millions of Africans and have to be promoted as key sectors contributing to nutrition-delivering food systems.

Africa’s one trillion-dollar business is in agriculture and agribusiness

16. African Agriculture is projected to offer a US$1 trillion agribusiness by 2030. Africa’s food imports are projected to soar to US$90 billion by 2030. This trend has implications on several areas, including undermining economic growth of small scall food producers and Africa remains in the unfavourable balance of trade and trade deficits.

17. With a 60 per cent global share of arable land, Africa is in a strategic position to cement global leadership in agriculture and agribusiness and become the food and agribusiness centre of the world. But realizing this dream requires appropriate and strategic investments.

18. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) offers the continent a promise of US$2.5 trillion in combined GDP. Agribusiness is expected to significantly contribute to this growth. To realize
this growth in agribusiness will require a concerted effort to increase production and value addition and ensure adequate quality infrastructure and food safety standards to supply and grow local and regional markets.

Resilience in Africa’s food systems

19. For the last two and a half decades, climate change has received attention as a disruptive challenge to Africa’s food systems and constitutes a significant threat to food security and poverty reduction efforts on the continent. The continent’s food systems and those directly dependent on them are still vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change shocks such as droughts, floods, higher air and soil temperatures increasing in frequency and intensity. These extreme weather events have a high cost and threaten crops, livestock and people, thereby risking millions of Africans’ food security. Environmental degradation due to destructive use of both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, inappropriate development and inadequate waste management has further reduced the resilience of Africa’s natural productive ecosystems to continue to provide goods and services that support our food systems.

20. The outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the inequities in the continent’s food security situation and exposed how vulnerable Africa’s food systems are to systemic shocks. Building food systems resilience is an imperative for African governments to strengthen enabling environment through improved policies and investments in food production public goods, scale-up digital solutions and other innovations for sustainable and equitable food production and develop innovative financing schemes through public-private partnerships.

Section 3: Challenges and opportunities of African food systems

21. Despite decades of decline and stagnation, growth in African economies has picked up substantially since the early 2000s, and a new optimism has emerged about the potential of food systems on the continent. Yet, African food systems continue to face several challenges, including extreme weather events and climate change, limited levels of adoption of yield-increasing technologies, dependency on rain-fed agriculture and low levels of irrigation, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and spread of fall armyworm in parts of the continent.

The search for resilient food systems in the face of a changing climate

22. Climate change presents significant challenges to African food production and threatens recent progress in increasing productivity and reducing poverty and hunger. The combination of rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns are projected to result in a broad range of impacts, including increases in the frequency of weather volatility and extreme weather events, rising sea levels, changes in the incidence of agricultural pests and diseases, and adverse effects on crop productivity. Climate change is expected to leave more than 38 million more people at risk of hunger in Africa. Evidence indicate women are experiencing this in different ways than men, and resilience strategies need, therefore, to take this into account.
23. With the growing threat to food security and food systems, policies and practices that promote adaptation and mitigation measures to rapidly changing climate conditions will be required to address climate change impacts on African food systems. The climate change-food systems nexus should be continually examined to mainstream locally nuanced policy and investment interventions fostering improved climate-adapted agricultural technologies for climate-smart practices and approaches, resilient and increased productivity, value addition processes.

24. Furthermore, while these climate-smart practices show promise in terms of higher productivity and improvements to food security, their adoption by poor smallholder farmers and producers can be constrained by insecure tenure rights, poor access to finance, climate-adapted crops/livestock and information, markets, and risk-management tools. Significant investments in research and technology, together with institutional and physical infrastructure that is responsive to the needs of small-scale producers, will be needed to overcome these barriers. Aquaculture, a low carbon emission avenue for low-cost production of protein and highly nutritious food, has to be encouraged and taken to scale.

**Stumping out chronic vulnerability and protecting livelihoods among the poor and marginalized**

25. Another key intervention will be the scaling up social protection programmes to protect livelihoods in the face of risks related to climate variability, conflicts and other shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic effects on livelihoods point to the importance of safety nets to ensure the well-being of vulnerable populations in the face of unexpected shocks.

26. Targeted social safety nets and health- and nutrition-specific programmes that recognize and support the diversified nature of the livelihood strategies of small-scale food producers can help increase communities and households’ resilience in times of crises. Research has shown that safety nets programs that are properly designed can significantly accelerate progress in African countries with high rates of maternal and child undernutrition and mortality, with even greater benefits for national economies and global health. Additionally, food production interventions, such as information provision and weather-based crop and livestock insurance, can increase certainty and security and assurance to a minimum income stream to rural households.

**Overcoming a persistent slow rate of adoption of improved production technologies**

27. The expanded use of modern inputs, such as improved seeds, feeds, irrigation, and mechanization, also contribute to increased food production productivity, but the accessibility of improved technologies and the intensity of input use in Africa still lags behind that of other regions. Only an estimated 33% per cent of arable land is grown to improved crop varieties on the continent. For instance, African seeds systems are still struggling to produce and distribute high-quality varieties in sufficient quantities to reach a critical mass of smallholder farmers. Similarly, Africa’s aquaculture industry is challenged by a lack of access to quality seed and feed for increased production. Public research and development systems lead the way while appropriate policies and regulatory frameworks are putting in
place to enable the private sector to play a driving role in the development of competitive supply chains. Future strategies need to focus on enabling private sector-based systems through adequate institutional, policy and regulatory arrangements, including using government procurement to stimulate private sector investment and the emergence of competitive enterprises. Given that the vast majority of food producers in Africa are either informal or small-scale producers, there is also a need to ensure equitable access to improved technologies and inputs and stimulate investment within this sector. Concrete interventions include the creation of Regional Technology Delivery Infrastructure (RTDI), a Compact of national, sub-regional and international research organizations, private sector seed companies, governments to facilitate an agro-ecosystem based rapid diffusion of new varieties that surmount the barriers of political borders.

28. Improving labour productivity is critical for African agriculture to play a greater role in meeting local to global food demand in a competitive and cost-effective and competitive manner, as Africa harnesses science solutions for growth. A proportionately balanced workforce will enhance labour productivity, especially when coupled with agri-innovations creating the opportunity to increase rural incomes and participation in the cash economy.

**Securing tenure and access rights**

29. There is strong evidence that secure tenure and access rights (land, water, forestry and fishing) contributes to productive and environmentally beneficial agricultural investments that can contribute to climate change mitigation as well as adaptation. Women’s land tenure security has further benefitted in empowering women and reducing the gender gap in agricultural investment, especially in long-term investments such as soil fertility management and tree planting. Recognizing these issues, the African Union adopted a Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa (July 2009), and many African governments have engaged in legislative/regulatory and administrative/institutional land governance reforms using a continuum of land rights approach suited to protecting land rights of vulnerable groups such as women because it involves localized recording and documentation of rights (including secondary or derived rights), adapting and expanding existing tenure and land administration systems where possible, and introducing new ones selectively. However, population pressure, the commodification of land, and the commercialization of agriculture often reduce tenure security, particularly for women. Thus, particular efforts are needed to ensure that tenure security reforms are not only passed, but implemented, including provisions for legal literacy and ensuring that women and marginalized groups of know their land rights. Reforms should promote state land allocation to small and landless producers (women and youth included) to produce food.

**The road to adapted mechanization technologies across food system value chains**

30. Africa still has the least mechanized food systems in the world. Food producers across Africa have 10 times fewer mechanized tools per farm area than farmers in other developing regions, and access has not grown as quickly as in other regions. Also, the development of agricultural equipment markets remains impeded by constraints related to importing or manufacturing equipment. Mechanization in
African food systems need rethinking and fresh strategies. The success of mechanization in African countries will be about technology and organizational innovations, such as reliable services and cooperation arrangements for and with food producers. Opportunities for mechanization must be harnessed at each stage of the food production value chain. When done right, the mechanization of food production value chains in Africa can and should be employment-enhancing and need not be labour-replacing.

31. Irrigation use is also low in Africa. Yet, evidence shows that average yields on irrigated areas are ninety percent higher than in nearby rainfed areas. Moreover, research findings demonstrate that one of the critical factors that stimulated agricultural productivity growth during the Green Revolution in India was increased public investments in irrigation. Expanded investments in irrigation must be coupled with better policies for the improved management and sustainable use of available water resources to maximize agricultural output per unit of water used. By adopting high-efficiency irrigation technologies or by improving water management, water-use efficiency can be increased.

**The promise of digital and biotechnologies and the transformation of food systems**

32. While Africa has witnessed tremendous growth in the adoption and use of information and communication technologies, digital innovations need to move beyond large-scale food production operations to benefit more small-scale producers, improve food and nutrition security, build climate resilience, and expand the inclusion of youth and women. Access to and delivery of holistic digital food production technologies, innovations, and data to transform business models and practices across food production value chains is critical. Digital innovations can help enhance access to –extension services, markets and financial services by smallholder farmers and support mechanization services among food producers.

33. Biotechnology, including improved breeds and seed varieties, has not been widely embraced across Africa and is inadequately addressed in food production policy frameworks. Increased support for the adoption of biotechnology, particularly among smallholders, including the new generation of farmers emerging across Africa, requires accelerated action and a conducive enabling environment. Scientists are designing and developing livestock breeds and crop varieties with higher yields, additional nutrients (e.g. in biofortified crop seeds, roots and cultivars), increased disease resistance and enhanced tastes through crop biotechnology and genomics. The power of modern agricultural biotechnology and genomics in transforming African food systems into a force of economic growth, creating wealth in the rural space and beyond, feeding an African population expected to reach 2.2 billion people by 2050 cannot be ignored.

34. Despite challenges and uncertainties surrounding the adoption of biotechnology adoption, there appears to be a significant potential for capturing large economic, social, and environmental payoffs from the use of biotechnology products in the farming systems across Africa.

**Taking to scale research-proven food science technologies to increase nutrient content of African diets**
35. A specific area of biotechnology worth special attention is two cutting-edge research in agricultural and food science technologies, notably biofortification and industrial food fortification. Industrial food fortification is adding nutrients, which do not naturally occur or occur at minimal levels in the food, to foods during processing to improve nutrition and add health benefits.

36. Biofortification is the process of conventionally breeding staple food crops that are naturally enriched with micronutrients. It complements industrial food fortification, supplementation and dietary diversification as AU strategies for making nutrition-sensitive agriculture a reality and enduring conventional practice. To date, Africa has played a strong leadership role with 38 countries testing and/or growing biofortified staples (cassava, maize, sweet potato, beans and pearl millet) and 14 countries have included biofortification in their policies and programmes. Evidence is accumulating showing that with increased use of biofortified crops comes reduction in anaemia, diarrhoea, night blindness and improved cognitive and physical performance. It is in this regard that the second and third Ordinary Sessions of the AU Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment recommended taking to scale these nutrition enhancing technologies to scale so that they benefit larger populations, with specific focus on the poor and the vulnerable who often do not have access to the niche markets or lack purchasing power.

**Recognising the importance and potential of aquatic or blue foods in African food systems**

37. Aquatic foods provide an essential yet often under-valued contribution to Africa’s food systems and contributes significantly to livelihoods, food security and nutrition. The African continent is adjacent to some of the highly productive large marine ecosystems and endowed with networks of productive rivers and lakes that provide abundant opportunities for aquatic food production systems and blue economy development in the continent. The total fish production is estimated at about 12.5 million metric-tonnes, which constitute about 6% of global fish production. The sector currently contributes 1.26% GDP, and per capita, fish consumption is about 9.6 kg which is less than half the global average (20.5 Kg).

38. The sector creates employment for about 12 million people with women constituting about 27% of the total employment. African fisheries and aquaculture play significant roles in international and regional trade. Africa imports about USD 5 billion worth of fish annually and export about USD 7 billion.

39. In Africa, the artisanal or small-scale producers contribute the most to the production of aquatic or “blue foods”. For instance, small-scale fisheries account for more than 60% of Africa’s fish production, and a further 90 million (farmers and resource-poor) depend on fishing as part of a diversified livelihood strategy. Despite the importance of blue foods to Africa’s food systems, aquatic ecosystems and their capacity to produce food and other ecosystem services, they are under threat from harmful activities and degradation and contamination of aquatic ecosystems and climate change.

40. Key actions that need urgent attention include Leverage existing of continental frameworks to promote coherence and best practices in fisheries and aquaculture governance and blue growth
initiatives; Combating IUU fishing, conservation biodiversity, environmental governance; Improve skills of value chain actors, especially women and youth, in post-harvest technology and Increasing Africa role in global regimes including Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. Moreover, the continent has Africa Blue Economy Strategy and a Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa which are strategic frameworks for strengthening African aquatic food systems through enhancing the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to food security, livelihoods and wealth creation as strengthening enablers and levers such as maritime transportation and safety; sustainable coastal tourism development, ensuring environmental sustainability; renewable energy development, gas and mineral exploration and development of innovative industries; strengthen governance and institutions, poverty reduction measures, innovative financing mechanisms.

**Boosting Africa’s Food Systems through increased economic integration, industrialisation and trade**

41. Development of the Agro-industry sector remains an essential vehicle for Africa’s development processes. The Industrialization of Africa’s food systems, with strong multisectoral linkages to domestic and regional economies, can help African countries to achieve higher economic growth rates, economic diversification and transformation, and reduce their exposure to external shocks. Industrialisation along Africa’s food value chains will maximize the benefits offered by the sustainable and equitable use of the continent’s natural resources and stimulate wealth generation, value addition, increased regional trade and strengthened resilience, particularly if aligned closely with the AfCFTA operationalization. The establishment of industrial clusters provides a useful avenue to stimulate agro-industries along a variety of pathways including, but not limited to: i) Enhancing the competitiveness/productivity of the sector; ii) Leveraging innovation capability through cooperative research, competitive striving, new business formation, increasing demand for services, and the attraction of investors; iii) Achieving economies of scale for micro, small and medium-sized businesses; iii) improving information sharing and dissemination; and iv) supporting cross-border trade in local products which, in turn, facilitate Africa’s economic integration and the successful implementation of the AFCFTA.

**Overcoming the energy deficit in African food systems**

42. Technologies to generate and deliver energy for the transformation of food systems in Africa are also urgently needed. Africa faces the highest costs of electricity provision globally, and large shares of the population, particularly in rural areas, remain unconnected to energy grids. With the over 580 million people going without access to electricity is a matter of serious concerned and requires dedicated attention

43. Policies that explore promising off-grid and mini-grid solutions that could meet the needs of farmers, agro-industries and households in remote areas should be explored. Expanding access to alternative energy sources, such as solar, wind, and biogas, can help boost food security in Africa by accelerating sustainable agricultural development, improving water security, accelerating rural and economic growth.
Section 4: Drivers of transformation and levers of change in Africa’s food systems

44. Recognising on-going push-pull effects of global and continental mega trends and transitions including technological innovations, climate change, Africa’s youthful population and the advent of the AfCFTA are affecting the form and character including speed of change. Main drivers and levers expected to play significant roles in championing the transformation of Africa’s food systems include:

Sustained, broad-based economic growth

Africa’s real per capita GDP has increased by over one third, on average, between 2000 and 2014, with faster growth of up to 100 percent or more in some countries. Africa aims to foster the mutually reinforcing inter-dependences between healthy, resilient and inclusive food systems, on one hand, and broad-based economic growth, on the other. Many countries across Africa have seen sustained growth in the agricultural sector, about 4.7 per cent per year on average between 2000 and 2018. Africa is committed on policy and investment interventions to stimulate and incentivise the fight against hunger and malnutrition, while enhancing competitive economic growth, resilience in the interactions between the economy, the environment and the food systems. The successful transformation of African food systems anchored closely on all economic sectors is key in building and sustaining resilient and inclusive food systems - and large-scale farmers.

45. African food systems are evolving — a development which is central to Africa’s unfolding economic transformation. In some countries, the number of medium- and large-scale farms is increasing, accounting for a sizeable and rising portion of total farmland and food production. Agricultural commercialization is increasingly attracting private investments. In areas with growing numbers of medium-scale farms, large-scale traders are also increasing investments and expanding operations. The economic landscapes in which smallholder farmers in Africa have traditionally operated are shifting rapidly.

Africa’s demography

46. Africa’s demographics, characterised by a high annual population growth rate (1.6 billion people by 2030), the median age of below 30 years old, with growing number remaining unemployed, and the largely rural population, rapidly shifting urbanisation with the rural-urban divide getting blurred. According to projections of the UN Population Fund, the level of urbanization in Africa is expected to reach 65 per cent by 2050. While there were only two African cities with more than a million inhabitants in 1950, the number of cities jumped to fifty in 2010 and is expected to nearly double by 2025. Furthermore, as the number of cities increases, less concentration is observed.

47. The rapid urbanization and transformation of food systems to feed Africa’s growing cities are reshaping farmers access to markets, starting with those closest to towns and moving outward into remote areas. The rise of secondary cities has expanded market access and extended value chains into previously hard-to-reach areas.
Globalization, food trade, and changing diets

48. Africa is experiencing a widening food import gap. This growing external deficit in agriculture and food is a sign of demand growing faster than production due to higher economic growth, demographic pressure, and increased urbanization. This high level of imports is exposing the continent to relatively high volatility that agricultural markets typically experience. Globalization and the growth of the large-scale food industry, including supermarkets and expansion of mass marketing, rising incomes, and changing employment pressures that lead to changes in eating and activity behaviours, are all significantly driving changes in dietary patterns and associated health conditions. These are closely linked with urbanization, as changing environments and preferences interact to influence diets and nutrition. Diet habits are changing across Africa with implications for food systems. To be sure, there is a widespread increase in consumption of refined foods, such as refined grains, or highly processed foods and non-traditional staple foods. Also, the consumption of sugar, salt, fats, and oils has been on the rise. While there has been some shift towards high-quality diets, the consumption of poor-quality diets—the number one risk factor in the global burden of disease—remains prevalent in African countries. These diet changes and their impacts on nutrition are strongly linked to increasing burdens of obesity and diet-related chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Rise of the staples processing sector

49. The rapid transformation of traditional staples’ value chains driven by fast-paced urbanization and rising incomes is the most dramatic change facing African smallholders. Rapid urbanization and rising incomes are growing Africa’s middle-class, which is fuelling higher demand for agricultural products and local foods. Changing diets associated with rising incomes and urbanization are boosting demand for processed foods, such as couscous, millet flour and cassava flakes. Increasingly, consumers across Africa are demanding for foods to be processed with higher quality and ready to cook or eat—with ease of preparation. Furthermore, Africa’s total urban food market is projected to reach $150 billion by 2030, and smallholder farmers could capture as much as $30 billion of that total.

50. These trends are spurring the rapid rise of an emerging and dynamic processing sector. The rise of the processing sector is accompanied by a lengthening of the value chains of agricultural staples. From traditionally short chains limited to home-based processing and confined predominantly to rural areas, the changing value chains now primarily supply small towns and large urban centres with a range of branded ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat products. The urban-based value chains are fuelled by the introduction of new processes, sometimes mechanized, of producing and distributing traditional foods outside of the household setting through specialized enterprises.

51. The emerging processing sector provides new employment opportunities in processing, distribution, packaging, and marketing across food value chains, as well as increased incomes for farmers. However, the small and medium enterprises undertaking these new activities face significant challenges. Rising numbers of firms combined with low levels of innovation will lead to a situation with an abundance
of small firms with persistently low productivity and profitability and limited ability to drive agricultural transformation. Strengthening the links between producers and processors is a critical intervention to facilitate firm growth and benefit smallholder farmers.

**Rising demand for animal source foods**

52. Animal agriculture is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors across the African continent. It plays a significant role in Africa’s food systems, supporting the livelihoods of an estimated 268 million people in several countries and making an important contribution to food security and nutrition. It could help answer some of Africa’s most pressing challenges, including food and nutrition security, employment, climate adaptation, and gender equality. Africans are eating more animal products, as their population grows, and their incomes rise. In 2013, the average person on the continent annually consumed around 20kg of meat and 45kg of milk—by 2050 this is projected to increase to more than 25kg of meat and almost 65kg of milk. Africa’s domestic livestock sector has been expanding as a response. Animal agriculture already contributes between 30 and 80 percent of agricultural GDP across Africa, and in some countries, it is the fastest-growing agricultural sub-sector. In response to the growing demand, producers and other actors will make significant investments in the livestock value chains and the impacts on livelihoods, public health, and environment will be unprecedented. To meet the increasing demand for animal-sourced products, more needs to be done to elevate the role of the livestock sector through context-specific technology development and adoption as well as targeted policy innovations for a sustainable increase in production and productivity.

**Digitalization and the growing agri-tech industry**

53. The use of digital technologies, innovations, and data is transforming food systems in Africa. Digital technologies, services, and tools now offer numerous opportunities to agriculture value chain actors to make more informed decisions, increase productivity and incomes and achieve improved nutrition and health outcomes. For many farmers, access to output and input markets has increased as a digital revolution allows markets to connect faster. Data from digitalization efforts offer opportunities to design better-informed policies for the transformation of food systems. The digitalization of food systems across Africa presents new opportunities for the use of digital and data-driven technologies at each segment of agriculture value chains, which can guide and support decisions on production methods, value chain optimization and storage methods to avoid food waste and loss.

54. The private sector is already playing a major role in accelerating the development of promising technologies and solutions in the food and agriculture sector. Innovation funds, often in the form of grants, are now being used to create innovative activity platforms by providing incentives to improve collaboration and the quality of services offered. From 2016 to 2018, US$19 million was invested in agriculture technology in Africa, and agri-tech start-ups grew by 110 percent - an indication of a growing African agri-tech industry. Placing digitalization at the centre of food system transformation strategies and policies will be key to harness its cross-cutting innovative power.
Section 5: Africa’s game-changing solutions

Africa has consulted widely across the various stakeholders and the following game-changing solutions are what the continent believes will transform its food systems and are stated in this section under each of the five Action Tracks of the UNFSS. The solutions presented here, when implemented, will contribute to attainment of the goals in AU’s Agenda 2063, CAADP goals and targets and the UN SDGs.

Ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all: Under this area, Africa is committed to:

55. Promote biofortification of staple foods and industrial fortification of complementary foods to deliver better diets for children.
56. Scale-up successful climate-resilient and proven agricultural technologies, including drought and heat tolerant crop varieties, integrated crop - small/large ruminant systems, aquaculture, small scale irrigation, and cost-efficient blending of fertilizers and to at least 40 million farmers across Africa to raise local food production, diversify the food basket and make nutritious food more affordable to combat malnutrition and stunting in children and women.
57. Facilitate the expansion of cash transfer programs and use expanding cash transfer platforms to reach families with nutrition services and programs that focus on producing nutritious foods.
58. Promote and enforce food safety standards in both formal and non-formal food markets to protect consumers.
59. Set up a mechanism to improve on cross-border dispute resolution, food production in conflict-prone areas and curb corruption.
60. Expand school feeding programs to improved nutrition for school children and create markets for locally produced foods to increase farmer incomes.
61. Design and implement innovative Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) campaigns and nutrition education to improve food and feeding practices for children, and society at large, and influence food supply and food environments.
62. Adopt and implement coherent nutritious food policies and strategies that are evidence-based, along with enhanced institutional capacities and capabilities for accelerated transformation of sustainable food and nutrition systems.
63. Identify, renew and implement longer-term actions across multiple systems –food, health, water and sanitation, education and social protection-- in the food system to facilitate sustained access to affordable and nutritious foods, essential nutrition services and positive nutrition practices in all contexts; and to promote diversification, including in nutritious indigenous foods.
64. Adopt policy and fiscal measures across ministries to support food affordability (i.e. subsidies for healthy and sustainable foods; expansion of social protection programmes; taxation for unhealthy foods; procurement policies for healthy school meals).
65. Implement long-term inclusive strategies that foster multifaceted investment in agriculture, agribusiness, and agro-industries and ensure food safety, micronutrient content, and sustained food quality and standards that enable micro and medium agri-SMEs to compete domestic, regional and international value-added food markets.

67. Promotion of national, regional and continental food information systems to share information on the availability of food and its prices at all levels and how it could be accessed.

68. Ensure adequate regional strategic emergency food reserves and storage facilities, operationalize trade corridors for food and essential items, remove trade barriers and other taxes along the food value chain and the export promotion process and accelerate the implementation of AfCFTA.

**Shifting to sustainable consumption patterns:** Under this area, Africa is committed to:

69. Promote and support the sustainable production and consumption of traditional and indigenous food crops, including nuts, fruits, vegetables and tubers.

70. Support value chain actors to meet regulatory food and agro-industry requirements and produce healthy and sustainable diets to promote responsible processing sector and healthy-diets driven consumption systems.

71. Promote the sustainable and equitable production, use and management of Africa’s aquatic resources and the productive ecosystems that support them.

72. Align national strategies to AfCFTA and develop agro-industrial clusters and regional agricultural value chains that focus on value addition in integrated markets and are healthy and sustainable diets-driven.

73. Establish and expand modernized food markets, including wholesale food markets, to become accessible to vendors and consumers across demographic and social groups.

74. Revive, support and modernize local markets, which are the heart of local economies and traditional solidarity networks, while concurrently supporting food chains to promote standardized production chains and supermarkets.

**Boosting nature-positive production at sufficient scale:** Under this area, Africa is committed to:

75. Invest in productivity enhancing technologies, including improved seeds, feeds and animal breeds adapted to the changing climate, safe and humane transportation and appropriate storage facilities.

76. Promote measures and practices sustainable soil and water management, including irrigation, watershed management and renewable energy production in the different agro-ecological zones.

77. Adopt policies and technologies to increase agricultural productivity and production while reducing the carbon footprint, e.g. reducing emissions and post-harvest losses and increasing carbon capture without undermining health or nutritious diets.

78. Support adoption of policies to drive the adoption of climate-smart agro-industry practices in the various agro-ecological zones of the continent.

79. Promote digitalization in agriculture to reduce transaction costs, connect farmers to markets, and improve farm-level decision-making using remote sensing data.

80. Invest in agro-industrial research and development to develop innovations for sustainable agriculture intensification, including setting up agro-industrial clusters incubation and acceleration centers for youth, women and family farmers, promoting research on best variety of inputs (feed and seed), promoting technology and infrastructure that will unleash productivity.
81. Increase agricultural financing to meet the CAADP target of minimum 10 percent of public expenditure to agriculture. African Union Member State and Governments should mobilize financing institutions and private sector actors to invest in agriculture, and to stimulate sustainable, affordable financing to agriculture.

82. Promote Africa’s sustainable blue economy development at the national and regional levels to harness the potential of blue foods, develop appropriate aquatic transport infrastructure (ports, harbours etc.) to service regional integration and trade and boost resilience of Africa’s productive aquatic resources and ecosystems.

83. Promote intra-African agriculture and food trade by fostering local productivity, value addition and competitiveness and the adoption of national AfCFTA strategies and the African Union-endorsed guidelines to develop regional agricultural value chains. More focus should be given to value addition, integrating family food producers and developing mechanisms to improve on cross-border dispute resolution.

84. Establish a Facility for Financing Food and Nutrition Security dedicated to Africa, similar to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), to mobilize green and donor partner funds for concessionary sovereign loans and Grants to address shortfalls in public expenditures to scale successful agricultural technologies and provide competitive research and development grants to national, sub-regional and international research organizations on the African continent.

**Advancing equitable livelihoods and value distribution:** Under this area, Africa is committed to:

85. Empower women, including through greater access to and security of tenure over land, water and productive resources, an essential step towards closing the gender gap in agro-industries, leading to considerable gains in productivity and production.

86. Adopt policies and make investments that support the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in agribusiness including providing training and skills development, and financing.

87. Build capacities of Member States to promote policy, legal and institutional reforms; and increase budgetary resources and innovations for tenure rights.

88. Enhance women’s income opportunities to improve the welfare of children and improve food security and nutrition, in addition to attaining enhanced health and education outcomes.

89. Develop and promote competitive and inclusive food value chains with a view to promoting agribusiness linkages and agro-industrialization for improved market opportunities, job creation and livelihoods.

90. Encourage the establishment of viable groups and cooperatives at all segments of food value chains.

91. Facilitate smallholder and family farmers and Agri-SMEs access to food markets.

92. Empower local communities to develop inclusive and sustainable food systems, including own food systems.

93. Making agriculture attractive to the youth is key to ensuring the sustainability of the agricultural sector. Strengthening the capacities of the smallholder producers and SMEs is a key element to generate effective demand for science, technology, and innovation.
94. Stabilize access of food for the population, particularly for the most vulnerable through ensuring support for improved production for personal consumption; increased logistical access to food and improved markets such as establishment of small-scale processing centres close to the productive areas where family farming is promoted; and ensuring stable pricing and affordability.

**Building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress:** Under area track, Africa is committed to:

95. Promote the centralisation of food systems and the agro-industry sector in response and recovery plans for existing and future shocks, including the recognition of the important role and specific needs of the informal sector for food security during times of stress.

96. Design or adopt targeted social safety net programs to enhance community and household adaptation and resilience to shocks, especially climate-change related shocks such as extreme weather events and migratory pests and diseases.

97. Promote production of traditional and indigenous foods not only to enhance sustainable access to nutritious food but also to build food system resilience.

98. Promote the production of aquatic food products as alternative and supplementary protein sources and also as options for improved diversity for nutrition, accessibility and environmental sustainability.

99. Invest in climate data and knowledge systems and in early warning systems for food security and climate change related disasters.

100. Encourage partnerships and investments to overcome water scarcity challenges in the continent.

101. Consider investing in risk insurance and its available mechanisms against effects of climate change such as droughts and floods, for example weather-indexed crop and livestock insurance schemes.

102. Leverage regional actions for building resilience of small-scale agricultural producers to the impacts of climate change; and restoring degraded land under climate resilient practices.

103. A deliberate effort for investment in homegrown institutions to provide local solutions with more appropriate application to local contexts.

**Access to means of Production:** Under this area, Africa is committed to:

104. Engaging access to production and productivity enhancing technologies and resources including land, finance, data and information as well as technologies (e.g. Seed, breeding materials, irrigation and mechanisation equipment, biotechnology, etc.)

105. Access to water and energy addressing both availability as well as affordable access to quality water and energy

**Cross-cutting game-changing solutions:** Solutions that cut across the five Action Tracks are presented in this section as cross-cutting game-changing solutions. They are important to support or augment the implementation of the solutions proposed in the Action Tracks. Africa is committed to:

106. Strengthen integrated policy making, inter-ministerial collaboration and private sector engagement as a cornerstone for food systems transformation. This includes recognition of the
interlinkages between diverse food production systems (i.e. land-based and aquatic systems), as well as the intersectoral dependencies among financial, economic, social, political and environmental sectors within Africa's agro-industry.

107. Apply more “systems thinking”, in a broad spectrum of areas, including policies, regulations, business models and culture, food supply chains, and involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

108. Apply a people-centred, place-based, cross-sectoral, multi-level, multi-stakeholder and flexible territorial approach to development and promote integration and synergies between policies and actions: Develop a territorial strategy, adopt a foresight approach, support collective action.

109. Enhance continental accountability for food systems transformation through the CAADP biennial review mechanism and agricultural joint sector reviews.

110. Empower citizens to participate in program design at local level and in accountability platforms to monitor program implementation.

111. Mobilize global, continental and national political leadership and institutional support to the commitments for food systems transformation.

112. Ensuring good governance and considering establishing national governing bodies to improve coordination among stakeholders.

113. Encourage public investment in cold chains to reduce food losses.

114. Expanding Social protection programs and linking them to nutrition and food access.

115. Mainstreaming awareness campaigns of healthy diets, food fortification, greenhouse production, rationalizing population growth, and early diagnosis of malnutrition and similar diseases.

116. Provide incentives and a conducive business environment to enhance private sector engagement and investment in food systems within a market-driven context and strengthen public-private partnerships.

117. Develop and implement tenure reform policies and legislative frameworks to enhance tenure security, especially for women and marginalized groups. Related are the collection of sex-disaggregated data to guide actions/monitor progress and mapping land and aquatic ecosystems with potential for food production development to provide a basis for inclusive land-based investments as per the AU guiding principles for large-scale investments in Africa.

118. Investment in targeted industrialisation to upscale Africa’s agro-industry through improved digitalization infrastructure and capacity building as a game-changer for food systems transformation.

119. Engage the youth meaningfully in food system transformation. Youth should be mainstreamed in policies devised to advance food systems. Youth should be attracted to food systems by technology and innovations.

120. Support of regional coordination, synergies, joint programming, joint research and planning to accelerate implementation of policies and strategies and the building of human and institutional capacity on resilient and sustainable food and agricultural systems.

Section 6: Post Summit Rollout Plan

121. After the Summit in September, Africa plans to roll out the implementation of the game-changing solutions in this position. The solutions will be implemented within existing development frameworks,
including Agenda 2063, AfCFTA, CAADP-Malabo and others. Following define main implementation support entry points:

a) **Domestication and internationalization**: Involving (i) confirming and socialization of national goals and commitments in the pursuit of resilient and inclusive food systems, and (ii) analysis of relevant existing national and sector policies and legislation to situate policy and investment choices to drive execution. Identified gaps and strengths will constitute primary areas for action. In this context, the development of the Second Ten Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 will also be informed by the analysis and implementation considerations for the food systems goals. The formulation of the AU-CAADP Business Plan (2022-2025) will also be informed by the solutions in this common position.

b) **Decision making and implementation support tools and guidelines**: Development and adoption of multi-sectoral systems approaches and decision-making tools and guidelines. Strengthening and aligning supportive data management systems and linkages to homegrown science, technology and innovations will come into focus under this component.

c) **Facilitate and broker technical and investment partnerships** to augment expanded and appropriate implementation capabilities. This includes monitoring and accountability instruments, including on CAADP-Malabo Biennial Review Report and the Agenda 2063 Annual Implementation Report.

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