

Policy Paper

**Agro ecology Framework Perspective on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture
Development Programme Strategy and Action Plan: 2026-2035**



Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana

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1. Introduction

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Strategy and Action Plan for 2026-2035 sets a vision for transforming Africa's agricultural systems through sustainable, inclusive, and resilient practices. While the strategy addresses key challenges in agriculture, food security, climate resilience, and economic growth, there is a need to assess how it aligns with the principles of agroecology. This is crucial since the drafting of the CAADP strategy was a broad and widely inclusive process, that solicited input from a wide range of actors both within and outside the continent. Our participation at the Technical working group meetings and analysis of memos, proposals and input submitted to the African Union Commission (AUC) revealed a heavy dose of proposals by stakeholders on the promotion and adoption of agroecology as a cardinal point for the new agenda for African Agriculture. The agroecology framework, which emphasizes diversity, resilience, synergies, recycling, co-creation of knowledge, human and social values, and responsible governance, provides a holistic approach to sustainable agricultural transformation. This framework is championed by several actors and stakeholders including State and Non-State Actors made up of farmer groups, researchers, the private sector, Civil Society Organizations, among others., promoting agroecology, circular economy, climate action, and ecosystem services in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This report analyzes the CAADP Strategy from the perspective of agroecology, identifies synergies, and highlights gaps requiring specialized policy guidance.

2. Synergies Between the CAADP Strategy and Agroecology Framework

A. Sustainable Food Production and Ecosystem Services

The CAADP Strategy emphasizes sustainable food production practices such as conservation agriculture, integrated pest management, and sustainable land management. These align closely with agroecological practices that prioritize soil health, water conservation, and biodiversity. Agroecology encourages crop rotation, polyculture systems, and agroforestry, which not only enhance productivity but also build ecosystem resilience. The focus on habitat restoration and pollinator services in the strategy supports biodiversity conservation, a core principle of agroecology. This synergy promotes both food security and ecological sustainability.

B. Climate Action and Resilience Building

CAADP's adoption of climate-smart agriculture, crop diversification, and the promotion of renewable energy technologies like solar-powered irrigation aligns with the agroecological approach of building climate resilience. Agroecology's emphasis on diversified and adaptive farming systems reduces reliance on external inputs and enhances resilience to climatic shocks. The integration of early warning systems and digital tools within CAADP supports the anticipatory and adaptive capacities needed for resilient food systems, echoing agroecological principles of proactive management.

C. Circular Economy and Value Chain Development

The CAADP Strategy integrates circular economy principles by promoting sustainable value chains, nutrient-dense indigenous foods, and reducing post-harvest losses. These align with agroecology's focus on local economies, nutrient recycling, and minimizing waste. Practices such as organic and biofertilizer use, agro-processing, and value-added production align with agroecological goals of reducing dependency on non-renewable inputs and closing nutrient cycles. This synergy is essential for building sustainable and resilient food systems.

D. Inclusivity, Social Equity, and Community Resilience

CAADP's focus on integrating women, youth, and marginalized groups into agricultural value chains, and decision-making processes resonates with agroecology's emphasis on social equity, co-creation of knowledge, and community participation. By promoting participatory approaches, capacity building, and farmer-led research, CAADP aligns with the agroecological principle of ensuring that agricultural transformation is inclusive and socially just. Strengthening local governance and rural development programs that support smallholders and indigenous communities further amplifies this synergy.

3. Gaps Needing Specialized Policy Guide

Despite the synergies identified, several critical gaps within the CAADP Strategy need to be addressed through specialized policy guidance that fully integrates agroecology, circular economy, and climate action principles.

A. Lack of Integration of Agroecology as a Holistic Approach

While the CAADP Strategy promotes various sustainable practices, it lacks a cohesive policy that integrates these efforts under an agroecological framework. Specialized guidance is needed to bring together conservation agriculture, organic farming, and indigenous knowledge systems into a unified agroecological approach. This policy should emphasize the enhancement of ecosystem services, soil health, and biodiversity conservation as fundamental to agricultural transformation.

B. Limited Emphasis on the Circular Economy in Agricultural Policies

Although there is a focus on reducing food loss and waste, the CAADP Strategy does not fully integrate circular economy principles across all levels of value chain development. Specialized policies are needed to incentivize the recycling of organic waste, the use of locally produced bioinputs, and the development of small-scale agro-processing systems that minimize waste and reduce emissions. A comprehensive circular economy policy would support the transition towards regenerative agricultural systems.

C. Insufficient Focus on Climate Mitigation Strategies

The CAADP Strategy includes adaptation and resilience measures but lacks concrete steps for reducing greenhouse gas emissions within agricultural systems. For instance, methane management in livestock and rice production and carbon sequestration through agroforestry are not adequately addressed. A specialized policy guide should focus on integrating mitigation practices such as low-emission livestock management, no-till agriculture, and carbon farming methods that align with international climate goals like the Paris Agreement.

D. Ecosystem Services Not Explicitly Recognized and Valued

While the strategy mentions biodiversity and soil health, it lacks explicit policies that value ecosystem services such as pollination, water regulation, and soil carbon sequestration. A specialized policy guide should focus on developing mechanisms like Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) and frameworks that incentivize farmers to maintain and enhance natural habitats. This would align agricultural policies with broader environmental and biodiversity conservation goals.

E. Weak Policy Coherence Across Sectors

There is a need for stronger coherence between agriculture, environment, energy, and trade policies to effectively implement agroecological and circular economy principles. The ACE4ES project can champion the development of inter-sectoral policies that align agricultural practices with ecosystem conservation, renewable energy initiatives, and sustainable trade policies. Such coherence is vital for creating an enabling environment that supports integrated and sustainable food systems.

4. Recommendations for Specialized Policy Guide Development

To address the gaps identified, the following recommendations are proposed for developing specialized policies aligned with the agroecology framework:

A. Agroecology and Ecosystem Services

- Develop a policy framework that promotes agroecology as a holistic approach, emphasizing the enhancement of ecosystem services such as biodiversity, soil health, and water regulation.
- Establish guidelines for integrating agroforestry, pollinator-friendly habitats, and mixed cropping systems into national and regional agricultural plans.
- Promote agroecological practices that support ecosystem restoration and carbon sequestration, aligning with climate action goals.

B. Circular Economy Integration

- Formulate policies that encourage the recycling of agricultural by-products, the promotion of bio fertilizers, and the reduction of food loss through improved storage and processing facilities.
- Create incentives for smallholder farmers and SMEs to adopt circular economy models such as composting organic waste and local biogas production.
- Integrate circular economy principles across all stages of the value chain, from input supply to final consumer products.

C. Climate Action: Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies

- Develop guidelines addressing climate mitigation in agricultural systems, including methane management in livestock and rice production and carbon sequestration through agroforestry and soil conservation.
- Overhaul investment strategies towards smart organic fertilizer subsidies, thus encourage the significant investment in sustainable agriculture, which focuses largely on improving soil health while reducing dependency on synthesized inputs.
- Align these strategies with international climate agreements and seek funding opportunities from global green finance mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund.
- Promote low-emission technologies and practices that enhance resilience while reducing carbon footprints.

D. Valuing Ecosystem Services

- Design and implement mechanisms for Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) to incentivize farmers for maintaining and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Integrate ecosystem service valuation into national agricultural and environmental planning, ensuring that policies reflect the importance of preserving natural capital.
- Promote investment in biodiversity conservation programs that align with sustainable agricultural practices.

E. Strengthening Governance and Policy Coherence

- Establish inter-ministerial platforms for coordinated policy development that align agriculture, environment, and trade sectors under a unified agroecological and circular economy framework.
- Engage local communities, farmer organizations, and civil society in policy formulation and implementation to ensure ownership and accountability.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that track policy impacts and adjust strategies as needed to ensure long-term sustainability and resilience.

5. Conclusion

The CAADP Strategy and Action Plan: 2026-2035 shows significant alignment with agroecology principles, particularly in sustainable food production, climate resilience, circular economy, and social inclusivity. However, critical gaps remain that need to be addressed through specialized policy guidance. The ACE4ES project has a unique opportunity to champion agroecology, circular economy, and climate action through a comprehensive policy guide that integrates these elements, ensuring sustainable and resilient agricultural transformation across Africa. Coordinated efforts among stakeholders are essential to leverage these synergies and fill the identified gaps, driving Africa's agri-food systems towards a sustainable, equitable, and climate-resilient future.

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