



From Commitment to Delivery: Implementation as the Frontier for CAADP 3.0

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Abstract

Africa enters the third phase of CAADP under the Kampala Declaration—CAADP 3.0—at a moment of profound possibility and significant stress. A young population, urban growth, technological adoption, and vibrant entrepreneurial systems are powerful drivers of agrifood innovation and transformation. Simultaneously, the continent's agrifood systems are being shaped by intensifying climate shocks, constrained fiscal positions, fragile macroeconomic conditions, political volatility, and persistent conflict and displacement. These pressures are deepening hunger and undermining livelihoods across large regions. Importantly, Africa has accumulated considerable institutional knowledge and practical experience in policy formulation, planning, and cross-sector coordination. Governments, farmer organizations, regional bodies, and development partners understand the challenges facing the agrifood sector with far greater precision than in earlier CAADP cycles.

The Kampala Declaration reflects this maturity. It is not simply another policy statement; it is a political signal that Africa intends to convert aspirations into meaningful, sustained action. The challenge is no longer conceptual clarity. The challenge is implementation. For CAADP 3.0 to fulfill its promise, countries must strengthen their ability to deliver consistently, at scale, and under difficult and rapidly changing conditions. This brief outlines the nature of that challenge and proposes a structured way to approach it, drawing from the November 2025 IFPRI webinar on strategic priorities for CAADP implementation.

Keywords: Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), CAADP 3.0, implementation, food system transformation.

Why Implementation Is the Defining Challenge of the Kampala Declaration

A persistent insight from earlier CAADP cycles is that African countries do not lack plans. They lack mechanisms that convert plans into outcomes. The continent has produced high-quality strategies, investment frameworks, policy guidelines, and regional agreements for more than two decades. Many countries have advanced capabilities in planning, scenario analysis, and program design. Yet the gap between intention and delivery remains large.

Implementation falters when systems cannot maintain coherence across ministries and jurisdictions, when budgets do not align with priorities, when institutional authority is fragmented, when administrative bottlenecks accumulate, when political shifts disrupt continuity, and when countries lack the capacity to adjust programs in the face of shocks.

The Kampala Declaration will be judged not by its ambition but by its execution. It arrives at a time when the structural and operational demands of implementation have grown. CAADP 3.0 is more complex, more cross-sectoral, more continental, and more resilience-oriented than previous cycles. It requires states to act across ministries and levels of government; to coordinate national and regional actions; to strengthen data, monitoring, and accountability systems; and to implement in contexts shaped by climate uncertainty, political transitions, and fiscal constraints. The implementation challenge is therefore more pressing—and more central—than in any previous CAADP phase.

A Framework for Understanding Implementation: Four Foundations of Delivery

The ability to implement is not a single capability but a system of capabilities. It involves a set of foundations that must reinforce each other for delivery to become routine rather than exceptional. These foundations—articulated in the opening and closing reflections at the webinar and expanded here—offer a structured lens for approaching CAADP 3.0 implementation.

The Ability to Act

Effective implementation requires states to have the practical capacity to act. This includes the institutions, professional cadres, logistical systems, and administrative processes that allow resources to be moved, programs to be executed, and progress to be tracked. Ministries and agencies must have the operational muscle needed to carry out plans, backed by reliable systems for planning, budgeting, procurement, and monitoring. Without this bedrock of functional capacity, strategies remain theoretical. The Kampala Declaration's ambitions will only be realized if countries strengthen these basic but essential capabilities.

The Ability to Work Together

Implementation is never the responsibility of a single institution. Agriculture lies at the intersection of finance, planning, infrastructure, environment, trade, and local governance. The success of CAADP therefore hinges on whether governments can cultivate cooperation across these domains. Coordination must be intentionally constructed rather than assumed. It requires clear mandates, shared incentives, functioning inter-ministerial structures, and authentic engagement between public agencies, farmer

organizations, and private actors. Regional alignment among member states and RECs is equally important. The capacity to work together—across sectors, across levels, and across borders—is a defining determinant of implementation effectiveness.

The Ability to Reduce Frictions

Even with strong capacity and coordination, implementation can stall when bottlenecks are allowed to accumulate. Administrative delays, unclear responsibilities, slow procurement processes, regulatory misalignment, and competing incentives often act as invisible brakes on delivery. These frictions are not peripheral; they are central. Systems that can identify obstacles early, create mechanisms for rapid problem-solving, and maintain momentum over time are far more likely to achieve consistent results. Reducing friction is therefore not a technical exercise but a strategic imperative.

The Ability to Stay Flexible

Successful implementation requires flexibility—the capacity to maintain strategic options in the face of uncertainty. This involves designing programs that can adjust as conditions shift, avoiding rigid commitments to pathways that may prove ineffective, and retaining some excess or surge capacity so that systems can react swiftly to shocks. Flexibility is a form of insurance. Climate events, fiscal tightening, political transitions, and disruptions to markets are inevitable over the next decade. Countries that create space for adaptation will be far better positioned to sustain delivery. This is the often-overlooked element of implementation: the ability not simply to choose well, but to avoid being trapped in choices that constrain future action.

Lessons and Insights from Experience

The November 2025 IFPRI webinar provided a rare, multi-actor view of Africa’s implementation challenge. Leaders from national ministries, the African Union, farmers’ organizations, and strategic planning bodies offered perspectives shaped by experience, responsibility, and practical realities. Several lessons and insights emerged, pointing to essential dimensions of implementation capacity that must be strengthened across the continent.

Political Commitment, Steadiness, and Accountability

A recurring theme in the discussion was the centrality of political steadiness to the success of agricultural transformation. As Richard Mkandawire emphasized, implementation succeeds when reforms survive election cycles, leadership transitions, and fiscal turbulence. Many African countries have experienced moments of high policy ambition that were not matched by sustained follow-through. Implementation falters when political momentum dissipates or when reform champions move on before systems are institutionalized. Political commitment must therefore extend beyond declarations. It must be embodied in durable accountability structures, empowered institutions, and clear mandates that hold across administrations. This kind of steadiness is especially important in an environment of economic tightening and high public debt, where competing priorities can easily crowd out long-term agricultural investment. The panelists agreed that without political constancy—and without mechanisms that bind the system to its commitments—CAADP 3.0 will struggle to achieve results.

Coordination as an Intentional, Systemic Function

Coordination must be intentionally designed into the architecture of implementation. Agriculture does not operate in isolation; it relies on the decisions and actions of ministries of finance, planning, transport, environment, trade, and local government. When these actors operate in silos, policies become inconsistent, budgets misaligned, and programs fragmented. When they work in concert, implementation accelerates. Panelists stressed that coordination cannot depend on personalities or goodwill. It requires institutionalized mechanisms, clear inter-ministerial platforms, harmonized processes, and shared incentives. The Kampala Declaration’s multi-dimensional focus makes coordinated action even more critical. Implementation will succeed only if countries build systems that bind sectors together, enable joint planning and monitoring, and create shared responsibility for results.

Institutions as the Backbone of Delivery

Institutions—rather than individual projects or leaders—constitute the backbone of delivery. For CAADP 3.0 to deliver, countries must strengthen the institutions that carry implementation: delivery units, monitoring and evaluation systems, budget alignment mechanisms, regulatory agencies, farmer platforms, and regional harmonization bodies. These institutions translate commitments into routines, enabling continuity, consistency, and scale. Institutions also shape incentives. Strong institutions allow systems to maintain direction even under pressure, while weak ones magnify uncertainty and create openings for drift. In the absence of institutional capacity, even well-designed programs struggle to reach the ground. This insight aligns closely with the view that implementation is a system of interacting capabilities. Institutional strength is one of the most important of those capabilities.

Farmer and SME Inclusion as the Source of Legitimacy and Grounding

Implementation must be grounded in the lived realities of farmers and rural SMEs. CAADP 3.0 must therefore be “unpacked” in ways that make sense to the millions of producers, traders, processors, and service providers who drive Africa’s agrifood systems. Without meaningful farmer participation in planning, monitoring, and accountability, implementation risks drifting away from the communities it aims to serve. Farmer inclusion is not merely a participatory ideal; it is an operational necessity. It provides early information on what is and is not working. It creates legitimacy that enhances compliance. It anchors implementation in local systems. And it helps align public interventions with private initiative. The next CAADP decade will need mechanisms that draw farmers and SMEs into the mainstream of decision-making, not as beneficiaries but as co-creators of transformation.

Evidence-Informed, Practical Pathways for Navigating Complexity

Rigorous analytics, real-time data, learning systems, and decision processes that help governments identify bottlenecks early and adjust course when needed are vital. Countries must be able to navigate administrative and political complexities with clarity and agility. Public capacities must be strengthened not only at national levels but also in local institutions and in the public–private partnerships that increasingly drive investment in agrifood systems. This focus on practicality is essential. Implementation unfolds in conditions defined by uncertainty and variation. Countries that develop systems for gathering evidence, interpreting it, and acting on it will be better positioned to sustain progress. These practical pathways allow governments to maintain a clear line of sight on results and to anchor decisions in reality rather than aspiration.

A Continental Readiness Agenda

Taken together, these lessons and insights point toward a continental readiness agenda. Africa must invest in the political steadiness, coordination structures, institutional capacities, farmer engagement mechanisms, and evidence systems required to implement CAADP 3.0 under real-world constraints. The Kampala Declaration creates the opportunity; the readiness agenda determines whether that opportunity will be seized. The next decade of CAADP will depend on whether these elements are strengthened deliberately, systematically, and at scale.

The Road Ahead: Strengthening Implementation Capacities for CAADP 3.0

There is an urgent need for a new level of ambition around implementation. The Kampala Declaration provides a unifying vision, but its success will depend on whether countries and regional bodies can strengthen the foundations that allow systems to deliver consistently and reliably. This means investing in operational capacity; institutionalizing coordination across ministries, levels of government, and regions; creating mechanisms that reduce administrative and political friction; and designing programs and systems that retain flexibility—even under conditions of uncertainty. It also means fostering a mindset shift, one that understands delivery not as an administrative detail but as a strategic capacity to be cultivated and protected. If these capabilities are built with seriousness and intention, CAADP 3.0 can become the most impactful decade in the program’s history. African governments, regional bodies, farmer organizations, and development partners each have essential roles to play in this effort. IFPRI remains committed to supporting these efforts through research, analysis, collaboration, and capacity development.

Conclusion: From Commitment to Delivery

The Kampala Declaration articulates an ambitious, compelling vision for Africa’s agrifood future. But the real work lies in implementation—building the systems and capabilities that enable countries to act, work together, overcome barriers, and adapt to changing circumstances. The next decade of CAADP will be judged not by the strength of the declaration but by the strength of delivery. If countries and continental institutions invest in these foundations with discipline and intent, Africa can move from commitment to action and from action to transformation. This is the central task of CAADP 3.0—and the opportunity that now stands before the continent.

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