

Issue



CEA-FIRST
Consortium Europe-Africa on Research and Innovation for Food Systems Transformation

September 2025

04 Newsletter

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



EIT Food has launched the **Proof-of-Concept Co-Financing Instrument** designed to financially de-risk commercial collaborations between agrifood startups and corporates, helping promising solutions reach the market faster.

[Details here](#)

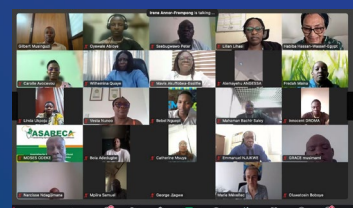
FS4AFRICA OC 1 aims to provide financial support to research and technology stakeholders. Targets: start-ups, SMEs, research organisations from all African countries. Deadline: **30 September 2025**.

[Read more](#)



Farming in a changing climate demands resilient innovations, equitable access, and strong partnerships. In this fourth edition of the CEA-FIRST Newsletter, we bring you concrete updates from across the Africa-Europe FNSSA (Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture) landscape. You'll find the newly developed **International Research Consortium (IRC) Strategy and Operational Plan**, fresh calls for **IRC membership and Working Groups**, and a new **Clustering Tool** to map research and innovation networks. We also spotlight the **Gender and Youth Strategy**—moving from commitments to measurable inclusion, with targets for women's and youth leadership across FNSSA initiatives.

Beyond project updates, this issue curates funding opportunities (from Horizon Europe to CFC, FS4Africa, EIT Food, and women- and youth-focused grants), a rich calendar of upcoming events from Uppsala to Cape Town and Brussels, and new courses, publications, and datasets that can strengthen your work. Whether you are a researcher, a programme manager, farmer, agri-business man/woman, funder, or youth leader, this newsletter connects you to the partnerships, tools, and opportunities shaping sustainable food systems today.



Consultation on the IRC on FNSSA - Strategy and Operational Plan

Through consultation with external stakeholders at national, regional and continental level, we have developed a Strategy and Operational Plan, which provides a unified framework to operationalize the International Research Consortium (IRC) on Food, Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) under the AU-EU partnership. There were identified key areas where IRC can contribute as well as IRC's essential roles and added value.

[Read more](#)

Calls for IRC membership

The National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa launched calls for funders to join the IRC during the Joint GEH-FOSC Meeting on 28 May 2025 in Montpellier, France, the Sustainability Research and Innovation Africa Satellite Event held on 4-6 June 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya, and the High-Level Meeting of African Heads of Research Councils, held on 6 August 2025, in Sandton, South Africa.

However, all researchers, academics, advisers, innovators, funders, practitioners, extension specialists, NGO workers, policy makers, and representatives of youth or women's organizations are invited.



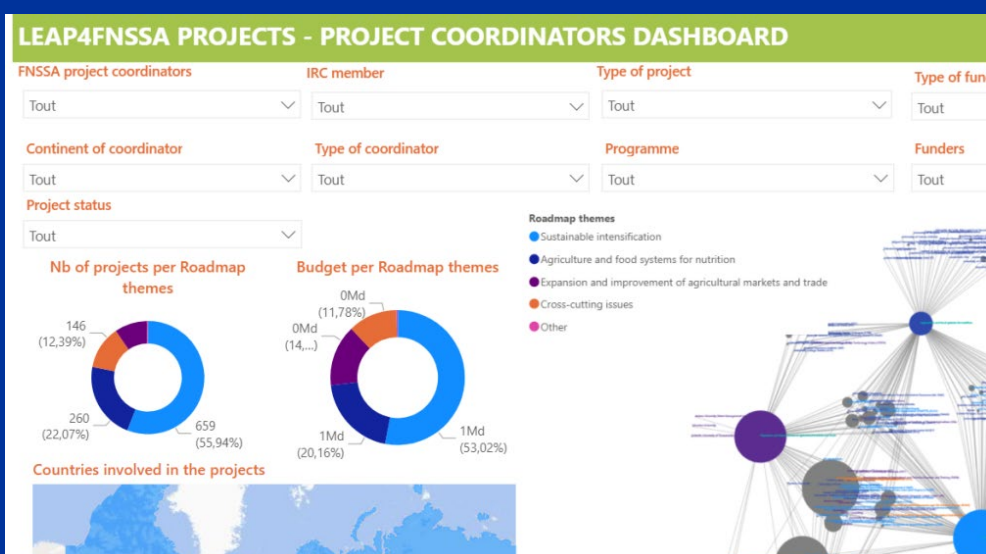
[Read Membership Terms here](#)

[Apply for membership here](#)

IRC clustering tool: a network intelligence tool

To strengthen EU-AU research coordination and knowledge brokerage under the FNSSA partnership, CEA-FIRST has launched a Clustering Tool that maps and analyzes groups of R&I projects and initiatives by theme, geography, and institutions. Building on the LEAP4FNSSA approach, it supports the structuring of the International Research Consortium (IRC) by organizing information on projects, stakeholders, and expertise into meaningful "clusters."

[Access here](#)



The tool also underpins IRC operationalization and links with complementary platforms such as the **FNSSA project database** to power knowledge extraction, and partnerships.

The following dashboards will be accessible to the IRC members:

1. **IRC Members:** find and locate IRC organizations and experts
2. **FNSSA Projects:** explore project coordinators and partner networks
3. **FNSSA Initiatives:** scan programmes and initiatives across FNSSA



The gender and youth strategy for the AU-EU FNSSA partnership stresses that transformation of food systems cannot occur without women and youth as central actors. Building on the CEA-FIRST Gender and Youth Strategy and Action Plan, inputs from YPARD, CORAF and partners call for embedding gender-transformative and youth-responsive approaches directly into the **FNSSA Roadmap 2027-2037**. This includes making gender and youth inclusion a requirement for project eligibility, ensuring Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems track not just participation but also leadership roles, and prioritizing inclusive capacity building—aligned with the AU target of at least 50% women in PhD training.

In the **IRC Functional Working Groups Strategy**, the recommendations go further by requiring women and youth to actively shape decisions and innovation processes. Proposals include at least 30% representation of women and youth in governance, gender- and youth-sensitive MEL indicators with annual reporting dashboards, and institutionalized training in digital, financial, and leadership skills. Communication outputs should also highlight inclusive success stories. Together, these measures shift the FNSSA agenda from rhetorical commitment to concrete, measurable inclusion, ensuring women and youth are co-owners of Africa-Europe food systems transformation.

Next IRC related steps

FNSSA 2027-2036 Roadmap

Establishment of the IRC Functional Working Groups, which act as operational engines of the IRC, designed to deliver function-specific outputs (e.g., research pilots, curricula, policy briefs, innovation partnerships) that are aligned with the Roadmap and embedded in regional contexts.

Launch calls for IRC Working groups' participation, for the following ecosystems: Research; Education; Advisory Services; Policy Think Tank; Agrifood Enterprises; Funding, Gender and Youth (cross-group enabler); Communication (cross-group enabler); and Digitalization (cross-group enabler).



Side events at the Innovation Fair

Co-construction of IRC SOP and IRC Funders Working Group at the Innovation Fair "Enabling that step forward", on 23 October 2025, in Brussels, Belgium.

[Register here](#)

The role of EU-AU R&I strategies in contributing to Africa's food future - Insights from the CEA-FIRST and AfriFOODlinks projects

[Register here](#)

Some Funding Opportunities

The Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) seeks to support transformative, high-impact projects that not only increase smallholder incomes but also contribute to the regeneration of ecosystems. Targets: MEs, cooperatives, social enterprises, NGOs, and public or private sector entities that are based or have active operations in one of more of the 101 member countries.



Deadline:
29 September 2025

[Details here](#)

EIT Food has launched the **Proof-of-Concept Co-Financing Instrument** designed to financially de-risk commercial collaborations between agrifood startups and corporates, helping promising solutions reach the market faster.



Deadline:
**30 September/31 October/
30 November 2025**

[Details here](#)

[Click here for more](#)

Upcoming Events

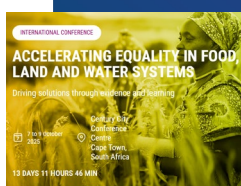
Science for Sustainability 2025, 30 September - 2 October 2025, Helsinki, Finland, Late registration deadline: 16 September.

[Details here](#)



2025 Gender Conference, 7-9 October 2025, Capetown, South Africa, Registration deadline 26 September 2025

[Details here](#)



10th AfriLabs Annual Gathering, 13-15 October 2025, Nairobi, Kenya.

[Details here](#)



SELECTED PUBLICATIONS



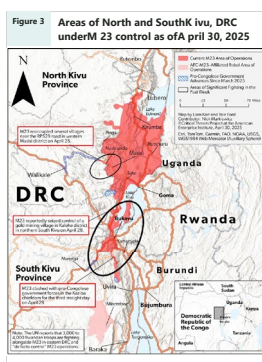
Cedefop (2025, February 11). Skills empower workers in the AI revolution: First findings from Cedefop's AI skills survey (Policy Brief No. TI0124009ENN). Publications Office of the European Union

[Access it here](#)



De LattreGasquet, M., & Rostom, F. (2025, February 22). Foresight for the transformation of agrifood systems through agroecology - Guidance document for decisionmakers and practitioners. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and CIRAD

[Access it here](#)



Famine Early Warning Systems Network. (2025, June 23). Global food security update: June to September 2025. USAID.

[Access it here](#)

Review
'Land Mxing': Regenerative, Remunerative, Productive and Transformative Agriculture to Harness the Six Capitals of Sustainable Development

Page 11. R. Leakey and P. E. Harding
Specialist Advisor
Sustainable Use of Agricultural Landscapes and Rural Development of Sustainable
Agriculture
Dr. Peter B. B. B.



Leakey, R. R. B., & Harding, P. E. (2025). 'Land Mxing': Regenerative, Remunerative, Productive and Transformative Agriculture to Harness the Six Capitals of Sustainable Development. Sustainability, 17(13), 5876.

[Access it here](#)



Agri4D 2025, 23-25 September 2025, Uppsala, Sweden, Registration deadline (for online participation) 23 September 2025.

[Details here](#)



AU-EU HLPD 15 years- Anniversary, celebrated with R&I Senior Officials Meeting, 23-24 October 2025, Brussels, Belgium.

[Details here](#)

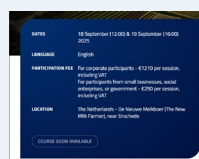


The 2025 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 30), 10-21 November 2025, Belém, Brazil, Registration deadline (for online participation) 9 November 2025

[Details here](#)



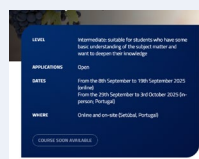
COURSES



SystemShifters in Food

On 18 September (12:00 CET) & 19 September (16:00 CET) 2025, organized by EIT Food, in person, The Netherlands.

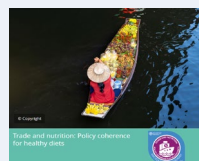
[Details here](#)



Inspire - Circular Agrifood

8th September to 19th September 2025 (online) and 29th September to 3rd October 2025 (in person, Portugal), organized by EIT Food.

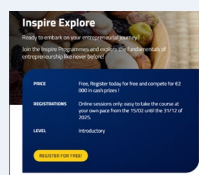
[Details here](#)



Trade and nutrition: Policy coherence for healthy diets

online, organized by FAO elearning Academy, available since July 2025.

[Details here](#)



Inspire - Explore

available all year long, online, organized by EIT Food

[Details here](#)

Join IRC community and live discussions

[Click here](#)

Funding Opportunities

360 WOMAN AFRICA WOMEN-IN- BUSINESS GRANT 2025 dedicated to supporting and empowering women-led businesses across Nigeria.



Deadline:
5 October 2025

[Details here](#)

GREEN MONEY PROJECT: CULTIVATING YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE aimed at empowering Nigerian youth through agriculture.



Deadline:
30 October 2025

[Details here](#)

Building Resilience in Agriculture this funding opportunity will support innovative projects that apply science and innovation in a real-world context, focused on feasible, nature-positive solutions. Target: individual project leaders with sufficient experience leading solutions-based regenerative projects on a farm, in a farming community, or in an impacted landscape adjacent to cultivated land.



Deadline:
30 September 2025

[Details here](#)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: SIPRA CHALLENGE FUND LARGE GRANT FACILITY PROGRAM offers funding for innovative, high impact proposals that address critical challenges in Sudan's rainfed agricultural value chains and interconnected systems, including poultry, livestock, and horticulture.



Deadline:
Rolling

[Details here](#)



DATABASES

Africa-Europe Innovation Platform (AEIP)
A vibrant "network of networks" connecting startups, researchers, investors, and policymakers across Africa and Europe. It fosters inclusive innovation ecosystems and supports the AU-EU Innovation Agenda through capacity building, funding access, and strategic partnerships.

[Access it here](#)

Sub-National Harmonized Food Insecurity Dataset (HFID)

An open-source dataset consolidating IPC, FEWS NET, WFP's FCS, and rCSI indicators. HFID enables predictive modeling and deep analysis of food insecurity trends at sub-national levels—crucial for humanitarian response and policy planning.

[Access it here](#)

EU Transition Pathways Platform

A stakeholder support platform guiding industrial ecosystems, including agri-food, toward greener, more digital, and resilient futures. It's a collaborative space for aligning with the EU Industrial Strategy and accelerating sustainable transformation.

[Access it here](#)

UN Food Systems Hub - Database of Practices

A global repository of good practices submitted by countries and coalitions. It showcases scalable solutions for transforming food systems, from school meal programs to climate-smart agriculture, empowering stakeholders to replicate and adapt successful models.

[Access it here](#)

Videos

The donor dialogue held on 25th June 2025 by the **Strengthening Evidence-Based Policy Practice for Sustainable Food Systems (StEPPFoS)** team spotlighted the urgent need to strengthen the science-policy interface (SPI) in Africa to build resilient, equitable, and nutrition-sensitive food systems.

[Watch it here](#)

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We would very much appreciate your insights about our newsletter, so we can tailor its content to better align with your interests. Kindly take a few minutes to fill in our short survey [here](#)



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