

The UN Secretary-General lauds the African Union (AU) Common African Agro-Parks, (CAAPs) and African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as potential for increasing agricultural productivity and expanding intra-African trade during his message at the ongoing Africa Food Summit Dakar 2 in Senegal. The three-day Summit, hosted by His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal and Chairperson of the African Union, and co-hosted by the African Development Bank Group, kicked off yesterday, January 25, 2023. The Summit has brought together governments, private sector investors, multilateral organizations, NGOs, and scientists to meet the escalating challenge of food insecurity in Africa.

In a written statement by the UN Secretary General, H.E. Antonio Guterres, addressing the honorable dignitaries and distinguished invited guests and organizations present on day one of the Africa Food Summit in Dakar through a representative of the UN, he expressed his admiration to the continent's leaders for joining forces to share ideas, mobilize assistance, harness knowledge, and technology to forge solutions to feed the people of Africa and unleash the continent's tremendous food and agricultural potential.

He addressed the vulnerability of African agriculture to climate risk and fragmented value chains, stating strongly that the transformation of the African food system is critical to alleviating poverty, advancing food security, promoting sustainable development, and creating productive jobs, most especially for women and the youth.

He then praised the African Union Commission initiative, the Common African Agro-Parks (CAAPs) program, and the full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), emphasizing how these have enormous potential for increasing agricultural productivity, building agricultural value chains, expanding trade, and, most importantly, intra-African trade.

According to [H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko](#), the African Union's Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Development, "the CAAPs initiative is to establish a number of cross-border agro-industrial parks within the regional economic communities." Conceptualized in 2019, the program is one of the concrete initiatives of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) in support of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Malabo commitments, particularly "tripling intra-African trade for agricultural commodities and services."

The CAAPs also intend to provide over 8 million job opportunities within the crop and livestock value chains. The transboundary dimension of the CAAPs presents vast potential for developing cross-border market linkages to connect all agro-park initiatives to respond to Africa's food gap, which is presently filled largely by imports. CAAPs is being implemented by the African Union Commission (AUC), Afrexim Bank, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Food and Agriculture Organization, member states, and regional economic communities. CAAPS, a 37-million-dollar investment, has already received USD 0.5 million in seed capital from Afreximbank. It has planned holding Investors' forum to be held on the margins of the 36th Ordinary Session Of The African Union (Au) Assembly, February 17th 2023, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.