

Will COP30 put smallholders at the centre of climate action?

At the just concluded COP 30 in Belém, Brazil, delegates faced multiple stark choices. In Africa, where three quarters of jobs are in agriculture and a single bad season can ripple through food prices, incomes and politics, the urgency was clear: climate action for smallholders is essential.

The Belém Declaration on Hunger, Poverty, and People-centred Climate Action calls for urgent investment to support climate adaptation, eradicate hunger, and build climate-resilient food systems. Africa's farmers are ready. With nearly \$2.8 billion already announced for climate-smart agriculture, funding exists. What matters now is ensuring it reaches farmers through tangible interventions like healthy soils, timely seeds, and reliable market access.

Healthy soils underpin climate resilience. The Africa Union's (AU) 10-year Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan provides a clear pathway to restore soils and lift yields if countries and financiers back science-driven agriculture, extension and input markets. Success should be measured in hectares restored, yield gains, and losses reduced, ensuring investment translates into concrete farm-level results. Speeding up the

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Climate action



time it takes seed from the lab to the local shop could transform African agriculture as powerfully as any new financing pledge. Across the continent, climate-smart and nutritious varieties already exist, yet too many are stuck behind slow release, certification, and distribution systems.

Regional efforts show how to cut those delays and crowd in local enterprises so that a farmer can buy the right seed on time, close to home. At the Growing Innovations Showcase in the AgriZone at COP30, we saw practical solutions, from climate-resilient seeds to digital advisory services, demonstrating that delivery innovations are achievable. Equally critical is connecting farmers

to markets and finance. Corridor approaches linking surplus zones to demand centres with storage, cold chains, harmonised rules, and value chain finance reduces waste and attract private capital.

Some argue we should wait for new funds, flawless data, or perfect safeguards before acting. Accountability matters, but progress cannot pause. We already have tools to target innovations and track progress.

The AU Soil Plan provides a clear delivery framework, the CAADP Biennial Review offers mutual accountability, and the Emirates Declaration united over 130 countries around a shared intent on food systems.

Building on this, we are scaling proven solutions across borders, coordinating innovation and finance for maximum impact. The sensible path is to use what exists, scale what works, fix what doesn't, and spread proven methods. That is how public money attracts private capital and how farmers see real change within seasons, not decades.

Belém was not the place to rehearse promises. It was the place to fund delivery that puts smallholders first, especially women who carry much of the labour in our value chains.

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