

More than 5,000 African and global leaders, investors, scientists, entrepreneurs and young innovators from more than 50 countries are expected in Kigali next month for the 20th Africa Food Systems Forum (AFSF), as African countries seek to turn food-system commitments into investment, jobs and action.

The forum will run from Aug. 31 to Sept. 5 under the theme, “Investing in Africa’s Agri-Food Systems: Nourishing Nations, Growing Jobs, Building Resilience.”

President Paul Kagame will open the forum, which will focus on how Africa can build food systems capable of feeding a growing population while creating jobs, supporting economic transformation and withstanding climate shocks.

The meeting follows the 2025 forum in Senegal, where six countries presented programs that together targeted more than \$6 billion in investments for food-system transformation, youth employment and sustainable agri-food value chains.



The 2025 forum also identified investment-ready projects, including businesses led by young people and women. Its Agri-Food Investment Forum highlighted the need for blended finance, measures to reduce investment risks and greater mobilization of domestic resources to unlock investment at scale.

Amath Pathé Sene, managing director of the Africa Food Systems Forum, said Africa has the knowledge and innovation needed to transform its food systems but must match that potential with greater investment and action.

“Africa has the knowledge, the innovation and the entrepreneurial energy to transform how our continent produces, processes, trades and consumes food. What we need now is to match that ambition with investment and action at scale,” Sene said.

The Kigali forum will bring governments, development finance institutions, investors and private-sector companies together to identify investment opportunities, strengthen project pipelines and advance implementation across Africa’s food and agriculture value chains.

Five priorities will guide the discussions: investment and finance, food security and nutrition, climate resilience, youth and digital innovation, and trade, markets and value chains.

The forum will also feature an AFSF Deal Room, where African agribusinesses, entrepreneurs and innovators will connect with investors and financial institutions to explore investment opportunities, mobilize capital and build partnerships.

Youth, entrepreneurship and innovation will feature prominently, including discussions on how technology and digital innovation can expand opportunities for Africa's young population across agriculture and food value chains. The forum will also examine the role of women in food production, processing, trade and household nutrition.

The 20th edition will feature a Council of the Wise made up of six former African heads of state and government. They include former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, former Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, former Guinean Prime Minister Mohamed Beavogui, former Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou, former Beninese Prime Minister Lionel Zinsou and former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn.

Other expected participants include former African Development Bank President Akinwumi Adesina, Food and Agriculture Organization Director-General Qu Dongyu, International Fund for Agricultural Development President Alvaro Lario, AGRA President Alice Ruhweza, African Union Commissioner for Agriculture Josefa Sacko and CGIAR Executive Managing Director Ismahane Elouafi.

Nardos Bekele Thomas, CEO of the African Union Development Agency, Claver Gatete, U.N. Under Secretary-General and executive secretary of the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa, and Silvia Maria Fonseca Massruha, president of Brazil's Embrapa, are also expected, alongside government officials, investors, researchers and private-sector executives.

For Rwanda, hosting the forum will provide an opportunity to showcase its experience in food-systems transformation and position Kigali as a meeting point for African and global leaders working on food, agriculture and investment.

The forum will also look ahead to implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and preparations for COP32 in Addis Ababa.

"After 20 years of progress, the question facing Africa is no longer whether transformation is possible, but whether the continent can mobilise the investment, partnerships and action required to deliver it. AFSF 2026 will bring those decisions

to Kigali,” Sene said.

The forum will conclude with a Food Festival celebrating food, culture and innovation, followed by a closing communique linked to the Kampala CAADP Declaration.