

## Planting the seeds of growth

African agricultural stakeholders must develop deal-making skills if we are to see regional trade grow and an increase in market access for African products. By growing its agricultural economy, Africa ensures a better life for all its people. By becoming an agricultural powerhouse, it serves African people with food security and agribusiness opportunities.



AAC Executive Director Ben Leyka. Image Source: [African Agri Council](#)

According to the African Agri Council (AAC) Executive Director Ben Leyka, Africa and its people have unlimited potential to become the breadbasket of the world, and growing the agriculture sector is central to Africa's industrial development. The AAC works towards a thriving agriculture sector across the continent and providing a gateway to Africa's bankable agricultural opportunities across the value chain.

The Council continued towards these lofty goals in 2017 by identifying, building and developing key partnerships with international investment firms, departments of trade, commerce and industry, departments of rural development and finance departments, as well as the agri-tech and the logistics sectors. It focused on three key factors:

- Addressing logistical challenges to allow easy market access
- Developing the technology and digital infrastructure in agriculture
- Understanding the benchmark for deal-making in African agriculture

East Africa was a key region in its 2017 outreach, and the AAC was proud to host two conferences in Nairobi, Kenya:

- e-Agri East Africa Summit
- Agri Logistics East Africa Summit

These conferences provided key insights into emerging trends, addressed the most pressing issues, explored technologies and debated a roadmap for improving and expediting the movement of goods in and out of the region. Improving the supply chain process from farmer to market and decreasing post-harvest losses were the main talking points.

## **Obstacles to efficient trade**

Growing trade volumes in the east African region provides both opportunities and challenges. A major obstacle to efficient trade facing the region's agricultural sector is the transportation stage of the supply chain. These obstacles include:

- Poor infrastructure (roads, bridges, etc.)
- A lack of appropriate transport systems
- A lack of refrigerated transport and storage
- A lack of innovation – like embracing ICT to improve production and increase productivity

## **An investment destination**

By partnering with Agrimoney and Wesgro, AAC ensured Africa had a voice and was represented at the Agrimoney Live conference in London, UK. The African investment focus session was an opportunity to present the Western Cape and South Africa as an investment destination.

Understanding and navigating through the enabling environment created by governments and the private sector across the African continent is critical to the development of agriculture across the value chain. The second annual African Agri Investment Indaba (AII) was held last year in November. The format of AII seeks to capitalise on the presence of the Council's members, partners, investors, bankers and agribusinesses seeking opportunities in specific regions across the African continent.

The AAC looks forward to a successful 2018. A year dedicated to smart agriculture, agriculture commodity trade and investment, and mergers into small, medium and large agri-deals.

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