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 **AGRICULTURE**
SUMMIT
AFRICA

 **Sterling**

POST-EVENT COMMUNIQUE FOR **THE AGRICULTURE SUMMIT AFRICA 2025**

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Executive Summary

The Agriculture Summit Africa (ASA) is a premier platform dedicated to advancing agricultural transformation across Africa. Organized by Sterling Bank, ASA convenes diverse stakeholders from finance, research, government, the private sector, and development agencies to engender dialogue, drive innovation, and implement solutions aimed at overcoming the continent's agricultural challenges. The 2025 edition draws on lessons learned from, and successes recorded in previous years to further engender innovative solutions, financing, and important policies in the sector.

Core Objectives

- **Advance Food Security:** Develop evidence based policies and actionable strategies that reduce malnutrition, and prioritize investments that enhance local food production.
- **Mobilize Investment and Innovative Finance:** Bridge the existing financing gap through innovative instruments and engage different financing partners to pledge capital towards sustainable agriculture development.
- **Champion Agritech and Digital Solutions:** Showcase cutting-edge agritech innovations and establish incubation programs that connect agritech innovators with market opportunities.
- **Empower Smallholder Farmers:** Enhance capacity building initiatives that provide farmers with modern farming techniques, financial literacy and market access.
- **Promote Youth and Women Inclusivity:** Ensure active participation of youth and women in decision making and launch mentorship programs and funding schemes specifically targeting young entrepreneurs and women-led agribusinesses.

- **Foster Global and Pan-African Partnerships:** Leverage Sterling Bank's global partnerships to bring international expertise and investment to Nigeria and the Wider African market.

Key Features

- **Policy Advocacy and Harmonization:** ASA serves as a platform for advocating evidence-based agricultural policies across regional and national levels to enhance competitiveness, fill key gaps, and improve market access.
- **Investment Deal Room:** A signature component of the summit, the deal room facilitates financing and investment opportunities in high-value agricultural projects, connecting SMEs, investors, and development partners.
- **Thought Leadership:** The summit features keynote addresses, panel sessions, and expert presentations on critical topics such as food security, innovative financing structures, climate change, and agribusiness.
- **Networking and Collaboration:** With participants ranging from policymakers to grassroots stakeholders, ASA fosters dialogue that bridges urban and rural divides, unlocks investment and partnerships, and drives a unified approach to agriculture.

Impact and Vision

Since its inception, ASA has significantly influenced the narrative around agriculture in Africa, emphasizing its role as a driver of economic development and food security rather than a subsistence activity. By promoting innovative solutions, inclusive policies, and sustainable finance, the summit aims to transition agriculture into a profit-driven, industrialized sector that not only feeds the continent but also creates jobs and drives exports.

ASA envisions a future where Africa's agricultural potential is fully realized, contributing to global food systems and sustainable economic prosperity. The summit is committed to remaining a catalyst for transformative change by fostering partnerships, innovation, and policy coherence across the continent.

ASA 2025 PARTNERS

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General overview

The 2025 Agriculture Summit Africa, powered by Sterling Bank in partnership with Mastercard and other strategic partners, convened policymakers, financiers, agribusiness leaders, and innovators under the theme Survival of the Greenest: Reclaiming Africa's Food Destiny. The event focused on building resilient food systems, deepening access to finance, and accelerating the adoption of technology to unlock Africa's agricultural potential. The summit was held physically at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel in Abuja from November 6 to 7, 2025, and was also live-streamed on YouTube.

The 2025 summit was attended by representatives from various levels of government, officials from nonprofit organisations, financiers, business leaders, innovators, farmer associations, students, development partners, researchers, and entrepreneurs.

DAY ONE

ACTIVITIES AT THE AGRICULTURE SUMMIT AFRICA 2025



Welcome Address

Abubakar Suleiman

Managing Director/CEO, Sterling Bank Limited

Represented by **Garba Mohammed**

Executive Director, the Alternative Bank

Key Issues Highlighted

The following are the major points highlighted in his address:

- **Targeted Innovations Could Resolve Africa's Food Sovereignty Paradox:** The continent owns more than half of the world's uncultivated arable land, yet it greatly relies on food imports to feed its population.
- **Recognising Agriculture's Structural Complexity and the Need for Systemic Alignment:** Several factors spanning climatic, economic, and cultural environments affect the health of agriculture on the continent. To better withstand these challenges, systemic interventions must align across these factors for success.
- **Relevance to Sterling's H.E.A.R.T. Strategy:** The Agriculture Summit Africa (ASA) is an extension of the agriculture segment of Sterling's H.E.A.R.T. (Health, Education, Agriculture, Renewable Energy, Transportation) sector-focused approach to investment and financing.
- **Collaboration and Systems Thinking for Transformation:** Eliminating challenges in the sector and sustaining progress requires cross-sector collaboration between governments, the private sector, and development partners. These institutions should prioritise green finance, agri-tech, smallholder empowerment, and climate-resilient farming.

Recommendations:

- **Reclaiming Africa's Food Sovereignty:** Regaining control over who feeds or starves the continent's people is vital to the economic independence of its nations. This aim should be an overarching objective that will snowball into prosperity in other sectors of the economy.
- **Scaling Green Finance:** As the world continues to prioritise the use of renewable energy and adopt greener practices across industries, staying aligned with this will ensure that scaling up is achieved without harming lives or the environment.
- **Segueing from Dialogue to Enduring Action:** For a long time, conversations on agriculture have been more talk than action. A dogged commitment to following through on consensus in the face of daunting challenges can remedy the sector's inefficiencies. This move will require embracing innovation or tailoring it to the cultural or environmental context.

Overview

Garba Mohammed welcomed delegates, comprising government officials, business leaders, innovators, farmer associations, students, and development partners, to the 2025 edition of the summit, themed Survival of the Greenest: Reclaiming Africa's Food Destiny. He said the theme underscored an essential truth: in a rapidly evolving world, survival depends not on size or speed, but on the ability to adapt, innovate, and grow sustainably. The agricultural sector is complex. It is an ecosystem that requires continuous alignment between financial systems, regulatory institutions, private-sector innovation, and the lived realities of farmers. Agriculture cannot succeed through isolated interventions; instead, it requires a systems-thinking approach, persistence, and collaboration across the entire value chain.

The Executive Director spoke at length about Sterling Bank's HEART strategy, which features Agriculture as its third pillar, explaining that

the bank's decision to invest in agriculture was because of its inextricability from Nigeria's development. Sterling Bank views agriculture as a long-term endeavour requiring patient capital, enabling regulation, and innovation at scale. Africa's situation remains paradoxical, as the continent holds nearly 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land yet spends billions annually importing food that could be produced locally. This reality, he argued, demands a strategic rethink of policies, value chains, and investments to reclaim Africa's food sovereignty. "We possess the resources; what remains is the collective will to transform them into shared prosperity," he said.

The Agriculture Summit Africa (ASA) has evolved from a national dialogue into a continental platform driving agricultural innovation through collaboration among governments, private sector actors, and international partners. The 2025 summit, he explained, would explore the intersection of finance, technology, innovation, and policy, focusing on unlocking green finance, advancing agri-tech adoption, empowering smallholders, reforming policies, and promoting climate-resilient farming.

Reiterating Sterling Bank's vision to enable prosperity through purposeful investment in the real economy, Mohammed stated that agriculture remains central to this mission, not only as a developmental necessity but also a viable business opportunity and a path to social inclusion. He urged all stakeholders to view agriculture as a shared responsibility that requires leadership, coherent policy, and cross-sector collaboration.

He called for a future where African farmers enjoy market access, modern tools, and fair returns, where young people view agriculture as a career of first choice, and where the continent feeds itself and the world. Mohammed challenged participants to move "beyond conversations to actions, beyond analysis to collaborations," stressing that the desired transformation would only be achieved through collective effort and resilience.

He closed by acknowledging ASA 2025 partners and sponsors, including Sunbeth Global Concepts, Mastercard, IFC, One Foundation, The Alternative Bank, Leadway Assurance, and others, describing their support as proof of what can be achieved when vision meets collaboration. Concluding his remarks, he affirmed that the summit's mission embodies a clear conviction: "The future will not belong to the strongest or the fastest. It will belong to the greenest."

Keynote Address

Jude Uzonwanne

Managing Partner, TUG Capital Partners

Issues Highlighted

- **Data Scarcity:** There are gaps in the numbers and projections required to inform decision-making in the sector. Even where available, it is out of reach for the parties in need.
- **Fragmented Agricultural Markets & Barriers to Integration:** African countries still operate with fragmented agricultural markets characterised by tariff barriers, border closures, and inconsistent standards. Weak intra-African logistics and the absence of reliable shipping networks further limit trade and integration.
- **Chronic Underinvestment in Infrastructure:** Weak roads, ports, storage facilities, unreliable power, cold-chain systems, and irrigation systems continue to depress productivity across the continent. These transport inefficiencies make African goods uncompetitive and hinder smooth internal trade.
- **Weak Pipeline from Academic Research to Industry:** Research from universities and polytechnics rarely translates into practical farming applications.
- **Unsustainable Financing Structure:** The continent's agriculture relies too heavily on banks as its primary source of financing. The sector's working-capital needs run into billions annually, far exceeding what banks alone can provide.
- **Inconsistent Policies:** Frequent policy shifts, such as border closures and import bans, undermine investor confidence. As it stands, agricultural planning remains tied to electoral cycles rather than the long-term, multi-decade strategies needed for growth.

Recommendations:

- **Countries Should Aim for Food Sufficiency:** To achieve this, half of agricultural output should serve local consumption needs, while 10-30% should be targeted for exports to global markets.
- **Building a Unified African Agricultural Market:** This can be achieved by removing intra-continental trade barriers, harmonising tariff regimes through the AfCFTA, allowing the free movement of goods, labour, capital, and technology, and creating recognition frameworks so that one country's seed/crop approvals are accepted across others.
- **Infrastructure Investment Should Be Long-term, Not Determined by Election Cycles:** African governments should build a consistent regulatory environment that can survive political turnover.
- **Jettison Crude Farm Management Techniques:** Farm management must become more professional through improved mechanisation and stronger operational systems. Better post-harvest processes will cut losses and increase both productivity and farmer income.
- **Democratise Access to Agricultural Research from Universities:** Create a pipeline for transferring research findings from universities to industry and the private sector.
- **Expand the Financing Base:** To grow the industry, funding must diversify beyond government financing to incorporate venture capital, private equity, fintech lenders, and other sources from the private sector. No single institution can finance agriculture sustainably.
- **Strategically Target Markets for Exports:** Africa should target domestic consumers for approximately half of its output, deepen intra-African trade under the AfCFTA, and allocate 10–30% of production to global markets, particularly Asia and China. To

succeed across these markets, it must compete through price leadership rather than price parity.

- **Provide Access to Agricultural Data:** Agricultural data should be openly accessible to farmers, investors, and policymakers. The ensuing transparency will help align production decisions with actual market needs, eventually reducing costly inefficiencies.

General Overview

Jude Uzonwanne's address merged macroeconomic insight and policy realism. He emphasised the need for African nations to reassess their food and agricultural strategy and establish a unified continental market. Africa must "dismantle the barriers it has put up against itself" and pursue an integrated agricultural market for goods, labour, and innovation across the continent.

He structured his remarks around five core themes:

Africa's first principles, aspirations, target markets, winning strategies, and the capabilities required for success. Uzonwanne said he would use the terms "agriculture" and "agribusiness" interchangeably to encompass food crops, livestock, economic trees, and value-added industries. Africa's historical undervaluation of farm labour is the "pink elephant in the room." Farm workers must be paid appropriately, even if it raises food prices, because "We have effectively used the rural areas to subsidise the urban areas, and that has to come to an end."

Research and innovation from African universities and polytechnics should be commercialised and integrated into everyday agricultural practice. Financing agriculture should not rest solely on banks but involve venture capital, private equity, fintechs, and family offices. Governments should stop subsidising fertiliser and instead invest in infrastructure, roads, ports, and logistics that reduce production costs and expand trade.

Uzonwanne criticised border closures used to "protect" local farmers,

describing them as “intellectually wrong.” Instead, he called for tariff policies under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) to foster a single African market that encourages intra-continental trade rather than blocking the movement of goods between countries.

Africa should build a free and integrated agricultural market that allows capital, goods, and labour to move freely. “A farmer in Nigeria should be free to work in Ghana, just as Sterling Bank should be able to finance agriculture in South Africa,” he said. He urged African nations to harmonise trade systems and pool resources to become globally competitive.

He proposed that African countries target three key markets: domestic, intra-African, and global. About half of agricultural output, he said, should serve local consumption needs, while 10 to 30% should target exports to international markets, especially China. Using rice as an example, he criticised Nigeria’s import restrictions. He praised the quality of Tanzania’s Kilombero rice, noting that poor logistics and lack of intra-African shipping networks make trade unnecessarily difficult. He argued that fixing infrastructure and seed supply chains was essential before restricting imports.

Africa must compete globally through price leadership, not price parity, and must set its own quality standards. African producers should aim for “top five export market quality,” adopting rigorous packaging and sanitary standards to rival USDA Grade A livestock and global food safety benchmarks. Innovation and branding will be key differentiators, especially in the food processing and packaging sectors. He recalled a past Nigeria–China cassava export agreement that had failed because shipments were rejected due to high moisture content, arguing that Africa must learn from such setbacks and continually improve quality to gain trust in global markets.

African countries need to overhaul their agricultural systems, beginning with seed selection. Without quality seeds, there can be no

growth in productivity. He called for stronger coordination among research institutions and regulators across Africa, suggesting a continental framework similar to global pharmaceutical approvals, where one country's approval could be recognised by others.

There is a need to professionalise farm management, expand mechanisation, and develop better post-harvest systems to reduce food losses. Governments should focus infrastructure investments on transport networks that enable the efficient movement of goods, as this would unlock private investment in storage, processing, and export facilities, driving up rural GDP and household income.

Financing, risk management, and data are critical enablers of transformation. He stressed that no single institution—banks, fintechs, private equity firms, or governments—could fund the required scale of agricultural expansion alone, stating that billions of dollars in working capital would be needed annually. He also called for more open and accessible agricultural data, arguing that “hoarding data does not solve anybody's problem.” Transparent data, he said, would help farmers and investors make informed decisions about what to produce and where to allocate resources.

If Africa pursued these strategies with unity and discipline, its agricultural GDP could rise from approximately \$400 billion today to \$1 trillion within the next decade. Achieving this growth would require a complete shift in mindset, coordination, and ambition across the continent. “It's not a mystery—it can be done,” he said. “But it requires us to think very differently, act very differently, and operate with one singular intent: to build a continental market that allows everyone a seat at the table.”

MOU Signing

Mohammed Abu Ibrahim

ES/CEO National Agricultural Development Fund

Represented by **Nasir Ingawa**

GM, Partnerships and Investor Relations

Key Issues

- **Agricultural finance is fragmented:** Multiple interventions are operating in isolation, resulting in duplication and limited system-wide impact.
- **High-risk segments struggle to attract private investment:** Many value chains remain underfunded because commercial financiers perceive the sector as too risky.
- **Climate vulnerabilities persist:** Without climate-smart financing models and resilient systems, farmers, processors, and exporters remain exposed to shocks that weaken productivity.

Recommendations:

- **Blended Finance for mitigating risks:** NADF's first-loss approach and concessional-commercial capital mix are designed to make agricultural ventures bankable and appealing to private investors.
- **Creating coordinated, ecosystem-level financing:** The MoU and NADF's broader strategy calls for structured collaborations between government, financiers, and private-sector actors to drive scale and avoid duplication.
- **Integrate climate-smart, inclusive financing models across the value chain:** NADF prioritises resilience-focused investments such as improved seeds, efficient water use, renewable energy, and support for women, youth, and smallholders to strengthen long-term agricultural productivity.

General Overview

Ingawa apologised for Ibrahim's absence, explaining that he was attending the National Agricultural Council alongside other policymakers. He then delivered Ibrahim's prepared remarks, commending Sterling Bank for its leadership in convening ASA and for sustaining "a platform not just for talk, but for uniting agricultural powerhouses to chart a new course for Africa's agricultural transformation."

On the summit's theme, Survival of the Greenest: Reclaiming Africa's Food Destiny, he noted that while the continent's food security challenges, climate vulnerabilities, and financing gaps are well known, what is required now is action and innovation in agricultural financing. The NADF believes finance must be "catalytic", capital that funds projects, unlocks value, de-risks innovation, and builds investor confidence across the agricultural value chain.

NADF operates as a sector-wide agricultural finance vehicle that leverages blended finance to attract private investment into high-impact, yet often high-risk, segments of the farming sector. The fund, he said, plays a first-loss role, bearing early risk through feasibility studies and initial capital injections, to make agrarian ventures bankable and attractive to private financiers. "By taking the first risk and putting the first naira forward,...we make it possible for commercial banks, investment funds, and cooperatives to come on board with confidence."

Ibrahim outlined that the Fund's mandate extends beyond traditional public financing by aligning its interventions with the principles of climate-smart agriculture. NADF is integrating climate-resilient financing models across its operations, supporting innovation in areas such as improved seed varieties, efficient water management, renewable energy for processing, and sustainable land use practices. These, he said, are being developed in collaboration with international partners to embed resilience into Nigeria's and Africa's

agricultural systems.

NADF is deepening agricultural finance frameworks that recognise the unique risks faced by farmers, processors, and exporters. Through specialised financial products, the Fund seeks to ensure that credit, insurance, and payments flow seamlessly “from farm to fork.” One of these models, the NADF1 on-lending product, would be formally launched at the summit through an agreement with Sterling Bank, which, he noted, demonstrates the Fund’s practical approach to unlocking agricultural growth through partnerships.

The NADF’s strategic focus includes financing value addition, mechanisation, irrigation, and storage infrastructure while prioritising smallholder farmers, women, and youth. “They are not just beneficiaries of our work,” he said. “They are the core of our strategy. Their success is the one true measure of our success.” By strengthening cooperatives and linking them to structured markets, the Fund aims to transition rural producers from subsistence to sustainable livelihoods.

Ibrahim issued a call to investors, urging them to view Nigerian agriculture through the lens of patient capital and to collaborate with NADF in scaling viable financial models. “No capital is too little,” he said, appealing for joint mobilisation of public and private resources to drive food security. He cautioned against symbolic agreements that remain unimplemented, insisting that “the partnerships we seek are not MOUs that sit on shelves, but collaborations built on shared risk, shared investment, and shared success.”

The address ended with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the National Agricultural Development Fund and Sterling Bank to operationalise the NADF1 on-lending facility aimed at unlocking finance for agricultural growth and resilience.

Goodwill Message

Hon. Idi Mukhtar Maiha,
Hon. Minister, Federal Ministry of Livestock Development

Key Challenges

- **Livestock Farming Remains Informal and Underdeveloped:** Although valued at approximately \$32 billion, it has operated informally for decades and lacks the necessary structure to scale into a globally competitive industry.
- **Chronic underinvestment limits export potential:** Weak genetics, poor pasture management, and inadequate animal health systems hinder Nigeria's ability to reduce dairy imports or tap into lucrative global meat markets.
- **Banks Do Not Provide Fitting Financing:** Most financial institutions rely on traditional risk assessments and lack dedicated livestock desks, leaving small producers without the soft loans and flexible funding they need.

Recommendations:

- **Formalise the Livestock Economy:** The National Livestock Growth Acceleration Strategy aims to expand the sector to \$74 billion by 2035 and integrate pastoralists, who hold 95% of livestock assets, into the formal economy.
- **Invest in improved genetics, pasture systems, animal health, and processing capacity:** These upgrades would increase productivity, enhance nutrition, reduce import dependence, and expand access to global markets, such as the \$3.2 billion halal meat segment.
- **Targeted financing through strong partnerships:** Dedicated livestock lending, combined with coordinated investment, would unlock jobs, expand value chains like leather, and turn livestock

into a major driver of food security and economic diversification.

General Overview

Hon. Idi Mukhtar Maiha reframed the conversation around livestock agriculture by drawing attention to its critical importance. Livestock, whether dairy, beef, poultry, or small ruminants, is integral to national nutrition, export potential, and rural employment, and must be placed at the centre of Africa's food security and economic development agenda.

The creation of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development by President Bola Tinubu a year earlier was a bold strategic decision aimed at modernising the livestock sector into a globally competitive industry. The current value of Nigeria's livestock economy is approximately \$32 billion; however, it has largely remained informal for decades. The government's goal is to mainstream this sector into the formal economy through the newly developed National Livestock Growth Acceleration Strategy, which aims to expand the industry to \$74 billion by 2035.

The potential of livestock farming remains untapped due to outdated practices and underinvestment in the sector. He urged stakeholders to envision a transformed landscape stretching "from Cape to Cairo, from Mombasa to Abuja," where modern genetics, improved pasture management, and better animal health systems drive higher productivity, improved nutrition, and increased incomes. If properly developed, the Nigerian dairy and meat industries could replace the \$1.5 billion currently spent on dairy imports and tap into the \$3.2 billion red halal meat market in the Gulf region.

The sector's modernisation would also unlock enormous employment potential, especially for young people, who make up about 65% of Nigeria's 230 million population. He cited the leather value chain as a powerful yet neglected opportunity, capable of creating over 700,000 jobs and adding ₦23 billion to the economy. Nigeria is already in talks

with companies in France and Ethiopia to help revive its leather industry, positioning it as a significant global player.

He directed a strong appeal to the banking sector, describing financial institutions as “the keyholders to unlocking the livestock economy.” He urged banks to move beyond conventional risk assessments and provide soft loans and flexible financing tailored to small livestock producers, who form the backbone of the industry. He criticised the limited agricultural focus of most banks and challenged them to establish dedicated livestock desks separate from general agricultural departments.

About 95% of Nigeria’s livestock assets are in the hands of pastoralists, who must be mainstreamed into formal economic activity. “Livestock is the only sector where you harvest every day—you can pick an egg, milk a goat, or sell a sheep daily.” These daily cash flows, he said, make the sector a safer investment than it is often perceived to be. Stronger partnerships between financial institutions, investors, and policymakers to build infrastructure, improve breeding, feed, and disease management systems, and expand value-added processing. Such collaborations would turn livestock into a major contributor to Africa’s food security, nutrition, and export competitiveness.

Concluding his remarks, he called for a shared vision of transformation that aligns finance and innovation with Africa’s natural resilience: “By investing in livestock, we are investing in nutrition, in employment, in economic diversification, and ultimately in a more secure and prosperous future for all of us in Africa.”

Goodwill Message on Risk Management in Agriculture

Aminu Tukur

Vice Chairman, Noor Takaful

Key Issues

- **High insurance premiums exclude smallholder farmers:** The current premium rates of 5–7% are unrealistic for rural farmers, limiting their access to risk-management solutions.
- **Agricultural risk conversations are out of touch with farmer realities:** Small-scale farmers are focused on survival and yield, not abstract notions of “agric risk.” This has created a gap between policy design and their actual needs.
- **Limited reach of inclusive insurance models:** Despite progress, existing solutions still do not sufficiently penetrate the grassroots level where the majority of Africa’s farmers operate.

Recommendations:

- **Develop affordable and accessible insurance products:** New interventions should focus on designing low-cost, realistic models that smallholder farmers can adopt without financial strain.
- **Strengthen collaboration between financial institutions and the government:** Joint efforts can expand inclusive, ethical, and sustainable risk-management frameworks across rural communities.
- **Prioritise solutions that improve farmer resilience and productivity:** Interventions should tangibly enhance farmers’ ability to survive each cycle and achieve sustainable yields.

General Overview

Tukur thanked the Sterling Bank Group for its continued commitment to agricultural innovation and sustainability. He acknowledged the long-standing partnership between Noor Takaful and Sterling Bank, noting that the collaboration began approximately seven or eight years ago and became firmly established during the COVID-19 period, when both organisations worked closely to design ethical, affordable, and sustainable risk-management solutions for agricultural clients. Mr Tukur shared that, over the past five years, this partnership has yielded measurable results, providing practical and effective risk-management cover to a significant portion of Sterling's customer base.

He acknowledged that discussions about growing Africa's agricultural sector often revolve around de-risking the industry. Still, he cautioned that such conversations must be connected to the realities of small-scale farmers. "What does the risk of agric or financing mean to the smallholder farmer? It means nothing to them," he said, adding that for the average farmer, the focus is simply survival and producing enough yield at the end of each farming cycle.

There exists a need for affordable and practical insurance models that small farmers can realistically access, rather than the high premium rates, typically 5–7%, often associated with conventional insurance. Noor Takaful remains committed to working with partners and governments to design inclusive, sustainable, and cost-effective insurance and risk-management products tailored to the needs of rural farmers.

Goodwill Message

Hon. Mai Mala Buni

Executive Governor, Yobe State

Represented by **Garba Tahir Usman**

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Natural Resources, Yobe State

Key Issues

- **Persistent gaps in agricultural capacity:** The state's strategic plan revealed structural weaknesses that still limit productivity and sector-wide resilience.
- **High dependence on government-driven support for inputs and equipment:** Current progress relies heavily on subsidised or free distributions, which may not be sustainable without broader system strengthening.
- **Insufficient integration of climate-smart practices:** Modern, adaptive farming methods are still not widespread enough to change the status quo.

Recommendations:

- **Deepen multi-stakeholder collaboration:** A coordinated approach across government, private sector, and research institutions will accelerate the adoption of climate-smart, technology-enabled solutions.
- **Strengthen agricultural empowerment programmes:** Building local systems and farmer-led capacity will reduce the prevailing overreliance on government subsidies.
- **Prioritise scalable innovations that enhance food sovereignty:** Practical interventions that boost productivity and self-reliance will help secure Nigeria's food future.

General Overview

Delivering the Governor's goodwill message, Tahir described the summit as a vital platform for rethinking Nigeria's approach to food security, agricultural innovation, and sustainable development. Agriculture remains the backbone of Yobe State's socioeconomic development, and reclaiming food sovereignty is essential to restoring dignity, resilience, and self-reliance among communities.

The state government has pursued a comprehensive programme to transform the agricultural sector through modern farming techniques, expanded irrigation infrastructure, and farmer empowerment. "A productive agricultural sector," he said, "is the foundation of sustainable development, food security, and poverty reduction."

Yobe's agricultural transformation agenda formally began in 2020 with the organisation of the state's first-ever agricultural summit and the establishment of an Agricultural Revitalisation Committee, which developed a five-year strategic plan—the first agricultural policy in the state's history. This framework identified gaps in the sector and produced recommendations for sustained growth.

He outlined several achievements under the ongoing agricultural empowerment programme, launched in 2024 by the Vice President of Nigeria. Through this initiative, farm inputs and equipment worth billions of naira were distributed free of charge to 5,340 farmers across the state. In 2025, the state expanded the programme, providing agricultural tools and inputs worth several billions more to about 17,000 additional beneficiaries.

400,000 cassava stems, 5,350 solar-powered water pumps, 2,500 power tillers, and 1,550 multipurpose threshers were also distributed. One hundred tractors were allocated to zonal offices across the state at highly subsidised rates, while another 40 tractors were given free of charge to farmers across all 17 local government areas.

The state also distributed 20,000 goats to women in all 178 wards as part of its livestock empowerment initiative. To further support food production, 180,000 bags of NPK fertiliser were procured and sold to farmers at a 50% subsidy. Governor Buni assured that these interventions would continue and expand in the coming years, demonstrating the government's commitment to achieving food self-sufficiency.

He called for stronger collaborations among all stakeholders, government agencies, private sector players, researchers, and farmers, to advance technology-driven, inclusive agricultural practices that will secure Africa's food systems for future generations. The summit's deliberations, he hoped, would produce outcomes capable of positioning Africa as a true global food powerhouse.

Special Address

Rt. Hon. Bello Kaoje

Chairman, Committee on Agricultural Production and Services, House of Representatives, National Assembly

Represented by **Kelechi Nwogu**

Key Issues

- **Obsolete agricultural laws:** Several laws governing the sector no longer align with today's realities, which weakens their ability to support growth or protect farmers.
- **Weak enforcement of existing legislation:** Even when good laws exist, they are not consistently implemented by the executive arm, leaving many policies ineffective in reality.
- **Coordination and representation gaps across the value chain:** Policymakers, financiers, and farmers often lack alignment, and concerns about effective political representation underscore deeper challenges to trust and collaboration.

Recommendations:

- **Bring agricultural laws up to speed with current needs:** The legislature and relevant bodies should revise outdated laws and transform sound proposals from stakeholders into effective policies.
- **Strengthen the enforcement of existing laws:** The executive arm needs to apply passed legislation more decisively so that policies translate into tangible results for farmers and communities.
- **Promote collaboration among political actors and the value chain:** Policymakers, financiers, and farmers should work together to develop solutions that support food sovereignty, resilience, and equitable agricultural growth.

General Overview

“Food sovereignty” is more than food security. It is the right of nations to shape their agricultural policies, control their land, water, and genetic resources. The Honourable Nwogu assured the audience that the National Assembly would act on sound proposals brought forward to address these challenges.

He also addressed the issue of capable representation raised earlier in the summit, acknowledging that while some elected officials fall short, many, including himself, work diligently to serve their constituencies. Emphasising legislative limits, he reminded participants that lawmakers make laws but cannot implement them, appealing to the executive arm to enforce existing statutes and ensure that passed legislation delivers tangible outcomes.

Several agricultural laws are outdated, and the parliament has pledged to update them, while stressing that enforcement remains critical. The committee would continue enacting transformative laws, collaborate with African counterparts to promote fair policies, and support all partnerships aimed at ending hunger and advancing agricultural growth across the continent.

Special Remarks

Olasunkanmi Owoyemi

Managing Director, Sunbeth Global Concepts

Represented by **Ibukun Opeke**

Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Sunbeth Global Concepts

Key Issues

- **Escalating food insecurity:** Despite Africa's abundant arable land and favourable climate, over 800 million people remain food insecure, with numbers projected to rise significantly.
- **Mismatch between population expansion and food production capacity:** With Africa's population expected to double by 2050, current productivity levels are insufficient to meet future demand.
- **Systemic gaps:** Weak agricultural infrastructure, limited access to technology, and inadequate financing hinder efficiency, innovation, and the scaling of sustainable food systems across the continent.
- **Slow transition from dialogue to implementation:** The impact of high-level discussions remains limited without coordinated, sustained post-summit action.

Recommendations:

- **Modernising through green innovations:** Scaling climate-smart tools and practices will boost productivity.
- **Introducing accessible financing:** Robust systems and capital flow will empower smallholder farmers and drive long-term growth.
- **Promote solution-oriented partnerships:** This will transform commitments into measurable outcomes that extend beyond the summit, fostering lasting impact.

- **Develop a clear roadmap for collective implementation:** A shared agenda ensures coordinated efforts that can meaningfully close the food production gap.

General Overview

Opeke conveyed Owoyemi's warm greetings and appreciation to the organisers, noting that it was a great honour to address a gathering dedicated to shaping Africa's agricultural future. The urgency to build sustainable food systems across Africa has never been greater, with agriculture playing a central role in protecting the continent's future.

The continent possesses enormous potential, vast arable land, favourable climatic conditions, and a youthful population, which are "not just statistics but building blocks for transformation." Potential alone, however, is insufficient, particularly as the population is projected to double by 2050, widening the gap between food production and demand.

Citing World Bank data, Opeke revealed that more than 800 million Africans were food insecure in 2024, a figure expected to rise by an additional 300 million in the coming years. "These figures remind us of abundance without efficiency, innovation, and collaboration," she said, urging participants to treat the summit as a platform for action rather than rhetoric. She called on stakeholders to use the gathering to strengthen agricultural infrastructure, unlock financing, expand access to technology, and scale green innovations that can define the next chapter of Africa's agricultural transformation. The true measure of the summit's success would be in the partnerships and collective actions that emerge beyond the event.

Speaking on behalf of Sunbeth Global Concepts, Opeke reaffirmed the company's deep commitment to sustainability, innovation, and value creation across the agro-commodities value chain from smallholder farmers to global markets. She noted that as a co-convenor of ASA, Sunbeth is proud to partner with Sterling Bank and

other institutions, driving agricultural transformation across the continent.

She invited participants to visit the Sunbeth exhibition stand to learn more about the company's innovative work in the cocoa sector, including processing, backward integration, logistics, and farmer empowerment. Sunbeth sees itself as "A solution-driven partner for sustainable growth." She concluded by introducing a short video showcasing Sunbeth's impact in the cocoa sector, featuring testimonies from smallholder farmers and local communities whose livelihoods have been transformed through the company's initiatives. There was a 25-minute break for exhibitions led by the representative of the Lamido of Adamawa, HRH Dr Muhammadu Barkindo Aliyu Mustapha, who is the Dujima of Adamawa, and the Chairman of TILT Group of companies, Musa Halilu Ahmed.

SESSION 1

FROM POLICY TO PLATE: ENABLING LAWS FOR A THRIVING AGRI-FUTURE

Moderator:

Oame Airauhi

Group Head, Transaction Banking, Sterling Bank

Panelists

Toritseju Dottie

Partner, IP Team

Dr Nurudeen Abubakar Zauro

Technical Adviser to the President on Economic and Financial Inclusion

Leonard Anyanwu

Managing Director, SaroAfrica Nigeria Limited

Abubakar Sadiq Kassim

President, Fertiliser Producers & Suppliers Association of Nigeria (FEPSAN)
and Public Relations Executive, Nigeria Agribusiness Group (NABG)

Rt. Hon. Bello Kaoje

Chairman, Committee on Agricultural Production

Arc. Kabir Ibrahim

National President All Farmers Association of Nigeria

John Kennedy Opara

Chairman/CEO CSS Group of Companies

Key Issues

- **Weak Policy Implementation & Instability:** Continental agreements and national policies fail due to scarce financing, short political cycles, weak accountability, outdated laws, and disruptive policy reversals that erode investor confidence in the sector.

- **Land Tenure & Data Gaps:** Most farmers lack formal land rights; land allocation processes are inconsistent across states; and the absence of a national census of farmers/farmlands limits planning and credit access.
- **Financial Inclusion Barriers:** Rigid KYC requirements, fragmented identity systems, and poor last-mile onboarding keep smallholders outside formal finance, limiting access to credit, insurance, and market-support programs.
- **Youth Apathy:** Government programs are often poorly communicated at the grassroots level, and agriculture remains unattractive to young people due to complex processes, unclear market access, and outdated perceptions of the sector.

Recommendations

- **Reform Legal Frameworks:** Harmonise agricultural laws, establish multi-year policy commitments with clear KPIs, and formalise pre-legislative consultations to reduce uncertainty for operators.
- **Digitise Land Administration:** Implement tech-enabled land titling (geospatial mapping, digital proof of title) and conduct a national census of farmers/farmlands to unlock credit and promote transparent land allocation.
- **Expand Financial Inclusion Through Digital Infrastructure:** Simplify KYC processes, integrate identity/payment systems, deploy local one-stop inclusion hubs, and scale micro-insurance and agent banking to accommodate smallholder farmers.
- **Improve Communication to Attract Young People to Agriculture:** Utilise localised, continuous communication channels for programme awareness and introduce youth-focused incentives, such as grants, incubation programmes, simplified licensing, and guaranteed market-access pathways, to eliminate preconceived

notions about the sector and attract young people to engage.

Summary

The panel noted that Nigeria's agricultural sector is still held back by laws that no longer reflect the realities of modern farming. Many of the legal frameworks guiding the industry were written for an earlier era. These laws create confusion, overlap across states, and discourage new investments. The country needs clearer, more coherent rules that can effectively support the kind of agribusiness activity currently happening.

A primary concern was the frequent policy swings that disrupt planning. Several speakers explained how sudden changes in import rules or commodity pricing can upend multi-year investments. They stressed that agriculture depends on long-term visibility, yet businesses often face uncertainty that makes expansion difficult. Lasting progress requires commitments that continue even as political administrations change.

Land administration emerged as another key issue. Farmers continue to struggle to secure transparent and verifiable land rights, which hinders their ability to access loans and insurance. The absence of a national database linking farmers to their farmland is a major gap. Without it, the country cannot plan effectively or extend credit at the scale required.

The government has highlighted ongoing efforts to improve financial inclusion. These include building a unified farmer database, expanding agent-banking networks, digitising extension services, and promoting micro-insurance. Even with these steps, the panel acknowledged that many farmers remain outside the system because of documentation challenges and weak coordination between federal and state actors.

Youth participation was another central theme. The speakers

observed that young people are interested in technology and processing, but remain hesitant to enter agriculture because the system feels cumbersome and unwelcoming. They called for targeted incentives that offer real opportunities, not symbolic gestures. Grants, incubation programs, simpler licensing, and priority access to markets were all identified as valuable tools for eliminating this mistrust.

Communication gaps between the people and government also bedevil the sector. Government programs often fail at the last mile because farmers do not understand the requirements or timelines. Participants encouraged a shift toward community-based information channels that rely on trusted local actors. They also emphasised the importance of involving private-sector operators early in the policy and legislative process, ensuring that new laws align with market realities rather than hindering the sector with unnecessary bureaucracy.

FIRESIDE CHAT

Powered by MasterCard

HARVESTING RESILIENCE: STORIES FROM THE VALUE CHAIN

Moderator:

Ahmed Abdrabboh

Vice President, Growth Segments, Mastercard

Panelists

Michael Adeshola Adeoluwa

GMD/CEO, Arzikin Noma

Akintunde Akinwande

Head of Digital for Africa, OCP Africa

Key Issues

- **High risk and fragmentation across the smallholder value chain:** Limited credit, volatile prices, weak market linkages, and siloed systems prevent scaling. Lenders also lack reliable alternative data to mitigate the risks associated with agricultural investments.
- **Last-mile gaps limiting adoption and productivity:** Connectivity issues, low digital literacy, and thin retail/extension networks slow uptake of digital tools and constrain timely access to inputs, advisory, and markets.
- **Weak coordination:** Policy alignment is inconsistent, partnerships remain shallow, and high lending rates constrain investment in resilient local production.

Recommendations

- **Push ecosystem “bundle” solutions:** Promote integrated packages that combine inputs, advisory, payments, alternative-data credit,

and guaranteed markets.

- **Invest in last-mile infrastructure:** Expand rural connectivity and retail presence, and support ongoing training to drive sustained digital adoption.
- **Establish a policy-private action platform:** Create a standing forum to align regulation, improve credit conditions, encourage local procurement, and standardise digital data systems.

Summary

The session highlighted how digitisation is reshaping Africa's rural economies, with Mastercard outlining its 2030 ambition to connect one billion people by scaling partnerships, expanding last-mile reach, and enhancing farmer education. Arzikin Noma's Michael Adeoluwa demonstrated what this looks like in practice: during Nigeria's cash crunch, the company pre-onboarded smallholders and, working with its PFI and Mastercard, issued 100,000 cards that enabled instant digital payments, exceptional repayment rates, stronger savings habits, and seamless spend control for inputs. Combined with certified seeds, agronomic training, climate-smart timing, and guaranteed markets that eliminate predatory intermediaries, farmers in its clusters increased yields from roughly 1.5 t/ha to 4.5–5 t/ha. Adeoluwa stressed that fundamental transformation hinges on political will, physical presence in rural communities, and continuous capacity building. He pushed for ecosystem “bundles” that integrate inputs, finance, extension, alternative data, and assured offtake.

OCP Africa's Akintunde Akinwande expanded the conversation to soil health and nutrient management, detailing a customisation strategy rooted in the 4R principle and supported by AI/GIS mapping, granular data capture, farmer training, and new digital sales channels. To turn data into access, OCP is rolling out 200 last-mile retail centres within 10km of farming communities, opening them to partners to deliver bundled inputs, finance, and services. He underscored affordability

through flexible nutrient blends and smaller SKUs, and highlighted how parcel-level data and remote-sensed yield history can strengthen credit scoring for smallholders.

Declining commodity prices risk eroding smallholder margins unless the ecosystem accelerates de-risked lending, affordable and tailored input models, spend-controlled finance, and fully bundled solutions that link inputs, extension, payments, and guaranteed markets. They closed with a clear message: progress depends on coordinated policy-private and private-private partnerships backed by real field presence and sustained farmer education to make smallholder agribusiness competitive and profitable.

PANEL SESSION 2

POWERING UP THE BASE: SMALLHOLDER FARMERS AS DRIVERS OF FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE

Moderator:

Mohammed Aliyu

Senior Country Officer, International Finance Corporation (IFC)

Panelists

Sekongo Kolognin

Operations Officer, International Finance Corporation

Bountiful Atako

Alana Green Limited

Uka Eje

Co-Founder/CEO, ThriveAgric

Adejoke Nofiu

COO, Ecotutu

Kola Masha

Co-Founder/CEO, Babban Gona

Olushola Obikanye

Group Head, Agric & Solid Minerals Finance, Sterling Bank

Key Issues

- **Smallholder viability hinges on profitability, not access to credit:** Delayed financing, poor yields, weak market access, and post-harvest losses undermine repayment and make lending appear riskier than it actually is.
- **Missing-middle finance:** Banks face high perceived risk, DFIs can not cover all tiers, and coordination between lenders, cooperatives, and ag-techs remains uneven.

- **Structural bottlenecks:** Post-harvest losses, insecurity, and low adoption rates of 40–60%, climate shocks, conflict-affected zones, and limited mechanisation/digital literacy weaken productivity and deter investment.

Recommendations

- **Build cooperative-centred, multi-layer risk-sharing ecosystems:** Scale farmer cooperatives as the anchor for credit, mechanisation, extension, offtake contracts, and insurance/guarantee structures to de-risk banks and DFIs.
- **Align financing with crop cycles:** Design lending models tied to planting windows, mechanisation access, improved seeds, and guaranteed markets, putting yield and income at the centre of repayment.
- **Expand to climate-smart and cold-chain infrastructure:** Support tech-enabled advisory, community-run finance institutions in conflict zones, and modular, solar cold-chain solutions to cut losses and stabilise farmer income.

Summary

Unlocking smallholder potential requires shifting focus from disbursing credit to enabling profitability. The panellists highlighted that timely financing aligned with crop cycles, access to improved seeds and mechanisation, and secure market linkages are what actually drive yields and repayment. IFC outlined its expanded agriculture commitment and the use of ag-tech platforms to profile, monitor and de-risk lending at scale. ThriveAgric, Alana Green, and Babban Gona reinforced that when farmers earn a reliable income, default rates fall dramatically, even in conflict-affected regions, showing that smallholders can be both commercially viable and investable.

A second theme centred on ecosystem coordination. The “missing middle” remains underserved because lenders perceive it as high risk

and operate in silos, while DFIs struggle to meet financing needs across all tiers of the value chain. Panellists called for cooperative-led structures that bundle inputs, advisory services, mechanisation, credit, insurance, and guaranteed markets, supported by blended finance and multi-layer guarantees.

Finally, the panel underscored that resilience depends on infrastructure and adoption. With post-harvest losses reaching 40–60%, Ecotutu highlighted the need for affordable, modular cold-chain systems, alongside farmer sensitisation to reduce waste. Climate-smart practices, digital extension, and community-run finance institutions were presented as critical to navigating climate shocks, insecurity and fragmented markets. Together, these elements form a pathway where smallholders operate not as aid recipients but as empowered agribusiness partners central to Nigeria's food security and its broader economic resilience.

Remarks/Prayers

HRH Dr Muhammadu Barkindo Aliyu Mustapha

The Royal Father of the Day, the Lamido of Adamawa

Represented by **Alhaji Musa Halilu OFR**

The Dunima of Adamawa & Councillor, Adamawa Emirate Council,
Yola

On behalf of the Lamido of Adamawa, His Royal Highness Dr Muhammadu Barkindo Aliyu Mustapha, Alhaji Musa Halilu extended warm greetings and appreciation to the organisers and participants of the Agriculture Summit Africa 2025. He commended the summit for serving as a vital platform that brings together leaders, innovators, and farmers to design a sustainable and inclusive agricultural future for Nigeria and the continent. The royal father reaffirmed his commitment to supporting agricultural development, describing the sector as “The heartbeat of our economy and the foundation of our communities, especially in rural areas, where tradition and livelihood are deeply rooted in the soil.” He urged stakeholders to remember that Africa’s future depends on how its people nurture the land that sustains them. On the Lamido’s behalf, prayers were offered for the success of the summit and for outcomes that will strengthen agriculture and food security across Nigeria and Africa.

Closing Remarks

Olushola Obikanye

Group Head, Agric and Mineral Finance, Sterling Bank

Obikanye thanked all present on behalf of the bank's board and management, as well as all participants, partners, government representatives, and delegates. He described the first day of the Agriculture Summit Africa 2025 as "a very robust and invigorating session," commending the quality of insights and contributions shared. Obikanye extended special thanks to the Minister of Livestock Development, the representative of the Yobe State Governor, and other senior officials and partners for their active participation. He announced that the second day of the summit would begin at 8:30 a.m., featuring concurrent sessions including the Deal Room, and urged attendees to arrive promptly. Concluding, he reminded participants that while the day's formal sessions had ended, networking activities and refreshments would follow, promising that Day Two would be even more informative, engaging, and impactful.

Key Recommendations:

- **Strengthen Policy–Private Collaboration:** Governments must shift from control to facilitation, creating enabling environments for private sector–led growth, consistent regulatory frameworks, and incentives for local production.
- **Invest in Digital and Physical Infrastructure:** Beyond fintech platforms, Africa needs last-mile agricultural retail hubs, data infrastructure, rural broadband, and solar-powered cold storage to connect farmers to finance and markets.
- **Scale Blended and Cooperative Finance Models:** Financial institutions and DFIs should expand blended-finance mechanisms, guarantee schemes, and cooperative lending to reduce default risk and broaden inclusion.

- **Enhance Farmer Education and Data Literacy:** Continuous training and data awareness are crucial for helping smallholders adopt precision farming and make informed business decisions.
- **Promote Local Value Addition and Market Access:** Stakeholders must prioritise local sourcing, product aggregation, and regional trade linkages to boost competitiveness, reduce imports, and stabilise rural incomes.
- **Leverage AI and Geospatial Tools for Precision Agriculture:** Tools such as GIS mapping, machine learning, and remote sensing should be integrated into policy planning, credit scoring, and yield forecasting for better risk management.
- **Expand Partnerships Across Value Chains:** Input producers, banks, off-takers, and technology firms should co-create bundled solutions that integrate finance, inputs, extension, and market access into single service offerings.

DAY TWO

ACTIVITIES AT THE AGRICULTURE SUMMIT AFRICA 2025



Opening Remarks

Olushola Obikanye

Group Head, Agric & Mineral Finance, Sterling Bank

Key Issues Highlighted

Dr Olushola Obikanye began the day's event by reiterating Sterling Bank's longstanding commitment to agriculture and rural prosperity. He recalled several highlights from Day 1, including the Managing Director's charge for actionable outcomes, Professor Oyeyinka's keynote on agriculture as an instrument of socio-economic transformation, and the energetic conversations around science, GMOs, data, and food security.

Sterling Bank's agricultural footprint has expanded significantly over the years. The bank's role is not merely to finance agriculture but to champion systems that strengthen farmer livelihoods. He encouraged everyone to participate fully, stating that Day 2 would focus on execution, specifically, how technology, financing, inclusion, and sustainability can translate into tangible outcomes for farmers and the broader economy.

Special Remarks

Garba Mohammed

Executive Director, The Alternative Bank

Represented by **Azeez Baduru**

Mr Baduru conveyed the goodwill message of the Executive Director of The Alternative Bank. He commended Sterling Bank's unwavering dedication to agricultural transformation, describing agriculture as a strategic asset for Africa's resilience and prosperity. He emphasised that the principle guiding Alternative Bank's interventions is ethical, an inclusive partnership financing model where risks and rewards are shared transparently with farmers and agribusinesses.

Agriculture must now be seen through the lenses of regeneration, climate awareness, and technological support. The bank's expanding its work around solar-powered cold storage, regenerative agricultural practices, and innovative financing solutions designed to serve small-scale producers. "The survival of the greenest" is not just a thematic phrase, but a practical guide for Africa's future.

Introductory Session

The State of the Agricultural Sector

by **Victor Igono**

Senior Research Associate, Veriv Africa

Key Issues

- **Severe financing gaps and insecure land tenure:** Less than 10% of smallholders hold formal land titles, which limits access to affordable credit and drives reliance on exploitative lenders charging up to 100% annual interest. Africa receives only 4% of the global agricultural credit, despite its large population and significant dependence on the sector.
- **High climate vulnerability with minimal insurance coverage:** Africa loses about \$24 billion annually to climate disasters, yet less than 2% of losses are insured. Nigeria alone recorded \$7 billion in flood-related damage in 2022, undermining farmer resilience and discouraging lenders.
- **Weak infrastructure, policy inconsistency, and insecurity:** Poor storage and logistics result in post-harvest losses of up to 40% (and over 50% for perishables), while abrupt policy reversals and widespread insecurity increase investment risks and depress productivity.
- **Data scarcity and fragmented systems:** Inconsistent farmer registration, outdated demographic baselines, and fragmented databases hinder accurate planning, lead to “ghost farmers,” and undermine subsidy targeting, investment flows, and evidence-based policymaking.

Key Issues

- **Accelerate land reform and expand land documentation:** Leverage drones, blockchain, and big-data tools to formalise land

titles and unlock a portion of Nigeria's \$300–\$900 billion undocumented land value. Prioritise political will at the state level and close the gender gap in land ownership.

- **Scale climate-risk financing and irrigation infrastructure:** Expand access to parametric insurance, increase public investment in dams and irrigation systems, and integrate climate-risk assessment into agricultural lending frameworks.
- **Strengthen infrastructure and promote predictable policies:** Invest in cold chain, storage, road networks, and logistics systems to reduce waste, and enforce consistent, long-term policies, particularly regarding export restrictions, to mitigate investor uncertainty.
- **Establish a unified digital agricultural identity and intelligence system:** Build a biometric and transaction-backed digital registry for farmers and scale Veriv Africa's real-time intelligence platform to close information gaps, improve subsidy targeting, and support financial inclusion.

Summary

Mr Igono delivered a data-driven overview of the current state of agriculture in Nigeria and across Africa. He explained that the sector continues to hold enormous potential, particularly because a significant proportion of the population depends on agriculture for livelihood. With agriculture contributing up to 30% of GDP and employing as much as 65% of the workforce, particularly women and youth, the presentation highlighted how longstanding structural challenges such as weak infrastructure, minimal mechanisation, and high post-harvest losses continue to undermine productivity and competitiveness.

Due to these constraints, many smallholder farmers rely on informal and often exploitative financing sources, including community

lenders, local moneylenders, and unregulated loan apps, which charge interest rates as high as 5–10% per month. Such rates translate into 50–100% annual interest, making Nigerian farmers globally uncompetitive compared to their peers in Asia, who borrow at less than 15% annually.

Using global data, out of the \$1.2 trillion in agricultural credit disbursed worldwide in 2023, Africa received barely 4% (around \$48 billion). “Asia gets over \$600 billion, Europe about \$300 billion, but Africa, with 1.5 billion people, gets only \$48 billion,” he said, calling it a stark reflection of the continent’s financial marginalisation.

He linked finance deficits to climate risks, noting that Africa loses an estimated \$24 billion annually to floods, droughts, and other climate disasters. Yet, less than 2% of these losses are insured. Nigeria alone, he recalled, suffered about \$7 billion in flood damage in 2022. “We cannot continue to give loans to farmers whose entire farms could be wiped out overnight without risk coverage,” he cautioned.

Beyond finance and climate risk, Igono identified four additional threats to agricultural growth: policy inconsistency, insecurity, infrastructure gaps, and data scarcity. He criticised the pattern of abrupt policy reversals, especially export bans, that discourage investors. “You don’t invite someone to invest millions in a value chain and then ban exports overnight,” he said. Such uncertainty, he argued, worsens risk perception and increases borrowing costs.

The effects of insecurity, ranging from farmer kidnappings to communal clashes, deter production and investment in key food-producing zones. On infrastructure, he cited massive post-harvest losses due to poor storage and logistics, estimating that “about 40% of food produced in Nigeria is wasted, and over 50 per cent for perishables like tomatoes.”

Poor statistics and unreliable information prevent investors from making evidence-based decisions. There exists a need for reliable data on production, pricing, and market trends.

For solutions, he argued, land reform must be central to transforming agriculture. Citing a PwC study, Nigeria's undocumented land, both agricultural and residential, was valued at \$300 billion to \$900 billion. "Unlocking just 10% of that could generate more than 70% of Africa's total agricultural credit," he said. The technology for land documentation exists, through drones, blockchain, and big data systems, but the problem lies in politics and weak governance. State governments must show willpower to reform land systems despite local resistance from traditional authorities.

He further raised the issue of gender imbalance in land ownership, noting that women constitute over 50% of Nigeria's smallholder farmers but own less than 10% of the country's farmland. "This is not a technology issue; it's a question of the choices we are willing to make," he said. He also urged the expansion of climate insurance products, such as parametric insurance, which automatically compensates farmers once disasters exceed pre-agreed thresholds, and called for greater investment in dams and irrigation infrastructure.

He closed by revealing that Veriv Africa is developing an agricultural intelligence platform that collects real-time data on prices, production, and market conditions across states every two weeks. This, he said, would help bridge the country's chronic information gap and support smarter investment decisions.

PANEL SESSION 1

HARNESSING DIGITAL TOOLS FOR AN AGRICULTURAL RENAISSANCE

Moderator:

Vera Iheanacho

Head, Agribusiness Development & Strategy,
Sterling Bank

Panelists

Isa Abdulsamad

COO & Co-Founder, Extension Africa

Muhammad Bello

Executive Director, YieldEx Nigeria Limited

Nasir Yammama, MON,

Senior Special Assistant to the President on Innovation, Office of the Vice President

Bello Haruna

CEO, Yield Ex Nig Ltd

Daniel Huba

Vice President, Growth Segment, Mastercard

Dr Emmanuel Okeleji

CEO, SeamlessHR

Key Issues

- Collapse of extension systems and human capital gaps:** Public extension is severely understaffed and outdated, with ratios as high as one extension worker to 10,000–15,000 farmers, far from the recommended 1:800. There are only about 7,000 public extension workers nationwide, many of whom lack updated climate-smart training. This gap hinders farmer productivity, hinders technology adoption, and forces agribusinesses to deploy expensive, seasonal private agents.

- **Fragmented digital and financial infrastructure:** The absence of a shared farmer database fuels distortions, such as multiple input loans being issued to the same farmer. Fragmented systems also impede effective identity, payment, and data visibility across the value chain.
- **Weak storage systems & high post-harvest losses:** Smallholders face chronic losses due to inadequate aggregation, poor storage, and distress sales. Even where warehousing exists, farmers often lack systems to convert stored produce into tradable financial assets.
- **Insufficient financial inclusion and social protection for rural workers:** Farmers primarily operate outside formal financial systems, lacking credit histories, health insurance, or pensions. SeamlessHR's experience shows that even groups with steady income flows—such as 600,000 tea farmers in Kenya—have historically been excluded. This exclusion discourages youth participation, leaves ageing farmers without safety nets, and makes long-term agricultural careers unattractive.

Recommendations

- **Build coordinated, digital public infrastructure:** Establish interoperable digital systems that harmonise farmer identity, transaction histories, warehouse receipts, and geospatial verification. A unified registry would prevent duplicate financing, reduce acquisition costs and cut defaults by up to 70%, while making support programs traceable and trustworthy.
- **Scale decentralised, tech-enabled extension models:** Expand youth-powered digital extension systems. Tie payments to commercial outcomes for input companies, processors, and buyers to ensure year-round engagement and sustainability.

- Strengthen digital trade, payments, and collateral systems:** Digitise agricultural trade end-to-end through tools that connect farmers to buyers, enable QR-based farm-gate payments, and create transaction-linked “payment credentials” for every farmer.
- Integrate farmers into structured financial and social-protection systems:** Use payroll-style income tracking (as demonstrated in HR/payroll innovations) to build credit files, expand health insurance, and create pension access for farmers and rural workers. This shift enables agriculture to transition from a survival-based occupation to a viable, long-term profession that can attract young talent.

Summary

The panel on harnessing digital tools for an agricultural renaissance provided a detailed examination of how technology, finance, and policy must converge to modernise Africa's food systems. Speakers highlighted profound structural weaknesses—most urgently the collapse of public extension systems where one agent often supports 10,000–15,000 farmers instead of the recommended 800. With only about 7,000 public extension officers nationwide and poor incentive structures, the sector struggles to transmit updated practices or manage climate and market risks. Without addressing the human capital and data gaps in extension, digital solutions cannot achieve their full impact.

Across the ecosystem, the conversation repeatedly returned to fragmentation: uncoordinated databases, unverifiable farmer identities, and opaque transactions that increase risk for lenders and agribusinesses. Mastercard, YieldEx, Didex and others demonstrated how digital trade systems, QR-enabled farm-gate payments, warehouse receipt financing, and transaction-linked farmer credentials create visibility that raises farmer incomes, sometimes by up to 30%, while lowering lending risk and enabling smallholders to

secure credit worth as much as 70% of their stored produce. Yet, without a shared data infrastructure, issues such as one farmer receiving inputs from five different organisations continue to erode trust and inflate default rates across the financing landscape.

Sustainable agricultural transformation requires coordinated execution. The government must institutionalise innovation, as evidenced by increased funding mechanisms, performance bonds for ministries, and a more transparent regulatory framework. Private innovators must focus on solutions that are inclusive, scalable, and grounded in farmers' real transaction histories. Ecosystem players must commit to interoperable systems. From Extension Africa's youth-led digital advisory networks earning ₦90,000–₦150,000, to SeamlessHR's vision of farmers with pensions and insurance, to Mastercard's pilots linking every transaction to a trusted digital identity, the session made a clear case for a future where Africa's farmers operate within a fully digitised, financially inclusive, and resilient agricultural economy.

Spoken Word Performance

A spoken-word presentation by Mr Muhammed Al-Amin Sanusi titled "Reclaiming Our Food Destiny" at the Agricultural Summit Africa 2025. He emphasised the importance of agriculture in Africa, noting the continent's 60% share of the world's arable land, yet its struggles with food insecurity.

Sanusi passionately recited, "Green is not just a colour. Green is our future. Green is not just a land. Green is life. Green is not just a dream. Green is destiny." He urged the audience to reclaim Africa's food destiny, emphasising the need for sustainability, resilience, innovation, and inclusivity.

He called on policymakers, investors, innovators, and farmers to work together to transform Africa into a food powerhouse. Sanusi stressed that "our destiny is not written by fate, it is written by our choices." He

concluded by saying, "Let Green be our strength. Let Green be our revolution. Let Green be our survival and our triumph."

Sanusi's message was clear: Africa's future depends on its ability to reclaim its food destiny and prioritising agriculture as a key driver of economic growth and sustainability.

PANEL SESSION 2

GREEN MONEY, GREEN FIELDS — MOBILISING FINANCE FOR CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE IN AFRICA

Moderator:

Olapeju Ibekwe,
CEO, Sterling One Foundation

Panelists

Nzubechukwu N. Anisiobi

Executive Director, Corporate Finance, Sunbeth Global Concepts

Represented by **Ibukun Opeke**

Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Sunbeth Global Concepts

Ade Adefeko

Business Leader and Speaker

Kashetolulope Lawal

Ag. Divisional Head, Corporate & Investment Banking Directorate, Sterling Bank

Dumebi Oluwole

Lead Economist, Stears, Director, Farm Junction Foundation

Ayodeji Balogun

Group Chief Executive, AFEX

Key Issues

- **Low Farmer Preparedness for Climate Finance:** Many farmers and SMEs lack documentation, digital identity, financial literacy, and the climate-smart readiness required to access available funds.
- **Lack of Standardised Green Eligibility Metrics:** Agriculture on the continent struggles to attract climate finance because value chains cannot clearly demonstrate compliance with climate-smart or “green” criteria.

- **Weak Data and Traceability Systems:** Limited farmer mapping and inconsistent traceability undermine investor confidence and constrain risk assessment.
- **High Exposure to Climate and Market Risks:** Floods, droughts, and heat stress frequently devastate crops and capital, rendering financing unviable without robust insurance and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Underdeveloped Market and Physical Infrastructure:** Gaps in processing, irrigation, aggregation centres, and storage facilities prevent climate-smart practices from scaling and weaken repayment reliability.
- **Persistent Exclusion of Women, Youth, and SMEs:** The lack of land rights and formal identification keeps women and small enterprises outside mainstream climate-finance pipelines.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen Farmer Readiness and Documentation:** Continuous training, digital identity systems, and improved record-keeping should be prioritised to make farmers finance-eligible.
- **Develop Clear Green-Finance Metrics for Agriculture:** Stakeholders should agree on standardised, credible criteria to classify and certify climate-smart agricultural practices.
- **Invest in Robust Data, Mapping and Traceability Tools:** Digitised farmer registries, geo-mapping, KYC processes and transaction histories are essential for reducing risk and improving bankability.
- **Expand Accessible, Affordable Climate Insurance:** Index-based, easy-to-claim insurance supported by extension networks is needed to manage climate shocks and protect both farmers and

lenders.

- **Deploy Blended Finance Linked to Infrastructure Gaps:** Concessional capital should absorb early risk while commercial resources fund irrigation, storage, aggregation, and processing facilities.
- **Promote Inclusion Through Clustering and Flexible Collateral Models:** Farmer mobilisation, value-chain financing and non-land-based collateral instruments will enable women and SMEs to participate fully in climate finance.

Summary

The session underscored that unlocking climate-smart agriculture in Africa requires a deliberate blend of preparedness, data integrity, market stability and financial innovation. Although climate funds exist, farmers and SMEs remain largely excluded due to weak documentation, limited technical capacity and the absence of clear green finance metrics. Speakers agreed that risk-aware infrastructure such as irrigation, storage and aggregation centres, along with proactive climate disaster management, are critical foundations for investor confidence.

A strong consensus emerged around the central role of data. Farmer mapping, traceability, KYC processes, and digital transaction histories were presented as essential for de-risking value chains and enabling blended finance. Institutions such as AFEX, Sunbeth, Sterling Bank and Olam Agri showcased practical models using climate linked insurance, resilient seed varieties, digital platforms and structured farmer networks to attract investors and stabilise production systems. These examples demonstrated that finance flows more readily when value chains can demonstrate transparency, reliability and climate-smart performance.

Inclusion featured prominently, with emphasis on supporting women,

SMEs and unorganised smallholders who face heightened barriers to finance. The panel highlighted community sensitisation, clustering, continuous training and flexible collateral systems as essential pathways for participation.

During the final round of contributions:

- Ayodeji emphasised blended capital and structured market systems.
- Adefakor reiterated the need for farmer preparedness.
- Opeke stressed farmer mobilisation.
- Dumebi focused on the inclusion of women and community awareness.
- Lawal emphasised insurance and risk systems.

Across all, one message stood out: climate-smart agriculture will scale only when finance, data, infrastructure and community readiness move together to create value chains that are both resilient and investable.

PANEL SESSION 3

DRIVING INCLUSIVITY FOR WOMEN AND YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

Moderator:

Modupe Ojo

Sustainability Manager, Sunbeth Global Concepts

Panelists

Korede Demola-Adeniyi

Executive Director, The Alternative Bank

Adetola Oniyelu

Project Manager, Sustainable Agriculture BATN Foundation

Tracy Dabul

Head of Marketing & Partnerships, Leky Mills Limited

Baliqees Salaudeen-Ibrahim

CEO and Co-founder, Green Republic Farms

Samson Ogbole

Team Lead, Eupepsia Place Limited (SoillessFarm Lab)

Key Issues

- **Innovation remains inaccessible and unaffordable:** Technologies like greenhouses, drip irrigation and solar systems are transformative but priced far beyond the reach of most women and youth farmers.
- **Land insecurity limits women's agency:** Many women farm on land they do not own, undermining long-term investment and decision-making.
- Conventional finance excludes first-time and marginalised farmers: Collateral-heavy lending models, distrust in formal finance

and limited rural reach prevent women and youth from accessing capital.

- **Weak infrastructure and ineffective policy implementation reduce agriculture's attractiveness:** Inadequate roads, security, electricity, and market access, combined with unimplemented policies, discourage young people from considering agriculture as a viable career.

Recommendations

- **De-risk innovation costs through blended finance:** Banks, DFIs, and governments should jointly absorb upfront technology costs, allowing women and youth to pay over time through production.
- **Strengthen cooperative and cluster models for visibility and support:** Organised groups make it easier for institutions to justify funding, provide inputs, and deliver extension services.
- **Engage traditional authorities and community leaders to expand women's land access:** Dialogue-based approaches, women-only cooperatives and designated farming zones help shift norms without confrontation.
- **Adopt flexible financial products tailored to rural realities:** Risk-sharing models, agent networks, simplified digital tools, and bundled insurance improve trust and accessibility for marginalised farmers.
- **Invest in skills-based youth empowerment programmes:** Long-term training, mentorship, market linkage and exposure to profitable value chains make agriculture a credible career pathway.
- **Prioritise market-guided technology adoption:** Farmers should select tools aligned with their target markets, supported by ongoing demonstrations, agronomic education and patient capital.

General Overview

The session on Driving Inclusivity for Women and Youth in Agriculture accentuated that, despite progress, significant structural and sociocultural barriers still constrain meaningful participation. Women often operate farms without secure land rights. Young people struggle to see agriculture as a long-term career, and essential innovations such as greenhouses or drip irrigation remain financially out of reach. Across the panel, speakers made clear that affordable technology, equitable access to resources, and visible success stories are the catalysts required to shift mindsets and rebuild confidence in the sector.

Finance emerged as a decisive lever. The Alternative Bank's non-interest, risk-sharing approach, supported by DFIs and local agent networks, offered a practical model to reduce collateral barriers and rebuild trust among farmers who have previously experienced predatory schemes. Panellists emphasised that de-risking is essential: institutions must share the cost of innovation so that smallholders are not forced to shoulder ~~¥~~15–~~¥~~20 million investments before productivity even begins. Blended finance, flexible repayment, and gender-focused instruments were presented as necessary tools for unlocking broader participation.

The discussion expanded to encompass the ecosystem conditions necessary for sustainable inclusion. Participants stressed that women and youth thrive when provided with supportive policies, strong cooperatives, practical training, and market-first guidance that ensures technology matches real demand. With private-sector innovation growing, from processing-led firms like Leky Mills to high-tech training programs that have reached over 11,000 young people, panellists agreed that Africa can tap into its vast agribusiness potential only when infrastructure, security, and policy implementation catch up with the ambition of its entrepreneurs. The session concluded with a shared conviction: empowered women and youth are the driving force behind agricultural transformation.

Results from the Investment Deal Room

The Nigeria Feed, Fodder, Livestock, and Agribusiness Investment Deal Room 3.0 took place on November 7, 2025, at Kano Hall, Transcorp Hilton, Abuja, running concurrently with the panel sessions held in Congress Hall. While the main summit focused on policy dialogue and sectoral financing discussions, the Deal Room provided a practical interface between project promoters, fund managers, and investors, aiming to translate conversations into concrete investment commitments.

A total of 31 investment-ready projects were showcased with cumulative funding requests of ₦97.42 billion across agribusiness, feed, fodder, and livestock value chains. Further engagements and conversion discussions are still ongoing.

Goodwill messages came from Osinachi Ejireke of Sunbeth Shipping and Logistics, representatives of Propcom+, and Hakeem Ibilade, Deputy Director of Ranch and Pastoral Management at the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development, who emphasised the government's livestock transformation and feed–fodder framework.

The keynote address, delivered on behalf of Sterling Bank's CEO, Abubakar Suleiman, by Dr Olushola Obikanye, reaffirmed the bank's commitment to financing agriculture as a driver of inclusive growth. He described the Deal Room as a space where “ideas become investments and investments become impact,” noting that Sterling would support the planned digital portal to enhance accountability and transparency in project tracking.

Throughout the day, a mix of development finance institutions and private investors outlined blended financing and technical support mechanisms for agribusinesses. Representatives of CDI Capital and Sterling Bank shared examples of past collaborations and highlighted new financing products targeted at women, youth, and value-chain operators.

Several Nigerian agribusiness firms pitched their projects showcasing innovations in areas such as seed production, organic farming, waste recycling, and animal feed processing. The presentations demonstrated both commercial viability and alignment with national agricultural development priorities.

Stakeholders agreed on follow-up mechanisms through the proposed digital portal, which is expected to host project profiles, facilitate online pitch sessions, and track financing progress toward the ASA 2026 goal. The session concluded with remarks emphasising the importance of collaboration among financiers, agribusiness innovators, and policymakers to transform Nigeria's feed and livestock ecosystem into a competitive, export-oriented value chain.

Investment Interests and Commitments

The Deal Room generated multiple expressions of interest, ongoing investment reviews, and preliminary commitments, reflecting strong appetite for agribusiness investments. These included:

- Reviews of large-scale blended finance programmes aimed at scaling structured agro-export clusters.
- Equity and risk-capital interest in medium-scale production projects with due diligence and term-sheet discussions underway.
- Confirmation of strategic partnerships aligned with national cultivation and aggregation initiatives.
- Ongoing scoping and due diligence processes for expansion-focused agribusinesses.
- Requests for access to the Deal Room pipeline to support further investment screening and technical evaluation.

- Commitments to de-risk agribusiness investments through wholesale lending and technical assistance frameworks.

In addition, work is ongoing to co-develop a dedicated digital investment portal to support structured engagement, transparency, and accountability. The platform is expected to track project progress, support investor matchmaking, and report on deal closures, with an indicative target of converting a significant share of showcased projects within six months.

Project Showcase

Projects featured during the Investment Pitch Series, include innovations in hybrid seed production, women-led spice cultivation, biofertilizer technology, and export-oriented agribusiness.

The Dealroom deliberations identified the following priority actions:

- Structured follow-up to finalise investment agreements and facilitate due diligence.
- Launch and operationalisation of the digital investment tracking platform for continuous engagement..
- Formalisation of confirmed partnerships within national agricultural initiatives.
- Preparation of targeted investor outreach initiatives, including virtual engagements.
- Publication of a **mid-term progress report** within six months to document closed deals, disbursements, and lessons learned.

Conclusion

The 2025 Dealroom demonstrated strong investor appetite and significant financing opportunities across Nigeria's agribusiness sector. With a combined investment pipeline of ₦97.42 billion, and clear commitments from local and international investors, the platform continues to catalyse agricultural transformation and export competitiveness.

Closing Remarks

Dele Faseemo

Corporate and Investment Banking, Sterling Bank

Mr Dele Faseemo commended all panellists, participants, and partners for their contributions. He reiterated that the Summit's purpose is not only to host conversations but to inspire meaningful action. Agriculture is the foundation of national survival and economic stability, and Sterling Bank remains committed to driving positive change within the sector. He expressed hope that by the next edition of the Summit, stakeholders will be reporting the outcomes of actions taken based on this year's insights. He thanked all collaborators, including Mastercard, IFC, OCP Africa, African Union partners, and various farmer organisations, for their support and reaffirmed Sterling Bank's dedication to fostering a resilient and inclusive agricultural future for Nigeria and Africa.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ASA 2025

1. **Operationalise the Digital Investment Portal:** Fast-track the development of the portal proposed during the Deal Room to serve as a one-stop platform for hosting agribusiness projects, connecting promoters to financiers, and ensuring traceable funding outcomes.
2. **Strengthen De-risking Frameworks:** Expand the use of blended finance instruments and risk-sharing partnerships between commercial banks, DFIs, and private investors to make lending to smallholders and agribusiness SMEs more attractive.
3. **Accelerate Livestock Sector Reform:** Expedite the implementation of the National Feed and Fodder Policy, Red Meat Council, and livestock market digitisation to formalise the sector and integrate pastoral value chains into national trade systems.
4. **Enhance Gender and Youth Inclusion:** Build on insights from the “Driving Inclusivity for Women and Youth in Agriculture” panel by scaling affordable innovations, land-access cooperatives, and targeted financing for women-led agribusinesses.
5. **Translate Policy to Action:** Establish an inter-ministerial and private-sector task force to monitor the execution of commitments made during ASA 2025, ensuring progress reports are presented at the 2026 summit.
6. **Promote Data-driven Decision-Making:** Institutionalise data collection and dissemination frameworks that enhance project bankability and investor confidence, particularly in climate adaptation, value addition, and export-oriented agribusiness.

Event Coverage Images



Conclusion

ASA 2025 marked a decisive step from conversation to coordination, i.e transforming the summit's energy into tangible frameworks for financing, partnership, and innovation. The Deal Room model demonstrated the feasibility of structured investment facilitation in agriculture, while the Ministry's policy announcements reflected the government's growing readiness to align regulation with private-sector growth. The emphasis on inclusivity, de-risking, and sustainability set a new benchmark for how development and finance can converge in Nigeria's agribusiness landscape. As the summit closed, stakeholders agreed that sustained collaboration and measurable follow-through, primarily through the forthcoming investment portal, will determine whether the momentum from ASA 2025 translates into real capital flows, stronger value chains, and lasting food security across Africa.

