



FSRP

First High-Level Learning Event for Food System
Resilience Program for Eastern and Southern Africa

First High-Level Learning Event For Food System Resilience Program For Eastern And Southern Africa

March 4-6, 2025 | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



FACILITATORS REPORT

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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

AFDB	African Development Bank
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AUC	African Union Commission
AU	African Union
AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa’s Development
CCARDESA	Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research & Development for Southern Africa
CoP	Community of Practice
DARBE	Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Environment
FS	Food Systems
FSRP	Food Systems Resilience Program
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT4Ag	Information and Communication Technologies for Agriculture
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MPA	Multiphase Programmatic Approach
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa’s Development
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RCoL	Regional Center of Leadership
REC	Regional Economic Community
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference
WB	World Bank



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The FSRP Learning Event, held from March 4–6, 2025, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, convened 141 participants including agriculture ministers, senior policymakers, technical experts, and development partners from across Eastern and Southern Africa. Organized by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA), and the World Bank, the event aimed to strengthen institutional learning and promote cross-country knowledge exchange within the Food Systems Resilience Program (FSRP). It focused on translating evidence into action, advancing digital transformation, supporting trade integration, and improving Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) compliance. The event created a dynamic, multi-level platform to accelerate learning, elevate policy dialogue, and align FSRP interventions with national, regional, and continental priorities.

Top-Line Issues

Several issues emerged from the discussions:

- There is a pressing need to institutionalize continuous learning—within and between countries, and across regional and continental bodies—to ensure lessons are not only shared but applied to strengthen program implementation.
- Digital transformation holds significant promise for productivity and resilience, but must be scaled with attention to infrastructure gaps, data protection, and user trust.
- SPS and trade policy inconsistencies continue to constrain intra-African trade. Participants called for harmonized standards and targeted investments in compliance systems.
- Shifting global financing trends underscore the need for innovative domestic resource mobilization, expanded private sector engagement, and stronger regional cooperation.
- While the learning event validated the importance of shared knowledge, it also revealed the absence of clearly defined learning mechanisms and the unclear role of key regional institutions in sustaining momentum.

Key Insights

- Across plenaries, group work, and ministerial dialogues, participants affirmed the value of institutional learning and emphasized the need to move from ad hoc exchanges to structured and sustained mechanisms for knowledge capture, synthesis, and application.
- Digital tools such as farmer registries and real-time advisory services were showcased as game-changers, though adoption challenges—such as limited digital literacy and fragmented platforms—persist. Participants emphasized that effective deployment of these tools requires regional alignment and stronger support systems.
- Trade integration and SPS compliance featured prominently, with the trade scorecard and digital traceability tools highlighted as promising innovations. However, concerns were raised about the lack of shared metrics, weak enforcement capacity, and underutilized data. Participants recommended targeted learning and capacity-building to unlock the potential of these tools.
- The event also reinforced that regional food system resilience depends on stronger collaboration among countries and alignment with the African Union's broader agenda. Importantly, it highlighted the need to strengthen both formal and informal learning mechanisms and to embed learning as a core capability at all levels of the FSRP.

Strategic Learning Recommendations

- **Develop a learning framework for the FSRP:** this will provide a basic structure to guide how to systematically implement learning within the programme and how to strengthen learning at the various levels. The FSRP should have one overarching framework that allows for flexibility/contextual adaptation at the various national, regional or continental levels.
- **Ensure that the learning framework addresses key components:** This should include defining: learning themes; approaches to generate, document/synthesize and store learning; approaches to share learning, approaches to reward learning; and approaches to apply learning at national, regional and continental levels.
- **Clarify Roles of Regional Bodies:** Define the coordination and technical support roles of AUC, IGAD, and CCARDESA in operationalising learning within the FSRP including sustaining institutional learning and managing shared learning repositories.
- **Build Incentives for Knowledge Sharing:** Promote a culture of continuous learning by recognizing and rewarding individuals and teams that generate and apply lessons from practice.
- **Embed Learning in MEL Systems:** Position learning as a strategic function by aligning monitoring and evaluation systems with knowledge generation, use, and accountability mechanisms.
- **Allocate appropriate levels of resources:** To ensure that learning is truly effective and does not become a mere “tick box” exercise, there must be intentional and appropriate levels of resourcing assigned to this function at all operational levels.

Key Ministerial Insights

Ministers echoed many of the learning themes and offered additional insights to strengthen food system resilience:

- **Regional Integration is Essential:** Cross-border policy harmonization and shared regulatory frameworks are vital to unlock intra-African trade and regional value chains.
- **Digital Transformation is a Strategic Priority:** Digital tools for agriculture, finance, and trade must be *appropriately* scaled and backed by enabling infrastructure and literacy efforts.
- **Sustainable Financing Requires Diversification:** Domestic financing, private investment, PPPs, and diaspora engagement are critical for reducing aid dependence.
- **SPS Compliance is Central to Market Access:** Investments in testing, certification, and early warning systems are key to reducing export rejections and enhancing competitiveness.
- **Political Commitment and Policy Continuity Matter:** Long-term agricultural transformation requires sustained leadership, policy stability, and institutional learning.
- **Food System Resilience Must Be Opportunity-Driven:** Countries must shift from food aid to value-addition, agribusiness investments, and climate-smart agriculture as engines of economic growth.

Toward a Culture of Continuous Learning

A critical takeaway from the event is that learning must be positioned not only as a thematic area but as an operational imperative across all aspects of FSRP. Participants called for a shared learning framework to support generation, documentation, storage, and application of lessons—from grassroots implementation to continental policy dialogue. This includes establishing digital repositories, peer-to-peer learning partnerships, learning awards, and country-led learning plans.

To sustain this momentum, FSRP should consider institutionalizing a recurring learning platform—such as an annual technical exchange and a biennial high-level learning forum. These gatherings can offer space for reflection, sharing, co-creation, and alignment, helping to keep learning dynamic and demand-driven.

By embedding learning across the program cycle, FSRP can strengthen implementation, avoid duplication, and support adaptive management—positioning itself as a global model for how food systems resilience is built through evidence, innovation, and collaboration.



INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

The first High-Level Learning Event for the Food Systems Resilience Program (FSRP) in Eastern and Southern Africa took place from March 4 to 6, 2025, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This event was convened by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), the Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA), and the World Bank. The rationale was to enhance cross-country learning, strengthen institutional capacity, and promote knowledge exchange among participating nations and regional organizations implementing FSRP interventions.

The FSRP is a multiphase initiative supported by the World Bank to increase resilience to food insecurity and enhance the sustainability of food systems in Africa. Approved on June 21, 2022, the program was designed using the Multiphase Programmatic Approach (MPA), with an initial financing envelope of \$2.3 billion. The FSRP aims to address critical food security challenges exacerbated by climate change, transboundary natural resource management issues, and regional trade barriers. It provides a platform for coordinated action across national, regional, and continental levels, leveraging economies of scale and fostering policy harmonization.

Workshop Objectives

The overall objective of the learning event was to reflect on the achievements of the FSRP at regional and country levels since the program's inception, document and share lessons learned for future implementation, and raise the profile of the FSRP in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The specific objectives were:

1. To establish the event as a key learning platform for FSRP countries, regional organizations (ROs), the AUC, and AUDA-NEPAD.
2. To facilitate knowledge exchange from FSRP investments and similar initiatives.
3. To link FSRP-generated evidence to national, regional, and continental policy processes.
4. To enhance the visibility of FSRP by showcasing its progress and impact.

Participants

The FSRP Learning Event brought together a diverse group of participants, including high-level policymakers, technical experts, and development partners. The event featured ministers of agriculture and their representatives from various Eastern and Southern African countries, with key officials attending the ministerial session on March 6, 2025, at the African Union Commission (AUC). These senior officials, including state ministers and secretaries-general, played a crucial role in discussing issues such as policy alignment, regional trade facilitation, and the need to apply digital innovations in agriculture.

Representatives from regional organizations, including IGAD, CCARDESA, and AUDA-NEPAD, as well as technical experts from national ministries, research institutions, and civil society organizations, participated in the knowledge-sharing sessions. The World Bank was represented by senior agricultural specialists and program coordinators, contributing insights on institutional learning and resilience strategies.

In total, the event hosted 141 participants, including 11 agriculture ministers or their representatives.

Methodology

The FSRP Learning Event employed an interactive and participatory methodology designed to foster knowledge exchange, collaboration, and actionable insights. The workshop was structured over three days, combining plenary sessions, group discussions, breakout sessions, and hands-on exercises.

Day one focused on institutional learning, with country representatives sharing experiences and best practices, complemented by a World Café session where participants rotated among different country-level presentations.

Day two emphasized digital transformation and trade integration, featuring case studies, solution brainstorming, and small group activities using tools such as trade scorecards.

On the final day, participants synthesized key insights and prepared messages for the ministerial session. The workshop concluded with a high-level ministerial dialogue, allowing policymakers to reflect on key recommendations. The methodology ensured engagement at all levels, fostering regional collaboration and practical learning.



DAY 1: TOP-LINE ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

Overview: Summary of the agenda and activities

The first day of the FSRP Learning Event focused on strengthening institutional learning and knowledge exchange across participating countries and regional organizations. Participants engaged in structured discussions to identify successes, challenges, and practical strategies for improving knowledge capture and application. During the afternoon World Café session, 10 national and regional coordinators showcased their FSRP initiatives, allowing participants to rotate among different presentations and fostering cross-learning.

Analysis of Perspectives and Viewpoints Shared by Participants

The discussions revealed a wide range of perspectives on institutional learning, regional coordination, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms. Participants highlighted successes, including the use of digital tools to disseminate agricultural knowledge, the development of a food and nutrition security framework, and the promotion of regional centers of leadership for agricultural research and technology dissemination. However, while learning activities are happening at national and regional levels, they are often fragmented, leading to gaps in cross-country knowledge sharing.

Participants emphasized the need for structured learning frameworks, stronger connections between research and implementation, and improved coordination between regional economic communities (RECs) and national governments. A major concern was the lack of incentives to promote knowledge sharing, particularly in engaging the private sector and policymakers. Barriers such as language differences, bureaucratic processes, and inconsistencies in country-level policies were cited as challenges to effective institutional learning.

Synthesis of Key Insights and Issues Raised

FSRP's success depends on improving institutionalizing learning mechanisms (to better capture, share and utilize lessons learned), and on developing clear and explicit roles and responsibilities (e.g. the role of regional bodies for coordination). Suggestions included:

- Develop structured learning and knowledge-sharing platforms, including digital tools that would allow systematic documentation and dissemination of best practices.
- Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems as a critical step to ensure that insights from the program are effectively captured and used for decision-making.

The World Café session reinforced the need for tailored agricultural strategies that align with country-specific challenges while maintaining regional coherence. Participants recognized that many countries face similar challenges—such as climate change impacts, inadequate policy harmonization, and limited private sector engagement—underscoring the need for collaborative solutions and enhanced regional cooperation. Digitalization emerged as a key theme, with a consensus on the importance of expanding digital tools and knowledge-sharing platforms to facilitate cross-border learning and implementation.

Recommendations to Strengthen FSRP Learning Processes

To enhance future FSRP learning processes including learning events, a structured approach to knowledge sharing should be implemented to ensure discussions translate into actionable outcomes.

A summary of key recommendations to strengthen learning includes:

1. **Stronger Engagement of Policymakers and Private Sector**- Develop targeted strategies to increase the participation in learning processes of key decision-makers and private sector representatives, who play a crucial role in scaling agricultural innovations.
2. **Incentives for Knowledge Sharing**- Establish mechanisms such as recognition programs or funding opportunities to encourage countries and institutions to actively share and apply best practices. For instance, an annual FSRP Learning Award could be created to spotlight countries or teams that have successfully shared and implemented lessons, with small grants to scale those initiatives further.
3. **Dedicated Peer Learning Sessions**- Introduce structured case study sessions where countries can present specific challenges and solutions, fostering direct learning exchanges. For example, establish country-led “learning clinics” where FSRP teams share real experiences—what worked, what didn’t, and why—with opportunities for others to ask questions and adapt solutions to their contexts.
4. **Expansion of Digital Learning Platforms**- Enhance digital knowledge-sharing platforms to ensure better accessibility of information across all participating countries and regions.
This means creating or strengthening online repositories where teams can upload case studies, toolkits, and videos—with search and tagging functionality—so lessons are easy to find and reuse. A mobile-accessible version would ensure even field teams can contribute and benefit.

Links to presentations and other resources

- [Overview of FRSP - Tim Robertson Senior Agricultural Specialist, World Bank](#)
- Opening Remarks:
 - a. [Abebaw Bihonegn, IGAD Head of Mission in Ethiopia](#)
 - b. [Professor Lala Razafinjara, Board Chairperson, CCARDESA](#)
 - c. [Juliana Victor, Operations Manager, World Bank](#)
- [Official opening by the Host Country \(Ethiopia\) - Minister for MOA, Ethiopia- Guest of Honour, On Behalf of H.E. Dr. Girma Amente, Minister of Agriculture, Ethiopia. Read on his behalf by Dr. Ifa Muleta, State Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia.](#)
- [Expectations – Mentimeter Results.](#)
- [Survey on State of Learning in FSRP- Femi Nzegwu](#)
- [Reflections on Learning – Mentimeter Results](#)

DAY 2: TOP-LINE ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

Overview: Summary of the agenda and activities

The second day focused on digital transformation and trade as case studies to explore learning options, with sessions designed to explore opportunities, challenges, and solutions in these areas. Participants engaged in thematic sessions on digital farmer registries, real-time advisory services, and data-driven decision-making. The afternoon focused on trade integration, with sessions on trade scorecards and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures. Participants analyzed export rejections, identified immediate solutions, and proposed long-term strategies for improving compliance.

Analysis of Perspectives and Viewpoints Shared by Participants

Digital technologies present significant opportunities for improving agricultural productivity. **However**, key challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to financing, and low digital literacy must be addressed for their effective adoption. Several case studies highlighted the potential of digital technologies to enhance service delivery, but participants stressed the importance of local adaptation, robust policy frameworks, and stakeholder collaboration to ensure sustainability.

On trade integration, discussions focused on the use of trade scorecards and compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures. Participants highlighted trade barriers such as export rejections due to pests and residue, which result in economic losses and undermine regional trade efforts. Immediate and long-term strategies for improving SPS compliance are needed, including stronger traceability systems, capacity building for farmers, and enhanced enforcement mechanisms to prevent rejections.

Synthesis of Key Insights and How Learning Can Help Address Them

- 1. Digital farmer registries can streamline data collection and improve access to services, but cost, infrastructure gaps, and trust issues among farmers must be addressed.**
 - A stronger learning agenda can help countries identify which registry models are most cost-effective, scalable, and trusted by farmers. Tools such as peer case studies and field-based evaluations of registry rollouts were highlighted.
- 2. Issues of trust are directly linked to the need to raise awareness across the board (from farmers through to FSRP staff) on the legal and ethical issues related to digitization and accessing people's data.**
 - Learning initiatives can include capacity-building modules and awareness campaigns that demystify digital rights and data protection, enabling both implementers and farmers to better understand their roles, rights, and responsibilities.
- 3. The integration of real-time advisory services can enhance decision-making for farmers, particularly in areas affected by climate variability.**
 - Cross-country learning can help document how real-time advisory tools have been tailored to local contexts and climate realities, providing a repository of lessons to guide adaptation and scaling in similar environments.
- 4. A harmonized approach to digital platforms, with interoperability among different national and regional systems, is crucial for effective knowledge sharing and agricultural transformation.**

- Learning exchanges can support technical dialogue among ICT teams to share standards, success stories, and challenges in platform integration—laying the groundwork for regional coherence in digital agriculture.
5. **Trade scorecards can be powerful tools for policy interventions and mutual accountability if properly implemented, helping countries track progress and identify areas for improvement. However, more support to effectively utilize this and related tools is required.**
 - By embedding structured learning around the use of trade scorecards—such as how countries interpret results and adjust policies—FSRP can build a shared understanding and toolkit for using these tools to drive regional progress.
 6. **SPS measures require enhanced enforcement mechanisms, training, and early detection systems to minimize export rejections and improve the competitiveness of African agricultural products.**
 - Ongoing learning platforms can document emerging best practices in SPS implementation, support South-South mentoring, and create a space for countries to troubleshoot compliance issues collectively.

A recurring theme was the need for stakeholder engagement, particularly in ensuring that digital initiatives are farmer-centric and accessible to all, including smallholder farmers and marginalized groups. Participants emphasized that technology should not be a standalone solution but should be integrated within broader agricultural policies and trade frameworks.

Recommendations

1. **Tailored Digital Training and Capacity Strengthening** – Introduce training sessions on digital tools and platforms to improve digital literacy among farmers and agricultural stakeholders as well as FSRP staff/other technical experts.
2. **Scalable and Inclusive Digital Solutions** – Design digital interventions that are affordable, scalable, and inclusive. Ensure accessibility for smallholder farmers and women in agriculture.
3. **Strengthened Policy and Regulatory Frameworks** – Encourage countries to develop comprehensive digital agriculture policies and trade regulations to support the sustainable adoption of technology. Build in monitoring mechanisms to adapt and update as required.
4. **Enhanced Stakeholder Collaboration** – Strengthen partnerships between governments, private sector players, and research institutions to co-create and implement digital solutions.
5. **Trade Scorecard Monitoring and Application** – Establish follow-up mechanisms for tracking the effectiveness of trade scorecards, ensuring that they guide evidence-based policy decisions.
6. **Holistic Approach to SPS Compliance** – Promote integrated SPS compliance frameworks that include early detection systems, farmer training, and regional harmonization of food safety standards.

Links to presentations and other resources

- [Key Highlights from Day 1](#)
- [Participants' Mentimeter Feedback to the Highlights of Day 1](#)
- Presentations & Feedback:
 - a. [Data and Digital Agriculture: Opportunities and Challenges in FSRP Countries- Parmesh Shah Global Lead on Data and Digital Agriculture and Innovation – World Bank](#)
 - b. [Lightning Presentation- Priscilla Muiruri- FSRP Project Coordinator for Kenya](#)

- c. [Learning from public and private sector experiences on data, digitization & Agtech- Boniface Akuku, Digital Ag Specialist, World Bank](#)
- d. [Purposes and Development of a Trade Scorecard- AfCFTA Team, Sunday Odjo](#)
- e. [Overview of SPS measures and their objectives - AfCFTA Secretariat, Diana Ogwal, Principal Officer SPS Measures](#)
- f. [Farm and Farm Registry- Mentimeter Feedback](#)
- g. [Recipe for a Livable Planet- Alexander Lotsch, Senior Climate Finance Specialist, Agriculture & Food Global Department, Climate and Nature World Bank](#)
- h. [Nutrition & Gender Mentimeter Survey/Poll](#)



DAY 3: TOP-LINE ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

Overview: Summary of the agenda and activities

The final day of the FSRP Learning Event focused on synthesizing key learnings, aligning trade policies with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, and discussing the need for a roadmap for enhanced trade integration.

Analysis of Perspectives and Viewpoints Shared by Participants

There was broad agreement that trade scorecards provide a structured mechanism for measuring trade facilitation efforts and enhancing transparency. However, participants highlighted challenges such as inconsistent data reporting, lack of standardized SPS compliance frameworks, and limited coordination among regional economic communities (RECs).

SPS compliance was identified as a critical element in agricultural trade. Challenges included export rejections due to pests, residue limits, and infrastructure deficits in testing facilities. Several countries shared experiences on how inadequate enforcement of SPS measures has resulted in economic losses, underscoring the need for improved traceability systems and harmonized quality assurance mechanisms. Stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, and regional organizations, emphasized that collaboration is essential to ensure compliance with global trade standards.

The final sessions of the morning centered on developing strategic roadmaps for trade integration. Participants explored the importance of continuous market assessments, mobilizing resources to implement trade policies, and establishing platforms for knowledge exchange. Regional collaboration was recognized as a cornerstone of successful trade integration, with calls for stronger engagement between governments, development partners, and private sector players to streamline agricultural trade and enhance food security resilience.

Synthesis of Key Insights and How Learning Can Help Address Them

- 1. Trade Scorecards as Policy Tools:** Participants recognized that trade scorecards offer valuable data-driven insights for guiding trade policy decisions. However, for these tools to be effective, they need standardized metrics and a structured approach to data collection.
 - A focused learning agenda can facilitate shared understanding of best practices in trade scorecard design and use, allowing countries to align on core indicators, methodologies, and reporting cycles through joint training and peer exchange.
- 2. SPS Compliance as a Trade Enabler:** Export rejections due to SPS violations remain a significant barrier to trade. Addressing these challenges requires investments in laboratory infrastructure, training for farmers and regulators, and the adoption of digital traceability solutions.
 - Learning platforms can spotlight successful country experiences in upgrading SPS systems and applying digital traceability, offering guidance on how others can sequence investments and build the necessary capacity for compliance.
- 3. The Role of Regional/Cross-border Collaboration:** Harmonization of trade policies across borders was highlighted as essential to reducing trade barriers and improving agricultural trade efficiency. Participants called for strengthened regional cooperation through RECs and international partners.

- Cross-country learning mechanisms can document how collaborative policy harmonization has been achieved elsewhere and promote shared dialogues between national and regional stakeholders to align objectives and timelines.
4. **Capacity Strengthening and Awareness Creation:** The importance of building awareness among farmers, traders, and policymakers regarding SPS requirements was widely emphasized. Countries that have successfully implemented SPS frameworks highlighted the role of consistent training and public-private partnerships in ensuring compliance.
 - An enhanced learning strategy can include tailored curricula and toolkits for different audiences, and foster partnerships with private sector actors and NGOs to expand outreach and sustainability of training programs.
 5. **Integration of Digital Solutions:** The use of digital tools in monitoring trade flows and SPS compliance was seen as a transformative opportunity. Participants stressed the need to invest in digital platforms that allow real-time tracking of trade scorecard performance and compliance with SPS measures.
 - Learning initiatives can help identify which digital tools are most effective, document implementation challenges, and promote cross-country learning on how to ensure interoperability and farmer-friendly design of such systems.

Recommendations

1. **Standardizing Trade Scorecard Metrics** – Develop a common framework for trade scorecards to ensure consistency in reporting and evaluation across different countries and regions.
2. **Strengthening SPS Compliance Mechanisms** – Establish clearer guidelines for SPS compliance, including mandatory testing facilities, traceability systems, and regional harmonization of food safety standards.
3. **Enhancing Regional Collaboration** – Encourage stronger cooperation among RECs, governments, and private sector players to align trade policies and facilitate agricultural trade.
4. **Capacity Strengthening for SPS Implementation** – Organize training sessions and awareness campaigns targeting farmers, exporters, and regulators to improve adherence to international trade standards.
5. **Promoting Digital Innovation in Trade and SPS Monitoring** – Leverage technology to create digital platforms for real-time trade scorecard tracking and automated SPS compliance verification.
6. **Ensuring Policy Follow-through and Accountability** – Establish mechanisms to track commitments made during the learning event, ensuring that discussions translate into concrete policy actions.
7. **Stakeholder Mapping and Resource Mobilization** – Support countries in identifying key stakeholders and securing financial resources to implement trade and SPS-related interventions effectively.

Links to presentations and other resources

- [Key Takeaways from the FSRP Event](#)
- [Mentimeter Feedback to the Key Takeaways, and Proposed Questions for Ministers.](#)
- Closing Remarks

- a. Dr. Godfrey Bahigwa, Director of Agriculture and Rural Development, on behalf of Deputy Chairperson/ AUC DARBE Commissioner
- b. IGAD Executive Secretary H.E. Dr Workneh Gebeyehu



MINISTERIAL SESSION: AFRICA UNION HEADQUARTERS

Ministerial Event Overview

The Ministerial Event took place at the African Union Commission (AUC) Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, bringing together ministers and high-level representatives from Eastern and Southern African countries. This high-profile session provided a platform for policymakers to reflect on key insights from the three-day event and discuss strategies for sustaining investments in food system resilience amid a shifting financing landscape.

The session opened with welcome remarks from the African Union, IGAD, and CCARDESA, followed by an address from Frauke Jungbluth of the World Bank, who set the scene for the discussions. Ministers from Malawi, Uganda, Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Madagascar shared their national perspectives, emphasizing the importance of digital agriculture, trade harmonization, policy standardization, and regional collaboration in building resilient food systems.

A central theme of the discussion was how to sustain investments in food systems resilience in an evolving global financing environment. With traditional aid budgets from development partners shrinking, ministers explored new strategies, including leveraging domestic resources, increasing private sector engagement, strengthening intra-African trade, and investing in climate-smart innovations, to ensure the long-term sustainability of food systems.

The event concluded with closing remarks from key regional institutions, reinforcing commitments to policy harmonization, private sector engagement, and continued knowledge-sharing to drive agricultural transformation and food security resilience across the region.

Ministerial Engagement: Key Insights and Lessons Learned

A. Key Takeaways from the Learning Event

Question 1

Based on the summary output of the FSRP high-level learning event, which has just been shared with you, what resonates with you the most in your context?

1. **Digital Transformation is Critical** – Representatives emphasized digital agriculture as essential for modernizing food systems, improving market access, and enhancing productivity. Malawi, Kenya, Somalia, and Côte d'Ivoire highlighted significant advancements in digital platforms for farmer registration, advisory services, and financial transactions.
2. **Regional Collaboration is Essential** – Representatives from Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti, and Malawi stressed that agricultural challenges transcend national borders, necessitating regional coordination and collaborative approaches to optimize resource sharing and resilience.
3. **Trade Policy Harmonization** – Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Djibouti underscored the importance of harmonizing sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards to facilitate smoother cross-border trade, improve market access, and bolster competitiveness within African markets.
4. **Institutional Learning and Capacity Strengthening** – Madagascar, Comoros, Malawi, and Somalia recognized structured learning and continuous knowledge exchange as vital for improving agricultural practices, implementing innovative solutions, and enhancing sustainability across regions.

5. **Climate-Smart Agriculture as a Model** – Ethiopia, Uganda, and Malawi emphasized successful climate-resilient agricultural practices such as Ethiopia's Climate-Resilient Wheat Initiative, stressing the importance of adopting sustainable agricultural practices and technologies tailored to local contexts.
6. **Enhanced Private Sector Engagement** – Nigeria, Malawi, Madagascar, and Côte d'Ivoire strongly highlighted the necessity for increased private sector investment in agricultural processing, infrastructure development, and financial innovations to drive sectoral growth and economic sustainability.
7. **Addressing SPS Compliance** – Tanzania and Nigeria focused on meeting international SPS standards to reduce export rejections, expand market opportunities, and improve global competitiveness.
8. **Reducing Post-Harvest Losses** – Malawi and Kenya stressed the urgency of investing in storage, processing, and value-addition infrastructure to reduce food losses, enhance efficiency, and strengthen overall food supply chains.
9. **Local Research and Innovation** – Somalia and Ethiopia advocated for stronger investments in local research, indigenous knowledge, and innovation, emphasizing tailored solutions that leverage unique agricultural conditions and resources in each country.
10. **Food Sovereignty and Resource Mobilization** – Uganda, Ethiopia, Comoros, and Djibouti emphasized reducing dependency on external aid by mobilizing domestic resources and prioritizing agriculture strategically within national budgets and economic frameworks.

B. Sustaining Investments in Food Systems Resilience

Question 2

We are in the midst of a dramatically shifting financing landscape (the US, Britain, the Netherlands, and France are all cutting aid budgets). How do we sustain investments to build food systems' resilience in this environment?

1. **Leveraging Domestic Financial Resources** – Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda stressed the need to strategically realign national budgets towards agriculture, using analytical tools such as financial flow assessments to maximize domestic investments effectively.
2. **Strengthening Private Sector Participation** – Nigeria, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, and Malawi emphasized policies and incentives designed to attract private investments in agriculture, especially in processing, agri-finance, and infrastructure.
3. **Maximizing Intra-African Trade Opportunities** – Tanzania and Ethiopia highlighted the importance of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) for expanding intra-African trade, reducing dependency on external partners, and enhancing regional food systems resilience.
4. **Promoting Farmer Savings and Cooperatives** – Kenya emphasized the successful Savings and Credit Organization (SACCO) model, advocating for its broader application to support farmers in accessing finance independently.
5. **Expanding Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)** – Nigeria and Malawi highlighted strengthening PPPs in agriculture, particularly focusing on irrigation, mechanization, and agricultural infrastructure.
6. **Advancing Irrigation and Water Management** – Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Djibouti underscored the strategic importance of irrigation expansion and sustainable water management practices to reduce vulnerability to climatic variations and enhance agricultural productivity.
7. **Digitization for Efficiency** – Somalia and Uganda noted digital technologies' potential to improve efficiency, lower transaction costs, and enhance service delivery directly to farmers.

8. **Diaspora Engagement and Investment** – Somalia uniquely advocated leveraging diaspora communities for funding agricultural projects, suggesting diaspora remittances as an innovative financing resource.
9. **Long-Term Policy and Planning** – Ethiopia, Uganda, and Côte d'Ivoire emphasized embedding resilience strategies into long-term national economic and agricultural policies, ensuring sustained commitment beyond external funding fluctuations.
10. **Diversifying Global Partnerships** – Nigeria proposed strategic engagements with emerging global partners such as India and Brazil for funding, technology transfer, and capacity-building in agriculture.

C. Lessons from the Engagement with Policy Makers

1. **Regional Integration Crucial for Food Security and Trade** – Representatives emphasized that thriving food systems require cross-border collaboration, harmonized trade regulations, and aligned policies. Kenya, Tanzania, Djibouti, and Uganda particularly highlighted the need for unified SPS standards and coordinated agricultural strategies to enable seamless intra-African trade.
2. **Digital Transformation is Essential** – Representatives from Malawi, Kenya, Somalia, and Côte d'Ivoire underscored digital agriculture as transformative by enhancing farmer productivity, market access, and resilience against climatic and economic disruptions.
3. **Diversified Sustainable Financing** – Given the shifting global financial landscape, countries stressed mobilizing domestic resources, encouraging private sector participation, exploring diaspora investments, and developing robust Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). Malawi, Nigeria, and Somalia particularly emphasized these alternative funding strategies.
4. **SPS Compliance Vital for Market Access** – Tanzania, Kenya, and Nigeria strongly highlighted improving SPS infrastructure, laboratory testing, and certification processes as critical to overcoming trade barriers and enhancing market access regionally and globally.
5. **Political Commitment and Policy Stability** – Ethiopia emphasized the need for nationally customized policies, while Uganda promoted cross-country knowledge sharing, stressing that stable government commitment and sustained institutional learning are critical for long-term agricultural success.
6. **Economic Opportunity as Driver of Food System Resilience** – Ministers advocated shifting from a dependency on food aid to recognizing agriculture as an economic growth sector. Promoting agribusiness investments, value addition, and climate-smart innovations will sustain long-term sector viability and employment generation.

Links to presentations and other resources

- [Key Take-aways from the FSRP Learning Event](#)
- Opening Remarks
 - a. [AU](#)
 - b. [IGAD](#)
 - c. [CCARDESA](#)
 - d. [World Bank](#)
- [Closing Remarks by H.E. Dr. Girma Amente, Minister of Agriculture, Ethiopia.](#)

ADVANCING THE LEARNING AGENDA: REFLECTIONS FROM THE LEARNING EVENT

This section outlines the key learning outcomes and possible approaches that can support learning at the project, country and regional levels. This includes the generation, documentation, storage/accessibility, sharing and application of lessons learned.

Key Participant Feedback

1. Learning is important to the participants who attended the event; however, it was not the number one priority for the majority. When asked to rank the high-level takeaways from the event, “enhanced institutional and sector learning” was second behind “digital transformation of agricultural systems resilience and implementation.

This points to a need for more awareness-building on the importance of moving learning from the conceptual to the practical and actionable. People agree in theory that learning is important, but the practice to effectively capture, share and use lessons needs much improvement.

2. Participants want a framework on what and how to learn, and information on the tools available to enable improved approaches and activities. In practice, many valuable lessons are being ‘left on the table’ because of a lack of such a framework.
3. Interconnected learning at various levels – within country, between countries and between country and region - was embraced as an important approach to share and scale up learning.
4. Incentivizing learning at the individual and organizational levels was recognized as key to move from theory to action.
5. Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) as a basic component of project design was seen as an important step in embedding this practice and raising awareness of the importance of learning more generally.

Recommendations to Advance Learning within FSRP

The learning event identified five key recommendations to advance learning within the FSRP:

1. **Develop a clear learning framework or road map for the FSRP** – this will provide a basic common structure to systematically implement actionable learning. The FSRP should have one overarching framework that allows for flexibility/contextual adaptation at the various national, regional and continental levels.
2. **Ensure that the learning framework addresses key learning components.** The learning framework should outline the following areas as a minimum:

2.1 Thematic Focus – clearly define priority thematic and sub-thematic areas of focus at the different levels. For example, countries can pair up to pursue a learning theme in a particular year; and/or countries could define areas of interest which they wish to pursue which are internal to the country. Similarly, a country and regional office could develop a learning partnership on a particular theme.

2.2 Approaches to generate, document/synthesize and store learning – define the process for generating, synthesizing learning in ways that are fit for purpose, and clearly document key learning on a subject or theme.

In generating and synthesizing learning, a number of important practical questions need to be asked:

Generating learning

- Which elements of this information are useful to cascade to a wider audience? While the report on an activity may be generally valuable, are there specific elements that may be of particular value or interest and would benefit from being highlighted and shared more widely?
- Who is the target audience and for what purpose is the learning being shared (e.g. to improve operations, to influence policy, etc.)?
- Clearly consider how to embed learning into overall project management, especially in the area of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). This ensures that projects are aware of and respond to learning (and its monitoring) in an objective and accountable manner. More broadly, learning is best generated when it is embedded in the planning process.

Documenting/Synthesizing learning

- How is the learning summary to be produced to maximize uptake?
- Who is responsible for producing these learning products? Can existing teams be incentivized to produce summary documents, case studies, learning blogs, videos, etc., or are specialist/communications teams to be engaged?

Creating easily accessible, user-friendly storage (AKA: a Knowledge Repository)

- Where will this information be stored to be readily accessible to members? For example, a website where teams can create their own accounts to upload material. Materials could then be searched for, filtered and tagged as required.
- Who will create this repository?
- Who will maintain the repository? This includes updating and sharing new learning additions to the space.
- Key to the successful delivery of this exercise is to avoid being technology/tool driven. Instead, focus on the messages to deliver and use the technology to serve that clear purpose, rather than the other way around.

2.3 Approaches to sharing the learning – there are a number of approaches that could be adopted for sharing learning at the different levels of engagement.

- At the individual level, the opportunity to learn by becoming involved in a learning partnership of some type is a useful way to “individualize” learning. (e.g. peer to peer or via a community of learners)
 - Engagement in this activity can be tied to an annual performance review or promotion criteria to help incentivize the approach.
- Creating wider partnerships of learning, and nurturing these to grow into trusted learning hubs where discussions on learning from practice are routinely held with key learning captured.

- This approach underscores the fact that lessons learned are more impactful when brought upwards collectively into national or regional settings (and reduces the suspicion of self-promotion or fundraising often associated with learning products from individual agencies).
- Supporting observational visits between countries is an excellent way to enable cross learning, its documentation and forging learning partnerships.
- Holding regular reviews of emerging knowledge that highlight experiential learning are key to enabling the flow and cross fertilization of learning. This could occur as a continental event such as the recent high level learning event in Addis Ababa; it could also occur within a particular region or country – on an annual or biennial basis.

2.4 Approaches to reward learning – earlier on we indicated that there was an interest at the event to explore means of incentivizing learning. We have discussed how this might occur at an individual level. There are, however, opportunities for incentivizing across the programme. For example, one such method is to hold competitions across regions to showcase and reward excellent learning and the application of learning outcomes. This could become a biennial event or aligned with region-wide learning events.

2.5 Applying learning – in this section of the framework define clear mechanisms and opportunities for demonstrating the application of shared learning. This is an essential element in the operationalization of the framework.

3. Operationalise the learning framework – once the learning framework is developed, an important step is to pilot it in a few interested projects/regional bodies. Piloting should include the following:

- Customize the framework to the individual project/organization. How easy is it to adapt to individual contexts?
- Define themes, areas of learning to be engaged in during the defined period, preferred approaches, groups to partner with, levels of partnership, etc.
- Overall engagement strategy with preferred partners at various levels to advance the learning agenda.

4. Agree roles – it will be important to define the various roles and responsibilities across the various levels

- What roles will continental, regional and national bodies play in facilitating the process?
- Agreed roles should be included in the learning framework.

5. Allocate resources

For each of the possible activity areas outlined above, there will be a requirement for resources within budgets at a project, regional and continental level. Ideally this would be “normalized” as part of the project’s learning budget, with each project/organization agreeing areas of learning in a project cycle, developing associated budgets, having these activities funded and reporting on

EVALUATION: SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Did the Event Meet Its Objectives?

The FSRP Learning Event effectively met its overall and specific objectives, particularly those focused on knowledge sharing, networking, showcasing progress, and raising the program's profile. According to survey feedback and content analysis:

- 91% of participants rated the workshop as useful.
- 95% learned something applicable to their work.
- 95% found the networking opportunities valuable, with many connecting with colleagues they intend to stay in contact with.

These results, coupled with high levels of engagement during interactive sessions (e.g., World Café, group work, digital and trade sessions), affirm that the event achieved its aim of facilitating peer learning, cross-country collaboration, and exposure to good practices. The event successfully positioned itself as a regional learning platform, with clear links between FSRP-generated evidence and policy discussions, especially during the ministerial engagement.

Assessment Against Specific Objectives and Expected Outcomes

Objective / Outcome	Assessment
Showcase regional and country-level achievements	✓ Delivered through presentations, World Café, and country-led sessions
Establish the event as a key learning platform	✓ Strong participation (141 attendees), including 11 ministers, RECs, AUC, World Bank
Facilitate knowledge exchange	✓ Evident in group discussions, case study sharing, and post-event connections
Link evidence to policy processes	✓ Realized during the AUC Ministerial Fireside Chat and takeaway synthesis
Raise the profile of FSRP	✓ High-level visibility, regional presence, and press-worthy engagement
Strengthen institutional learning	✓ Through structured breakout sessions, digital tool demonstrations, and cross-country feedback
Empower food systems with digital tech	✓ Most popular and highly rated topic; strong momentum for scaling digital agri solutions
Improve understanding of SPS/trade tools	✓ Progress made; some content seen as too technical for non-specialists
Increase knowledge and collaboration	✓ Clear feedback that participants learned from others and formed new connections
Support scaling of successful interventions	✓ Countries expressed intent to replicate innovations such as digital registries
Influence policy and programming	✓ Ministers shared how insights would shape national strategies and investment decisions

What Went Well and Should Be Repeated?

1. **Digital Agriculture Sessions** – Consistently cited as the most useful, these sessions were practical, innovative, and immediately applicable.
2. **World Café and Group Discussions** – Enabled informal, targeted knowledge exchange and cross-country learning.
3. **Diverse Stakeholder Representation** – Inclusion of regional institutions, technical experts, and ministers allowed for multi-level dialogue.
4. **Facilitation and Time Management** – Well-structured sessions and skilled moderation contributed to the workshop's success.
5. **Policy Dialogue with Ministers** – The Fireside Chat at the African Union elevated the event's political and strategic relevance.
6. **Interactive Tools (e.g., Mentimeter)** – Helped capture live feedback and keep discussions dynamic.

Was the Content Relevant and of High Quality?

Yes. The sessions were grounded in real-world experience and aligned well with current country priorities.

Key takeaways included:

- **Digital farmer registries**
- **Data-driven agriculture**
- **Trade integration and SPS compliance**
- **Regional coordination for resilience**

Areas for improvement:

- **SPS and trade scorecard sessions** were seen as overly technical by some.
- **Nutrition and gender** components received limited attention and should be more deeply integrated in future events.

Suggestions for Increasing Impact and Efficiency

1. **Introduce Field-Based Learning** – Include site visits or field demos to showcase FSRP-supported innovations in action.
2. **Design Parallel Thematic Tracks** – Allow participants to self-select into deeper sessions based on their roles (e.g., digital, gender, policy).
3. **Share Pre-Event Materials** – Circulating presentations and background briefs in advance will enhance session engagement.
4. **Strengthen Private Sector and Youth Inclusion** – Invite more non-governmental practitioners, agri-tech innovators, and youth leaders.
5. **Create Post-Event Follow-Up Mechanisms** – Establish digital communities of practice or peer learning platforms to sustain knowledge exchange.
6. **Support Country-Level Learning** – Complement regional events with shorter, targeted workshops at national or sub-regional level.
7. **Integrate Learning with Policy Tools** – Help participants link learning event insights directly to programming and national strategies.
8. **Scale Communication and Visibility** – Use storytelling, short videos, and post-event briefs to raise awareness and reach broader audiences.

Event Specific recommendations

1. **Action-Oriented Learning Sessions** – Future events will need to balance important conceptual/policy discussions with developing clear steps for implementation and follow-up accountability.

2. **Improved Language Accessibility** – Provide more comprehensive translation services and bilingual materials to overcome language barriers and promote inclusivity among participants (including in small groups and during interactive sessions such as the World Café).
3. **More Practical Demonstrations and Case Studies** – Incorporate practical demonstrations of successful digital applications to show their real-world impact and inspire replication in other regions.
4. **Interactive Learning Formats** – Utilize more group exercises, scenario-based discussions, and hands-on workshop sessions to encourage active participation and problem-solving.
5. **Interactive and Scenario-based Learning** – Introduce more role-playing exercises and scenario-based discussions to enable participants to work through trade policy challenges and SPS enforcement issues in a practical way.



CONCLUSION

The FSRP Learning Event achieved its stated objectives and delivered a high-quality, participatory learning experience that was both timely and relevant. It created meaningful opportunities for cross-country collaboration, enabled high-level policy engagement, and highlighted emerging innovations, particularly in digital agriculture and trade. It also strengthened institutional learning and contributed to a growing culture of knowledge sharing and evidence-based policy formulation within the FSRP.

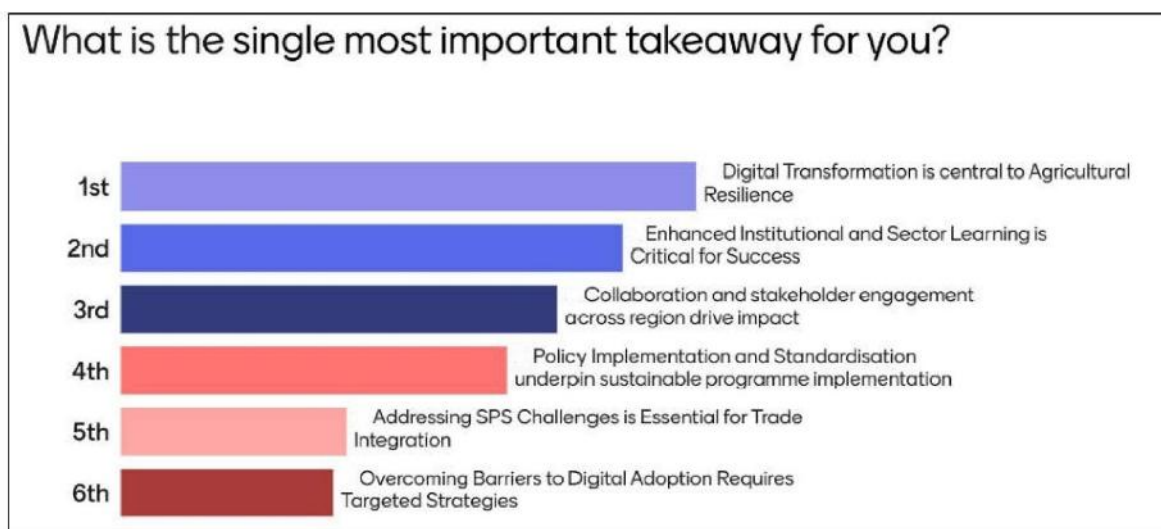
However, the event also surfaced important reflections about the *depth and formality of learning mechanisms* within the FSRP. While many learning moments occurred—through peer exchanges, thematic sessions, and case study presentations—there was limited time devoted to *designing or strengthening formal and informal learning systems*. The need for a structured learning framework was repeatedly raised by participants. As such, future learning events should include dedicated sessions to co-design country-level and regional learning mechanisms, define clear follow-up actions, and explore learning partnerships.

Additionally, there was recognition that *regional institutions such as AUC, IGAD, and CCARDESA* have a vital role to play in institutionalizing and coordinating learning across countries and regions. However, their roles are not yet clearly defined within the learning architecture of the FSRP. Greater clarity is needed on how these bodies can:

- Provide technical guidance and standard-setting for MEL and knowledge sharing,
- Serve as regional hubs or repositories for learning,
- Facilitate horizontal learning across countries and between projects,
- Track the uptake and application of lessons across the program.

Participants called for the development of a regional learning framework that includes roles and responsibilities for these key institutions, with mechanisms to resource and monitor implementation. Without this clarity, there is a risk of fragmentation and missed opportunities to scale learning across borders.

In sum, while the event served as a strong catalyst for learning, the next step is to embed a more structured, coordinated, and resourced approach to knowledge generation and application. By institutionalizing learning at all levels—project, country, and regional—and assigning clear leadership roles to the AUC, IGAD, and CCARDESA, the FSRP can become a truly transformative platform for agricultural resilience in Africa.



ANNEXES

Agenda of the FSRP Learning Event

List of Participants and Speakers

List of Ministers and Country Representatives

Summary of Responses from Ministers and Country Representatives

