

Agrifood Systems Can Drive Employment Expansion Across Africa: New Report

The Malabo Montpellier Panel presents a policy blueprint to scale agrifood interventions for decent work, inclusive growth, and rural transformation.

KIGALI, RWANDA, July 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Agrifood systems are central to Africa's

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employment challenge yet also offer a major pathway to its solution, according to a new report from the Malabo Montpellier Panel of experts.

Launched on July 8 at the Malabo Montpellier [Forum](#), the publication demonstrates that agrifood systems can generate the productive jobs needed for Africa's rapidly growing youth population, provided the right policies are in place to accelerate transformation and ensure these jobs are productive, resilient, and accessible to all.

“[Job Harvests](#): Policy Innovations for Inclusive Agrifood Employment in Africa” examines employment in Africa's

agrifood systems and rural economies through the lens of structural transformation, analyzing the constraints and enablers of inclusive agrifood employment. Drawing on case studies from Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Rwanda, the report highlights scalable institutional and policy innovations and programmatic interventions that have driven progress in economy-wide labor productivity, structural change, and the creation of decent, quality jobs.

It is estimated that around 70 million young people in Africa are not currently in employment, education, or training, and, by 2040, Africa will need to create around two million jobs per month to absorb new entrants into the labor market.

The central challenge is to create employment that is productive, secure, resilient, and inclusive, particularly for youth and women.

“Africa's employment challenge is not about the absence of jobs per se; the quality of employment matters. Safer workplaces, fairer opportunities, stronger skills systems, and more resilient livelihoods are essential to ensuring that agrifood transformation improves lives,” said Dr. Ousmane Badiane, Co-Chair of the Malabo Montpellier Panel and Executive Chairperson at AKADEMIYA2063.

“Addressing interconnected challenges—including demographic pressures, climate change, weak infrastructure, insecure land rights, limited access to finance, and fragmented policy implementation—requires accelerated structural transformation and renewed focus on skills and entrepreneurship. This is essential to enable agrifood systems to drive inclusive employment and broader economic transformation. Evidence from ‘Job Harvests’ provides an integrated approach to achieving this.”

The analysis highlights an integrated action agenda linking productivity growth, value chain development, rural industrialization, digital transformation, and skills development.

“A dual approach is called for to harvest the jobs: indirectly creating jobs by accelerated investment in agrifood system productivity, and directly creating jobs with labor-intensive public works building productive rural infrastructure,” said Prof. Joachim von Braun, Co-Chair of the Malabo Montpellier Panel at the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn.

He added: “The African Union [Kampala](#) agenda calls to foster agrifood system growth, and we note in the report that already more than 20 African countries invest in rural public works programs, which were so important for jobs and transformation in China in the past and also in India.”

Case studies from Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Rwanda show how impactful government action can create a more enabling environment for improved labor market outcomes, particularly for youth and women in agrifood systems.

In Ethiopia, initiatives such as the Agricultural Growth Program (AGP), the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), and the Rural Job Opportunity Creation Strategy (RJOC) have strengthened agricultural development, skills, livelihood diversification, and labor market participation. Agricultural Commercialization Clusters have improved farmers’ access to services, aggregation, and markets, while the Industrial Parks Development Corporation (IPDC) has attracted approximately USD 740 million in investment and created nearly 90,000 jobs in less than a decade, many of them for young women.

In Nigeria, improved employment planning and job matching have enhanced labor market coordination, while specialized agricultural universities and the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme have equipped young people with skills for modern agrifood value chains. Between 2015 and 2024, the Bank of Industry (BOI) mobilized more than USD 7 billion in catalytic capital, financed more than 5.4 million enterprises, and contributed to the creation of more than 15 million jobs. Through targeted financing for women, youth, and rural enterprises, BOI has expanded inclusive agrifood entrepreneurship and strengthened linkages between smallholder farmers and processing facilities.

In Rwanda, the Chief Skills Office and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Board have improved alignment between training and labor market needs through employer engagement and demand-driven skills programs. The Rwanda Development Board (RDB) has

strengthened the business-friendly environment, attracting investment in agribusiness, agro-processing, horticulture, dairy, and logistics. Rural transformation has been supported by the Girinka (One Cow per Poor Family) program, which distributed more than 460,000 cows by early 2024, helping increase milk production to over 1 million metric tons. The program has raised livestock productivity, boosting daily milk yields by about 50 percent. The National Agriculture Insurance Scheme has enrolled more than 650,000 farmers and disbursed nearly USD 3.5 million in subsidies to protect against climate and other shocks.

Expanding inclusive agrifood employment across the continent can be supported through targeted policy interventions that position productive agrifood employment at the core of national development strategies; equip youth and women with the skills to transform agrifood systems; address informality and strengthen worker protections; mobilize innovative financing and private investment; build digital ecosystems to support rural employment and agrifood innovation; invest in labor-intensive rural infrastructure to create jobs and strengthen rural economies; and harmonize labor market statistics across countries.

The Malabo Montpellier Panel's recommendations below draw on the experiences of the three countries and the key factors underlying their success.

- Prioritize agricultural productivity growth as the foundation for broader employment transformation.
- Ensure skills development is demand-driven and directly connected to growth sectors.
- Strengthen employment policies to advance decent work, productivity, and inclusive labor markets, and advance occupational safety and health systems to improve job quality.
- Expand and strengthen the quality of public works and integrate with social protection.
- Strengthen one-stop business support institutions to lower barriers to enterprise growth, increase formal job creation, and expand digital labor and market information platforms to improve job matching and market access.
- Strengthen high-level institutional coordination to support integrated employment outcomes.

With implementation of the Kampala CAADP Strategy and Action Plan (2026–2035) under way, African countries have an opportunity to strengthen agrifood systems as engines of better jobs, food security, poverty reduction, climate resilience, industrialization, and inclusive growth. This will require coherent policies, capable institutions, sustained investment, and inclusive implementation.

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