African Union

AGRICULTURAL POLICY DIALOGUE AFRICAN UNION

Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture

AGRICULTURAL POLICY DIALOGUE

Supporting accelerated progress towards sustainable and resilient agrifood systems for a healthy and prosperous Africa

ANNUAL REPORT – SYNTHESIS

November 2023
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November 2024

1 BACKGROUND

The Agricultural Policy Dialogue (APD) initiative was launched in November 2023, as a collaboration between the African Union Commission (AUC), through its Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE), and the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL). The overarching objective of the APD is to support AUC ARBE in its efforts to accelerate agrifood systems transformation towards enhanced inclusivity, sustainability, and resilience.

The initiative aligns with key African development frameworks including the AU Agenda 2063, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and the Africa Common Position on Food Systems. The APD initiative provides technical and strategic support to the AUC to advance these agendas, focusing on multisectoral stakeholder engagement, knowledge exchange, and dialogue to foster coherent policy development and implementation.

Key to its approach is strategic support and integration of good practices at national, regional, and continental level. This will include popularization of the newly drafted CAADP Ten-year Strategy & Action Plan (2026- 2035), as well as co-creation of guidelines, and delivery of mechanisms for CAADP implementation towards accelerated agrifood systems transformation. To this end, the APD intends to initially focus on five AU Member States representing the five AU Regional Economic Communities (RECs), to extract lessons and good practices for replication at continental level.

2 PROGRESS AND KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The APD initiative has made significant strides during its first year[1] in operationalizing initial activities and laying a foundation for the next phase of implementation. The accomplishments outlined below highlight a dedication to fostering strategic partnerships, multi-sectoral stakeholder engagement, and development of strategic frameworks essential for achieving the long-term objectives of the APD initiative (Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of planned activities and progress made November 2023 to November 2024.

	Planned activity	Progress	Status
1	Installment of project team and office	• Team Leader, Senior Policy Advisor, Senior Coordinator, Technical Coordinator for Knowledge Management, and Project Officer assumed their duties on secondment to the AUC. • The APD office was installed at AUC headquarters, Old Conference Centre, in March. • Formal inauguration of the APD office took place on 4 November by H.E. Commissioner Josefa Sacko and BMEL Minister H.E. Çem Özdemir.	Completed
2	Study tour for exchange with German stakeholders	• Delegation from APD and AUC ARBE attended the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA), International Green Week (IGW), and the German African Agribusiness Forum (GAAF) in Berlin 22-26 January, to foster strategic partnerships for international collaboration.	Completed

1 November 2023-November 2024 is considered as the project inception period, aimed at enabling initial operationalization and adjustment of strategies, if required to reach its objectives. The APD has funding for three years, with option of extension.

	Planned activity	Progress	Status
3	Review of APD Theory of Change and Results Framework	• Initial review of the TOC and Results Framework was done to guide implementation, planning, and budgeting; Pending review by APD Consortium, ARBE, BMEL, and approval by Project Steering Committee (PSC).	Ongoing
4	Stakeholder mapping and analysis	• Mapping conducted of key multi-sectoral stakeholders relevant to agrifood systems transformation at international and continental level. • Mapping of stakeholders at regional and national level ongoing (pending confirmation of country selection; see below).	Completed Ongoing
5	CAADP 10-year Strategy & Action Plan Development	• Conducted initial analysis of lessons learned from two decades of CAADP implementation in selected countries to inform future support. • Supported the Secretariat with two short-term staff (Admin Officer and Communication Expert). • Participated in technical thematic meetings and workshops related to science-policy interface (including on Soil Health & Fertilizers, Post-Harvest Management, Farmer Managed Seed Systems, and Climate Smart Agriculture) with key stakeholders. • Analysis of critical issues relevant to equitable, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient agrifood systems transformation; and participation in multi-stakeholder consultations (including RECs, youth, and non-state actors) as well as Technical Working Groups (May-July). • Participated in final CAADP 10-year Strategy & Action Plan validation workshops (July and August). • Participated in the CAADP Partnership Platform (October).	Completed

	Planned activity	Progress	Status
6	CAADP – APD Popularization & Implementation Support	• Proposal developed for establishment and operationalization of an AUC ARBE-led advisory body on agrifood systems transformation ('ASTAC') aimed at leveraging expert dialogue for coherent and informed policy development and CAADP implementation; Pending discussion with ARBE senior management. • Proposal developed for initial selection of countries for analysis of lessons learned and good practices to inform implementation strategies for scaled approaches at regional and continental level (38 countries long-listed, 10 short-listed, and 5 recommended for initial selection); Pending approval from H.E. Commissioner. • Proposal developed for co-creation of guidelines for accelerated progress towards resilient agrifood systems transformation ('GRASS'); Pending discussion with ARBE senior management.	Ongoing
7	African Youth in Agribusiness Forum	• AYAF was successfully held on 4 November, engaging 230 participants across 36 African countries and resulting in a draft Call to Action; Draft was reviewed by group moderators, and final Call to Action on *Moving from Policy to Action for African Youth in Agribusiness* developed in December.	Completed
8	Knowledge Management and Communication	• Initial products developed, including APD factsheets, communication and outreach materials in support of the AYAF. • Draft outline for communication strategy developed.	Ongoing

3 CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Upon its initiation in November 2023, the APD initiative experienced several risks and challenges that impacted its ability to progress towards its annual deliverables and ultimate objective. Table 2 summarizes the main challenges as well as proposed strategies to overcome them.

Table 2: Overview of key challenges and mitigation strategies.

	Risk/ Challenge	Description and Impact	Mitigation Strategy
1	Staffing delays	• Initial three months were supported by *ad interim* Team Leader; followed by lengthy onboarding of longer-term TL; Recruitment of Project Officer, Senior Coordinator, and Technical Coordinator - Knowledge Management, was delayed; resulting in overstretched staff.	• Closer engagement with AUC ARBE during recruitment processes. • Utilization of ad hoc consultants for urgent tasks.
2	Delays in budget approvals	• Impact on operational progress and risks for APD reputation.	• Improved planning and proactive follow- up systems.
3	Ambiguous institutional arrangements	• While the APD initiative works under direct authority of the Commissioner, formal working relations and communication lines with senior staff were not initially established, hampering effective operationality.	• Organogram drafted to clarify APD institutional arrangements; Agreement among ARBE senior management required to formalise reporting and communication processes. • APD to be more active in providing regular progress updates in writing, and engaging with ARBE team, including in developing and discussing concepts, including through structured, regular meetings for enhanced coordination.

4 KEY LEARNINGS

The initial year of the APD initiative has been an invaluable learning experience, providing key insights into some of the underlying operational dynamics within the African Union Commission, RECs, and Member States, complexities of coordinating multi-stakeholder processes, as well as the opportunities provided by the newly drafted the CAADP Ten-year Strategy and Action Plan (2026-2035).

The most significant takeaways from this period, which will guide future efforts and APD strategies in moving forward are as follows:

- ***Fostering of Strategic Partnerships:*** As the agrifood systems landscape is characterized by multilayered complexities as well as diverse political and profit-driven interests, it is critical to promote and advance balanced partnerships.
    - Partnerships should be based on common goals towards equity, inclusiveness, sustainability, and resilience.

- ***Evidence-Based Guidance:*** Processes underlying APD strategies and advice in support of CAADP implementation need to be grounded in sound evidence.
    - Focus should be on strengthening opportunities to provide AUC support at the science-policy interface, through partnerships, synergies, and technical consultancies.

- ***Agility in Operations:*** Considering the ever-changing dynamics inherent to multi-stakeholder processes, the ability to remain flexible in planning and execution is critical to successful operations.
    - Underlying this ability is the necessity of consistent engagement with all relevant actors to effectively anticipate and communicate required changes.

5 NEXT STEPS

Below table provides a brief overview of activities planned for 2025. Note that the detailed annual work planning process for 2025 and 2026 is ongoing, with the intention to submit a draft by mid-January prior to convening of the APD Steering Committee for its decision-making.

Table 3: Overview of planned activities in 2025.

	Issue	Activity	When
1	APD Governance & Reporting	• Finalization of draft Inception Report; dissemination of draft for review and approval by APD Consortium, ARBE and BMEL. • Steering Committee meeting. • Monthly progress reporting to all above mentioned partners.	Dec 2024 Jan 2025 Jan 2025
2	Stakeholder mapping and analysis	• Continued mapping of key multi-sectoral stakeholders relevant to agrifood systems transformation at international, continental, regional, and national level ongoing (the latter pending confirmation of country selection).	2025-2026
3	Strategic Partnerships	• Engagement with key strategic partners for synergies and maximised impact. • Participation in relevant meetings and fora (including Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, Berlin 15-18 Jan. 2025) aimed at fostering partnerships.	2025-2026
4	CAADP 10-year Strategy & Action Plan Development	• Participation in Extraordinary CAADP Summit, Kampala. • Convening of side-event on *Catalysing Action through Policy Dialogue: Advancing the CAADP 2026-2035 Vision for Resilient Agrifood Systems*.	9-10 Jan 2025

	Issue	Activity	When
5	CAADP - APD Popularization & Implementation Support	• Share proposal for initial selection of countries for analysis of lessons learned and good practices to inform implementation strategies for scaled approaches at regional and continental level with HE Commissioner for review and discussion/ endorsement. • Disseminate draft concept for establishment and operationalization of an AUC ARBE-led advisory body on agrifood systems transformation ('*ASTAC*') to ARBE senior management for review and discussion. o Operationalisation of advisory body; convening its members for initial workshop. • Disseminate draft concept for co-creation of guidelines for accelerated progress towards resilient agrifood systems transformation ('*GRASS*') to ARBE senior management for discussion and endorsement. o Initiate first national-level study in one of the selected countries as test case.	Dec 2024 / 1st Q 2025 Dec 2024 2nd Q 2025 Dec 2024 1st Q 2025
6	African Youth in Agribusiness Forum	• Convene side event to launch the final Call to Action on *Moving from Policy to Action for African Youth in Agribusiness* during Extraordinary CAADP Summit.	9-10 Jan 2025
7	Knowledge Management and Communication	• Launch of targeted communication and stakeholder engagement strategy. • Development and launch of platform to foster an active community of practice. • Development and dissemination of strategic knowledge products, including policy briefs and case studies in line with APD and CAADP objectives.	1st Q 2025 2nd Q 2025 2025-2026
8	Resource Mobilisation	• Roll out of a strategy to mobilise additional resources for CAADP - APD popularization and implementation support	

6 PHOTOS & MEDIA

Links to media depository: AYAF 2024 Short Video | AYAF 2024 Photos

Young agripreneurs arriving at the African Union Commission

H.E. Commissioner Josefa Sacko during the AYAF Opening

Dr. Janet Edeme during the AYAF closing ceremony

African Youth in Agribusiness Forum participants, 4 November 2024

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