



## PAFO-COLEAD INNOVATIONS SERIES: Innovations and successes of African farmer-led businesses and SMEs

### SESSION N°25

#### Foresight: Key agrifood changes impacting entrepreneurs

Wednesday 5 November 2025 - 12:00-14 :00 UTC

Online ([Zoom](#))

*English-French-Portuguese interpretation available*

#### 1. Context

Africa's agrifood sector is entering a decisive decade of transformation, driven by demographic growth, technological innovation, environmental pressures, and changing consumer preferences. By 2050, the continent's population will exceed 2.5 billion, with over 60 % of food demand coming from urban consumers<sup>1</sup>. This shift is reshaping value chains, consumption habits, and innovation priorities.

At the same time, climate change is intensifying risks. Yields for major staple crops in Sub-Saharan Africa could decline by 10–20 % by 2050 under current warming trajectories<sup>2</sup>. Extreme weather, soil degradation, and water stress are forcing farmers and SMEs to adopt new technologies and resilient business models.

Food safety has become equally urgent: over 90 million Africans fall ill each year from foodborne diseases<sup>3</sup>. Compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards, traceability systems, and quality regulations is now essential for both public health and trade competitiveness.

In this rapidly changing environment, foresight provides entrepreneurs and policymakers with tools to anticipate disruptions, identify emerging opportunities, and design future-ready strategies for inclusive and sustainable growth.

<sup>1</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, 2023. [Reimagining economic growth in Africa: Turning diversity into opportunity](#).

<sup>2</sup> FAO. 2024. [The State of Food and Agriculture 2024 – Value-driven transformation of agrifood systems](#). Rome, [Food science & nutrition](#), 2025.

<sup>3</sup> FAO 2024, [Food Safety](#).

## 2. Key changes and challenges shaping the future of agrifood

Transformations will unfold on interconnected levels: global, continental, regional, national, and enterprise.

### *Macro - transition to low-carbon, digital, and nutrition-sensitive food systems*

Global agrifood systems are moving toward low-carbon, data-driven, and nutrition-sensitive models. Climate impacts, biodiversity loss, and trade realignments are driving this change. The African Development Bank warns that agricultural GDP could shrink by 15 % by 2030 if adaptation is not accelerated<sup>4</sup>.

Technological innovation is expanding through digitalisation (AI, IoT, remote sensing, blockchain) and biotechnology. Yet adoption gaps persist, only 17 % of African farmers currently use digital tools<sup>5</sup>. East Africa, for instance, leads through mobile-based extension platforms, while many Sahel countries still lack infrastructure.

Food safety and quality standards are increasingly decisive for competitiveness. Countries like Morocco and Kenya are improving export compliance, while others face fragmented inspection systems. The harmonisation of SPS frameworks under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will be crucial to ensure safe regional trade<sup>6</sup>.

### *Meso & Micro - adaptation, policy foresight, and business innovation.*

At national and enterprise levels, demographic and market shifts intersect with institutional gaps:

youth and labour transitions: around 10 – 12 million young Africans enter the labour market each year<sup>7</sup>. Agrifood entrepreneurship remains a major job engine, yet start-ups face limited access to finance, land, and technical support.

Market and trade transitions: urbanisation and changing diets fuel demand for convenience and quality. Imports already exceed USD 75 billion per year, reflecting both opportunity and vulnerability<sup>8</sup>.

Policy and investment uncertainty: many public interventions remain reactive. Weak foresight capacity leads to fragmented policies and missed innovation opportunities.

At enterprise level, agripreneurs must manage climate, market, and sanitary risks while embracing digitalisation and regenerative practices. Forecast capabilities, scenario planning, risk scanning, and trend monitoring, help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) move from reactive to strategic management.

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<sup>4</sup> AfDB, 2025. [African Economic Outlook 2025](#)

<sup>5</sup> GSMA, 2025. [The Mobile Economy Sub-Saharan Africa 2025](#)

<sup>6</sup> AGRA, 2025. [Africa Food Systems Report 2025](#)

<sup>7</sup> IFPRI, 2021. [Agricultural Investments and Hunger in Africa](#)

<sup>8</sup> UNCTAD, [2023 Economic Development in Africa Report 2023](#)

### 3. Emerging opportunities for entrepreneurs

The current transitions, though disruptive, offer fertile ground for innovation and inclusive growth.

*Climate-smart and regenerative agribusiness:* enterprises focusing on soil health, sustainable inputs, carbon farming, and circular resource use are gaining traction. The global carbon market and green finance could generate over US \$50 billion annually for Africa by 2030 if enabling frameworks are strengthened<sup>9</sup>. Southern Africa's carbon-credit pilots illustrate new income streams for farmers.

*Data-driven services and digital platforms:* demand for farm-advisory apps, logistics, and market-intelligence tools is rising. African agritech start-ups raised USD 650 million in 2023, nearly double 2021 levels<sup>10</sup>. Projects such as RIICE Côte d'Ivoire show how satellite data improve yield forecasting and risk management.

*Food safety and quality certification services:* As SPS regulations tighten, opportunities grow for firms providing testing, traceability, certification, hygiene, and packaging solutions. These services are essential for cross-border trade as AfCFTA integration accelerates.

*Regional value chain integration:* the AfCFTA is expected to boost intra-African trade in agrifood by +30 % by 2035, particularly in processed goods<sup>11</sup>. Entrepreneurs who anticipate demand shifts and policy harmonization will position themselves to capture new regional markets.

*Contextual innovation:* opportunities vary across ecosystems, digital extension and irrigation in East Africa, cold-chain and post-harvest solutions in West Africa, and renewable-energy agribusiness in Southern Africa. Forecast helps tailor innovation strategies to these contexts.

In short, forecast enables entrepreneurs not only to adapt but also to shape the future, identifying the “signals” of change early and converting them into competitive advantage.

### 4. The way forward

Building forecast capabilities across Africa's agrifood requires joint action by policymakers, researchers, investors, and entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs can no longer rely solely on short-term market signals; they need to integrate long-term trend analysis, scenario planning, and risk scanning into their business strategy.

Governments and development partners should invest in foresight platforms, data infrastructure, and participatory scenario processes that link local innovation systems with continental initiatives such as the African Union's Agrifood Systems Transformation Agenda (2024–2035). Agricultural research organisations have begun integrating foresight tools to guide technology adoption pathways and policy choices<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> UNDP, 2024. [Carbon Market](#)

<sup>10</sup> SmartAfrica, 2023. [African Agritech Blueprint for Africa](#)

<sup>11</sup> World Bank, 2023. [Making the AfCFTA Work for Women and Youth](#)

<sup>12</sup> Foresight4Food, 2024. [Building foresight capacity for African food systems](#)

For business support organisations and networks, mainstreaming foresight into entrepreneurship programmes can strengthen resilience and help members anticipate systemic shocks from price volatility to supply-chain disruptions.

With forecast, African entrepreneurs can transition from being reactive actors to becoming strategic shapers of tomorrow's food systems leading innovations that are sustainable, inclusive, and competitive.

Key points for discussion:

- How can the signs of change be transformed into drivers of resilience and sustainable growth for African agrifood SMEs?
- Which key trends and disruptions will most shape African agrifood systems by 2035, and how can entrepreneurs anticipate them?
- What partnerships and investments are needed to institutionalise foresight and strengthen innovation ecosystems across Africa's diverse agrifood sectors?
- What can be done concretely at various levels, especially at national level to address the issues in line with agrifood changes?

More information, including the programme, is available on [Agrinnovators.org](https://Agrinnovators.org), the platform that consolidates all information related to the PAFO - COLEAD Innovation Sessions and provides a forum for exchange and networking.

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**Agenda**

- **Moderator:** *Aimable Twagirayezu, Programs Officer PAFO*

**12:00-12:10 Introduction & Opening remarks**

- *Jeremy Knops, General Delegate, COLEAD*
- *Babafemi Oyewole, CEO, PAFO*

**12:10-12:45 Panel: Key Agrifood Changes Impacting Entrepreneurs**

- *Judith Kipchumba, Founder, Spring Agriventure, Kenya*
- *Augustine Appiah-Kubi, Founder Okubis Farms, Ghana*
- *Noël N'Guessan, Co-founder, LONO, Côte d'Ivoire*
- *Laila Achieng, CEO, CNS Nutri Foods, Kenya*

**12:45-13:20 Discussants**

- *Abdulrazak Ibrahim, Cluster Leader, Institutional Capacity & Future Scenarios, FARA*
- *David Adama, Senior Specialist, Continental and regional Engagements, AGRA*

**13:20-13:50 Debate**

**13:50-14:00 Key takeaways and conclusion**



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