



# *The Farmers Digest*

A COMPILATION OF NEWS FROM EAFF FAMILY

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## AIRTEA PROJECTS CLOSE-OUT AND CAPITALIZATION MEETING HELD IN RWANDA



*Participants pose for a group photo during the event*

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## AIRTEA PROJECTS CLOSE-OUT AND CAPITALIZATION MEETING HELD IN RWANDA



*EAFF Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Stephen Muchiri gives his remarks during the meeting*

**Ruhengeri, Musanze, March 24–28, 2025** – The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF) joined key stakeholders for the official close-out and capitalization meeting of the Strengthening Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Ecosystem for Inclusive Rural Transformation and Livelihoods in Eastern Africa (AIRTEA) project in Rwanda.

The primary aim of the meeting was to assess the impact of the AIRTEA project and compile valuable insights gained during its execution. Discussions focused on documenting and sharing the project's successes, challenges, and lessons learned, as well as identifying and disseminating best practices and innovative approaches. Additionally, the event provided an opportunity to foster collaboration and networking among stakeholders while informing future programming and policy directions in beneficiary countries.

The AIRTEA project, a transformative initiative aimed at strengthening agricultural knowledge and innovation ecosystems across Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, brought together representatives from academic and research institutions, government agencies, farmer cooperatives, and SMEs. Participants reflected on the project's key achievements, shared challenges faced, and documented critical lessons learned to guide future interventions in the region.

Since its launch in February 2021, the AIRTEA project has played a pivotal role in closing gaps in agricultural knowledge and innovation across East Africa. With a strong focus on empowering women and youth through entrepreneurial skills development and inclusive platforms, the project has helped transform rural economies and strengthen food systems.

Key achievements include the establishment and enhancement of multi-stakeholder innovation platforms in Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda; training of farmers in improved agricultural practices; development of digital tools to boost knowledge-sharing and market access; and creation of market linkages for key crops such as cassava, potatoes, and indigenous vegetables. The project has also promoted value addition and provided agribusiness mentorship, contributing to improved profitability and expanded employment opportunities.





## AIRTEA PROJECTS CLOSE-OUT AND CAPITALIZATION MEETING HELD IN RWANDA

Over the past three years, AIRTEA-supported third-party projects have implemented a wide range of initiatives across agricultural value chains, including aquaculture, crop production, livestock, and ICT. Through a competitive grants program, funding was provided to third-party actors to drive innovation and promote sustainable agricultural practices. As the project enters its final phase, a recent meeting was convened to capture and share the best practices and innovative approaches developed during implementation.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Telesphore Ndabamenye, Director General of the Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board, praised the AIRTEA third-party projects for their role in empowering women and youth, enhancing entrepreneurial skills, and expanding access to inclusive platforms.

On his part, EAFF CEO Mr. Stephen Muchiri expressed his deep appreciation to the European Union (EU) for their generous financial support and strategic partnership throughout the AIRTEA project. He emphasized that the EU's commitment to strengthening agricultural innovation ecosystems has made a tangible difference in the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, especially women and youth, across the region. Mr. Muchiri also acknowledged the dedication of project partners, including academic and research institutions, government agencies, and farmer organizations, whose collective efforts contributed to the project's success. He reiterated EAFF's commitment to building on the gains made and working with partners to scale up successful innovations across Eastern Africa.

The meeting resulted in several key outcomes, including the development of a comprehensive report detailing the achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from third-party projects. An inventory of best practices, success stories, case studies, and lessons was compiled to inform future project design and implementation. The event also strengthened networks among stakeholders and partners, fostering continued collaboration. Moreover, actionable recommendations were developed for future programming and policy decisions aimed at enhancing agricultural transformation in the region.

By leveraging collaboration and digital innovation, AIRTEA has played a critical role in enhancing agricultural production, processing, and market access, particularly for women and youth. As the project concludes, stakeholders pledged to remain committed to sustaining its impact and scaling up successful initiatives to ensure continued growth in the agricultural sector. The outcomes of this meeting will serve as a roadmap for future agricultural development programs, reinforcing the importance of knowledge-sharing and multi-stakeholder engagement in driving sustainable agricultural transformation in East Africa.





## EAFF, AfDB, PAFO CALL FOR STREAMLINED FINANCING FOR SMALLHOLDER FARMERS



The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF), African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Pan African Farmers Organization (PAFO) have called for entrenched financing for smallholder farmers across the continent aimed at scaling up food production. The organizations called on African governments to fast-track infrastructure constraints in financing for smallholder farmers that they contend is a major stumbling block.

According to the delegates at the scaling summit, smallholder farmers remain the backbone of Africa's agricultural economy, contributing 80 percent of the continent's food production. However, only 6 percent have access to finance. They face a staggering \$75 billion annual financing gap, exacerbated by challenges such as limited access to credit, inadequate agricultural inputs, and climate change impacts.

Beth Dunford, Vice President of Agriculture, Human, and Social Development at AfDB, emphasized the need for sustainable solutions to these challenges in her opening remarks. "We gather today in recognition of a fundamental truth; Africa cannot feed itself without its smallholder farmers," she stated.

"Africa's smallholder farmers are the foundation of rural economies, yet they face significant obstacles to access finance."





## EAFF, AFDB, PAFO CALL FOR STREAMLINED FINANCING FOR SMALLHOLDER FARMERS



*EAFF President, Ms. Elizabeth Nsimadala gives her remarks during the panel discussion*

On his part, PAFO president Ibrahima Coulibaly called on sustained innovation by governments and non-state actors to ensure finance for the smallholder sector.

“We all need more inclusion and innovations, we must create room for new solutions.”

His sentiments were echoed by Equity Bank CEO, who called for renewed focus on addressing challenges such as price volatility as well as post-harvest losses that hinder profitability in the sector.

Despite smallholder farmers' critical role in food security and economic development, less than 6 percent of them currently have access to credit, and fewer than 20 percent use improved seeds.

Speaking at a panel discussion on smallholder financing, EAFF President, Ms. Elizabeth Nsimadala emphasized that while key stakeholders understand the challenges and solutions, the financing gap

persists because smallholder farmers are often viewed as mere recipients rather than economic partners in agricultural transformation. EAFF highlighted that collectively, smallholder farmers are the largest investors in agriculture, yet they receive only a fraction of available financing

***“Despite smallholder farmers' critical role in food security and economic development, less than 6 percent of them currently have access to credit, and fewer than 20 percent use improved seeds”***



## EAFF, AFDB, PAFO CALL FOR STREAMLINED FINANCING FOR SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

Ms. Nsimadala called for a shift in perspective to recognize smallholder farmers as key drivers of agricultural growth and ensure they receive the necessary financial support to scale their impact.

Elizabeth emphasized the importance of partnerships and ecosystem collaboration in the agricultural sector but challenged the current approach to financing and investment. She questioned the effectiveness of warehouse receipt systems, pointing out that existing infrastructure mainly benefits millers, who compete with farmers' organizations.

She also highlighted Africa's \$50 billion food import bill, arguing that if this amount were invested in smallholder farmers to double their production, it could significantly reduce dependency on imports and create wealth within the continent.

Addressing climate change, she noted that while green financing and climate funds exist, smallholder farmers lack the capacity to develop bankable proposals to access these funds. She urged institutions like the African Development Bank to provide technical assistance and business advisory support, ensuring that smallholder farmers can turn their innovations into viable, fundable solutions.

The two-day conference seeks to address these challenges by fostering innovation in financing models, such as risk-sharing facilities, blended finance, and the use of digital platforms.



EAFF President, Ms. Elizabeth Nsimadala during the panel discussion on the landscape of smallholder financing in Africa



## EAFF AND SOLFOOD PROJECT PARTNERS ENGAGE FARMERS ON AFLATOXIN MANAGEMENT AND FOOD SAFETY IN KENYA



**M**arch 24–28, 2025, Nairobi, Kenya – The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF), together with German and Kenyan partners under the SolFood initiative, conducted a series of visits and engagements with farmers in Makueni County to promote aflatoxin management, food safety, and agricultural innovations.

During the field visits, farmers emphasized the vital role indigenous crop varieties play in reducing aflatoxin infestation. They also stressed the importance of collective action through cooperatives and farmers' associations, which have been crucial in amplifying their voices and accessing emerging market opportunities, including cross-border trade.

"Smallholder farmers (SHFs) must treat farming as a business," urged Mr. Philip Kiriro, Chairman of EAFF E-Granary Ltd. "It's critical that maize and other crops are produced and brought to the market. Given that most SHFs consume much of their produce, ensuring food safety is paramount."

The delegation also visited the Agricultural Mechanization Research Institute (AMRI), headquartered at Katumani, Machakos County. Established in November 2015, AMRI is one of the 16 research institutes under the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO).

The institute's core mandate is to generate and disseminate agricultural mechanization technologies and innovations across Kenya's livestock and crop value chains. The visit provided valuable insights into how mechanization can help smallholder farmers boost productivity, improve efficiency, and enhance food safety practices. Participants at the engagements further discussed the need for stronger channels to disseminate information on new agricultural technologies, thereby strengthening extension services across the region. EAFF highlighted its E-Granary platform — a digital innovation supporting commodity aggregation — as a vital tool for improving farmers' access to markets and technology in Kenya and Uganda.



## EAFF AND SOLFOOD PROJECT PARTNERS ENGAGE FARMERS ON AFLATOXIN MANAGEMENT AND FOOD SAFETY IN KENYA

To address ongoing challenges, EAFF emphasized the importance of collaboration with research institutions and development partners. "That is why we work with experts from organizations like KALRO, the German MRI, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), and the University of Nairobi (UoN)," Mr. Kiriro noted. "Through technical and resource support, we are building the capacity farmers need to succeed."

Aflatoxin contamination, a persistent challenge causing major post-harvest losses, was a key focus of the discussions. The main contributing factors identified include limited farmer capacity to adopt new technologies, weak linkages between researchers and farmers, poor information dissemination, and inadequate farmer training.

"Addressing aflatoxin risks demands integrated management throughout the entire value chain," said Mr. Kiriro. "With climate change and rising concerns over food security, agricultural research, innovation, and partnerships have become more important than ever."

EAFF continues to play an active role in the Prevention of Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) initiative, a continental platform advancing aflatoxin-free agricultural production and trade. EAFF's strategic priorities include:.



*EAFF Ltd Chairman, Mr. Philip Kiriro, addresses farmers during the field visit and farmers engagement of aflatoxin*

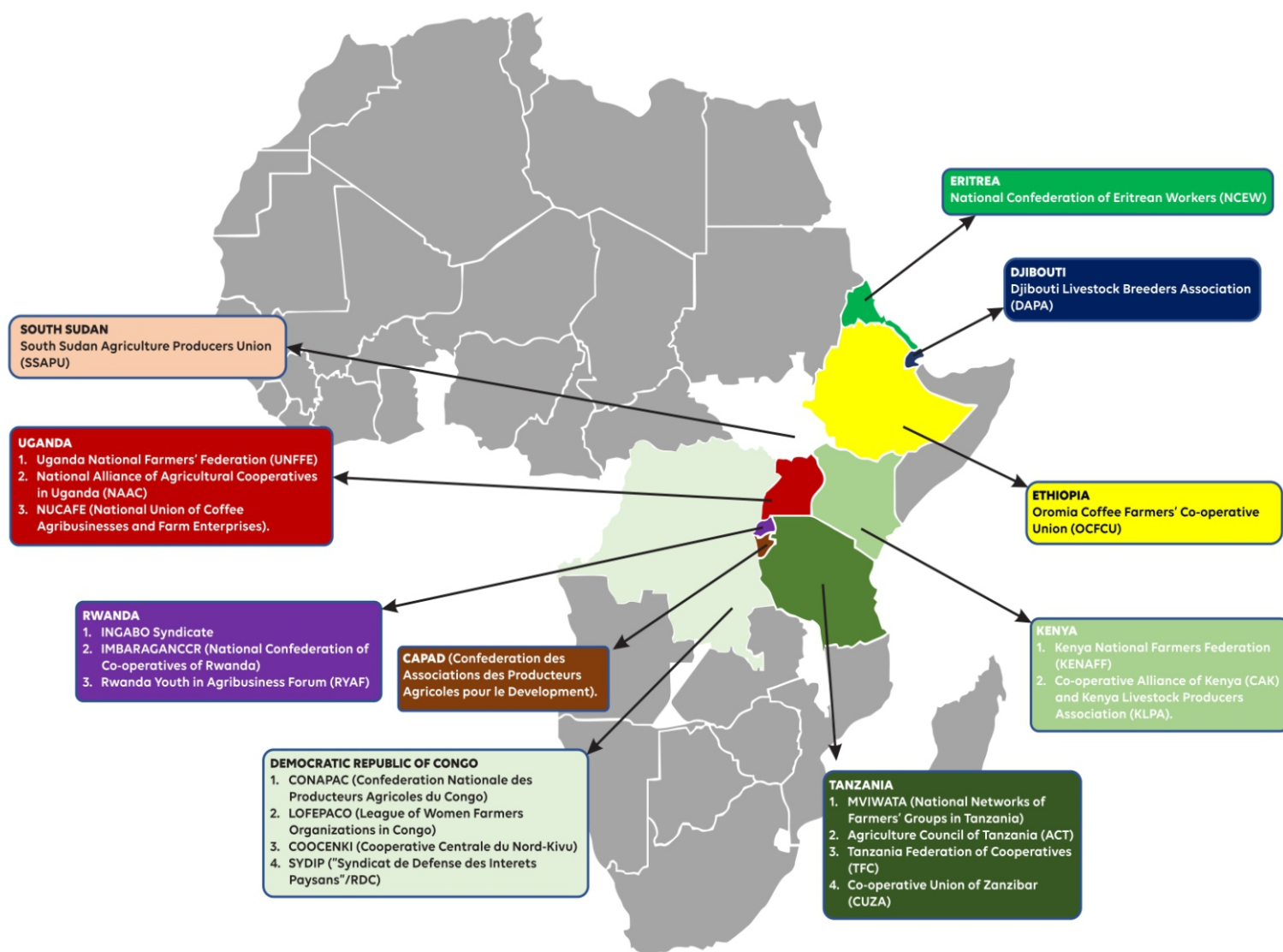


## Quote of the Month

**"The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways."  
- John F. Kennedy**



## EAFF MEMBERSHIP



**We believe that farmers are the backbone of Africa's economy and that empowering them is key to food security, economic growth, and sustainable development. At the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF), we are committed to championing the rights, interests, and prosperity of farmers by advocating for policies that support inclusive agricultural transformation, access to markets, and value addition.**





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