

South-South collaboration: Building business linkages for a thriving and climate- resilient maize sector

**Outcomes and insights from the Agri-Business Facility
for Africa Maize Partners Workshop**

Dates: 20 – 24 October 2025 **Location:** Nairobi, Kenya

Organised by: GIZ – Agri-Business Facility for Africa

Participants: 26 maize value chain partners from 14 African countries



The Agri-Business Facility for Africa (ABF) brought together 26 maize Matching Grant Fund (MGF) partners from 14 African countries for a five-day workshop in Nairobi, Kenya. The event aimed to strengthen collaboration, share innovation and accelerate inclusive agribusiness development. The maize sector, a cornerstone of Africa's food systems, faces shared challenges including market volatility, soil degradation and climate change. ABF's approach recognises that solutions are most effective when they build on collective experience and cross-border cooperation.

Workshop objectives

- Foster knowledge exchange across the maize value chain
- Strengthen cross-border business partnerships
- Promote sustainable, inclusive, circular production and trade models
- Build entrepreneurial and managerial capacity among partners

Workshop agenda

Programme

Day 1

Monday 20 October

- Know my business presentations from the 26 partners
- Group discussions on common and unique practices
- Marketplace B2B bilateral exchange

Day 2

Tuesday 21 October

- Maize sector presentation by the Kenya Ministry of Agriculture
- Support presentations from the Panafrican Centre for Strategic Development (PCSD) and Société de Finances, de Comptabilité et Audit (SOFICAU)
- CIMMYT expert talks on breeding, seed systems and marketing innovations

Day 3

Wednesday 22 October

- Field trip to:
 - National Cereals and Produce Board storage facility
 - Kenya Highland Seed Company
 - MLN disease screening facility in Naivasha

Day 4

Thursday 23 October

- Expert talk and Agribusiness e-Academy presentation
- Pan African Agribusiness Financing and Investment Forum session
- Group SWOT analysis to foster South-South partnerships

Day 5

Friday 24 October

- Partnerships in focus: defining two to three collaboration areas and actions
- Workshop summary with lessons learned and next steps





Key workshop outcomes

The ABF Maize Partners Workshop delivered concrete results that strengthened regional collaboration and advanced sustainable growth in Africa's maize sector. Bringing together 26 companies working in the maize value chain from 14 countries, the event provided a structured platform for dialogue, innovation and partnership building.

Building meaningful partnerships

Collaboration was at the heart of the workshop and the key outcome of the week. Through facilitated networking sessions, thematic discussions and informal exchanges, participants identified areas of mutual interest and complementary expertise. These interactions resulted in the businesses identifying 25 new B2B partnerships across 14 countries, covering technology transfer, research collaboration, improved seed systems, value addition and circular-economy innovation. The partner's perspectives in the quotes captures the workshop's immediate impact: structured dialogue for tangible, cross-border collaboration. Similar outcomes were recorded among partners collaborating to improve seed quality, storage efficiency and sustainable production models.

Strengthening regional cooperation

The workshop strengthened regional integration by fostering trust and alignment across the maize value chain. Partners agreed to pursue joint business proposals and maintain regular communication

through the ABF-MGF, with a shared focus on leveraging opportunities under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Policy engagement sessions, including contributions from the Kenya Ministry of Agriculture, improved participants' understanding of how enabling frameworks support trade, private-sector growth and climate resilience.

Skills gained

Participants significantly enhanced both technical and business capabilities. Sessions on value-chain analysis, partnership management and digital communication provided practical tools to strengthen competitiveness and collaboration. Agronomic sessions further developed skills in seed system management, climate-smart practices, post-harvest handling and compliance with quality standards.

Driving sustainable value-chain impact

Participants collectively committed to advancing climate-smart practices, responsible resource use and gender-inclusive business approaches. These commitments will be tracked through ABF monitoring processes and follow-up events, ensuring that the momentum from Nairobi leads to measurable business partnerships, greater market access and a more resilient maize sector across Africa.





Key lessons learned

Partnerships and collaboration

The workshop reaffirmed the power of collective action. Building on the regional and South-South connections established in the week, participants recognised that long-term success depends on continued dialogue, joint planning and transparent information-sharing. The 25 new partnerships initiated illustrate how trust and facilitation can turn ideas into business opportunities.

Innovation and practice

Field visits and technical exchanges, supported by CIMMYT experts, showcased innovative practices in seed systems, post-harvest storage and climate-smart production. These learnings inspired participants to adopt practical measures that improve productivity while strengthening resilience.

Market orientation

A consistent lesson from the workshop was the need for stronger market alignment across the value chain. Discussions emphasised the importance of building direct linkages with processors, feed producers and regional buyers, alongside improving aggregation, quality consistency and compliance with standards. Strengthening these connections will enable partners to respond to evolving demand, secure more stable offtake agreements and unlock regional trade opportunities.

Over the five days, the ABF Maize Partners Workshop reinforced that collaboration, innovation and shared purpose are at the heart of a thriving and climate-resilient maize sector. Participants gained not only technical insights but also built lasting relationships needed to translate knowledge into tangible outcomes across Africa's maize value chain.

Capacity building

Continuous learning emerged as a shared priority. Investing in farmer training, cooperative management and enterprise development ensures that smallholders and SMEs remain competitive and able to adapt to new technologies and market trends. Field visits, particularly the MLN disease management facility, were valuable for capacity-building, translating technical knowledge into practical, field-level application.

Sustainability mindset

Sustainability is no longer a peripheral concern but a guiding principle. Partners committed to integrating climate resilience, soil health and circular economy thinking into every business decision, ensuring that growth remains both inclusive and environmentally responsible and sustainable.

Inclusion

Participants emphasised that empowering women and youth strengthens innovation and community impact. Dedicated efforts to expand leadership opportunities and access to resources were recognised as essential for equitable value chains.

Policy awareness

The discussions highlighted the vital role of policy in enabling a more efficient and resilient maize sector. Participants recognised that stronger engagement with policymakers is essential to address trade and seed certification barriers, harmonise regional standards, and leverage opportunities under AfCFTA to support innovation and cross-border collaboration.



Next steps and vision: Scaling collaboration and impact



Shared commitments

Participants left Nairobi with a strong sense of purpose and an initial plan for the next phase of development across the maize value chain of the MGF partners. Key commitments focused on deepening collaboration, sharing knowledge and strengthening inclusivity:

- Formalising 25 partnership action plans through bilateral agreements
- Exchanging data and knowledge through ABF's online network
- Showcasing successful good practices in B2B and B2G networking
- Aligning private sector innovation with national policy strategies
- Strengthening women's and youth participation in agribusiness leadership
- Strengthening market linkages and access to finance



"Thank you to all ABF team and project partners for the nice week we had. The topics, the platform we shared as well as the lessons that we learned were amazing. From this workshop, we at APK in Tanzania have been able to form three partnerships with Oljoro Foods (Kenya), KIBMIST (Kenya) and MOUAFRICA (Tanzania). We have already laid down follow-ups which will lead to business partnerships. We are looking forward to more exchanges and forums like we had."

– APK Tanzania

"We identified an excellent opportunity to strengthen exchange across Africa. Quality seeds and the digitalization of agricultural services can be key enablers for win-win partnerships."

– Onesphore Cirhuza, DR Congo

"In Uganda, aflatoxin remains a major challenge, reducing market access and prices for farmers. Establishing accredited testing labs could greatly improve quality and competitiveness."

– Winnie Daisy, Uganda





Scan here to watch the workshop video

The week reinforced optimism about the maize sector's potential and the importance of trust-based collaboration. Participants highlighted that scaling innovation requires continuous communication, resource sharing and the sustained facilitation that ABF provides. Regional networks emerged as a critical enabler for driving collective action and long-term impact.

Vision for the future

Building on this momentum, ABF will continue to strengthen agribusiness ecosystems across Africa, guided by its mission to foster sustainable growth through cooperation. The next steps for the maize value chain will prioritise:

- Scaling climate-smart good practices to enhance resilience
- Supporting regional trade integration
- Expanding access to finance and digital tools for smallholder farmers
- Promoting circular production systems that reduce waste

ABF's collaborative model will remain central, connecting innovators, farmers and policymakers to co-create solutions that ensure Africa's maize sector is resilient, inclusive and future-ready, while sustaining long-term growth and shared prosperity.

Learn from ABF's Expert Talks

Gain practical insights into market access, financing solutions and trade opportunities shaping resilient agribusiness value chains:

- ▷ **Expert Talk:** The Import Promotion Desk - Your Partner for Sustainable Business Contacts
- ▷ **Expert Talk:** Access to Finance for Agribusiness Transformation in Africa
- ▷ **Expert Talk:** Exploring AfCFTA Opportunities for African MSMEs in Agribusiness



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