

African Union member states pledge to improve nutrition and food security in Africa

African Union member states meeting in Abidjan have called on governments to speed up investment, co-ordination and implementation of programmes to improve nutrition and food security in Africa.



Source: [Pexels](#)

African leaders gathered for a three-day meeting to draw attention to the 2022 African Union "Year of Nutrition". The meeting ended with the signing of an [Abidjan Declaration](#).

"This must be the time for Africa and its leadership to rise to the occasion and provide sustainable solution to the malnutrition and hunger crisis [in the continent,]" His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho told attendee at an event organised by the Government of Cote d'Ivoire in collaboration with African Development Bank' African Leaders for Nutrition initiative, the African Union Commission, and several other partners.

King Letsie III, who is the African Union and African Leaders for Nutrition's champion, spoke about African Union's executive decision in July 2022 that called for a multi-sectoral policy framework for addressing malnutrition, as well as financing targeted and high-level political commitment to end malnutrition in all its forms.

King Letsie commended the Ivorian government for its leadership on the nutrition agenda, including sponsoring the Africa Union "Year of Nutrition".

"It is not normal that Africans are underfed and malnourished - We need to develop our internal capacity to produce for indigenous needs," said African Union commission chairperson, Moussa Faki.

Despite progress, most African countries still face the triple burden of malnutrition, where stunting and wasting co-exist with obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases like stroke and diabetes. It is estimated that 61.4 million African children under five years are stunted, more than 12 million are wasted, and some 10 million are overweight.

The Abidjan event focused on strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security in Africa. The declaration calls for implementing and extending the African Union roadmap beyond 2022. The year's theme encourages member states to examine challenges posed by hunger and malnutrition and identify actions and strategies to address them.

A call to action

In his remarks, vice president of Cote d'Ivoire, Tiémoko Meyliet Koné, called African leaders to action. “The urgency for our continent is to save lives and offer better returns to our youngest, who represent the hope and the future of our community and nation.”

Vice President Koné said his government is committed to working with the African Union, regional member countries, the African Development Bank and the African Leaders for Nutrition initiative and partners, to improve nutrition targets.

“In the case of this year of African nutrition - women, men and children will be the actors and the beneficiaries placed at the heart of development and progress,” Koné added.

Beth Dunford, vice president for agriculture, human and social development at the African Development Bank, said the African Leaders for Nutrition would be working with the African Union Commission toward greater impact out of the African Year of Nutrition.

She stated that the African Leaders for Nutrition, hosted by the African Development Bank, aims to increase financing resources for nutrition by mobilising African governments to adopt stronger policies and increase financing for nutrition.

Dunford stressed: “If we accelerate investments and improve co-ordination of efforts, Africa will advance nutrition and improve food security outcomes. The African Development Bank and the African Leaders for Nutrition remain committed to working with all of you, particularly the Government of Cote d'Ivoire, to see that this event's deliberations are transformed into impactful commitments.”

The ceremony drew many senior African leaders, including Zambian vice president Mutale Nalumango; deputy prime minister of Congo-Brazzaville Anatole Collinet Makosso; Rwandan minister of agriculture and animal resources, Gerardine Mukeshimana; and Ivorian prime minister, Patrick Achi.

There were also several ministers representing nutrition-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, water sanitation and hygiene; health; education and social protection.