

# AGRA boss pushes for systems approach to transform Africa's agriculture

By Aloysius Kasoma

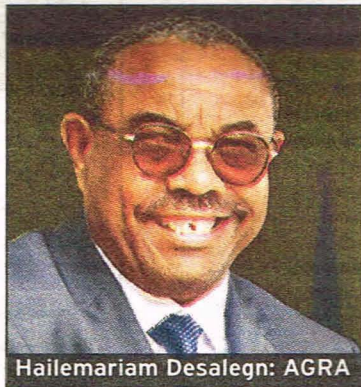
Hailemariam Desalegn, the former prime minister of Ethiopia and current board chairperson of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), has called for a fundamental shift in how Africa approaches agricultural transformation.

Desalegn is urging governments to adopt a systems-driven model that integrates production, processing, trade and innovation.

In an exclusive interview at Kampala Serena Hotel on Friday after his meeting with President Yoweri Museveni on Wednesday, Desalegn said Africa must move beyond fragmented interventions and address agriculture as a complete value chain.

Desalegn described AGRA as a pan-African institution established nearly two decades ago to catalyse agricultural transformation.

"We are preparing to celebrate 20



Hailemariam Desalegn: AGRA

years as an institution. The idea was to bring all stakeholders together to drive transformation in agriculture and food systems," Desalegn said, adding that AGRA's founding was driven by the realisation that Africa lagged behind other regions in agricultural productivity.

Desalegn highlighted a stark contradiction that, despite vast agricultural potential, Africa remains

home to nearly 600 million food-insecure people.

"We eat what we do not produce and produce what we do not consume," he said, pointing to the inefficiencies in production, processing and trade.

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## BETWEEN THE LINES

Desalegn called for stronger input systems, including reliable seed distribution, quality fertiliser supply and improved soil health management.

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Desalegn pointed to the ongoing collaboration between AGRA and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) secretariat to support implementation of the continental trade pact. While describing AfCFTA as a landmark initiative, he said progress has been slow.

"The agreement exists at policy

level, but we must translate it into operational reality," he said.

Desalegn identified the key bottlenecks, including poor logistics, weak infrastructure, lack of harmonised standards and non-tariff barriers at borders.

"Borders should not be barriers; they should be gateways," he said, calling for seamless trade systems supported by digital and physical infrastructure.

He further urged African countries to leverage their comparative advantages in producing inputs such as fertilisers.

## MUSEVENI COMMENDS AGRA

President Museveni commended AGRA's role in strengthening food systems and promoting innovation.

During a meeting at State Lodge in Nakasero, Kampala with Desalegn, the President highlighted the organisation's role in advancing science, innovation and policy support in agriculture.