

Africa must stop treating agriculture as a sector of last resort and turn it into a major source of investment, jobs and economic growth, Rwanda's Prime Minister Justin Nsengiyumva said on Wednesday, as the continent struggles with food insecurity despite its vast agricultural potential.

Opening the 20th Africa Food Systems Forum in Kigali, Nsengiyumva said Africa had the land, water, sunshine and young population needed to feed itself, but was failing to fully convert those resources into prosperity.

"Agriculture should not be viewed as a sector for people who have nowhere else to go. It should be seen as a modern sector offering opportunities to create jobs, drive innovation and build wealth," he said.



More than 5,000 people from over 50 countries are attending the forum, including government officials, farmers, investors, researchers, businesses and development partners.

The scale of Africa's food challenge remains stark. About 309 million Africans faced hunger in 2025, equivalent to 20% of the continent's population, while 56.6% experienced moderate or severe food insecurity, according to the latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report.

Nsengiyumva said Africa needed to move beyond increasing farm output and invest across the food value chain, from agricultural inputs and production to irrigation, mechanisation, storage, transport, processing and marketing.

Such investment, he said, could create opportunities for young people and women while allowing farmers to earn more from their produce.

The call comes as African countries seek to reduce dependence on imported food and capture more value from agricultural production.

Moses Vilakati, the African Union commissioner responsible for agriculture, rural development, blue economy and sustainable environment, said Africa needed to strengthen domestic food processing.

"Africa must become better at processing its own food rather than importing processed products from abroad," he said.

Former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, president of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, said increasing food production alone would not be enough and called for deeper changes across the agricultural sector.

Nsengiyumva said Rwanda supports the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and its 2026-2035 strategy and action plan, which he said could help countries share knowledge, implement reforms and attract investment.

He urged participants to turn political commitments into bankable projects, invest across the food system and scale up agricultural innovations that have already shown results.

“No single country, institution or organisation can transform Africa’s agriculture and food systems alone,” he said.