



POLICY BRIEF

Strengthening CAADP Mutual Accountability in the Agriculture Sector through Robust Regional Joint Sector Reviews in East Africa



This policy brief was jointly developed by the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat and FANRPAN with technical and financial support from the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). It was developed as part of efforts to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and implementation of the Regional Agriculture Investment Plan (RAIP). The brief draws on the regional agriculture joint sector review (JSR) study for the East African Community that was carried out by the EAC through the support of the Bayesian consulting team and AGRA. The EAC acknowledges the contribution of all stakeholders who informed this process.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To unlock the full potential of the Agriculture Joint Sector Review (JSR) process as a tool for mutual accountability, transparency, and inclusive agricultural development in line with the Comprehensive Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in the EAC region, a set of strategic reforms and actions is required.

1. Regular regional Agriculture joint Sector Review

Institutionalize a predictable regional agriculture JSR calendar with defined follow-up mechanisms and strengthen the role of Sectoral Councils and the EAC Secretariat to enforce the implementation of regional decisions.

2. Strengthen National Capacity for JSR Strengthening

Enhance technical capacity for JSR and evidence-based policy analysis through strategic partnerships and invest in integrated data systems to support real-time tracking of sector performance.

3. Inclusive Participation

Formalize the engagement of non-state actors in all stages of the JSR process

4. Strengthen youth in agri-food systems coordination

and gender-focused platforms and empower them to ensure inclusive representation in CAADP mutual accountability mechanisms such as JSR, Biennial Review and Sector M&E.

5. Financing

Develop and finance bankable regional programs aligned with RAIP and foster donor alignment and blended financing models to reduce fragmentation and scale impact.

6. Policy and Strategy Alignment

Regularly update regional policy frameworks to reflect emerging issues and harmonize planning and budgeting cycles to better integrate regional priorities into national development agendas.

INTRODUCTION

The agriculture sector is the backbone of the East African Community (EAC), employing over 60% of the region's population and contributing up to 40% of national GDP. As a result, the EAC has prioritized implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). EAC developed and adopted a CAADP compact in line with the Malabo declaration goals and targets in 2017. It was signed by all major stakeholders, including the partner states, EAC Secretariat, AUC, NEPAD, Academia, Research Institutions, regional farmer organizations, business community, development partners and civil society.

The compact sets the parameters for long-term partnership in the agricultural sector, specifies key commitments of the African Union/NEPAD, EAC Secretariat, Partner States, Development Partners, private sector, farmer organizations and cooperatives, civil society organizations (CSOs), other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), institutions of higher learning and research, and the Think Tanks. It also defines expectations from all stakeholders on their investments and contributions towards successful implementation of sector policies, investment niches and commitments of stakeholders to align their long-term development goals with agricultural sector programmes. A successor to the CAADP Malabo declaration i.e. the Kampala CAADP Declaration on Building Resilient and Sustainable Agri-food Systems was adopted by the Heads of States and Governments in January 2025. The Declaration and the CAADP strategy and action plan (2026-2035) define the agenda for the agri-food system in the next decade.

The EAC developed a Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) 2018-2025 that is anchored on the EAC CAADP Compact, the EAC CAADP Results Framework and other key regional Agriculture Sector Instruments. RAIP is a regional policy framework that aims to increase agricultural productivity and trade in the region. The RAIP is aligned with the Malabo Declaration's goals and commitments. It is designed to facilitate the coordination of regional and cross-cutting programmes that are best handled regionally and those that complement interventions in the National Agriculture Investment Plans. It seeks to catalyse the realization of the CAADP goals in the following five investment thematic areas: (1) Increasing regional agricultural production and food supply; (2) Enhancing food utilization; (3) Promoting agribusiness, value addition and agro-industry; (4) Promoting sustainable natural resource use and management and (5) Strengthening capacities of EAC regional agricultural institutions.

A critical element of CAADP is Mutual Accountability for Actions and Results. CAADP mutual accountability processes include sector M&E, Biennial Review and Agriculture Joint Sector Reviews JSRs (JSRs). This policy brief presents actionable recommendations from the 2024 EAC Regional Agriculture JSR, which marks a milestone in the institutionalization of mutual accountability mechanisms to improve policy coherence, sector performance, and stakeholder engagement across the region.

WHY ROBUST JOINT SECTOR REVIEWS ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE EAC REGION

Robust Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) are central to advancing mutual accountability in the EAC agriculture sector. They play a crucial role in enhancing transparency and accountability by enabling the systematic tracking of commitments made by governments and stakeholders under frameworks such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Regional Agriculture Investment Plan (RAIP), and other associated policies. Through regular reviews, stakeholders can assess progress, identify shortfalls, and hold each other accountable for agreed actions and results.

JSRs support evidence-informed decision-making by consolidating sector performance data, policy reviews, and implementation progress. This creates a strong evidence base that can guide strategic planning and resource allocation, ensuring that interventions are well-targeted and impactful. Additionally, JSRs foster inclusive dialogue by providing a platform for both state and non-state actors to engage in joint assessments of sector performance. This inclusive process promotes shared ownership of outcomes and encourages the co-creation of solutions to emerging challenges. Moreover, JSRs drive alignment by ensuring that regional frameworks like RAIP are harmonized with national policies and international development targets. This alignment is critical to achieving coherent and integrated agricultural development across the region.

From a political economy perspective, incentives for EAC partner states to participate in JSRs include access to technical and financial support from regional and international partners, enhanced legitimacy in the eyes of domestic and external stakeholders, and opportunities to showcase progress toward continental goals such as CAADP. Participation in JSRs can also strengthen a government's position in negotiating regional agricultural budgets or in securing donor alignment.

However, barriers persist. These include limited institutional capacity, especially for data collection and analysis; political reluctance to expose underperformance; competing sectoral priorities; and fragmented coordination among government departments. In some cases, weak enforcement mechanisms and lack of political will to domesticate regional policies may hinder full integration and follow-through on JSR recommendations. Strengthening the incentive structures and addressing these barriers is essential for enhancing the credibility and utility of JSRs as tools for accountability and transformative policy implementation.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2024 REGIONAL JSR

The 2024 regional JSR revealed that the EAC has made commendable progress in establishing a robust institutional framework to support mutual accountability. This includes the formation of a JSR Steering Committee, a secretariat, and technical working groups, all functioning under a clearly defined terms of reference. These institutional structures have provided the foundation for a structured and participatory review process.

Despite the strong policy coherence and alignment with RAIP, implementation across the region remains inconsistent. Several partner states face significant financing gaps and limited institutional capacity, which slow down the domestication and execution of regional commitments.

The JSR also noted encouraging developments in the involvement of youth and women in agri-food systems. However, there are coordination gaps of the existing initiatives and progress remains constrained by deep-rooted structural barriers and the absence of targeted policy frameworks that effectively support their engagement.

Another key finding highlighted the urgent need to strengthen data systems and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. A lack of robust youth-disaggregated data and analytical tools continues to limit the ability of stakeholders to track sector performance and make informed decisions.

Finally, while non-state actor participation in the JSR process is increasing, it remains largely informal and under-resourced. This limits the ability of civil society, the private sector, and farmer organizations to contribute meaningfully to the accountability dialogue.



CHALLENGES UNDERMINING EFFECTIVE MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Despite the progress made in institutionalizing the JSR process, several enduring challenges continue to limit the effectiveness of mutual accountability within the EAC agriculture sector. One of the most pressing issues is the delayed domestication and ratification of regional policies by EAC Partner States. Even when regional policies and frameworks are endorsed at the EAC level, the absence of timely ratification at the national level stalls their translation into actionable programs. These delays often stem from lengthy legislative procedures, competing national priorities, or limited technical capacity to integrate regional frameworks into national legal and policy instruments. As a result, regional commitments, such as those under the CAADP and the RAIP, are not fully implemented, weakening the integrity of mutual accountability mechanisms and slowing down the pace of agricultural transformation.

Fragmented data systems and limited analytical capacity at both the regional and national levels further undermine efforts to monitor progress and track results. Many Partner States lack comprehensive, interoperable agricultural data systems that can support timely decision-making. Data collection is often inconsistent, outdated, or stored across institutions, making it difficult to generate accurate insights or aggregate data regionally. In addition, weak analytical capacity means that even when data is available, it is not always translated into meaningful evidence that can guide policy or programmatic decisions. This gap in evidence-based decision-making reduces the effectiveness of the JSR as a tool for accountability and learning.

Inadequate financing continues to be a major bottleneck in the implementation of the RAIP and other regional agricultural priorities. Budgetary constraints within Partner States, coupled with a high dependence on donor funding, have made it difficult to sustain agricultural programs or scale successful interventions. The lack of dedicated funding streams for regional programs further exacerbates the challenge, as many initiatives remain under-resourced or reliant on fragmented project-based funding. Without sufficient financial backing, the commitments made through JSRs and regional plans often fail to move from paper to practice.

Another critical challenge is the limited integration of JSR findings into national policy and budgetary processes. While the JSR process generates valuable insights and recommendations, these are not consistently fed into the national planning and budgeting cycles. This disconnect diminishes the relevance and utility of the JSR and weakens its ability to influence real change on the ground. Ministries of Agriculture and Planning often operate in silos, and without explicit mechanisms to incorporate JSR outcomes, the process risks becoming a parallel exercise rather than an integrated part of agricultural governance.

Last, coordination gaps within EAC institutions and among Partner States pose a substantial obstacle to mutual accountability. Misalignments in planning and budgeting cycles, commu-

nication breakdowns between ministries, and a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities all contribute to inefficiencies in the implementation of regional frameworks. In many cases, line ministries do not have the mandate or capacity to coordinate with regional bodies effectively, and existing coordination structures, such as Sectoral Councils or Technical Working Groups, are underutilized or inconsistently convened. These institutional weaknesses dilute accountability, fragment policy implementation, and limit the potential for cohesive, region-wide agricultural development.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH JSRS

1. Regular regional Agriculture joint Sector Review

Regular JSRs are vital for governments because they provide a systematic way to monitor, evaluate, and improve the effectiveness of sector plans and programs. To enhance the effectiveness and continuity of the JSR process in the EAC region, it is essential to institutionalize a predictable JSR calendar. This calendar should outline clear timelines

for preparatory work, stakeholder consultations, review meetings, and follow-up actions. Regularity and predictability will promote a culture of accountability and ensure that recommendations are systematically tracked and acted upon. Equally important is establishing robust mechanisms for implementing recommendations that emerge from the JSR process.

The role of sectoral councils and the EAC Secretariat should also be reinforced. These bodies should be empowered not only to coordinate regional agricultural strategies but also to ensure that Partner States are implementing agreed-upon decisions. This includes establishing formal feedback loops and compliance measures to support the consistent application of regional policy directives at the national level.

2. Capacity Strengthening

Strengthening institutional and human resource capacity is critical for improving the quality and impact of JSRs. There is a pressing need to enhance the technical capacity for evidence-based policy analysis within the EAC Secretariat and Partner States. This can be achieved through partnerships with academic institutions, think tanks, and research organizations that offer expertise in data analysis, impact evaluation, and agricultural economics.

In addition, investments should be made in developing integrated, interoperable data systems that allow for real-time tracking of agricultural sector performance across the region. These systems should be equipped to collect, store, analyze, and disseminate timely and for preparatory work, stakeholder consultations, review meetings, and follow-up actions. Regularity and predictability will promote a culture of accountability and ensure that recommendations are systematically tracked and acted upon. Equally important is establishing robust mechanisms for implementing recommendations that emerge from the JSR process.

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3. Inclusive Participation

A key principle of mutual accountability is inclusivity, which can only be achieved by formalizing the participation of non-state actors (NSAs) in all phases of the JSR process, planning, implementation, review, and follow-up. This includes civil society organizations, farmer associations, private sector actors, and development partners. Formal engagement structures, backed by adequate resourcing, will ensure that diverse perspectives inform policy decisions and enhance accountability.

Special efforts should be made to strengthen platforms focusing on youth and gender inclusion in agricultural policy and programming. These platforms should be equipped to meaningfully contribute to JSR discussions and decisions, thereby ensuring that the voices of young people and women are not only heard but also translated into action.

4. Financing

The successful implementation of RAIP and the broader CAADP agenda depends on the availability of adequate and well-coordinated financing. One priority should be the development and promotion of bankable regional programs that align with RAIP's objectives and can attract financing from both public and private sources. These programs should be designed to deliver measurable results, particularly in areas such as value chain development, climate resilience, and regional trade.

Moreover, the EAC should work with development partners to encourage greater alignment of donor support with regional priorities. This includes reducing the fragmentation of development assistance and leveraging blended financing models that bring together public resources, donor contributions, and private investments to scale up the impact of regional agricultural initiatives.

5. Policy and Strategy Alignment

To maintain relevance in a dynamic policy environment, the EAC should ensure that its regional strategies are regularly updated. In particular, policy frameworks related to youth empowerment, gender equality, and climate resilience need to be revised to reflect emerging challenges and opportunities. Updating these frameworks will ensure that they remain fit for purpose and are aligned with the EAC Vision 2050 and the CAADP post-Malabo agenda.

Additionally, harmonizing the planning and budgeting cycles of Partner States with regional processes will improve the integration of regional priorities into national development agendas. This alignment will foster greater policy coherence, reduce duplication, and ensure that JSR recommendations are more readily absorbed into country-level implementation frameworks.





CONCLUSION

The 2024 Regional Joint Sector Review represents a pivotal step forward in institutionalizing mutual accountability within the EAC agriculture sector. It demonstrates the region's resolve to build a transparent, inclusive, and results-oriented framework for tracking the performance of agriculture and food systems. However, to unlock the full potential of the JSR mechanism, continued commitment is required. This includes political will at the highest levels, strategic investment in institutional and data infrastructure, and deliberate efforts to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly youth, women, and marginalized groups, are meaningfully engaged in the process. Strengthening the JSR is not simply a procedural necessity; it is a political and developmental imperative. By doing so, the EAC can catalyze the transformation of its agri-food systems, ensure food and nutrition security, and create sustainable employment opportunities for the region's rapidly growing youth population. Under the new Kampala CAADP declaration, there is a requirement that the commitments in the declaration be incorporated into the Regional Agrifood System Investment Plan (RASIP). Therefore, it is imperative that the EAC region, revises its RAIP (which expires this year) to reflect the expanded CAADP commitment that incorporates the agri-food systems under the Kampala declaration.

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EAC

The East African Community (EAC) is a regional intergovernmental organization of seven Partner States: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The EAC was established to promote economic, political, social, and cultural integration, with the goal of improving the quality of life of the people of East Africa through increased competitiveness, value-added production, and trade. The EAC works to harmonize policies and programs across member states in key areas such as agriculture, trade, health, infrastructure, and the environment. For more information, visit <https://www.eac.int>.



AGRA

AGRA is a proudly African-led institution focused on scaling agricultural innovations that help smallholder farmers towards increased incomes, better livelihoods, and improved food security. Since 2006, AGRA has worked with partners, governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector businesses, and more; to deliver a set of proven solutions to smallholder farmers and indigenous African agricultural enterprises. AGRA puts smallholder farmers first on the agenda, recognizing that no country has moved from low income to middle income without agricultural transformation. For more information visit <https://agra.org/>



FANRPAN

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is an autonomous regional stakeholder-driven policy research, analysis and implementation network that was formally established by Ministers of Agriculture from Eastern and Southern Africa in 1997. FANRPAN was borne out of the need for comprehensive policies and strategies required to resuscitate agriculture. FANRPAN is mandated to work in all African countries and currently has activities in 17 countries namely Angola, Benin, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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