

The African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) has reiterated its pledge to involving African youth in agricultural technology innovation and adoption. This call came at the conclusion of the 2025 African Conference on Agricultural Technology (ACAT), held in Kigali, Rwanda, with strong appeals for increased action and collaboration.

On the final day of the four-day conference, delegates explored a range of agricultural innovations during project exhibitions and demonstrations.

One notable highlight was a portable, battery-powered LAMP assay device introduced by Jovia Kamatenesi from the Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board. Priced at approximately \$8,000, the device allows for real-time detection of Cassava Brown Streak Ipomoviruses, significantly improving plant disease diagnostics and helping farmers safeguard their crops effectively.

Another innovation was showcased by Kigali Rabbit Farm, which demonstrated how artificial insemination (AI) is enhancing livestock breeding efficiency. The program includes performance evaluation, storage, insemination, and tracking systems that support farmers' productivity and livelihoods.

During a plenary session titled "Stewardship: Cultivating a Sustainable Future with Ag-Tech Solutions," panelists emphasized the urgent need for inclusive, transparent, and sustainable agricultural technology policies. They advocated for enhanced public-private collaboration, better access to funding, local innovation support, and youth empowerment to unlock Africa's agricultural growth.

"Africa's agricultural transformation is not a distant dream—it is a necessity we must act upon today," said Ambassador Professor Muhammadou Kah, a member of the AATF Board of Trustees. He recommended the launch of a continent-wide Youth Leadership and Fellowship Programme in Ag-Tech, aiming to train and financially support at least 10,000 young innovators by 2027.

Speaking on behalf of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), Olalekan Akinbo presented the continent's Genome Editing Programme. He highlighted its alignment with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its aim to achieve zero hunger through science-driven agricultural solutions.

Akinbo also underscored the importance of building Africa's scientific capacity, engaging policymakers effectively, and promoting innovation led by Africans.

“Science in Africa must be owned and advanced by Africans,” he stated.

In his closing remarks, AATF Executive Director Dr Canisius Kanangire thanked the Government of Rwanda for its hospitality and praised the event’s dynamic atmosphere. He reaffirmed AATF’s dedication to positioning youth and farmers at the center of Africa’s agricultural progress.

Former Nigerian President Dr Goodluck Jonathan also addressed participants, urging African leaders to support smallholder farmers and create job opportunities for young people through agriculture. “Young Africans should view agriculture as a professional and rewarding career, not something to take up only after retirement,” he said.

Rwanda’s Minister of Agriculture, Dr Cyubahiro Mark Bagabe, echoed this sentiment, reinforcing the country’s leadership in promoting agricultural advancement and innovation throughout the continent.

The conference concluded with the Kigali Declaration, a document outlining key commitments to scaling up agricultural technologies, improving regulatory environments, and boosting youth and private sector engagement in food systems.