Federal Ministry
of Food
and Agriculture

# Policy for our cooperation with African countries and regions

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# CONTENTS

Foreword by the Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture **4**

Foreword by the Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment – African Union Commission **5**

Summary **6**

*I. A new policy approach for our cooperation with African countries and regions* **8**

*II. Our goal: Working together to realise the human right to adequate food* **13**

*III. Action area 1: Rethinking agriculture and food systems* **17**

Objective 1: Agroecology as a basis for structuring sustainable and innovative agriculture and food systems **17**

Objective 2: Promoting organic farming as an option **26**

Objective 3: Protecting forests and trees through cultivation and promoting agroforestry systems **29**

*IV. Action area 2: Building partnerships, sharing knowledge and working together to promote innovation and strengthen it through trade* **32**

Objective 1: Building partnerships and sharing knowledge – with the focus on women and youth **32**

Objective 2: Leveraging opportunities in agriculture – innovation as a key to attractive agriculture **37**

Objective 3: Promoting transparent, rules-based trade, enhancing trade sustainability and resilience and reducing one-sided dependencies **40**

*V. Our current projects* **45**

*Appendices* **46**

*Our experts: Agencies in BMEL's remit* **46**

*List of abbreviations* **50**

*Germany is and will remain a trusted and reliable partner at the side of African countries and regions.*

# Dear Readers,

The African continent is full of opportunities – notably in the agricultural sector, many areas of which are currently being strategically rethought. At the same time, the African countries are facing major challenges. Conflicts and the climate crisis are destroying hopes in many places, and food insecurity and hunger have been affecting the everyday lives of millions of people throughout the world for many years.

These opportunities and challenges concern us all. We need to take joint action to master these challenges and we want to jointly benefit from opportunities – both in a spirit of partnership and respect. This is where our new "Policy for our cooperation with African countries and regions" comes into play: We would like to develop solutions together with our African partners in order to promote sustainable agriculture, ensure healthy and adequate food for everyone and create good long-term prospects.

Climate action, agricultural policies and food policies are inextricably linked. On the African continent and on a global scale, strong, self-determined and resilient agricultural and food sectors form the cornerstone of social cohesion and political stability. They foster peace, security and development. A strong farming sector creates good prospects and strengthens people's self-determination.

This is why we give centre stage to empowerment: Sharing knowledge, strengthening each other and shaping the future together – for me, this is what agricultural diplomacy is all about: fostering cooperation as partners in order to find the best solutions together.

Our Policy reflects this attitude. It was developed in exchange with the African Union and with representatives from the scientific community, industry and civil society in Germany and in the African countries. We considered it particularly important to have the opinions of young people from a generation that still has the future ahead of them. Their voices therefore carry particular weight.

Our shared goal is clear: We want to create an agricultural sector that is productive, sustainable and adapted to specific local conditions –and that helps to realise the right to food for everyone. This will enable us to not only ensure food security, but to also promote economic development, stability and peace around the globe.

I wish to thank everyone whose passion and commitment have made this Policy possible. It is not only the outcome of a fruitful exchange; it is also the starting signal for successfully taking the next steps. Germany is and will remain a trusted and reliable partner at the side of African countries and regions.

Let us bring this Policy to life and create a better future together!

Yours,

**Cem Özdemir,**
**Member of the German Bundestag**
*Federal Minister*
*of Food and Agriculture*

*The challenges and opportunities before us are profound. The nations of the world need each other, and we must be united in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.*

# Dear Readers,

Our planet is facing same of the most severe and unprecedented of climate change effects in recording history. Today, overlapping crises-extreme weather events, economic challenges, population growth, rapid urbanisation, and humanitarian emergencies persistently batter populations, especially the extremely poor and vulnerable. Africa as the least developed of the seven continents of the planet, is facing all these dilemmas simultaneously. If these alarming trends persist, they could jeopardise the overarching vision outlined in Agenda 2063.

It is on these grounds that I am encouraged by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) of Germany's commitment to strengthening its cooperation with African through a robust policy focusing on two key areas: 1. agriculture and food systems; and 2. partnerships and knowledge sharing and strengthening innovation through trade. This policy has come at no better time, as it is well-timed with our CAADP Strategy and Action Plan 2026-2035, which is endorsed by the African Union Heads of State and Government on 11th January 2025. This Strategy and Action Plan is also focused on agri-food systems transformation and resilience strengthening; thus, there are ample grounds for synergies and collaboration.

The BMEL Policy's emphasis on sustainable production, value addition and trade promotion, namely, promotion of agroecology, organic farming and protecting forests and trees that reflects the core principles of the African Union policy frameworks. It aligns closely with our shared objective of making the agri-food systems more responsive to nature, resources efficient, guaranteeing livelihood resilience, and striking a balance between environmental, social and economic sustainability. We can only be responsible policy makers and guardians if we work to promote and safeguard biodiversity and soil organic and carbon management across the planet and make it safer, nature-friendlier and enjoyable for the next generations. Agriculture must be the multifaceted guarantor of sustainable development and poorer countries should be protected rather than exploited to feed sections of population.

I am equally pleased that the BMEL Policy underlines partnerships and knowledge sharing with focus on innovation promotion with trade at the centre. Africa with its smallholder-driven, human right to food-focussed development, stands to benefit tremendously from the policy. The focus on women and youth for building of partnerships and sharing knowledge, is laudable, considering the continent's demographic dividend within the agri-food sector. African Governments are, therefore, encouraged to embrace the Policy and the cooperation being offered by BMEL. These synergies and collaboration will be particularly instrumental in the planning and development of national and sub-national investment plans aligned with the CAADP Strategy and Action Plan 2026-2035. Together, we can forge resilient partnership that advance the transformation of Africa's agri-food systems and promote sustainable development across the Continent.

**Ambassador Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko**
*Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment*
*African Union Commission*

# Summary

We, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), present the new **BMEL policy for our cooperation with African countries and regions.** It describes how we have restructured our cooperation activities with countries of the African continent in recent years, sets out our priorities, goals and policy instruments in this context and details the expertise we are able to offer as a partner to African countries, including in the context of geopolitical change.

The contribution made by the BMEL's subordinate authorities and departmental research institutions is central in this connection. Our shared capabilities and expertise are a unique feature of our international cooperation activities.

Our paramount goal is to realise the right to adequate food. Central elements of this for us include supporting a human rights-based approach and giving due account to the various dimensions involved. The key to jointly realising the right to adequate food is good governance.

We believe that achieving this goal will require a transformation of the agriculture and food systems. In our opinion, the principles of agroecology are the right approach here.

We consider it important to strengthen local food systems and hence regional food self-sufficiency and to enhance nutritional quality and diversity – also as a basis for ensuring culturally appropriate and sustainable nutrition.

Small farmers play a special role. They need to be enabled and empowered to make independent decisions about their farming methods, make use of knowledge on sustainable soil fertility, have access to seed and neutral advice and be integrated into the economy.

We promote organic farming methods as an option.

Supporting agroforestry systems is a key objective that is also linked to the goal of reducing the exploitation pressure on natural forests.

All of our activities centre on building long-term partnerships and networks. We do this by sharing and expanding knowledge, supporting the development of civil society, reinforcing structures and improving the level of organisation among stakeholders.

We place a focus here on young people and women. The aim is to further activate them, help them to improve their degree of organisation and bring them into decision-making bodies and hence positions of responsibility.

As well as considering regional, national and supraregional structures, we also consider the local level in order to enable networking where government structures are instable or simply absent or where governments themselves undermine security and the rule of law.

Leveraging the potential of agriculture requires investment, above all from private-sector players, in order to promote innovation and entrepreneurship and enable more regional value creation. This is the only way to make agriculture attractive, especially given the immense potential of a young and growing population.

We therefore seek to work with the private sector and engage in dialogue with African countries to promote an enabling environment. We involve companies and sectoral associations in our activities.

A key goal is the mechanisation of agriculture, guided by local conditions. Fundamentally, any improvement can help enhance food security, make working in agriculture more attractive and free up resources for more processing stages to be done locally.

We believe that transparent, rules-based trade that benefits all parties and takes into account the specific needs of our neighbouring continent is of greatest importance. It can make up for food shortages, guarantee year-round food diversity to ensure balanced diets and thus help implement the right to food.

We aim to support sustainable trade relations with our neighbouring continent. In this context, we work to ensure that food security and agricultural development issues are taken into account in trade liberalisation and that production for export does not come at the expense of smallholder structures and local food security.

# I. A new policy for our cooperation with African countries and regions

**The climate crisis, biodiversity loss, wars, conflicts and changing geopolitical conditions are having a massive impact on our agriculture and food systems. We are therefore working together to place our international cooperation, which we have already adapted and restructured in many areas, on a new footing.**

To this end, we – the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) – are presenting this new **BMEL policy for our cooperation with African countries and regions,** which has been developed in a comprehensive consultation process.

By 'we', we also mean **our subordinate authorities and departmental research institutions,** which are both **knowledge holders and actors** on the ground.

Within the Federal Government, we see this policy as contributing in the agriculture and food sector to the **implementation of the Federal Government Africa Policy Guidelines and the National Security Strategy.** It also complements the work of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), which is presented as part of the BMZ's Africa Strategy, "Shaping the Future with Africa".

At European level, we are guided by the objectives of the EU Task Force Rural Africa. Where relevant for cooperation with partners, guidelines and directives arising from the single EU internal market in the areas of agriculture and agricultural policy also apply.

Other important points of reference for this policy are our **shared international commitments** and processes, which are primarily enshrined in the **Agenda 2030** sustainability goals, the **Paris climate targets** and the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.**

To ensure compatibility with our approach, we also link this policy into contemporary **global debates** on the fundamental structuring of **cooperation with the Global South informed by fair play, transparency and inclusiveness.**

Also of key importance are the **goals set by African actors** – notably in the **Agenda 2063** for the political, economic and social transformation for "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa", drawn up by the African Union and its member states.

**The African Union is a strategic partner for us,** with whom – through a joint project, our Agricultural Policy Dialogue – we have been in even closer exchange since early 2024 regarding both our own policy and the African Union's future agricultural strategy, the Kampala Declaration.

It is on this basis that we formulate our principles and objectives for exchange and cooperation with African countries and regions, to which we offer our services as a steadfast partner, including in the context of geopolitical change. These objectives and principles are tied to our **nationally formulated policy goals** for sustainable and resilient agriculture and food systems and to the belief that innovative and sustainable agriculture and food systems can make a key contribution in overcoming hunger by 2030 and thus in realising the human right to adequate food.

By contributing our agriculture and nutrition expertise to our bilateral and multilateral cooperation activities, we aim to accelerate the **action** necessary to these ends.

## Our guiding principles

**The guiding principles of our international cooperation activities** are human rights-based approaches to combating hunger and poverty, the principles of agroecology, feminist foreign and development policies, the One Health approach, open, transparent and rules-based trade and the shift towards a more bio-based and circular economy. With regard to distribution pathways, we work according to the principle of **food over feed, feedstock or fuel – that is, of prioritising the production of crops for direct human consumption** – and that developing agriculture with improved local income opportunities is critical to sustainable food security.

## Our expertise

The specialist expertise of the BMEL and our subordinate authorities and departmental research institutions is our unique selling proposition (USP) – it shapes our international cooperation. In **transforming the agriculture and food systems** to make them more sustainable, the following areas are of particular importance in our cooperation with African partners:

In the design of **agricultural and food policy,** we can pass on many aspects of our own agricultural development – from interaction between federal structures, policy design at EU level, dialogue with civil society stakeholders and representatives of the entire agricultural sector, to cooperation with the private sector and models of agricultural self-organisation in cooperatives and machinery rings.

With regard to **food security,** we need safe and **high-quality food and feed.** With our specialist expertise, we can contribute along the entire value chain to ensuring that risks are assessed, solutions are jointly developed, and requirements and structures are adapted based on new knowledge and findings.

This also means that as part of our **standard-setting** activities, we create the conditions for **transparent and rules-based trade.**

**Healthy livestock** is the prerequisite for the production of safe food and the prevention of zoonoses. In line with the **One Health approach,** we strengthen existing capacities and make an important contribution at both national and international level through knowledge transfer and interdisciplinary cooperation between the stakeholders involved in the areas of **feed safety, animal disease control, animal health and animal welfare.**

**Plant protection and plant health** also play a role in food security as pest infestation and plant diseases can reduce yields and even destroy entire harvests, threatening livelihoods as a result. In matters of food security, our expertise in this field is key, with special consideration being given to human health and local environment protection in the application of plant protection products.

We are committed to preserving **genetic diversity** in **plant and animal breeding and in forestry,** thereby strengthening the adaptability and resilience of the agriculture system and forests. In doing so, we also contribute to the preservation of rural cultural values.

As the ministry responsible for forestry issues and international forestry policy, we are committed to achieving **sustainable, multifunctional forest management** with the aim of promoting forests and their diverse functions and productive capacity, and preserving them for future generations. With our expertise, we want to promote coherence and synergies between the numerous international processes related to forestry activities. These include the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Agenda 2030 with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and international measures to combat deforestation and illegal logging. The decision to end deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 is the result of the first global stocktake and is necessary to be able to implement the 1.5 °C target set out in the Paris Agreement.

**Fish stocks and fishing** are dependent on healthy marine ecosystems. The future of the fishing industry can only be reliably secured if fishing is operated sustainably, meaning at one with nature and with future generations in mind. This also calls for **sustainable aquaculture** to produce safe aquatic foods, and efficient, ecosystem-based management. Using our expertise, we work at national, EU and international level to achieve environmentally, socially and economically sustainable fishing and aquaculture.

# Our instruments

In our **Bilateral Cooperation Programme (BCP), we fund projects** that, in addition to providing advisory expertise concerning legal frameworks and institution building, also serve as an innovation and transformation platform in line with the 17 SDGs. Political, technical and administrative dialogue formats and collaborations form the basis for sustainable and inclusive transformation of the agriculture, forestry and food systems.

As the responsible Federal Government ministry, we support FAO projects designed to alleviate hunger and malnutrition through a **Bilateral Trust Fund (BTF).** The main focus here is on measures to strengthen human rights-based approaches for participative, just and climate-friendly agriculture, and the development of solutions to reduce or prevent food losses and food waste.

With our **funding programme on International Research Cooperation for Global Food Security,** we aim to make a long-term contribution to establishing international partnerships for participative research in order to develop solutions to the diverse challenges involved in achieving food security and transformation of the agriculture and food systems, especially in countries and regions severely affected by hunger and malnutrition, including sub-Saharan Africa.

Through our **innovation and transformation dialogue,** we promote sustainable formats and innovations in a bilateral context that provide new impetus and help to achieve change in the agriculture and food sectors.

As the responsible Federal Government ministry, we use our budgetary funding allocation for **cooperation with international organisations on sustainable forest management** to promote pilot projects involving global stakeholders such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) to achieve our global objectives, switch forest cultivation to sustainable forest management and combat ongoing deforestation and forest degradation. We place a focus here on initial and further training.

Using our **funding guideline for international sustainable forest management (FinW),** synergies with the research agenda for the international research landscape can also be exploited.

In our bilateral administration partnerships, we cooperate on relevant issues with authorities in partner countries.

Through the **involvement of our subordinate authorities and departmental research institutions,** the necessary transformation processes are supported by scientific research at both basic and applied research levels. This includes international reference laboratory activities as well as regionally-focused research projects that in many cases see us breaking new ground.

Through **multilateral and bilateral research cooperation, twinning projects, sharing of expertise and experience and doctoral student programmes** along the value chain, the departmental research institutions contribute to strengthening cooperation in the research landscape, intensifying inter-agency exchange and engaging in joint crisis management (such as on animal disease), thus accelerating the transfer of knowledge and innovation.

# Our mandate

Our expertise along the entire value chain **from farm to fork** and our policy instruments provide the basis for viable and successful cooperation. This is demonstrated by our many years of cooperation with partners on the African continent. We aim to intensify these efforts because we need strong partners on the African continent in order to surmount the global challenges in the agricultural and food sector. We believe that, together, we can develop solutions to help make our agriculture and food systems more sustainable and future-proof, and to realise the human right to adequate food.

To achieve this aim, we have identified **two key areas** where we have specific strengths and where we wish to intensify cooperation with our African partners.

**First,** we would like to intensify cooperation towards strong, sustainable and innovative agriculture and food systems based on agroecological principles, such as those defined in 2019 by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE).

**Second,** we wish to strengthen our cooperation at the level of civil society, administrations and institutions in order:

- → To build long-term partnerships, reinforce structures and intensify knowledge exchange;
- → To promote and support innovation;
- → To create the conditions for greater representation of African players in regional and international agricultural trade.

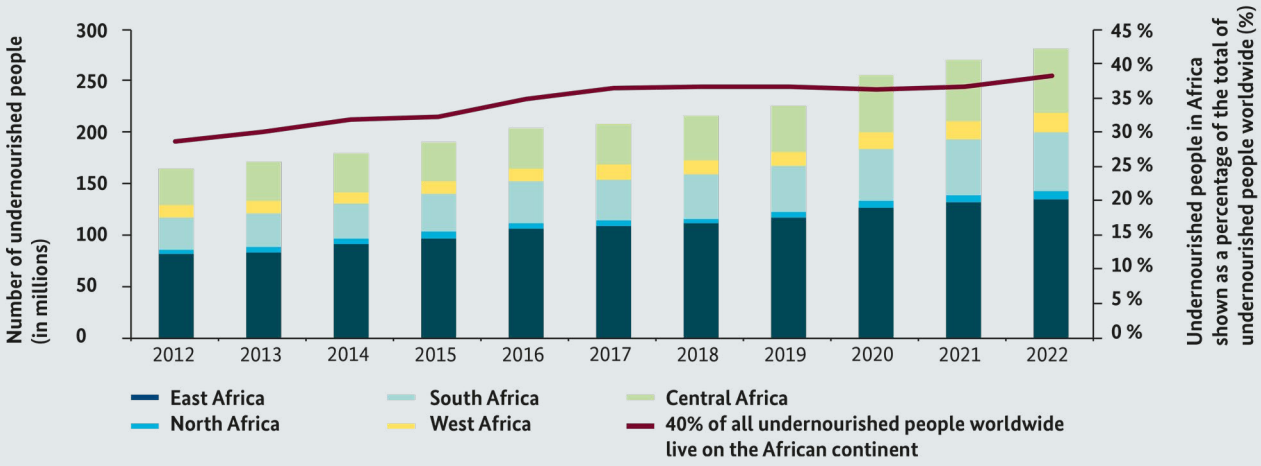
We are presenting this policy equally for the German and African specialist community and all interested parties. By means of this policy, we focus our resources, offer our services, seek exchange and aim for stable partnerships, ideally with a long-term perspective.

In the case of issues involving **goal conflicts,** competing approaches or even diametrically opposed ideas, rather than leaving a matter unmentioned, we present the current state of debate in a ‘spotlight’ box. This policy consequently also contributes to the ongoing search for viable and sustainable solutions.

# II. Our goal: Working together to realise the human right to adequate food

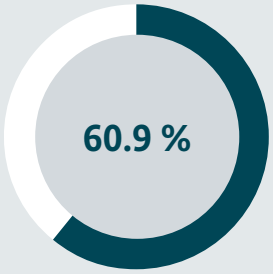
## NUTRITION SITUATION ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT:

### NUMBER OF UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE LIVING ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT: DEVELOPMENT 2012–2022[1]

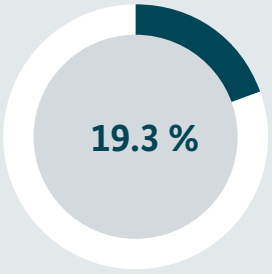


Estimated development of the number of people suffering from food insecurity per year since 2019 (in millions)[2]

A total of **74,000,000** people in **3** years

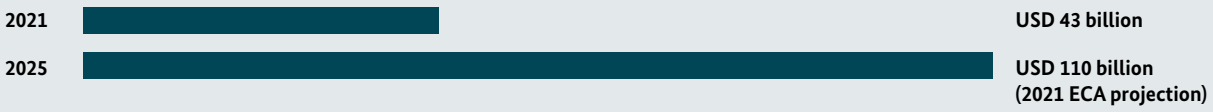



Population suffering from moderate or severe food insecurity in 2022 in per cent[3]




Population suffering from undernutrition in 2000-2022 in per cent[3]

### WHAT AFRICA'S FOOD IMPORTS COST PER YEAR[4]




1 Source: FAO, AU, WFP, UN-ECA (2023)
2 Source: FAO, AU, WFP, UN-ECA (2023)
3 Source: FAOSTAT-Daten (2023)
4 Source: ECA (2021)

In Agenda 2030, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, the global community resolved under **SDG 2 "Zero Hunger"** to end hunger, to achieve food security and improved nutrition and to promote sustainable agriculture. A key step towards global food security was taken in 2004 with the adoption by the FAO of the **Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.**

Two decades later, that goal has still not been achieved. Africa is the continent with the largest proportion of starving people among its population. It is therefore significant that the National Security Strategy adopted by the Federal Government has made the implementation of the human right to adequate food a **guiding principle for the Federal Government's international activities for food security.**

The **FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food** provide a framework for our international cooperation activities. We also tie in our activities with the Malabo Declaration of 2014, in which the member states of the AU committed among other things to end hunger in Africa by 2025. Numerous African countries, including Malawi, Niger, South Africa and Zimbabwe, have also enshrined the right to food in their constitutions.

In addition, we are guided by other policy recommendations developed by the CFS that relate to the human right to food, including the **Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests** (VGGT, 2012), the **Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems** (RAI Principles, 2014), the **Policy Recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems** (PR YEEAFS, 2022), the **Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication** (the SSF Guidelines, 2015), the **Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries** (CCRF, 1995) and the **Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls** (VG GEWGE, 2023).

In line with these recommendations, and with the human rights approach of the Federal Government's development policy, we focus our bilateral and multilateral activities and measures on strengthening the human rights-based approach and taking due account of the various different dimensions of the right to food. A key consideration here is the indivisibility and universality of human rights, as the human rights-based approach also promotes other rights that are closely linked to the right to food, such as the individual right to live in dignity and freedom, the right to education, the right to health, the right to water and the right to fair participation.

These rights are not realised, recognized or reliably implemented everywhere, especially for marginalised groups. The active inclusion of marginalised groups such as women, girls, young people, Indigenous groups and local communities is therefore of special importance. This applies particularly with regard to secure and equal access to resources such as land and water, which is essential to realising the right to food. Women, Indigenous groups, local communities and nomadic peoples in particular frequently lack access to rights, resources and representation.

**Explainer:**

## Access to land

Access to land and insecure or disputed land titles are major problems in many African countries. For women especially, insufficient or insecure access to land is a key factor placing them at a disadvantage in agriculture and food systems. Insecure land access can lead to water as well as land disputes, and can also make it hard for farmers to access government subsidies or private capital. It limits farmers' borrowing or support options, affecting their ability to invest in their enterprise and improve their farming practices. Insecure access to land, property and knowledge makes it difficult to practice sustainable land management, which is generally geared to the long term and therefore requires legally secured relationships on tenure and use.

In addition, new cultivation methods come into conflict with traditional land use forms such as nomadic livestock herding, which in some cases lack legal protection. There is also increasing pressure on land from climate change, soil degradation, conflict, displacement and investors seeking to use land for non-agricultural purposes. The CFS **Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests** (VGGT) can provide guidance here.

Good governance, understood as the responsible use of political power and public resources, together with the participation of the population in all phases of the political process, is therefore an **important facet of our cooperation activities** and a **key prerequisite** for realising the right to food.

The right to food is also the cornerstone of our annual **Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA)** and our **Policies against Hunger** conference series. The realisation of the right to food is also the guiding principle of our support and involvement in the relevant international organisations, forums and programmes, including **the FAO, the CFS, the G7, the G20, the Rio Conventions (the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).**

The CFS is of particular importance to us. As a central intergovernmental UN platform, its work on developing recommendations for the realisation of the right to food involves not only government actors, but also stakeholders from academia, civil society and the private sector and representatives of Indigenous groups. The **implementation of CFS policy recommendations and guidelines** is therefore of great relevance to us, as is the **uptake process** initiated by Germany to improve the implementation of the CFS recommendations in CFS members. That is why we are supporting the CFS with a project under our BTF programme with the aim of implementing human rights-based approaches worldwide. We are also involved in the **United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS),** launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2021, together with its follow-up processes, in which CFS should also play a greater role. This sees us engage together with the BMZ in a range of targeted Coalitions of Action in the areas of aquatic food, agroecology, school meals and nutrition, and combating hunger.

**Explainer:**

## Impacts of the climate crisis on food security on the African continent

Many African countries face multiple challenges in implementing the right to food. While population growth requires increased food production and better access to varied diets, impacts of the climate crisis are hindering progress in agricultural development. The climate crisis is leading to progressive degradation and destruction of soils and other natural resources, which also constrains production. Parts of the African continent are being hit disproportionately hard by the climate crisis, despite the fact that African countries are responsible for less than four percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Eight of the ten countries worldwide expected to be hardest hit by the climate crisis are in Africa (Chad, Eritrea, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Niger and Guinea-Bissau).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has outlined a range of scenarios for future warming, according to which temperatures in Africa will rise faster than the global average.

Some subregions will be subject to prolonged periods of drought and flooding. In East Africa, more than 50 percent of the land area will be affected by drought by the end of the century. Crops that are essential for nutrition on the African continent will not be able to withstand the rising temperatures. Irrigated land accounts for only six percent of the total production area in Africa; in the populous Sub-Saharan Africa, only around 3.5 percent of land is adequately irrigated.

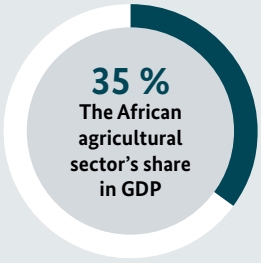
In many places, the impacts of climate change are currently compounded by unsustainable agricultural practices. Productivity is already stagnating or falling. The only way to increase productivity right now is to expand the area under cultivation. In addition, population growth is currently leading to a decline in per capita food production, as rising demand is outstripping supply.

# III. Action area 1: Rethinking agriculture and food systems

## Objective 1: Agroecology as a basis for structuring sustainable and innovative agriculture and food systems

### THE ROLE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT:

#### THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR'S SHARE IN GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)[5]




This proportion secures the livelihood of **50 %** of the continent's population

North of the Sahara

South of the Sahara

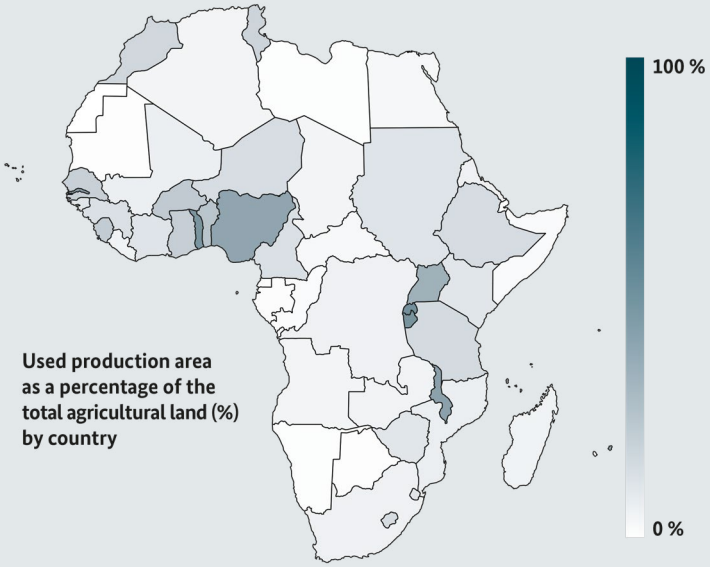
In Sub-Saharan Africa, the agricultural sector generates **17 %** of the GDP

#### HOW AGRICULTURAL LAND IS USED[6]

**Total area of Africa**

**1,080,000,000 ha**
Agricultural land in 2021

However, only 252,000,000 ha of it are being used for agricultural production




Used production area as a percentage of the total agricultural land (%) by country

5 Source: The Conservation (2023), based on World Bank data (2023)
6 Source: World Bank and FAO data (2023)

In light of the challenges outlined above, we believe that the principles of agroecology provide an innovative approach to finding viable long-term solutions that help increase productivity in line with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the right to adequate food. Agroecology stands for sustainable and locally adapted solutions to the problems of food security, combating poverty and social inequalities, climate change adaptation and mitigation, human and animal health, and the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources.

**Explainer:**

## Agroecology

In a multistakeholder process between 2015 and 2019, the FAO defined a total of 10 key elements of agroecology. Among these are diversity, efficiency, resilience, and culture and food traditions. For the FAO, an agroecological approach forms a key building block in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Against this backdrop, the FAO defined agroecology as follows: "Agroecology is an integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of food and agricultural systems. It seeks to optimize the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment while taking into consideration the social aspects that need to be addressed for a sustainable and fair food system. Agroecology is not a new invention. It can be identified in scientific literature since the 1920s, and has found expression in family farmers' practices, in grassroots social movements for sustainability and the public policies of various countries around the world. More recently, agroecology has entered the discourse of international and UN institutions." In 2019, the CFS High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) used the 10 elements to define the following 13 global principles of agroecology:

1. Recycling
2. Input reduction
3. Soil health
4. Animal and human health
5. Biodiversity
6. Synergy
7. Economic diversification
8. Co-creation of knowledge
9. Social values and diets
10. Fairness
11. Connectivity
12. Participation
13. Land and natural resource governance

We are currently seeing African countries increasingly aligning sector policies to the agroecology framework. Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda are among the countries that have prepared or adopted national strategies for agroecological transformation or sector development. This provides us with an opportunity to learn from each other and work together to develop innovative forms of agriculture that build on local knowledge and existing cultivation methods, already use little or no mineral fertiliser or chemical pesticides or antimicrobial substances and in many places integrate crop growing, horticulture, livestock farming, aquaculture and agroforestry along circular economy lines.

Accordingly, we are encouraging our African partners to jointly follow this avenue.

We take the 13 principles of agroecology compiled by HLPE as our guide in this regard. They must be brought in line with people's local needs in terms of food and income security. While the principles do not rule out the use of mineral fertilisers, any need for additional nutrients is to be met first by preventive means (such as cultivating nitrogen-fixing crops), recycling and organic fertilisers (see Spotlight).

**Spotlight:**

## Use of mineral fertilisers

**Fertilisers are essential for agricultural production.** Our fundamental aim is to **make agriculture more sustainable in general,** which means, among other things, becoming less dependent on synthetic fertilisers and making more efficient and resource-conserving use of fertilisers as a whole. A long-term goal is to base fertiliser supply on a **sustainable, circular system.** Countries in the Global South therefore need to be supported in reducing import-dependent fertiliser requirements and related dependencies, and in the sustainable production of fertilisers.

In virtually all countries south of the Sahara, mineral fertiliser use is well below the global average. The OECD estimates that farmers in sub-Saharan Africa use an average of 9 kg of fertiliser per hectare of arable land, compared with 100 kg per hectare in South Asia and 73 kg in Latin America. For Germany, the joint BMUV and BMEL nitrate report (2024) indicates nitrogen inputs of 66 kg per hectare of farmland in 2022. The figure for all nutrients is estimated at around 90 kg per hectare.

The difference is due to the cost and availability of purchased fertiliser. Especially in disadvantaged regions and on small farms in African countries, fertiliser use is low to non-existent. The majority of agricultural land there is under-fertilised, leading to nutrient 'mining' where harvesting takes more nutrients from the land than the amount of fertiliser applied puts back. This results in falling soil fertility and is a major problem in terms of food security.

Soil fertility critically depends on humus in the soil, which notably stores nutrients and has a positive impact on soil water retention capacity. Conserving soil biodiversity is a key factor in maintaining soil fertility. Important factors in maintaining and building humus in the soil include balanced crop rotation, cultivating catch crops, working in harvest residues and using organic fertilisation. In the BMEL's opinion, the use of organic fertiliser where available generally represents a good alternative to synthetic fertilisers and an important building block towards resilient and regenerative agricultural systems.

The **African Union** advocates the **increased** application of organic and mineral fertilisers on the African continent as part of integrated soil fertility management (IFSM). Meanwhile, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) aims to establish an intergovernmental coordination mechanism for monitoring in relation to the objectives of UNEA Resolutions 4/14 and 5/2 on nitrogen management. Measures are planned to enable stakeholders to practise the sustainable use of nitrogen fertilisers.

We believe it is important to collaborate with our partners in African countries to strengthen **local agriculture and food systems** and hence **regional, sustainable food self-sufficiency** and – also as a basis for culturally appropriate and sustainable nutrition – to increase food quality and diversity. This can be done, for example, by further increasing and systematising the crop diversification that in many places is already part of traditional practice, and by the cultivation of legumes. As well as benefiting nutrition and local markets, this also empowers women, as it is often they who grow traditional and local crops. A further concept in this context is that of **food sovereignty,** though as yet there is no standard definition (see Spotlight).

**Spotlight:**

## Food sovereignty

There is no standard definition of the term food sovereignty. It was coined at the 1996 World Food Conference by La Via Campesina, primarily to champion the interests of small farmers and the countries of the Global South in an increasingly globalised world. Most definitions have in common that they prioritise small-scale and (agro-)ecological production methods over industrial production and local supply over global free trade. This is also associated with the call to provide everyone with a self-determined healthy diet in keeping with their cultural context.

In January 2023, the AU published the **Dakar Declaration on Food Sovereignty and Resilience (Dakar 2),** placing the term more in the context of the goal of generally increasing production in order to make Africa less dependent on imports. The Declaration is therefore also to be regarded as a response to price increases and supply shortages resulting from the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which from an African point of view showed how important it is for African countries to become less import-dependent. The AU emphasises that the African continent can produce enough food to feed itself and contribute to global nutrition. Echoing the African Development Bank, the AU points out that achieving and sustaining food sovereignty requires delivering agricultural technology to farmers at scale, raising food production and increasing investments in food and agricultural systems.

**Spotlight:**

## The importance of maize, wheat and diversity in the field and on the plate

In the debate on how to improve food security, particularly in African countries, it is often said that too much emphasis is placed on wheat.

Wheat is fundamentally of immense importance to the world's food supply and globally the most widely cultivated crop, with some 220 million hectares under cultivation. For this reason, we support the Wheat Initiative. This G20 initiative launched in 2011 aims to strengthen wheat breeding research and practice by better combining and networking international research activities. The aim is to improve the productivity, quality and sustainable production of wheat worldwide. Wheat varieties and agronomic practices are to be adapted, among other things, to increasingly hotter and drier production conditions.

In Africa, where wheat is not preferable to other crops in many locations, wheat cultivation is subordinate to other cereals, with an area of 10 million hectares under cultivation. The most widely cultivated cereals on the African continent are maize at around 42 million hectares, followed by sorghum (30 million), millet (19 million) and rice (16 million).

With a view to food security, agroecology places the emphasis on traditional species and varieties and a culturally adapted diet. The dominance of maize, rice and wheat has also created dependencies that can quickly lead to food crises or poorly balanced diets. In our international project partnerships, we therefore focus on strengthening climate-resilient self-sufficiency, primarily by means of crops that are better adapted to local conditions and crop diversification.

At the same time, we promote the conservation and sustainable utilisation of **genetic resources,** access to genetic resources for research on the basis of international agreements, and access to seed in general as the basis for breeding new, locally adapted varieties and breeds, thus contributing to food security.

Agroecology is therefore an **extension of the National Security Strategy in the agricultural context. Food and agricultural policy is always also security policy, and agroecology** is the basis for a sustainable, green and socially just transformation that not only ensures food security, but also reduces dependencies and severs post-colonial continuities. Small farmers play a special role here. They need to be empowered and enabled to make impartial decisions about their farming methods, make use of knowledge on sustainable soil fertility, have access to seed and neutral advice and be integrated into the economy.

**Livestock farming** is an important factor here. More than 60 percent of Africa's land area is dryland, where livestock farming in the form of pastoralism and transhumance has become a key land use form and source of livelihood. In many African countries, livestock farming and pastoralism are of major socioeconomic relevance. Emerging economies are seeing growth in demand for animal-based foods, which requires environmentally sustainable and economically viable livestock farming and production forms and opens up new value chains for the region. To empower small farmers and private households, it is important to strengthen locally-adapted breeds by improving their performance through breeding and by adopting appropriate population and livestock management strategies. Specifically, this includes improved veterinary care, better biosecurity on farms, targeted cross-border

control of relevant infectious diseases and zoonoses, improvement of value chains of animal origin, and strengthening the **One Health approach** to promote cross-sectoral, systemic transformation processes that benefit animal husbandry and health, human health and the environment.

A recurring topic of debate is the **complex impact of agricultural imports on local production** and food security. There are no simple answers here, as has been shown by the debate on the impact of European poultry exports on African markets.

**Spotlight:**

## Impacts of European poultry exports on African markets

Exports of poultry meat from the European Union (EU) to African countries are often a topic of discussion with a view to potential impacts on African markets. Such exports mainly relate to animal parts that are not in as lucrative demand in the EU member states as in parts of the African continent or Asia. To safeguard a supply of low-priced meat for urban populations, a number of African governments do nothing to stop these imports or even encourage them with deliberately low import tariffs. Other countries, such as Mali and Niger, have imposed import quotas on chicken parts or raised import tariffs on poultry meat to protect domestic production.

At the same time, various studies – by the Thünen Institute, among others – have shown that poultry meat imports do not necessarily stunt the growth of domestic poultry production.[7] According to the Thünen study, demand for poultry meat in Ghana in recent years has risen in step with domestic production, which consequently does not come close to meeting domestic demand.

The findings of a more recent study also suggest that poultry imports cannot be clearly demonstrated to have a negative impact on local markets.[8] According to that study, higher tariffs and import bans can lead to an increase in domestic chicken prices, with negative consequences for consumers. The study therefore concludes that import restrictions are not universally positive for local markets and consumers and that, where necessary, targeted support should be provided to households that are particularly disadvantaged by poultry meat imports.

Both studies mentioned only look at a small cross-section and individual countries. However, they demonstrate the complexity that gets in the way of unequivocally assessing the impact of poultry imports on African markets.

7 Thünen Institute 2023, IMPEX study: https://www.thuenen.de/en/thuenen-topics/world-food-supply-and-global-resources/develop-local-markets-understand-global-trade/europas-gefluegel-und-milchexporte-nach-westafrika

8 Qaim et al., Springer; 20 January 2023; Volume 15, S. 791–804 (2023)Qaim et al., Springer; 20 January 2023; Volume 15, p. 791–804, (2023)

## Our activities so far:

We use a wide range of international activities, networks and forums to firmly establish agroecological approaches and principles on the global agriculture agenda. These include:

- The G7 and G20 agriculture workstreams and our annually held **GFFA**
- The **Coalition for Food Systems Transformation through Agroecology,** which we joined together with the BMZ in June 2023.
- The **4 per 1000 Initiative** to promote healthy and carbon-free soil worldwide and its Executive Secretariat located in Montpellier, which we co-finance.
- The **Commission for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA),** because these resources are essential to be able to respond to challenges such as changing environmental conditions, malnutrition and consumer behaviour.
- The BMZ-funded Global research partnership for a food-secure future (CGIAR), which is especially active on the African continent and promotes locally appropriate, agroecological production methods that, among other things, serve food security, environment protection, soil conservation, climate action and biodiversity conservation, as well as gender-appropriate and social participation.
- The G20 Bioeconomy Initiative launched under the Brazilian presidency, which led to the development of the High Level Principles of the Global Initiative on Bioeconomy (GIB).
- The **Champions 12.3-Coalition,** which addresses SDG 12.3 in a special way, calling for global per capita food waste to be halved at retail and consumer levels by 2030, and for food losses, including post-harvest losses, to be reduced along the production and supply chain.

We are committed to ensuring that the **reduction of food losses and food waste** is placed on the international agenda and aim in particular to reinforce the evidence-based **Target-Measure-Ac**t approach. This approach calls for the formulation of reduction targets, measurement of food losses and waste, and the strategic implementation of corresponding reduction measures adapted to national contexts.

We want to **prohibit the export of certain plant protection products** that for health reasons are not approved for use in the EU. To this end, we endorse the European Commission's approach in initiating a ban on the production and/or export of chemicals not approved for use in the EU.

## What are we doing to achieve the objective?

- We are supporting research with our funding announcement **Agroecological Innovations for Territorial Markets (2024)** as part of the three-phase Innovative Sustainable Production Systems funding cycle. The main focus lies on the potential of agroecology for territorial markets and value chains to improve local food supply.
- As part of our **global food research** programme, we are funding a transdisciplinary research project in South Africa on local **species** (e. g. sorghum, black-eyed peas, Bambara peanuts, amaranth and millet) to heighten awareness of the potential of local species for sustainable and resilient food systems.
- We lead the EU **Partnership for Research and Innovation, Accelerating farming systems transition: agroecology living labs and research infrastructures** (AGROECOLOGY). The partnership promotes the use of agroecological practices in EU agriculture. Regionally adapted management forms are identified and further developed for practical use in cooperation between researchers, agricultural stakeholders and authorities. For the second phase (from 2026), the partnership is to be expanded beyond the EU.
- In the **Green Futures project** – part of our **Innovation and Transformation Dialogue (ITD)** – we work with marginalised groups in the agricultural sector in Southern, Eastern and Western Africa (South Africa, Zambia, Senegal and Kenya) to address capacity building along the entire the value chain. The aim is to empower marginalised groups to cope with climate-related challenges, make use of innovations in agricultural production and increase food sovereignty through more stable incomes and crop diversification.
- We integrate agroecological approaches in our **Zambian-German Agricultural Knowledge and Training Centre (AKTC).** In doing so, we build on local knowledge of cultivation methods and local species, learn from the Zambian agroecology network, develop that knowledge in collaboration with Zambian and German research institutes, and disseminate knowledge and skills nationally and internationally.

- Our **Supporting Sustainable Agricultural Productivity in Ethiopia (SSAP)** project supports the Ethiopian government in strengthening formal, informal and intermediary seed systems. Firstly, the project promotes the implementation of neutral variety testing according to standardised criteria by establishing a national plant variety and seed authority. Secondly, it also strengthens seed cooperatives, seed associations and farmers' organisations and provides them with training in seed propagation. Finally, SSAP supports a local gene bank that stores and characterises local varieties and makes them available for purposes such as breeding more climate-resilient varieties.

- Building on the FAO **City Region Food Systems (CRFS) Programme,** we are supporting a project on transforming city region food systems by reducing food loss and waste in local food production and supply systems in a model region in Lusaka, Zambia. The aim is to improve food security and nutrition by reducing food loss and food waste. Focus is placed on small-scale producers in order to develop and stabilise the local food system.

- In Ethiopia, we use the **SUSCAMI** project to promote sustainable camel milk production through improved husbandry practices and value chains. In addition to studying camel husbandry, feeding and health management, the project assesses limiting factors and knowledge gaps with regard to the handling and storage of camel milk, food safety and incomes along the value chain. Another focus of the project is the integration of traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge. The project is jointly conducted by the University of Kassel and Addis Ababa University/ Borana University.

- In the **SoLFOOD** project, the **Max Rubner Institute (MRI)** and others including the **Julius Kühn Institute (JKI)** and local partners in Kenya aim, through a combination of scientifically founded and traditional best-practice methods, to reduce fungal infestation in maize fields and mycotoxin contamination of maize and end products, and develop strategies for the post-harvest use of contaminated maize. Food losses are to be reduced by optimising cultivation and food storage.

- **The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR)** works in the BMEL **ContamInsect** project with partners in Kenya (Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology) to reduce the exposure of edible insects to toxins. The aim of the project is to improve the situation regarding food supply and food safety for a protein source of animal origin. In addition, a way is to be found to make highly aflatoxin-contaminated grain safe for use and return it to the food and feed chain.

- On behalf of the BMEL, the **Thünen Institute (TI)** coordinates activities of the **Collaboration Initiative Food Loss and Waste launched at MACS-G20** aimed at sharing research findings internationally. Together with the G20 Presidency, we finance workshops to promote collaboration between various regional stakeholders. The Initiative's activities are to be expanded, using regional events to ensure more African stakeholders are involved.

- The **Friedrich Loeffler Institute (FLI)** engages in **capacity building** in all areas of animal health. It promotes national and international intersectoral collaboration in animal disease and zoonosis control, and participates as a partner of the Rapidly Deployable Expert Group on Health (SEEG) in interdepartmental implementation of **train-the-trainer assignments** Africa-wide.

- As the **WOAH, FAO and WHO Reference and Cooperation Centre,** and through participation in international **research alliances** such as the Global African Swine Fever Research Alliance (GARA) and the Global Foot and Mouth Disease Research Alliance (GFRA), the FLI supports African partner countries in combating animal disease.

# Objective 2: Promoting organic farming as an option

## ORGANIC FARMING ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT:

### CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARMING[9]

Tunisia, Tanzania and Egypt account for the highest percentage of land

**0.2 %** in Africa[10] **2.8 %** worldwide[10]

### CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARMLAND IN AFRICA HAS INCREASED SINCE 2015[10]

Total **approx. 119,000 ha** ↗

### CERTIFIED ORGANIC PRODUCERS ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT (LAST UPDATED: 2020)[10]

Total **834,000**

9 Source: Statista (2024), various sources (2024)

10 Source: Aubee, Ernest (2023): Exploring the benefits of organic agriculture in Africa, Tribune Online, https://tribuneonlineng.com/exploring-the-benefits-of-organic-agriculture-in-africa/

## MOST IMPORTANT CERTIFIED PERENNIAL CROPS ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT IN 2020[11]

## AFRICA'S SHARE IN THE GLOBAL TOTAL OF ORGANIC FARMLAND[11]

Organic farming is the BMEL's model for sustainable agriculture. An especially resource-efficient and environmentally friendly form of cultivation, organic farming offers solutions for combating species extinctions and the climate crisis. In Measure 12 of our Organic Strategy, published in 2023, we address fair international partnerships in agriculture for the first time. In Measure 30, we incorporate organic farming in the area of international cooperation. We promote organic farming methods as an option for the Global South – here, too, with the clear aim of implementing the human right to adequate food and increasing local value creation. In line with this, organic farming is a key element of agroecology, including internationally.

**11** Source: FIBL 2022 (The World of organic agriculture – STATISTICS & EMERGING TRENDS 2022), https://www.fibl.org/en/shop-en/1344-organic-world-2022

**Spotlight:**

## Organic farming – challenge or opportunity for the Global South?

A question that often arises with regard to organic farming is whether it is the right choice in regions with poor food security, based on the assumption that organic farming brings lower yields.

Depending on the input level, organic farming methods can in fact deliver similar yields to conventional farming. Raising agricultural productivity nevertheless remains a global challenge. According to the crop, weather conditions, region and input level, productivity in organic farming can be 20 to 50 percent lower than in conventional farming. The risk of harvest losses is therefore often assessed as greater, but then diverse crop rotation typical of organic farming can actually boost the resilience of the entire farming system. The growing population in many African countries gives rise to debate about whether organic farming is the right approach in the context of food scarcity.

The context is important here. As a rule, conversion to organic farming in Africa starts at a lower input level than in Europe. At this level, there is scope for boosting productivity without the aid of energy-intensive synthetic chemicals – by harnessing organic farming methods such as organic fertilisation accompanied by measures to improve soil fertility through crop rotation, inclusion of additional crops and soil cover, which generally lead to higher productivity per unit area and resilience, and most importantly to less dependence on external, mostly fossil energy sources.

In addition, certified organic cultivation is often supported by external entities (business enterprises and governmental and private organisations) and accompanied by other elements that add value – such as capacity building and fair trade – all of which means that, once certification is obtained, higher prices and thus also incomes can be made than is the case with conventional farming.

### Our activities so far:

We work to promote **locally appropriate, agroecological and climate change-adapted** production methods, and thus organic farming practices.

Our goals parallel those with regard to agroecology:

- Creating **local, diverse, efficient and resilient production for (small-scale) farms** in regions particularly affected by food insecurity.
- Driving the **sustainable improvement of existing production systems,** including by incorporating **traditional and local knowledge,** and promoting mutual knowledge exchange.
- Developing and offering organic farming as a means of **climate action and environment and health protection in line with the One Health approach** for regions particularly affected by food insecurity.
- Providing initial **support for the establishment of local and regional value creation,** where necessary up to the point of helping with entry into the international organic market (certification, trade agreements and sales promotion).

**What are we doing to achieve the objective?**
Germany has **diverse experience in putting organic farming into practice** and wants to share this knowledge in the course of our international cooperation. Increasing information requests from countries in the Global South confirm that this is the right approach. This is why organic farming also plays an increasingly important role in our international projects:

- → The **German-Moroccan Expert Dialogue on Agriculture and Forestry (DIAF)** was launched in 2019 and also addresses organic farming. Building on the successes achieved in the first phase, the project entered its second phase in 2024.
- → At European level, we endorse the aim of concluding **bilateral trade agreements** between the European Union and African countries enabling **imports of organic produce to the EU.**
- → We support relevant stakeholders in advising African countries on developing **their own organic farming legislation.** This is a prerequisite for a country wishing to export to the EU to enter into negotiations with the European Commission on a bilateral trade agreement specifically for organic products. As much of value creation and the value chain as possible should remain in the country of origin.
- → Through the **involvement of our departmental research institutions,** evidence-based decision-making processes are made possible that secure and support organic farming for the longer term.

## Objective 3: Protecting forests and trees through cultivation and promoting agroforestry systems

Our forests around the world contribute to food security by protecting natural resources such as soil, water and air. **Agroforestry** – integrating trees into agricultural cultivation systems – is particularly important in this connection as it is one of the most effective ways of improving the beneficial effects of trees in terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation, the protection and sustainable use of soil, water and biodiversity, and the restoration of degraded soils. What's more, **agroforestry contributes to food and feed production and to livelihoods,** especially for small farmers, thus playing a crucial role in reducing household risks and in income diversification. Particularly in our cooperation activities with African countries, promoting agroforestry systems is therefore a key objective that is also linked to the goal of reducing the exploitation pressure on natural forests (e.g. for firewood or charcoal) that continues unabated partly as a result of population growth.

This is a matter of urgency, as FAO studies for the Forest Resource Assessment 2020 show: Since 1990, the African continent has reported an increase in the rate of net loss of forest area, from 3.28 million hectares per year in 1990-2000 to 3.94 million hectares per year in 2010-2020. This is a **higher rate of forest loss** than in other regions of the world. From 2015 to 2020, annual forest loss on the African continent totalled 4.41 million hectares, of which the Eastern and Southern Africa sub-regions accounted for 2.20 million hectares and Western and Central Africa for 1.90 million hectares.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORESTRY AND AGRICULTURE ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT:

### FOREST AREA IN AFRICA 2020[12]

**636,639,000 ha**

= **16 %** of the global forest area

Africa is the continent with the largest forested areas worldwide

### AGRICULTURAL AREA IS INCREASING[13]

### ANNUAL NET CHANGE/SHRINKING OF FOREST AREAS 1990–2020[12]

| | |
|---|---|
| 1990–2000 | 3.28 million ha/year |
| 2000–2010 | 3.40 million ha/year |
| 2010–2020 | 3.94 million ha/year |

trending upwards ↗

**Northern Afrika**

| | |
|---|---|
| 2000–2010 | 127,000 ha/year |
| 2010–2020 | 168,000 ha/year |

**Western and central Africa**

| | |
|---|---|
| 2000–2010 | 1.50 Mio. ha/year |
| 2010–2020 | 1.86 Mio. ha/year |

**Eastern and southern Africa**

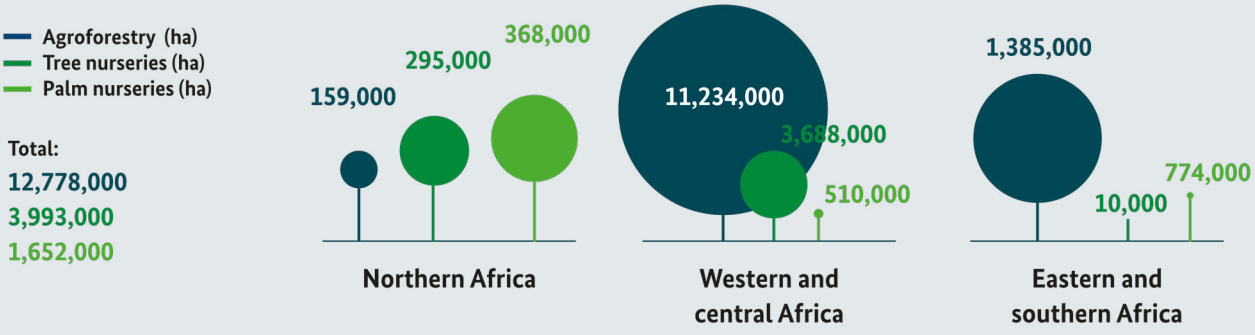
| | |
|---|---|
| 2000–2010 | 1.77 Mio. ha/year |
| 2010–2020 | 1.90 Mio. ha/year |

### DEFORESTATION OR CONVERSION OF FORESTS INTO OTHER LAND MANAGEMENT FORMS SUCH AS AGRICULTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE[13]

| | |
|---|---|
| 1990–2000 | 4.096 million ha/year |
| 2000–2010 | 4.314 million ha/year |
| 2010–2020 | 4.43 million ha/year |

trending upwards ↗

### LAND USE FOR AGROFORESTRY, TREE OR PALM NURSERIES IN AFRICAN SUBREGIONS 2020




12 Source: FAO Global Forest Resources Assessments (2020)

13 Source: FAO (2020) (Global Forest Resources Assessments 2020), https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/d6f0df61-cb5d-4030-8814-0e466176d9a1

## Our activities so far:

- We engage in bilateral exchange and participate in international cooperation formats such as the FAO, UNFF, ITTO, G7 and G20 and the GFFA to decouple **agricultural expansion and productivity improvements from deforestation and forest degradation,** and to strengthen agroecological approaches and sustainable forest management.
- At the **FAO,** we have ensured that since 2020, solutions concerning transformation of food systems and protection against deforestation have been developed in cooperation with the agriculture and forestry committees.
- The topic of agroforestry is now taken into account in many international settings, such as the CFS, the UN Forest Forum and the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- With the **EU Regulation on Deforestation-free Products** (EUDR), the EU aims to decouple agriculture and deforestation in that certain raw materials and products (such as palm oil, coffee and cocoa) may only be sold on the EU single market if they are deforestation-free and forest degradation-free.
- **EU cooperation with third countries is a key component** in implementing the EUDR, including to prevent trade policy and WTO disputes, and to preserve smallholder production structures in relation to forest protection. This cooperation is included as a mandatory element of an EU regulation for the first time (see Article 30). For its part, the Federal Government will continue to closely monitor this cooperation with partner countries. Monitoring will mainly be performed by the BMZ via the global **Team Europe Initiative on Deforestation-free Value Chains** (TEI) and other Federal Government projects.
- With the BMEL, BMUV, BMWK and BMZ, multiple Federal Government ministries promote **support measures in producing countries,** including in Africa. In this way, we aim to **promote our goals** and increase acceptance for our activities, while counteracting segregated trade and potential displacement effects.
- The Federal Government, as a member of the **Amsterdam Group** (Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, the UK, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain), also supports coordination in the private sector, such as with stakeholders on measures in producing countries with the aim of establishing sustainable, deforestation-free supply chains and of supporting small-scale producers in meeting related requirements.
- As part of our contribution to transforming the global use of forests to sustainable forest management and promoting agroforestry, we allocate some €5 million annually from our BCP project funding.

## What are we doing to achieve the objective?

- In the **Forests4People** project, we are investigating the adaptability of different types of community forests, their ecosystem services and their importance for livelihoods in rural regions of South Africa with the aim of strengthening their role. Collaborating with various community groups, local knowledge is gathered and conclusions are drawn for multifunctional and sustainable forest management.
- In Zambia, we are working to promote agroforestry practices. At the **Farmer Training Centre** in the Katete district and with the Agricultural Advisory Services, we have set up a model training and advice programme for smallholders in the region. Over the next few years, in collaboration with the Zambian government and also tying in with our agroecology advisory services, we plan to extend this approach to other parts of the country.
- In collaboration with the **ITTO,** we support a multi-country project in which, among other things, we support local communities and small-scale producers in Cameroon in the sustainable management of the valuable teak tree species (in part via innovative financing models for small-scale producers).
- We are the lead ministry in the fight against illegal logging and oversee the **Thünen Centre of Competence on the Origin of Timber** in Hamburg, which can be used to detect false declarations of charcoal, the production of which is of particular importance in Africa.
- In the future, we want to **increasingly combine agroforestry with agroecological approaches** to promote their global uptake and contribute to the Global Forest Goals. Given the environmental and economic importance of agroforestry practices, and with a number of African countries beginning to adopt inter-ministerial strategies and mechanisms to promote and develop agroforestry, we see openings here for stepping up our cooperation activities.

# IV. Action area 2: Building partnerships, sharing knowledge and working together to promote innovation and strengthen it through trade

## Objective 1: Building partnerships and sharing knowledge – with the focus on women and youth

Our activities centre on building long-term partnerships and networks. We do this by sharing and expanding knowledge, supporting the development of civil society, reinforcing structures and improving the level of organisation among stakeholders. And we believe that the key here is to mobilise and empower young people and women.

Our tools and approaches are as varied and diverse as the field in which we operate, which ranges from smallholders and local initiatives and organisations, on to scientific and regional institutions, and finally to government entities and supranational organisations such as the AU. The nature of our cooperation work varies accordingly. Our approaches extend from agricultural policy dialogues and specialised research projects to long-term research consortiums and training and exchange programmes for local practitioners, scientists and doctoral students.

### Project work

We place a special focus in our project work on involving young people and women. When this succeeds, we believe there is economic potential here that can result in increasing demand and an intensive agri-food industry close to the city. This can open up new business opportunities and further support the transition to sustainable agriculture and food systems. The aim must therefore be to further activate, organise and bring into decision-making bodies and hence positions of responsibility precisely those groups who today are not sufficiently represented but will help advance the necessary transformation in the future. This is where gender transformative approaches play a particularly important role.

### Long-term partnerships

Both within and beyond our project work, we engage in lasting partnerships that enable us to share knowledge and skills and collaborate over the long term. Our scope here ranges from the local level to regional, national and supraregional structures, and includes networking and collaborating with strong international partners. Focusing on empowerment, we aim in these activities to strengthen the ability of civil society groups in particular, both at local level and in organisations and institutional structures, to take responsibility for the necessary transformation of agricultural and food systems, set processes in motion and ensure their success. This is also important because there is frequently insufficient networking between governmental, private-sector and civil society actors. It is crucial where government structures are instable or simply absent or where governments themselves undermine security and the rule of law.

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN AFRICAN AGRICULTURE:

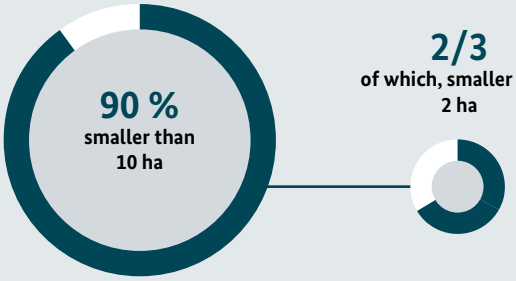
### FEMALE WORKERS IN THE AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR BY REGION[15]

Northern Africa
Algeria 3 %
Morocco 48 %
Sub-Saharan Africa[1] 66 %
worldwide 36 %

### PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE WORKING IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR[14]

Approx. 60 % of agricultural workers are between 15 and 24 years old

### SMALLHOLDER FARMS




Most of them are operated with limited resources by vulnerable groups and women

∅ The average size of farms in Sub-Saharan Africa amounts to 1.3 ha[16]

**Smallholder farms produce more than 90 % of the continent's food supply[17]**

### Our activities so far:

- We follow the **FAO Right to Food Voluntary Guidelines** to promote the active participation of civil society organisations and other relevant societal groups at national and regional level, including smallholders and traditional farmers, the private sector, women and girls, and youth organisations in all aspects of agricultural and food production.
- Consideration of the situation and needs of women and girls in relation to food security and also the degree of organisation of groups who work to represent their needs is especially emphasised in the CFS **Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment** (VG GEWGE 2023).
- In line with **feminist foreign and development policy,** we promote reinforcing the rights, resources and representation of women and girls and marginalised groups, such as young people and Indigenous groups, and also their role in shaping agriculture and the food environment, thereby enabling them to actively participate in ensuring the right to adequate food.

**14** Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (2023)
**15** Source: World Bank (2024)
**16** Source: International Fund for Agricultural Development
**17** Source: Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (2023)

**Explainer:**

## Our flagship project: Agricultural Policy Dialogue (APD) with the AU

In the face of the insecure food and nutrition situation on the African continent and the anticipated growing impact of complex crises, the African Union Commission (AUC) recognizes the urgent need to transform African agriculture and food systems to enable improved food and nutrition security, inclusiveness, sustainability and resilience.

Against this backdrop, the AUC Department of Agricultural, Rural, Aquatic and Environmental Development (ARBE) and the BMEL have launched the Agricultural Policy Dialogue (APD). Through this cooperation, we seek to strengthen the AU as a multilateral, pan-African organisation and support it in surmounting challenges on the continent.

The APD initiative aims to support the transformation of integrated agriculture and food systems towards greater sustainability and resilience, in line with Agenda 2063, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the African Common Position on Food Systems and the Post-Malabo Process. One of the key lessons from 20 years of implementing the CAADP is the need for an improved implementation strategy between the continental and national levels.

The APD plans to select a number of countries from among the AU member states for a special initiative that will focus on:

- Identifying measures to accelerate the transformation of sustainable and resilient agriculture and food systems;
- Generating findings and good practices to inform the post-Malabo agenda and the development of regional and continental guidelines.

In implementing the Agricultural Policy Dialogue, the BMEL works closely with the BMZ, which as the development ministry also cooperates with the African Union in implementing the Post-Malabo Process.

### What are we doing to achieve the objective?

We apply the **principles of feminist foreign and development** policy in our international project work, among other things with partner countries via cooperation projects and with the FAO via the Bilateral Trust Fund.

→ In our **Zambian-German Agricultural Knowledge and Training Centre (AKTC),** we specifically support practical and theoretical agricultural training for women. We aim to further increase the percentage of women among trainees from the current level of 30 percent.

→ Since 2023, via the **BTF,** we have strengthened local institutions, participative multi-stakeholder processes and more inclusive local administration of land rights (VGGT 2012). Women and young people are the main beneficiaries of this work. Mauretania and Sierra Leone serve as pilot countries.

- In our **PRO-PLANTEURS** project – which is jointly supported by the BMZ and private-sector partners – we plan to place a greater focus on women and youth by supplementing the project programme to include the empowerment of female household members, female cocoa producers, female extension professionals and female cooperative members. The plan is to provide training in nutrition, business and organisational management in order to promote economic prospects in the processing sector and the development of participants' own business ideas.
- With the FAO, Mauritania, Gambia and Senegal, we work to promote youth employment by applying the CFS principles for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems (RAI Principles, 2014).
- Under the **Global Soil Doctors Programme,** in cooperation with the FAO, we plan the distribution and implementation of the Technical Guidelines on Soils for Nutrition in Burkina Faso. As part of the project, farmers are trained to become Soil Doctors who pass their knowledge on to others (peer-to-peer learning). This involves teaching a combination of nutrition education and agronomic knowledge, and looking at the relationship between soil health and human nutrition. By promoting the distribution of knowledge on sustainable soil management, soil fertility can be improved and with it food supply.
- In conjunction with the German Federal Foreign Office (AA), the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and South African Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), and via the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), we are establishing a **Centre of Excellence for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems and Applied Agricultural and Food Data Science** with its main location in a South African university and with regional reach into other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The Centre is intended to contribute to training specialists and managers for research, society and industry, building research capacities and connecting research institutes in Africa and Germany.
- One of the thematic areas of the APD with the African Union is the implementation of the **African Agribusiness Youth Strategy** with AU member states with the aim among other things of improving the initial and further training of workers in agricultural occupations and young 'agripreneurs'. A one-off conference was staged at the end of 2024 by the AU, the BMEL and other partners to bring about exchange on improving the promotion of young people.
- With our **International Leadership Workshop for Rural Youth (ISFL),** we promote young people from around the world who occupy responsible positions in youth and education work in rural regions. The participants strengthen their leadership skills and develop action plans for sustainable management. The ISFL contributes to implementing these goals, promotes international exchange and fosters international understanding. **We aim to give more attention to international networking in the future.**
- With our programmes on international research cooperation for global food and our targeted promotion of **doctoral and post-doctoral research in which work is often conducted in international tandems, we already contribute to knowledge transfer and capacity building** in Africa – and to international networking between participating early career scientists. Examples include MRI projects conducted with institutes in Morocco on processing and authenticity of Moroccan oils, designed to boost both incomes and the availability of jobs in the rural population, especially for women working in agriculture. We aim to expand these activities further.
- In our BCP project with the **Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU),** we strengthen farmers' organisations in Southern Africa with regard to the organisational, thematic and technological development, and, through exchange of experience and knowledge with German associations and the Zambian-German Agricultural Knowledge and Training Centre (AKTC) in Zambia, promote capacity building in consulting on climate change resilience and agroecological production methods.
- The **BfR Summer Academy** has been held annually since 2012. It addresses researchers in public sector organisations internationally that are active in the area of food and feed security and already have experience in risk assessment. The Academy provides an introduction to and further training in risk assessment and risk communication, and also serves as a platform for dialogue and exchange between experts around the world, BfR policy officers and members of other research institutes.

→ Through the **improvement of animal health and the protection of humans against zoonotic diseases,** the FLI helps to **secure livelihoods** on a lasting basis, thereby enabling families, and particularly women and girls, in the Global South to access the health and education systems. By means of long-term partnerships, training in line with the train-the-trainer principle and the **creation of the necessary research and diagnostics infrastructure** in countries such as Zanzibar and Tanzania, knowledge is shared and made available to both partners.

→ With the establishment of a **jointly-operated base station in Zanzibar, Tanzania,** and other long-term partnerships, such as with Namibia, Nigeria, Guinea, Cameroon and Mauritania, the FLI pursues the strategy of conducting international beacon projects that provide transregional impetus to foster implementation of the **Quadripartite One Health Joint Plan of Action.**

**Explainer:**

## One Health

According to the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP), "One Health is (... ) an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development."

With regard to **animal husbandry and animal health,** we work to strengthen the **One Health approach** in order to promote cross-sectoral, systemic transformation processes that benefit animal health, human health and the environment. In addition to optimising animal husbandry, this also includes prevention and diagnosis of disease and stricter rules on the use of antibiotics.

When it comes to **national implementation of the One Health approach,** we can learn from our partners in the Global South and thus aim to further intensify our cooperation activities in this area, also to be able to draw on the expertise of African partner countries and collaborate with them on implementing the Quadripartite One Health Joint Plan for Action.

# Objective 2: Leveraging opportunities in agriculture – innovation as a key to attractive agriculture

We must aim to leverage the potential of agriculture in African countries on the basis set out under Objective 1. Doing so requires investment, above all from private-sector players, in order to promote innovation and entrepreneurship and enable more regional value creation. This is the only way to make agriculture attractive, especially given the immense potential of a young and growing population.

The conditions for this are in place. This is because the population growth on the African continent means that rural areas and agriculture retain their social and economic importance in most regions despite urbanisation. Agriculture accounts for 35 percent of GDP and secures the livelihoods of half the population. Many places, however, have seen little or no productivity gains in recent years.

Only just under a quarter of the 1.08 billion hectares of farmland is under cultivation. In some areas, the potential of the land cannot be exploited because of inaccessibility due to lacking infrastructure, crises and conflicts. In other places, however, what is lacking is the means to cultivate the land.

A key goal for us is therefore the context-adapted **mechanisation of agriculture.** This does not have to follow the same logic as Europe's agricultural development over recent decades. Instead, it must be guided by local conditions. But any improvement achieved here can help enhance food security, make working in agriculture more attractive and free up resources for more processing stages to be done locally. With farms of up to five hectares making up the majority in all countries of sub-Saharan Africa, small farm sizes and a lack of investment opportunities pose challenges for African agriculture in many places.

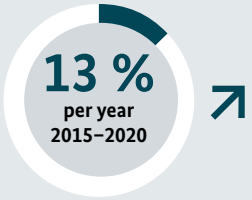
There is a vast range of approaches to mechanisation, from plough modifications facilitating the use of draught animals, to simple tractor-based mechanical tillage systems and the deployment of innovative harvesting machinery and tractors adapted to African markets. The same applies when it comes to irrigation. It is crucial for innovations – particularly those introduced with external funding – to be selected in close consultation with local stakeholders, adapted to local conditions and avoid creating new dependencies.

When it comes to agricultural machinery, for example, many regions need solutions for small-scale farming. In other regions that are similar in terms of agrarian structure, inter-farm cooperation arrangements such as machinery rings have proved beneficial because they can improve working conditions, increase harvests and strengthen the community. Such arrangements could also serve as a model for many African regions. At the same time, transregional networking leads to knowledge sharing that can benefit all regions. Ideally, the outcome is a community that succeeds in creating infrastructure with storage and refrigeration capacity, thus improving its market standing.

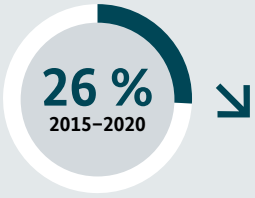
However, mechanisation also needs to be backed with the provision of new options for additional value creation and hence new jobs and earning opportunities, because successful mechanisation also reduces the need for labour. Further thought is also needed when it comes to potentially larger harvest volumes that must be stored, preserved and transported.

## PRODUCTIVITY IN AFRICAN AGRICULTURE:

### INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY[18]




### DECREASING AGRICULTURAL TRADE DEFICIT[18]

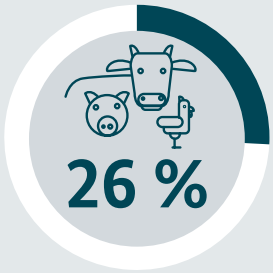



### PRODUCTION INTENSITY HAS INCREASED SINCE 2000[19]

FARMING + 16 %

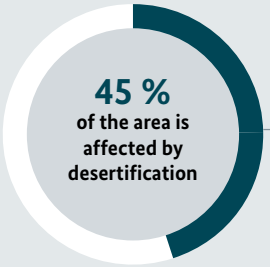
LIVESTOCK + 11 %

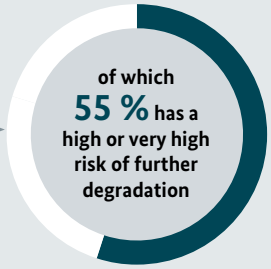
### THE LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION INDUSTRY'S SHARE IN GDP[19]




### CHALLENGES FACED BY THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR[19]

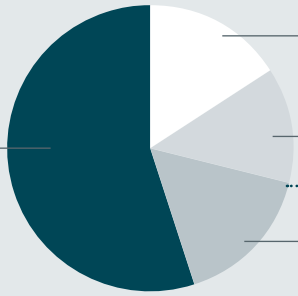
Soil degradation and desertification



Only 6 % of the agriculturally used area is irrigated

### SOIL QUALITY[20]



55 % not suitable for farming

16 % high

13 % medium

16 % low

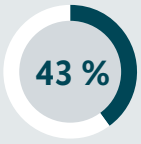
Approximately 45 % of the population lives on high or medium quality soil

Approximately 30 % of the population lives or depends on soil with low potential

### INCREASE OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS[20]

2011 — approx. 197,000,000

2021 — approx. 230,000,000




approx. 43 % of all workers were employed in the agricultural sector in 2021

### DEMOGRAPHY IN AFRICA IN 2022[21]

Africa has the youngest population in the world

Total population (1.4 billion/2022)

Proportion of people up to an age of 16 years

African continent 40 %

worldwide 25 %

18 Source: African Development Bank (2021)
19 Source: World Bank and FAO data (2023)
20 Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (2023a)
21 Source: Statista (2024), based on UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2022)

Properly deployed, **digitalisation** can also make an important contribution to African agriculture. Digital tools make it relatively easy to acquire new knowledge or create potential new sales openings, including on a global scale. Innovative digital technologies can also streamline workflows in agriculture and directly benefit target groups. Young people, young 'agripreneurs' and young farmers already use digital technology for exchange, networking and learning. Connectivity via online platforms and online meetings can make a key contribution in supporting young people in agriculture and help improve their degree of organisation. Using digital resources provides access to a vast range of information sources and makes further education and training available free of charge. Digitalisation can also be used to simplify access to vital resources such as land, e.g. via digital land banks. Furthermore, digital systems are also useful in obtaining cost-effective verification, for example with regard to compliance with the EU Regulation on Deforestation-free Products. However, digitalisation requires universal coverage with mobile communications infrastructure and people to have the knowledge needed to use the available tools.

## Our activities so far:

- We seek to work with the private sector and engage in dialogue with African countries to promote an enabling environment. We actively involve companies and sectoral associations, contribute in business networks and support events such as the annual **German African Agribusiness Forum.** We encourage German companies to use the networks they have established through their activities to go beyond building trade relations by investing for the long term on the basis of the experience gained in the countries concerned.
- German companies in the agricultural and food sector have particularly wide-ranging expertise in areas such as fertilisers, plant reproductive material, crop protection, cooling technology, irrigation, animal genetics, livestock farming and agricultural technologies, and notably also food storage and processing. They can help share knowledge, for example to avoid food losses due to a lack of processing options. Many companies already take responsibility and contribute to numerous projects and agricultural policy dialogues.
- The **GFFA Innovation Forum** is an exhibition format that we have developed to present innovative projects, practical examples and fresh solutions relating to specific topics. It provides scientific institutions, NGOs, businesses (including startups), public authorities and sectoral associations with a platform to exchange ideas among themselves and share information with a professional audience.
- We help companies **establish and intensify contacts,** for example with **delegation trips** that we plan with the involvement of companies and taking into account business interests and concerns.
- Through our **Export Promotion Programme and Foreign Trade Fair Programme,** we help small and medium-sized companies in the agri-food and upstream sectors (including agricultural technology, plant reproductive material and animal genetics) in accessing new markets, facilitating market entry and maintaining existing contacts. We expressly only support measures that are not expected to have a negative impact on the target markets.

## What are we doing to achieve the objective?

- We aim to make regionally suitable **innovations more readily available by intensifying exchange** and by providing better access to **existing BMEL activities** and activities of its subordinate entities through networking, with the involvement of the private sector and its products and services.
- This is why we have intensified our **triangular cooperation** activities, to bring partners together and identify suitable solutions.
- We share jointly acquired knowledge with other countries, including those of the African continent, in **innovation and transformation partnerships.** For example, we are working with New Zealand to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture with a view to making the project outcomes available to the Global South.
- In the **RAI Agri-Accelerator Hub 2.0 Bilateral Trust Fund (BTF) project, we are working in Senegal, Gambia and Mauritania** with young people in rural regions who aim to invest in farms and business enterprises. They receive business training so that they can plan and implement responsible investments in agriculture and the food systems. In the long term, the business development training tools are to be incorporated into existing governmental programmes.

→ In the **Zambian-German Agricultural Knowledge and Training Centre (AKTC),** we have been contributing to the mechanisation of Zambian agriculture since 2014. The initial equipment was loaned from 12 business partners, who also supplied agricultural machinery, seeds and other inputs. It was during this phase that the AKTC acquired its reputation as a training centre that disseminates knowledge on appropriate, cost-effective use of agricultural machinery, fuel-efficient driving and regular maintenance of machinery. Today, the AKTC is a state-recognized educational institution and operates the country's only licensed tractor driving school. More than 18,000 Zambian participants have received training at the AKTC in courses that in some cases run over several days. At policy level, the AKTC was involved in an advisory capacity in the development of the Zambian mechanisation strategy. Business partners and the science community play key roles in project activities. As new focus areas, climate-resilient and agroecological production methods have since been added to the programme. Agroecological cultivation trials have been scientifically monitored by the Julius Kühn-Institut since 2024.

## Objective 3: Promoting transparent, rules-based trade, enhancing trade sustainability and resilience and reducing one-sided dependencies

We believe that transparent, rules-based trade that benefits all parties and takes into account the specific needs of our neighbouring continent is of greatest importance. Trade can make up for food shortages, guarantee year-round food diversity to ensure balanced diets and thus help implement the right to food.

When it comes to leveraging the opportunities offered by international agricultural trade, fair conditions and transparency in agricultural markets play a crucial role. This also applies to regional trade within and between the countries of Africa. The considerable potential of intra-African trade is still underexploited but has received a major boost with the signing of the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement.**

Our aim at the BMEL is to support sustainable and fair trade relations with our neighbouring continent. In this context, we work to ensure that issues relating to food security and agricultural development, including fishing and aquaculture, are taken into account in trade liberalisation. The **Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)** between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries should be made development-friendly overall and their impact on the partner countries monitored. We are looking at enshrining sustainability goals in the labour, social and environment dimensions and we endorse development-friendly origin rules.

It is necessary to bear in mind that trade relations with African countries are organised at the level of the European Union. The European Commission has negotiated trade and development agreements, known as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), between the EU and the ACP states. These open the EU market fully and immediately to ACP countries through the elimination of tariffs. In return, the ACP states are partially opening their markets to EU imports, with transitional periods. The EPAs allow ACP states to exclude sensitive product groups – mainly agricultural products – from trade liberalisation. They also provide for safeguard measures – in the form of the temporary reintroduction of tariffs (or quotas) – if imports have a negative impact on the economy or pose a threat to food security.

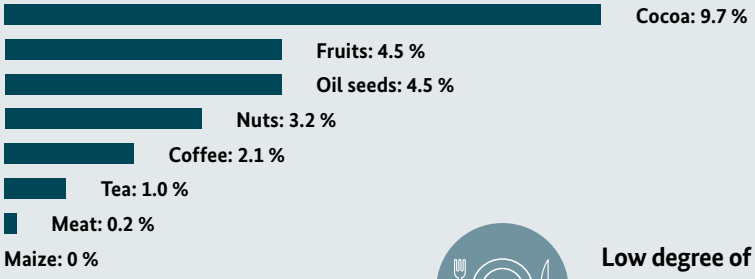
The EPAs put EU-ACP trade relations on a WTO-compatible footing and promote both development and regional integration within and between ACP states. In the longer term, once the AfCFTA is complete, the EU aims to conclude a continent-to-continent agreement to replace the existing agreements entered into with individual African states.

More generally, for all countries of the Global South, the EU offers trade under the European Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), which provides for reduced or zero tariffs on imports of many products. Overall, the majority of African countries can **export to the EU without**

## AGRICULTURAL TRADE:

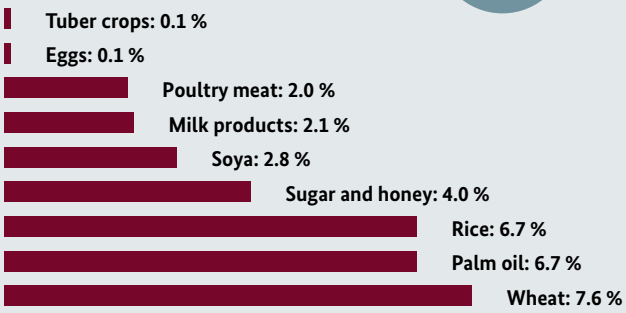
### THE AFRICAN CONTINENT IS A NET IMPORTER OF FOOD[22]

#### NET EXPORTS:



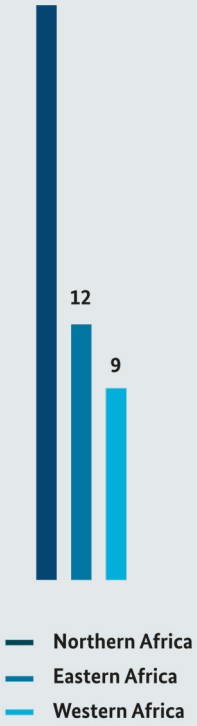
Low degree of self-sufficiency for maize, rice, wheat, soy and animal protein[25]

#### NET IMPORTS:

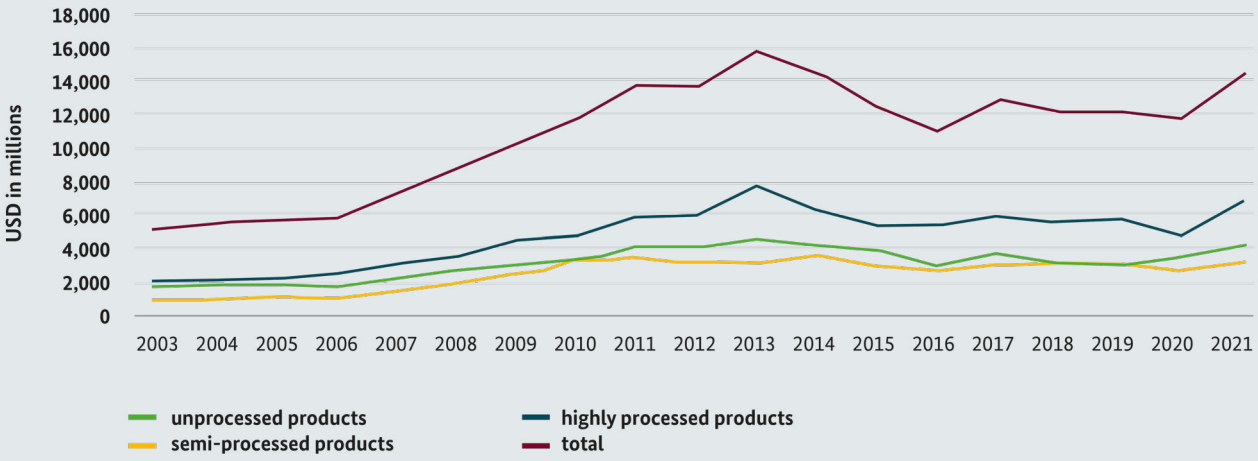



### ↗ Food imports are increasing[22]

### WHEAT IMPORTS IN MILLION TONNES IN 2020[24]




### DEVELOPMENT OF DOMESTIC AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL TRADE 2003–2021 (USD)[23]




22 Source: Database of the African Union Commission (2023) and AGRA (2023)
23 Source: African Agriculture Trade Monitor (2023)
24 Source: AGRA (2023), based on FAOSTAT data
25 Source: Statista (2024), based on UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2022)

**tariffs or quotas,** even without an EPA. GSP tariff preferences are not granted on a reciprocal basis, but some are tied to the fulfilment of certain standards under the **three-tier GSP regime:**

The **Standard GSP** offers basic preferences for low and middle-income countries of the Global South. These receive tariff reductions on two-thirds of goods imported into the EU provided that they comply with 15 core human and labour rights conventions.

**GSP+** is a special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance. It reduces the relevant tariffs to zero percent for countries that meet international human rights, labour, environmental and good governance standards.

**Everything but Arms** (EBA) is a special arrangement giving least developed countries (LDCs) tariff and quota-free access to the EU market. Only weapons and ammunition are excluded.

**Spotlight:**

## Standards – a condition for trade and potential obstacle for small farmers

Standards play a key role in international trade and are therefore of major importance. Standards in the areas of plant protection, animal health and food safety as well as technical production ensure that markets function properly within and across national borders and that food safety, plant health, animal health and sustainability can be guaranteed.

The introduction of standards can be particularly challenging for small and medium-sized enterprises, small farmers, Indigenous peoples and local communities, as achieving and maintaining compliance can be costly and multiple new requirements may have to be met in order to stay in the market. African countries often cite the international Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards **(SPSs)** and Technical Barriers to Trade **(TBTs)** as trade barriers and the greatest obstacles to market access.

A recent example of the challenges of meeting the requirements in international agricultural trade is the EU Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products – known as the **EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)** – which in African countries, for example, affects coffee and cocoa producers. The fact that the coffee supply chain relies on smallholder production makes it hard to provide the required information on time. This is why **EU cooperation with third countries is an important component** in implementing the EUDR.

## Our activities so far:

- The Federal Government has stepped up its advocacy for **equal trade and transparency and dismantling barriers to trade,** including non-tariff barriers to trade in global agricultural markets.
- African countries should be able to protect especially **sensitive sectors against imports as part of their trade law obligations,** but when it comes to food security not only the interests of farmers but also those of consumers in Africa must be taken into account.
- We advocate **entering into further Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)** with African countries in order to improve trade relations and embed sustainable development goals.
- We are committed to **opening markets** and improving transportation and quality assurance infrastructure for food safety and quality (e.g. laboratories and cold storage), structural and capacity development, and establishing (regional) value chains in Africa.
- This includes **realigning supply chains, establishing sustainable regional production and regional self-sufficiency and reducing post-harvest losses** – all with the aim of resilience and diversification of imports and exports to either reduce or eliminate one-sided dependencies.
- We welcome the fact that action can be taken to protect domestic production on the basis of international WTO trade rules and that **special status is provided** for developing countries.
- We are working to ensure that **developing countries and emerging economies can bring their interests and needs before the WTO** and that they are taken into account.
- Transparency in agricultural markets helps to prevent or mitigate price fluctuations. We will continue to work to ensure that all members of the **Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS), which goes back to an initiative of the G20 agriculture ministers in 2011,** participate in financing the system and provide data on their agricultural production and stock levels.
- Mindful of the **One Health approach,** we want to improve both **consumer health protection** and plant and animal health in African countries so as to facilitate their integration into rules-based regional and global agricultural trade.
- Implementing corporate due diligence obligations in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights plays a key role in addressing human rights and environmental issues in global supply chains and thus to sustainable trade and **protecting the interests of small producers and vulnerable groups.** However, it is important to ensure that these stakeholders do not suffer any unintended negative effects from the **EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD).** This should also be taken into account in implementing the **CSDDD** and in evaluating the German **Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG).**
- Under our domestic agricultural policy, the Federal Government will implement targeted measures that have no trade-distortion effects, while at the same time advocating a continuation of the reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy under competitive trade conditions. We are also committed to limiting trade-distorting subsidies in the course of WTO negotiations.
- The Federal Government is additionally working to ensure that export restrictions that could negatively impact global prices for food are dropped or that purchases made under the UN World Food Programme are made exempt from such restrictions.

## What are we doing to achieve the objective?

- We generate and share knowledge for our own policy advice activities in African countries: Through the Thünen Institute, we support countries in analysing the food and market situation so that they can better align their agricultural and trade policies accordingly.
- Working with the BMZ, we support African states, helping them to improve their expertise so they can produce agricultural goods in accordance with prevailing standards, actively engage in standard-setting and participate correspondingly in international trade. Key instruments here are the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and the Codex Trust Fund (CTF). The CTF strengthens opportunities for active participation in the standard-setting work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The STDF supports developing countries in complying with the SPSs. The BMEL has supported the STDF in conjunction with the BMZ since 2006.

- → In the German Initiative for Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO), the BMEL and the BMZ work together to improve the living conditions of cocoa farmers, conserve natural resources and biodiversity and increase the cultivation and marketing of cocoa certified to sustainability standards. GISCO is an alliance of the German confectionery industry and retail grocery trade, civil society organisations and the Federal Government represented by the BMEL and the BMZ.
- → In the BTF project Building responsible global value chains for the sustainable production and trade of tropical fruits, the BMEL, working via the FAO, promotes sustainable and responsible value chains for avocados and pineapples. A dedicated network of companies has been created that are aware of the environmental, social and economic impacts of their business operations and advocate more responsible value chains for tropical fruits.
- → Creating more responsible international value chains is also intended to generate higher incomes for the producers at the start of the supply chain. The project also aims to improve the food situation for smallholders as a result.

# V. Our current projects

**We are cooperating with the following countries:**

Algeria
Angola
Benin
Botswana
Burkina Faso
Cameroon
Cap Verde
Côte d'Ivoire
Egypt
Ethiopia
Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Kenya
Madagascar
Malawi
Mauritania
Mauritius
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia
Nigeria
Senegal
Sierra Leone
South Africa
Tanzania
Tunisia
Uganda
Zambia

# APPENDICES

## Our experts: Agencies in BMEL's remit

### *Federal Research Institutions*

**Friedrich Loeffler Institute (FLI) – Federal Research Institute for Animal Health**

The work of the Friedrich Loeffler Institute (FLI) focuses on farm animal health and welfare and on protecting humans from zoonoses. Its key responsibilities are the prevention, diagnosis and control of animal diseases, improving animal husbandry and animal nutrition, and conserving and using animal-genetic resources. The FLI works in various specialist disciplines in both basic and practice-oriented research, and has excellent connections at both national and international level. It has long-standing cooperations with African partners from a wide range of countries focusing on highly pathogenic zoonotic agents, transboundary diseases and antimicrobial resistance.

As the Federal Research Institute for Animal Health and as an independent higher federal authority, the FLI assumes the role of a national reference laboratory (NRL) for notifiable animal diseases. At international level, it is also designated as a WOAH Collaborating Centre for Zoonoses in Europe and operates 11 WOAH reference laboratories. The FLI is also a designated FAO Reference Centre for Animal Influenza and Newcastle Disease, Classical Swine Fever and Emerging Zoonotic Pathogens and High Biosecurity/Biocontainment Facilities as well as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Rabies Surveillance and Research. In the area of animal welfare, the FLI is part of the EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare Focusing on Pigs. The FLI comprises 12 specialist institutes at five locations. For more about the FLI see:
→ *www.fli.de*

**Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute – Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries**

The Thünen Institute develops practice-related models for sustainable and competitive resource use for the farming, forestry, timber and fishing sectors, and explores social and economic change in rural areas. Its core areas of focus – in relation to the natural environments of fields, forests and seas – are climate change and potential measures for adaptation, conserving and promoting biodiversity, use of digital technologies for crop production and animal keeping, integrated concepts for use of marine resources, and extensive monitoring activities. On socially relevant topics (such as livestock farming, forest reorganisation, reducing food losses and food waste), the Thünen Institute develops detailed proposals for solutions in the three dimensions of economy, ecology and technology and develops the solutions into strategies for policy action. Thünen Institute researchers cooperate closely with over 500 research institutes in Germany and worldwide – including with partners in 17 countries in Africa. The Thünen Institute comprises 15 institutes at nine locations. For further information see:
→ *www.thuenen.de*

**Julius Kühn Institute (JKI), Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants**

The JKI researches cultivated plants in their entirety, develops sustainable models for crop cultivation and advises policymakers on related issues. Its core areas of focus are plant genetics, crop production, plant nutrition and soil science, breeding research and breeding, plant protection and plant health (quarantine pests), bee protection and forest protection. As part of the EU review and approval process for plant protection products and testing of active substances, the JKI evaluates their efficacy. The JKI also conducts technical evaluations of plant protection equipment. As the national reference laboratory for harmful organisms in plants, the JKI liaises between the EU reference laboratories and the diagnostic laboratories in the German Länder (states). The JKI is also responsible for assessing the conformity of biostimulants. It cooperates with a wide range of universities and research institutes, specialist associations and societies. Its long-term cooperations with institutions in Europe and beyond form one of the main pillars of the international cooperation activities at JKI. Researchers work in the field and in partnership with local stakeholders to find answers to pressing issues concerning plant-based agriculture. JKI researchers teach at universities and universities of applied science. The JKI comprises 18 institutes at nine locations. For more about the JKI see:
→ *www.julius-kuehn.de*

**Max Rubner Institute (MRI) – Federal Research Institute of Nutrition and Food**
The Max Rubner Institute (MRI) focuses its research on consumer health protection in the food and nutrition sector. Five of its nine departments use a cross-product approach, focusing their research on investigating nutritional physiology and health, nutritional behaviour, food safety and bioprocess engineering as well nutritional behaviour. The results of this research are incorporated in recommendations for healthy nutrition. The research work conducted in the other four departments covers specific categories of foodstuffs such as cereals, fats and oils, milk, vegetables and meat. Focusing on the food chain in its entirety (from production to consumption), research at the MRI aims to ensure the safety and quality of food and sustainable food production. For more about the MRI see:
→ *www.mri.bund.de*

## *Higher Federal Authorities*

**Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Security (BVL)**
The BVL uses a wide range of measures to promote and ensure food safety. It issues approvals and coordinates monitoring programmes, cooperating with the German Länder (states). As part of the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed, the BVL ensures the flow of information between the EU and the German Länder. In the course of its international cooperation activities, the BVL has for many years collaborated intensively with partner authorities and also provides support to authorities in producing countries in building sustainable food safety structures. As a member of committees and bodies in various international organisations, the BVL also engages in lively exchange of knowledge and experience at international level. For more information see:
→ *www.bvl.bund.de*

**Federal Plant Variety Office (BSA)**
The BSA is an independent higher federal authority within the remit of the BMEL. It conducts multi-annual variety tests for the issuance of variety protection and variety authorisation. Plant variety protection takes the form of breeders' exclusive rights, similar to a patent for the commercial production and commercial distribution of seed and propagating material of new varieties, which is granted to the breeder of a variety for a period of 25 or 30 years. Variety approval is one of the prerequisites under public law for commercial sale of seeds for agricultural plant varieties and vegetable varieties covered by the German Seed Act (SaatG). The BSA has a coordinating function, particularly with regard to international activities on the seed market (EU, OECD, ECE, FAO Standing Committee on Seeds and Propagating Material), represents Germany at meetings of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) and on the Management Committee of the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), and sets the technical standards for plant variety protection and seed law. In the course of BMEL cooperation projects, the BSA supports third countries in developing and establishing plant variety and seed systems. In recent years, efforts have focused in particular on a range of countries in Africa and Asia. For more information see:
→ *www.bundessortenamt.de/bsa/en/the-bundessortenamt*

# Our experts: Agencies in BMEL's remit

*Legally Independent Institutions*

Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung

**Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR)**
The BfR is an independent research institution that assesses risks to consumer health and uses its finding to make recommendations to minimise those risks. It is responsible for all areas of food safety and consumer health protection. Risks to health can arise from residues and contaminants in food and feed, food additives and ingredients, and micro-organisms in and on foods and consumer goods. These risks are assessed by BfR researchers who actively communicate their findings to a wide audience. The core focus of the BfR's work is the development of modern, sensitive detection methods, generation of data in the course of risk analysis for exposure estimates, risk recognition, early risk detection and risk minimisation, the evaluation, development and validation of alternative and complementary methods for animal testing, and risk communication and risk perception. Closely based on its statutory tasks, the BfR conducts research with the aim of closing knowledge gaps about the risks related to food, chemicals, consumer products and biocidal substances, and ensuring scientific expertise in risk assessment. Its researchers work closely with national and international research institutes and organisations. They represent Germany as experts in their field and work to improve food safety worldwide. For more about the BfR see:
→ *www.bfr.bund.de*

Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung

**Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE)**
The BLE is the central implementing authority within the scope of the BMEL remit. It performs a wide range of specialist and administrative services and sees itself as a central service provider. The BLE functions as the German market organisation body in the fields of the EU agricultural market and external trade regulations and carries out conformity checks on fruit and vegetables. In addition, the BLE implements nationwide programs to promote healthy nutrition, organic farming and biodiversity. The networks involved in many Federal Government and Länder (state) activities in rural areas all converge at the BLE. Serving as a project management agency for the BMEL, it oversees numerous national and international research projects in the areas of agriculture, food and consumer protection, as well as projects on international sustainable forest management, including forestry knowledge transfer. At international level, the BLE assists the BMEL in general issues involving international cooperation and global food, and assumes tasks involving EU research coordination.
For more about the BLE see:
→ *www.ble.de*

## *Institutional beneficiaries*

The **German Biomass Research Centre (Biomasseforschungszentrum gGmbH, DBFZ**)
The DBFZ is the central research institution of the Federal Government for all fields of research in the area of bioenergy. It aims to provide comprehensive support for the efficient integration of biomass as a valuable resource for a sustainable energy supply within the framework of applied research and to establish a network with the research institutions working in this field at the same time. Bioenergy can be harnessed as a gaseous or liquid bioenergy source from different raw materials via different technological conversion concepts or it can be used directly for electricity and the supply of heat. The DBFZ's research priorities focus on applied research. The five research priorities include:
1. Anaerobic processes (biogas production)
2. Biobased fuels and products
3. Intelligent biomass heating technologies
4. Catalytic emission reduction (to reduce emissions during combustion processes of biomass energy sources) and
5. System contribution of biomass (analysis of the contribution of biomass to sustainable energy supply)

To find out more about the DBFZ, please visit:
→ *www.dbfz.de/en*

**FNR (Fachagentur Nachwachsende Rohstoffe e. V., agency for renewable resources)**
FNR is a project executing agency of the BMEL. It was established in 1993 at the initiative of the Federal Government for the purpose of coordinating research, development and demonstration projects in the field of renewable resources. The statutory purpose of FNR is to make an effective and ongoing contribution to the development and use of renewable resources, with special emphasis on sustainability, climate action and efficiency aspects. FNR's main task is to provide expert and administrative support for research projects under the BMEL's "Sustainable Renewable Resources" funding programme. FNR also provides information on selected expert topics related to the bioeconomy and the biogenic use of raw materials. It participates in various projects and initiatives at EU and international level.
In addition, a "Competence and Information Centre on Forests and Wood" was set up at FNR in 2019. This Competence and Information Centre is commissioned by the BMEL and pools activities related to all aspects of the forest and wood sector. To find out more about FNR, please visit:
→ *www.international.fnr.de*

## *Institutions of the Leibniz Association*

**Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF)**
ZALF conducts research on the economically, environmentally and socially sustainable agriculture of the future in cooperation with stakeholders from science, policy circles and practice.
To help tackle global societal challenges such as climate change, food security, biodiversity conservation and resource scarcity, ZALF develops and designs landscape-adjusted farming systems that reconcile the need for plant production with sustainability requirements. To this end, ZALF pools complex landscape data with a unique set of experimental methods, new technologies, computer-based models and socio-economic approaches. ZALF research is systems research: from processes in soils, plants and water, interrelationships at the field and landscape level, to global impacts and consideration of complex interactions between landscape, society and economy.
To find out more about ZALF, please visit:
→ *www.zalf.de*

Other Leibniz Institutes include: Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economics (IAMO), Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering and Bioeconomy (ATB), Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops Großbeeren/Erfurt (IGZ), Leibniz Institute for Food Systems Biology at the Technical University of Munich (Leibniz-LSB@TUM), and the Research Institute for Farm Animal Biology (FBN).

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AA | Federal Foreign Office |
| ACP | Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific |
| AfCFTA | African Continental Free Trade Area |
| AGRA | Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa |
| AKTC | Zambian-German Agricultural Knowledge and Training Centre |
| AMIS | Agricultural Market Information System |
| APD | Agricultural Policy Dialogue |
| ARBE | Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment |
| AU | African Union |
| AUC | African Union Commission |
| BCP | Bilateral Cooperation Programme |
| BfR | Federal Institute for Risk Assessment |
| BMBF | Federal Ministry of Education and Research |
| BMEL | Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture |
| BMWK | Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action |
| BMZ | Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| BTF | Bilateral Trust Fund with the FAO |
| BVL | Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety |
| CAADP | Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CFS | Committee on World Food Security |
| CGIAR | Global research partnership for a food-secure future |
| CGRFA | Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture |
| CSDDD | EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive |

| | |
|---|---|
| CTF | Codex Trust Fund |
| DAAD | German Academic Exchange Service |
| DSI | Department of Science and Innovation (South Africa) |
| ECA | Economic Commission for Africa |
| EFI | European Forest Institute |
| EPA | Economic Partnership Agreement |
| EU | European Union |
| EUDR | EU Regulation on Deforestation-free Products |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN |
| FinW | funding guideline for international sustainable forest management |
| FLI | Friedrich Loeffler Institute |
| G20 | Group of the 20 major industrialised and threshold countries |
| G7 | Group of the seven most developed countries |
| GAAF | German-African Agribusiness Forum |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GFFA | Global Forum for Food and Agriculture |
| GIB | Global Initiative on Bioeconomy |
| GISCO | German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa |
| GSP | European Generalised System of Preferences |
| HLPE | High-Level Panel of Experts of the Committee on World Food Security |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| IPPC | International Plant Protection Convention |
| ISFM | Integrated soil fertility management |
| ITD | Innovation and Transformation Dialogue |

| | |
|---|---|
| ITPGRFA | International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture |
| ITTO | International Tropical Timber Organisation |
| JKI | Julius Kühn Institute |
| LkSG | Supply Chain Due Diligence Act |
| NRF | National Research Foundation South Africa |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda |
| SPS | Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards |
| STDF | Standards and Trade Development Facility |
| TBT | Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade |
| TI | Thünen Institute |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |
| UNEA | United Nations Environment Assembly |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| UNFF | United Nations Forum on Forests. |
| UNFSS | United Nations Food Systems Summit |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WOAH | World Organisation for Animal Health |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

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