

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA



COMMUNIQUE OF THE 3RD ALL AFRICA POSTHARVEST CONGRESS AND EXHIBITION

Theme: Postharvest Loss Reduction for Sustainable Food Systems

13TH - 16TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

**AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
Virtual Platform Meeting**



INTRODUCTION

1. The African Union (AU) Commission jointly organized the 3rd All Africa Postharvest Congress and Exhibition (AAPHCE) in partnership with a multi-stakeholder consortium composed of diverse regional and global partners, including research and academic institutions, development partners, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors led by the University of Nairobi and the University of Johannesburg from 13th – 16th September 2021 under the theme "Postharvest Loss Reduction for Sustainable Food Systems".
2. The fully virtual Congress occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic was attended by over 300 participants from African Union Member States, Regional Economic Communalities, the Academia, Research Institutions, International Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, Media organizations, Financial Institutions, Development Partners, Farmers Organizations, Women and Youth Groups, Private Sector and representatives of various governments.
3. The overall goal of the 3rd AAPHCE was to galvanize the efforts towards achieving the continental targets on postharvest loss reduction in line with the Malabo Declaration (2014) on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Livelihoods to end hunger by 2025. Specifically, the Congress
 - a) Raised awareness about the causes, extent, impact and contribution of food losses and waste to unsustainable food systems;
 - b) Demonstrated the importance of good postharvest management and, food loss and waste reduction in line with the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and global agenda SDGs and Sustainable Food Systems Summit focus action tracks;
 - c) Showcased effective policy interventions and strategies, innovative technologies and practices, entrepreneurial investment and business opportunities, and affordable financing mechanisms towards postharvest food loss/waste reduction;
 - d) Provided a platform for experience sharing among the AU Member States in their efforts to get on track towards achieving the set targets for postharvest loss reduction under the Malabo Declaration (2014) and the impact of COVID-19 on food systems, from inputs supply to food distribution and the effective coping strategies towards resilience.

4. The main session of the Congress was preceded by six Side Events organized by the World Food Program (WFP); Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA); Buhler Group; Strengthening African Processors Project (SAP), Purdue University; African Postharvest Losses Information System (APHLIS); Consortium for Innovations in Post-Harvest Loss and Food Waste Reduction (Iowa State University); and Feed the Future Innovation Lab for the Reduction of Post-Harvest Loss (Kansas State University). There were three virtual exhibitions hosted by the Sasakawa Africa Association, the World Food Program and the University of Nairobi. Also, there were digital posters which were displayed all through the four days of the Congress
5. The Opening Session was presided over by Her Excellency Amb. Josefa Sacko, AUC Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE). In welcoming the 3rd All Africa Postharvest Congress and Exhibition delegates, she noted that the African Union has placed high importance on postharvest management as evidenced by institutionalizing the All Africa Postharvest Congress and Exhibition (AAPHCE) as a biennial African Union Platform on experience sharing and reporting on collective efforts to reduce food loss and waste (FLW) on the continent.
6. The Commissioner's remarks were preceded by remarks from Prof. Jane Ambuko, the chair of the Technical Committee (TC), who presented the Congress theme, Postharvest Loss Reduction for Sustainable Food Systems and its six sub-themes to address specific focal areas in the food systems transformation agenda using a food loss and reduction lens. She outlined the Congress organization, including side events, exhibitions, workstreams, poster gallery and the plenary sessions.
7. Goodwill remarks from high-level invited guests were given by Ms. Betty Kibaara (Director of the Rockefeller Foundation); Prof. Stephen Kiama Gitahi (Vice Chancellor of University of Nairobi); Dr. Makoto Kitanaka (the President of Sasakawa Africa Association); Dr. Hameed Nuru (Director of the World Food Programme Africa Union Global Office and Representative to the African Union & UNECA); Dr. David Phiri (Sub-Regional Coordinator for Eastern Africa and FAO Representative to AU); and Ms. Evelyn Geurtsen (Director of International Agribusiness & Food Security at the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality). The guests underscored the importance of creating a sense of urgency in tackling postharvest loss and food waste, conducting action research to generate innovative solutions, including technologies; digital platforms, information and social media; capacity building, outreach and awareness creation; value of partnerships and collaborations; relevant infrastructure to reduce losses; solutions to attract Youth into agriculture and gendered aspects of solutions; policy support to guide the scale-up of technologies; and the role of science and research to inform policy.
8. A framing presentation highlighting postharvest issues in the African context was made by Prof. Umezuruike Linus Opara of Stellenbosch University. This was followed by two keynote addresses which were delivered by Mr. Máximo Torero Cullen, FAO Chief Economist and Dr. Hans Hoogeveen, FAO Independent Chairperson of the Council and Champion of SDG 12.3. The two presenters highlighted the importance and urgency of FLW reduction in the efforts to achieve food and nutrition security in sustainable food systems.
9. The Speakers noted that the COVID- 19 pandemic had exposed the vulnerability and inefficiency of Africa's food systems. Significant volumes of food have been wasted as food distribution systems were disrupted due to the COVID- 19 pandemic, especially in low-income countries with inadequate postharvest infrastructure. Therefore, they

- urged Member States to refocus and include the reduction of postharvest food losses in national COVID- 19 recovery plans to transform food systems and, in turn, contribute to ending hunger in Africa.
10. The speakers called on all AU Member States to enhance investment in the prevention of food losses, which deprive the population of safe and nutritious food for human consumption, rather than investing only in increasing food production. They recognized a need to link postharvest losses to food safety and human health, thereby focusing beyond quantitative food losses to qualitative losses. They also noted that postharvest systems should be expanded to include pre-harvest interventions, which significantly determine the extent of FLW.
 11. Approaches, solutions, and investments for postharvest management should be holistic and include the youth and women. They identified the following as key in addressing postharvest loss in Africa: (a) strengthening policy, awareness and institutional capacity in postharvest loss management, (b) promoting knowledge management, data, skills and human development in postharvest loss management; (c) promoting technological advancements that are environmentally friendly, and d) having effective markets and market infrastructure to support postharvest loss management especially digitalization, and effective financing and investment in postharvest loss management.
 12. The Speakers further advocated for Member States to guide and coordinate postharvest loss initiatives at the regional and national levels towards achieving reduced postharvest losses in line with the Malabo Declaration and the SDGs.

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE VARIOUS CONGRESS SESSIONS

1. **Notes** that COVID-19 has dramatically increased the number of people facing acute food insecurity in 2020-2021, with nearly 2.37 billion people (30% of the global population) lacking access to adequate food in 2020 due to economic recession and disruptions in food supply chains.
2. **Recognizes** that postharvest loss is a leading cause of food and nutrition insecurity globally.
3. **Notes** that postharvest management should be looked at in the context of sustainable agrifood systems and proven methods used for accurately assessing and recording losses of different commodities across the continent. As pre as well as postharvest aspects contribute to postharvest loss, greater understanding and recognition of these linkages and dimensions is needed. Additionally, qualitative losses (e.g., maize contaminated with aflatoxin) should be given the same attention as quantitative losses. Both quantitative and qualitative losses are reduced when farmers and their service providers have appropriate knowledge and information.

4. **Recognizes** that food losses impact the environment negatively, impede development, and hinder social progress and induce economic losses with reduced investment returns. Noted that FLW carries a strong environmental burden: consuming 25% of fresh water, using arable land the size of China, and emitting 8% of global emissions. Furthermore, food waste predominantly occurs in highly urbanized and developed economies, while food loss predominantly occurs in developing economies.
5. **Recognizes** that Governments are already off-track on global goals related to hunger, malnutrition, environmental stress, and livelihoods – all of which have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and rising food prices. However, reducing FLW will have a major impact on the three (3) global challenges of climate change, biodiversity losses and hunger.
6. **Cognizant** that FLW is a trillion-dollar problem /solution with a massive opportunity for investors and the private sector for innovative methods to solve the problem. Thus, reducing FLW is a key environmental standard for the private sector and responsible investors, with World Bank assigning \$3 billion in Sustainable Development Bonds dedicated to FLW and the swift and steady demand from investors to raise awareness for FLW and supporting solutions through their own assets and operations.
7. **Underscores** women's role in contributing to postharvest loss management (PHLM) and the need to assist them in moving towards modern farming solutions through capacity building and gender-sensitive interventions.
8. **Calls** for sustainable and cost-effective solutions to reduce postharvest losses, extend shelf-life and preserve fresh produce in highly affected areas.
9. **Urges** the need for increased support in creating sustainable markets for the future through private sector engagement and harnessing renewable energy such as solar energy for cold storage and lighting 'smart' markets for postharvest food waste and loss management interventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The delegates in the 3rd AAPHCE Congress

1. **Call** on the African Union Member States to engage in transforming their food systems and supporting value addition, including strategies for reducing postharvest loss and food waste.
2. **Urge** the Member States to shift from the traditional emphasis of increasing food production while efforts to reduce food losses during and after harvest (including downstream activities in agro-processing) are ignored.
3. **Urge** the Members States to intentionally encourage the Youth and others to participate in agricultural enterprises that contribute to PHLM through the use of digital technology, innovations, information sharing and social media.
4. **Call** the Member States to fix broken value chain links between smallholder farmers and SMEs that enable access to finance and technology. Innovative financing

mechanisms are urgently required to reach the majority of smallholder farmers and SMEs.

5. **Encourage** strengthening of the working mechanisms and advancement of new models of Public-Private Partnerships for market development and promotion and uptake of emerging effective technologies to underserved and resource-constrained smallholder farmers.
6. **Call** upon the AU and TC to take stock of what has been done with 2nd and 3rd Congress recommendations and report to the 4th Congress.
7. **Call** for a global investment mechanism to address postharvest loss and waste. It is estimated that reduction of global FLW by 25% would require an investment of around \$350 billion over 10 years. A dedicated financing facility of this amount would initiate policy, research and investment into postharvest loss and waste reduction and leverage the huge consumer, private and public expenditures already being spent in the food systems that are disincentivizing actors and leading to increased FLW.
8. **Urge** the establishment of The Global FLW Financing Facility that would offer a deal-making platform for actors across the value chain and provide a suite of financing instruments that can be blended with existing investments. Additionally, de-risking the transition period of implementing FLW interventions or new business models needed for the transition; and funding the non-redeemable costs, e.g., identification and analysis of FLW hotspots, forming coalitions, and providing advisory and technical assistance and executing awareness campaigns.

Recommend the development of intermediate technologies for small scale farmers to bridge the gap between existing high-end and low-end technologies

9. **Support** farmers' cooperatives that act as leverage to access and manage applicable postharvest technologies when the cost is beyond an individual farmer.
10. **Call** for investment in training, rural infrastructure, appropriate technology, and cold chain storage, which can prolong shelf life of perishable goods, provide nutrition and livelihoods while reducing postharvest loss
11. **Recommend** increased investment in knowledge management and production of accurate and verifiable data that can track and monitor progress on PHL reduction.
12. **Call** for Member States to improve food safety which can lead to food waste when products do not meet the required standards, and further recommend enforcing food safety standards for known toxins such as aflatoxins and other mycotoxins.
13. **Underscore** the need for national postharvest policies and strategies to be redefined to include issues relating to policy interventions on PHL measures.
14. **Commit** to support Member States implementing systems and processes to achieve the postharvest loss reduction target set in the Malabo Declaration.
15. **Encourage** collaboration between industry and academia in developing appropriate technologies and effective adoption of those technologies; further recommend that research studies be well planned and include reasonable sample size, consider a range of real-life conditions and socio-economic and environmental outcomes in addition to technical outcomes.
16. **Recognize** that food fortification and processing add value

- 
- 
17. **Call** for a series of national and governmental commitments to match the financial requirements for implementing PHLM solutions. Therefore, recommends a deliberate and sustained increase in agricultural sector spending, explicitly towards smallholder farmer capacity development and gender empowerment for a substantive reduction in postharvest losses.
 18. **Recognize** the importance of ensuring linkages of interventions by governments and other actors to national targets.
 19. **Encourage** the mainstreaming of FLW along project management, value chains, food systems and food aid programs.
 20. **Support** innovative policy and social arrangements for optimal functioning of the food system.
Call for more AU Member States (beyond the five that are on track) to increase their efforts in reaching the Malabo target of halving PHL by half by 2025.
 21. **Recognize** that the key drivers to achieving the Malabo targets of halving PHL by 2025 include; government attention, capacity for implementation and incentives for adoption at the smallholder level.
 22. **While** there are different methods for data collection and reporting for mycotoxins, there is a need to develop a risk-based mycotoxin standard reflecting the local context.
 23. **Realize the urgent** requirement for sustainable and cost-effective solutions to reduce postharvest losses, extend shelf-life and preserve fresh produce in highly affected are.
 24. **Call** upon Governments and development agencies to increase their investments in research to promote promising postharvest trainings and technologies such as hermetic bags. Drying technologies are critical in preserving horticultural produce in times of pandemics and crises when market access is a challenge because of restricted movement.
 25. **Urge** African governments to consider input subsidies and means to improve farmers' market access; create market-based incentives to reduce the rate of loss incurred in the marks, and strengthen the capacities of farmers through incentive training, contract farming, and well-structured markets.

ADOPTION OF THE COMMUNIQUÉ AND WAY FORWARD

The 3rd AAPHCE Delegates and Partners present during the four-day Congress and Exhibition hereby adopt this Communiqué.

The Congress called upon the AU Commission to present the content of this Communiqué and the outcomes thereof to the United Nations Food Systems Summit in New York, USA on 23 September 2021, and to the AU Specialised Technical Committee Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at their sitting in December 2021

Done on 16 September 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



3RD ALL AFRICA POSTHARVEST CONGRESS AND EXHIBITION

Theme: Postharvest Loss Reduction for Sustainable Food Systems