

TAP NEWSLETTER

IN FOCUS

Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)

From Fragmentation to Function: Rewiring Africa's Agricultural Innovation Systems

Africa's agricultural transformation is not constrained by a lack of ideas or technologies. It is constrained by how effectively systems connect actors, align investments, and sustain learning over time. What is now emerging across the continent is a deliberate shift: from fragmented interventions to functioning Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) that integrate capacity, coordination, foresight, and delivery.

From Capacity Building to Institutional Capability

Recent capacity strengthening efforts have engaged thousands of professionals and institutions in areas such as innovation facilitation, research management, foresight, and value chain coordination. The emphasis is no longer on training individuals alone, but on building institutional capability—the ability of organisations to plan, coordinate, learn, and adapt. Structured training-of-trainers processes implemented in early 2026, for instance, have combined technical learning with country-level action planning, reflecting a broader shift from episodic training to system-level capacity development aligned with the TAP Common Framework.

Innovation Platforms as System Delivery Mechanisms

A central feature of this transition is the strengthening of multi-stakeholder innovation platforms, particularly through initiatives such as the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) programme supported by the African Development Bank. These platforms are evolving from facilitation tools into operational delivery mechanisms within AIS. By convening farmers, researchers, private sector actors, and policymakers around specific value chains, they enable coordinated problem-solving and accelerate the uptake of technologies and practices.

Foresight as Decision Infrastructure

Foresight is also moving from the margins to the centre of decision-making. Through collaboration between the African Union Commission, the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub, and technical partners including FAO, a continental foresight process is underway to address a defining question: How will Africa feed 2.5 billion people by 2050? This work combines horizon scanning, political economy analysis, and scenario development to inform policy and investment choices under the CAADP Post-Malabo (Kampala) Strategy and Action Plan (2026–2035). In parallel, a wider foresight ecosystem is emerging, helping link long-term scenarios to present-day decisions and contributing to anticipatory governance.



Participants during a multi-stakeholder workshop on agricultural innovation systems, bringing together policymakers, researchers and development partners.

© FARA

Learning, Coordination and Partnerships

Supporting these developments is a growing layer of knowledge and learning infrastructure. Digital platforms, monitoring and evaluation systems, and harmonised training resources are being strengthened to ensure that data and experience translate into action. Regular coordination processes are helping institutions move from fragmented knowledge flows to continuous learning systems. This transformation also reflects the complementary roles of multiple partners, including the African Union Commission, FAO, the African Development Bank, the European Commission, GIZ, and IDRC.



Participants of a continental foresight consultation on resilient agrifood systems, contributing to long-term planning and policy dialogue in Africa.

© FARA

Systems, Not Projects

The emerging lesson is clear. Africa's agricultural transformation will not be defined by the number of projects implemented, but by the strength of the systems that connect them. What is now taking shape is not a collection of interventions, but an architecture—one that integrates capacity, foresight, coordination, and delivery into functioning systems capable of sustained impact at scale.

By Abdulrazak Ibrahim, PhD

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS - TAP PARTNERS IN ACTION

Near East & North Africa

The Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA)

- AARINENA General Assembly Meeting Held in Amman; Dr Mustafa Altuğ ATALAY Elected President for 2026–2028

The Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) held its General Assembly meeting on 4 December 2025 in Amman, Jordan. The Assembly marked the election of Dr Mustafa Altuğ ATALAY, Director General of the General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies, Türkiye, as the new President of AARINENA for the 2026–2028 term.

The newly elected Executive Committee includes Dr Ibrahim Al-Rawashdeh, Director General of the National Agricultural Research Center (NARC), Jordan, as Vice President of AARINENA and representative of the Mashreq Sub-Region. Other members elected to represent the sub-regions are Dr Fadilah Al-Salameenn (Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Kuwait) for the Arabian Peninsula Sub-Region, Dr Rachid Moussadek (National Institute for Agronomic Research, Morocco) for the Maghreb Sub-Region, and Dr Ahmed Abu Assar (Agricultural Research Corporation, Sudan) for the Nile Valley and Red Sea Sub-Region.

The newly elected leadership team will guide AARINENA's efforts to strengthen regional cooperation, foster research and innovation, and promote sustainable agricultural development across the Near East and North Africa. AARINENA looks forward to a productive term under the leadership of Dr Mustafa Altuğ ATALAY and the Executive Committee as they advance agricultural research, knowledge-sharing, and regional partnerships in the coming years.



Official handover and leadership transition during the AARINENA General Assembly meeting in Amman, Jordan.
© AARINENA



Members of the AARINENA Executive Committee and participants at the General Assembly meeting.
© AARINENA

Africa

African Centre for Field Schools and Innovation (ACFiSiCo)

■ **Delivering Agri-food Systems Transformation from the Field, in Our Boots!**

The African Centre for Field Schools and Innovation (ACFiSiCo) technically led the rollout of an intensive Farmer Field Schools (FFS) programme under Phase II of the Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers (UgIFT) Microscale Irrigation Initiative, covering 95 District Local Governments nationwide. The FFS rollout training, conducted in December 2025, aimed to strengthen district-level capacity for implementing participatory, irrigation-based agricultural extension services. The Training of Trainers (ToT) targeted District Local Government managers, agricultural engineers, extension workers, and model farmers.

Through this process, over 600 personnel were refreshed and equipped with practical skills, including Agricultural Innovation Systems, FFS philosophy and adult learning principles, facilitation and communication for development, community engagement and farmer group sustainability, Agro-Ecosystem Analysis (AESA) for irrigated systems, crop phenology and season-long calendars, irrigated agronomy basics, irrigation system operation and maintenance, agroecology and climate-smart agricultural practices, agribusiness, nutrition, and gender-sensitive FFS tools. Practical application of AESA and irrigation management in learning sites significantly enhanced participants' skills, confidence, and appreciation of the approach.



Hands-on field learning under the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) programme in Uganda.

© ACFiSiCo



Participatory group work and knowledge exchange during FFS training sessions.

© ACFiSiCo

ACFiSiCo reaffirms that sustainable agricultural transformation is a collective endeavour, and that no single actor can deliver it alone. The Centre calls for continued collaboration among governments, development partners, research institutions, civil society, and the private sector to co-create and co-finance scalable, digitally enabled, and farmer-centred extension systems that work where it matters most — in farmers' fields.

ACFiSiCo remains committed as a technical implementation and learning partner in scaling FFS/FBS, innovation platforms, and living labs, including for irrigation-led climate resilience, mechanization, and the translation of policy and financing into tangible outcomes for smallholder productivity, resilience, and livelihoods. The Centre also acknowledges the strong partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), Uganda, Engineering Without Borders Eastern Africa, and the District Local Governments, whose collaboration made this work possible.

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Hands-on field learning under the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) programme in Uganda.
© ACFiSiCo



Participatory group work and knowledge exchange during FFS training sessions.
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Participants and trainers of the FFS rollout programme under the UgIFT initiative.
© ACFISICO

Latin America & Caribbean

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

High-level international event

Sustainable, Inclusive, and Competitive Tropical Agriculture: A Critical Pathway for Mexico and the Americas

📅 27–29 April 2026

📍 Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico

A high-level international event will bring together government authorities, research institutions, and strategic partners to advance a shared vision for tropical agriculture in Mexico and the Americas.

Convened by the Government of the State of Chiapas, the Secretary of Agriculture of Chiapas, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and CATIE, with the participation of key partners including EMBRAPA, the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, and CARDI, the meeting aims to define a 2026–2030 Critical Pathway for Tropical Agriculture under a hemispheric cooperation framework.

The agenda will focus on four priorities:

- sustainable intensification
- territorial innovation systems
- competitive tropical value chains
- governance and financial innovation to scale impact

🔗 Follow the event, through [Facebook](#) and [Youtube](#).



Event poster: Sustainable, Inclusive, and Competitive Tropical Agriculture (27–29 April 2026, Chiapas, Mexico).

© IICA

Red Latinoamericana para Servicios de Extensión Rural (RELASER)

Regional Agroecology Community of Practice: First 2026 Session on Agroecology and Rural Extension

More than 30 participants from Latin America and the Caribbean joined the first 2026 session of the Regional Agroecology Community of Practice, organized by RELASER on 19 February under the AERAS Project. The session brought together experiences on farmer field schools, soil management, bio-inputs, pollinators, and explored relational innovation as a lens to understand what enables or constrains the adoption of change.

Launched in 2025, the Community of Practice aims to sustain horizontal dialogue among public and private actors in the innovation system, with a focus on family farming, agroecology, and extension.

From field practice to system insights

Experiences from Mexico illustrated how Farmer Field Schools (FFS) support agroecological transition through diagnosis, participatory planning, and cycle-based monitoring. The process integrates technical and social dimensions, including production capacity, labour roles within households, and food-related objectives. Women's participation has increased significantly, now representing 51% of participants, with strong engagement in monitoring, seed conservation, and bio-input preparation.

The session also highlighted practical innovations, including the use of locally produced bio-inputs (e.g. bokashi, bioles), the establishment of community seed systems, and actions to support pollinators and biodiversity.



Participants of the Regional Agroecology Community of Practice during the first 2026 session on agroecology and rural extension, held online on 19 February 2026.

© RELASER

Innovation as relationships

A key discussion focused on relational innovation, emphasizing that adoption often depends not only on technologies but on trust, information flows, and institutional connections. The concept of relational distance was introduced to explain why some interventions succeed while others fail, particularly in systems driven by rigid targets and indicators.

Markets, policy, and sustainability

Participants also discussed persistent challenges in agroecology, particularly the mismatch between production efforts and market returns. The need to better integrate market actors, policy frameworks, and value chain dynamics into extension and innovation systems was highlighted.

Looking ahead

RELASER identified priority topics for 2026, including bio-inputs, digital extension, evaluation frameworks, agroecology and markets, youth engagement, and the responsible use of digital tools such as artificial intelligence. The Community of Practice will continue to serve as a platform for exchange, learning, and translating knowledge into practical support for farmers and policy dialogue.

Asia-Pacific

Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS)

FAO Director-General Visits CATAS, Recognizes Contributions to Tropical Agriculture Research

Dr QU Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), visited the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) in Sanya and Danzhou in December 2025. At the Sanya institute, he toured the National Key Laboratory for Tropical Crop Breeding, where he was briefed on advances in germplasm innovation and breeding technologies. The Director-General stressed the importance of fundamental research in tropical agriculture for addressing food security challenges and highlighted FAO's interest in expanding collaborative efforts with CATAS in this field.

At the Danzhou campus, the Director-General visited the historical site of the Lianchang Experimental Station, where he paid tribute to the pioneers of China's natural rubber research. He also explored field demonstrations of tropical fruit, flowers, and medicinal plants, and acknowledged the value of genetic resources for sustainable agricultural development. He commended CATAS for its longstanding contributions to tropical agriculture and its potential to share knowledge and innovations with other tropical regions through South-South cooperation.

The visit strengthened dialogue between FAO and CATAS and opened new opportunities for technical collaboration in support of global food security and agricultural transformation in the Global South.



FAO Director-General visits CATAS and reviews advances in tropical crop research and breeding technologies.

© CATAS

CATAS Concludes Zanzibar Training on Coconut Improvement and Pest Control

The Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS), with support from China's Ministry of Commerce, successfully delivered an overseas training course in Zanzibar on coconut variety improvement and crop pest control techniques. The 20-day programme trained 50 local participants and was led by eight CATAS experts, with senior officials from Zanzibar's Ministry of Agriculture and the Chinese Consulate attending the opening and closing ceremonies.

Minister Makame welcomed CATAS's contribution and called for stronger collaboration to enhance Zanzibar's tropical agriculture productivity and processing capacity. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between CATAS and the Zanzibar Agricultural Research Institute (ZALIRI) to formalize future cooperation in germplasm conservation, cultivation, and food safety. The hands-on training covered 12 technologies tailored to Zanzibar's fruit and spice sectors, supporting practical application and long-term impact.



Participants and trainers of the overseas training course on coconut improvement and pest control in Zanzibar.

© CATAS

CATAS and IITA Advance Partnership for Tropical Agriculture

On 4 March 2026, the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) held a webinar to advance implementation of the science and technology cooperation framework agreement signed in December 2024. Discussions focused on jointly developing proposals for projects under China's National Natural Science Foundation (NSFC) and advancing the development of a joint platform in Hainan Province to facilitate collaboration in research, capacity building, and technology demonstration.

With CATAS facilitation, IITA has signed a Letter of Intent for the Sustainable Development International Cooperation (SDIC) Program with NSFC, a step expected to facilitate joint project application channels for both institutions. Going forward, the two sides will strengthen coordination to advance these initiatives and further contribute to food security and sustainable agricultural development in tropical regions.



Virtual meeting between CATAS and IITA to advance cooperation in tropical agriculture research and innovation.
© CATAS

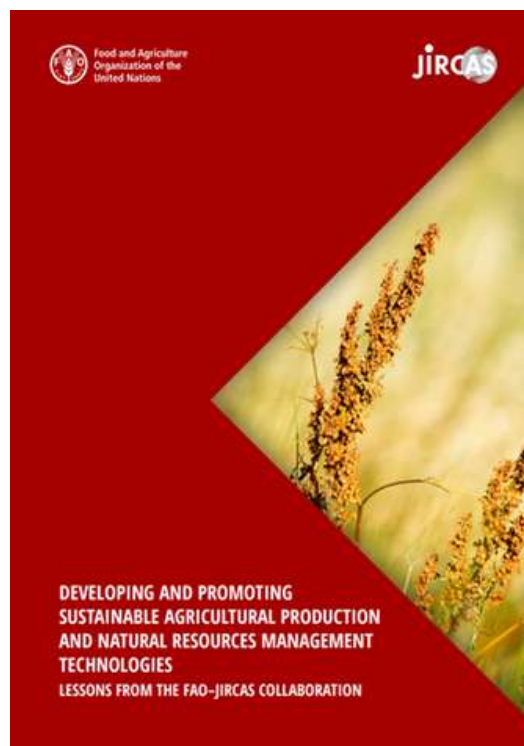
Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS)

Developing and Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Production and Natural Resources Management Technologies - Lessons from FAO-JIRCAS Collaboration

The Office of Innovation at FAO recently co-published a policy brief with JIRCAS (the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences) entitled *Developing and Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Production and Natural Resources Management Technologies – Lessons from FAO–JIRCAS Collaboration*.

The policy brief forms part of the joint efforts to disseminate science-based knowledge and information, leveraging JIRCAS's scientific expertise and FAO's global outreach, as envisaged under the memorandum of understanding between the two institutions. It highlights recent JIRCAS achievements across its three major research programmes and showcases ongoing FAO–JIRCAS collaborations. Drawing on lessons from these cases, the brief outlines opportunities to further strengthen the partnership and offers insights for similar collaborative models.

[Download](#) the policy brief.



Cover of the FAO–JIRCAS policy brief on sustainable agricultural production and natural resources management technologies.
© FAO/JIRCAS

FAO-JIRCAS Collaboration: Leveraging Science and Partnerships for Impact

The Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) is Japan's leading agricultural research institution and has a strong focus on tropical and subtropical zones and developing regions.

Guided by a shared vision of addressing global challenges in agrifood systems and mutual commitments to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), FAO signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with JIRCAS in 2014. Since the establishment of the partnership, FAO and JIRCAS have collaborated on agrifood systems transformation, leveraging their respective strengths.

Collaborations between FAO and JIRCAS have already generated promising synergies, stemming from the comparative advantages of both organizations. These include a number of mutual contributions to international conferences and seminars, and a joint publication for knowledge sharing and disseminating research outputs. Plans for further collaboration are currently in the active pipeline and focus on applying JIRCAS's technical expertise to FAO's work in field. This partnership remains well-positioned to generate real impact for sustainable agrifood systems worldwide.

Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AEAS)

AESA Blog 268 (March 2026) Why Pastoralism Must Be Integrated into India's Veterinary Education, Research, and Extension Systems?

As part of marking the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, the AESA Network published a blog on integrating pastoralism into India's veterinary, education, research, and extension systems.

Despite pastoralists' vital contributions to India's livestock sector, their knowledge, production systems, and challenges remain largely unaddressed in veterinary education, research, and extension services. Integrating pastoralism into these systems is not optional; it is essential for developing a deeper understanding of pastoral practices, recognizing pastoralists as stewards of fragile ecosystems, shaping supportive policy, and ensuring that their perspectives actively influence livestock sector debates, argue P.V.K. Sasidhar and S.V.N. Rao.

Click [here](#) to read.

AESA Good Practice Note 79 (March 2026) Roots of Change: Women Transforming Nepal's Community Forestry

As the world observes the International Day of Forests on 21 March, Rahul Karki reflects on how a local initiative in Nepal helped strengthen women's participation in community forestry and translate that engagement into tangible economic opportunities on the ground.

Click [here](#) to read.

AESA Blog 269 (March 2026) Beyond Fear and Fury: How Conservation Education Can Change Farmers' Responses to Wildlife Damage

Drawing on field insights, Hridya Sasikumar, Sreedhar Vijayakrishnan, and B. S. Meena explore how extension-led conservation education fosters informed farmer–wildlife coexistence.

Click [here](#) to read full blog.



Street play organised by Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) engaging plantation workers and school children on human–wildlife coexistence © Hridya Sasikumar

Europe & Global

The Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL)

Supporting the development of organic agriculture in Tunisia

Strengthening Tunisia's organic sector requires both supportive policies and practical implementation at the farm level. Within the framework of the FAO Tunisia BIOREST project, FiBL contributes as an implementation partner to support the development of organic agriculture in Tunisia. Since 2021, the initiative has contributed to improving the institutional framework by harmonizing legislation and supporting the certification of laboratories, while also building capacities among farmers, advisors, and agricultural institutions.

Training activities in 2025 introduced climate-smart organic practices for crop and livestock systems, including mechanical weed control, biological pest management, green manure, and improved soil management to address drought and rising temperatures. The project also promotes crop diversification, livestock integration, locally adapted crop varieties, and the development of a domestic organic seed sector to strengthen resilience and reduce dependence on imported inputs.

Read more: [FiBL - From policy to practice: Advancing the organic sector in Tunisia](#)



*Demonstration of mechanical weed control.
© Nicolas Lefebvre, FiBL*

Soil health for sustainable cocoa production

Over recent decades, cocoa farming in many regions has intensified, often shifting toward simplified systems such as monocultures and increased use of synthetic inputs to boost yields. While this initially improved productivity, poor soil management and limited monitoring have contributed to declining soil health. Many farmers lack accessible tools and knowledge to assess soil conditions, which can lead to reduced productivity and environmental degradation over time.

To address this challenge, the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) has launched a project to develop a practical framework for monitoring soil health on cocoa farms. The initiative focuses on identifying reliable soil health indicators and creating simple field tools for farmers and advisers. Through collaboration with international experts and field testing on hundreds of farms in major cocoa-producing countries, the project aims to strengthen farm productivity, support farmer livelihoods, and protect ecosystems linked to cocoa cultivation.

Read more: [FiBL - Soil health in cocoa production](#)



*Demonstration in a training on the importance of soil health in cocoa production systems.
© Fundación Ecotop, Lucia Descarpontriez Rojas*



*Organic coconut production in Cote d'Ivoire.
© Juliane Ebenhög*

Meet the WYNA Fellows: Youth Driving Agroecological Transformation in Africa Guidance for exporting organic products to the EU

The new EU Organic Regulation (EU) 2018/848 has fundamentally changed the landscape for international organic production and trade. For producers outside the European Union, the shift from the principle of “equivalence” to a stricter “compliance” regime introduces new rules, challenges, and more rigorous control requirements. The Guidance on production, preparation, and export of organic plant products into the European Union for Operators and Groups of Operators in non-EU countries helps farmers, processors, and exporters understand how to meet these requirements when exporting to the EU market. Commissioned by COLEAD under the EU-funded AGRINFO programme and implemented in collaboration with FiBL, the document supports stakeholders in adapting to the new regulatory framework.

The guidance condenses complex legal provisions into a clear overview of the entire export process, from farm production to certification and shipment. It covers requirements for individual operators and producer groups, on-farm practices such as seed use and soil fertility management, contamination prevention measures, and rules for processing, storage, labelling, and export documentation.

Read more: [FiBL - New guidance on EU Organic Regulation for non-EU operators and groups](#)

Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI)

CABI’s PlantwisePlus Programme: Building Women’s Digital Capacity to Strengthen Advisory Services

Efforts to narrow the gender digital divide are gaining momentum, with [CABI’s PlantwisePlus programme](#) demonstrating how targeted digital skills training can enhance women farmers’ access to agricultural knowledge. Training piloted across Nepal and other countries has helped women extension officers and farmers build confidence in using mobile devices and digital advisory tools, enabling them to access information more independently and participate more actively in decision-making.

In Nepal, a dedicated digital literacy programme brought together women IPM facilitators and plant doctors for hands-on sessions using the PlantwisePlus suite of digital tools. Participants not only strengthened foundational digital skills—such as safe internet practices and smartphone navigation—but also developed province-level action plans to reach at least 1,000 additional women farmers by November 2025. The initiative highlights how local capacity building can catalyse broader community uptake of digital advisory services, helping ensure that women farmers are not left behind in the digital transition.



IPM Farmer Facilitator Rita Bstakoti shows a farmer how to find agricultural information on a mobile phone.

© Malvika Chaudhary, CABI

CABI Advances GenAI Solutions to Strengthen Advisory Services for Smallholder Farmers

CABI is accelerating the responsible use of generative AI (GenAI) to improve how smallholder farmers access trusted, localized agricultural advice. Through the multi-partner Generative AI for Agriculture Advisory (GAIA) initiative, CABI is helping to develop AI-powered services that can deliver context-specific guidance in local languages while upholding strong data governance, ethical safeguards, and gender-responsive design. CABI's role includes integrating its curated crop health content into GenAI systems, creating licensing and governance frameworks, and developing an AI Ethics Toolkit to ensure fairness, transparency, and reliable advisory outputs.

Partners convened at CABI headquarters in early 2026 to review progress on GAIA Phase II, focusing on expanding high-quality content for AI use, strengthening responsible data governance, and embedding farmer-centred design principles. The programme is now moving from framework development to field-level pilots, with the aim of ensuring that AI tools are built on trusted content and aligned with real-world extension needs.

Read more [here](#).



Farmer using a mobile device for crop advice.

© CABI

CABI's wider work also highlights how AI can enhance the inclusivity of agricultural advisory services, including for women farmers who often lack access to reliable information. AI-enabled tools—when grounded in trusted scientific content and delivered through accessible formats such as voice and local language—offer significant potential to close gaps in access, strengthen pest-management decision-making and reduce the reliance on intermediaries. Click [here](#) to know more.



A farmer advisor sharing information via a digital tool with a female farmer.

© CABI

TAP has landed on LinkedIn

We're thrilled to announce that TAP has joined LinkedIn! This move represents our commitment to enhancing our online presence and fostering stronger connections. We invite you to follow our page and join us in this exciting journey. Your support in promoting our [LinkedIn page](#) among your network would be greatly appreciated, and we also welcome your contributions directly to our page.

Together, let's engage, network, and collaborate on LinkedIn to better promote agricultural innovation!

TAP on LinkedIn!



Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP)

FAO-led global mechanism with over 50 members/donors promoting agricultural innovation, especially in the tropics.

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/tropical-agriculture-platform-tap>

Contact the TAP Secretariat

TAP is a G-20 initiative launched in 2012 to promote agricultural innovation in the tropics. TAP has formed a coalition of more than 50 partners. Its main goal is to strengthen agricultural innovation systems (AIS) in developing countries through coordinated multi-stakeholder interventions.

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From August 2019 to December 2024, the European Commission (EU) supported TAP through the project "Developing capacities in agricultural innovation systems: scaling up the TAP Framework" (TAP-AIS), implemented by FAO.