AMCHAM BUSINESS SUMMIT

U.S. - EAST AFRICA TRADE & INVESTMENT FORUM



AGRICULTURE PANEL SESSION

BUILDING EAST AFRICA'S NEXT BIOSCIENCES ECONOMY

REPORT AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE SUMMIT FOCUS

Building on the momentum of previous editions of the U.S. - East Africa trade and investment summit, our platform brings together influential decision makers, facilitates direct business-to-business engagement, and fosters constructive private-sector led dialogue with the public sector and development partners. Our unwavering focus is on expanding markets, catalyzing business growth, and driving job creation and economic prosperity across borders.

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BUILDING

EAST AFRICA'S NEXT BIOSCIENCES ECONOMY

U.S. FIRMS SEE AGRICULTURE AS EAST AFRICA'S NEXT MAJOR GROWTH FRONTIER

Agriculture is emerging as one of East Africa's most significant opportunities for productivity growth, technology adoption and investment. Industry and policy leaders examined how the region can move beyond traditional agricultural models by combining capital, technology, biosciences, infrastructure and integrated regional markets to build more productive and globally competitive agricultural value chains.



MODERATOR

Annie Roberts

Co-CEO,
Open Capital Advisors

The session brought together Alice Ruhweza, President of AGRA; Daniel Huba, Vice President for Growth Segments at Mastercard; Mildred Nadah Pita, Head of Public Affairs, Science and Sustainability for Africa at Bayer Crop Science; Bret Tate, Counselor at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service; and Franck Gbaguidi, Managing Director for Agriculture and Forestry at Eurasia Group. The discussion was moderated by Annie Roberts, Co-CEO of Open Capital Advisors.

The conversation underscored that transforming agriculture requires an ecosystem approach. Access to innovation and technology must be matched by affordable capital, reliable infrastructure, market access, supportive policy frameworks and the capabilities required to translate innovation into commercial scale.

UNLOCKING CAPITAL ACROSS THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAIN



Alice Ruhweza

President,
AGRA

Access to capital remains one of the most significant constraints to agricultural transformation. Ruhweza emphasized that investment must extend beyond farming itself to the broader ecosystem of roads, storage, processing, manufacturing and other infrastructure required to connect producers to markets.

This is particularly important in addressing post-harvest losses, which remain a major source of lost productivity and income across African agriculture. Investment in storage, transportation and processing infrastructure can help preserve agricultural output while creating additional opportunities for value addition and industrial development.



Daniel Huba
Vice President,
Growth Segments,
Mastercard

Huba highlighted the need to rethink agricultural finance by using digital infrastructure to improve how financial institutions assess risk and extend capital to farmers and businesses.

Technology can help reduce information gaps and accelerate financing decisions, but its impact ultimately depends on whether it enables commercially viable connections between farmers, financial institutions and markets. The broader message was that innovation must be designed around commercial realities. Technology that cannot be financed, adopted or connected to markets will struggle to achieve meaningful scale.

BUILDING A MORE INTEGRATED REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL MARKET

Fragmented markets and regulatory systems continue to constrain the region's agricultural potential. Participants emphasized the need for greater harmonization of policies and regulations across East Africa to facilitate the movement of agricultural goods, investment, technology and services. Regional integration would allow producers and processors to operate at greater scale while creating larger markets for agricultural technologies and inputs. It would also strengthen the region's resilience by enabling countries to leverage complementary production capabilities rather than operating in isolation. The discussion reinforced that digital technology alone cannot overcome policy and regulatory barriers. Technology-enabled agriculture must therefore be accompanied by practical progress on cross-border trade, standards, market access and regulatory alignment.

EXPANDING EAST AFRICA'S GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL FOOTPRINT

Despite its substantial agricultural potential, East Africa remains a relatively small participant in global agricultural trade. Gbaguidi identified this gap as both a structural challenge and a significant opportunity for the region to expand its presence in international markets.



Franck Gbaguidi
Managing Director,
Agriculture & Forestry,
Eurasia Group

Greater productivity, investment and value addition could enable East African countries to move beyond primary production and capture a larger share of global agricultural value chains. The changing geopolitical and trade environment further strengthens the case for building regional production capacity, improving food-system resilience and developing competitive export industries.

The opportunity extends beyond traditional commodities. A more sophisticated agricultural economy could encompass food processing, agricultural inputs, biotechnology, logistics, animal health, digital agriculture, and other high-value segments of the biosciences economy.

HARNESSING U.S. TECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURAL EXPERTISE



Bret Tate

Counselor,
USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS),
U.S. Embassy Kenya

The United States brings significant opportunities for collaboration across agricultural technology, genetics, animal nutrition, animal health and other agricultural inputs.

Bret Tate highlighted the scale of the productivity opportunity in Kenya's livestock sector, where improvements in genetics, nutrition and animal health could substantially increase dairy yields. Such interventions demonstrate how science and technology can transform productivity while strengthening the commercial viability of agricultural enterprises.

For East Africa, the opportunity lies not simply in importing technology, but in building partnerships that adapt global innovations to local production systems and strengthen the capabilities of farmers, processors and agribusinesses.

BUILDING AN END-TO-END INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM



Mildred Nadah Pita

VP & Head of Public Affairs, Science and Sustainability, Africa, Bayer

Pita emphasized the increasing complexity of the challenges facing farmers, from climate change and evolving pest and disease pressures to changing market conditions.

Addressing these challenges requires more than individual products or technologies; it requires an integrated ecosystem that connects farmers with finance, knowledge, inputs, technology, and risk-management tools.

This ecosystem approach is particularly relevant to the development of a regional biosciences economy, where advances in agricultural science can generate value across multiple interconnected sectors.

The Summit discussion ultimately pointed to a broader transformation in how East Africa approaches agriculture: from a predominantly production-focused sector to a technology-enabled, investment-driven and globally connected economic industry. Unlocking this potential will require coordinated action across government, financial institutions, technology companies, agribusinesses and development partners.

With the right combination of capital, infrastructure, innovation and regional integration, East Africa can move from being a major agricultural producer to becoming a more competitive participant in global agricultural value chains, and build a biosciences economy capable of driving productivity, jobs, food security and long-term economic growth.

KEY OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

01 **Position agriculture as a strategic frontier for East African growth**
Mobilize coordinated investment in innovation, infrastructure, technology and regional market integration to unlock agriculture's potential as a major engine of economic growth and competitiveness.

02 **Unlock capital across the agricultural value chain**
Expand access to affordable and appropriate financing for farmers, agribusinesses and processors, recognizing that technology and policy reforms cannot deliver transformation without sufficient investment capital.

03 **Build integrated agricultural ecosystems**
Move beyond a production-focused approach by strengthening the infrastructure, logistics, manufacturing, storage and market systems that connect farmers to higher-value domestic, regional and global markets.

04 **Advance regional policy and regulatory harmonization**
Align agricultural policies, standards and regulations across East African markets to facilitate cross-border trade, attract investment and enable producers and agribusinesses to operate at greater scale.

05 **Scale commercially viable agricultural technology**
Prioritize technologies that can achieve meaningful commercial adoption by pairing innovation with appropriate financing, market access, technical support and viable business models.

06 **Digitize agricultural finance and risk assessment**
Leverage digital infrastructure and data-driven tools to improve the assessment of agricultural risk, accelerate financing decisions and expand financial access for farmers and agribusinesses.

07 **Expand East Africa's global agricultural market share**
Turn the region's relatively small share of global agricultural exports into an opportunity for growth by increasing productivity, strengthening value addition and developing competitive export-oriented agricultural industries.

08 **Deepen U.S.–East Africa agricultural partnerships**
Leverage U.S. expertise, technology and investment in areas including genetics, animal nutrition, animal health and agricultural innovation to raise productivity and strengthen the competitiveness of priority sectors such as dairy.

09 **Build a resilient, climate-smart agricultural innovation ecosystem**
Integrate research, technology, financing, farmer education and climate-risk management to strengthen agricultural resilience, improve productivity and enable farmers to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

01 **Establish a harmonized regional framework for agricultural investment**
Align agricultural policies, regulations and investment frameworks across the EAC and COMESA regions to create a more predictable operating environment and facilitate investment at regional scale.

02 **Mobilize blended finance for agricultural value chains**
Deploy blended-finance instruments, guarantees and risk-sharing mechanisms to unlock private capital for agribusinesses, smallholder value chains and commercially viable agricultural enterprises.

03 **Integrate infrastructure investment into agricultural development strategies**
Coordinate investment in roads, storage, cold-chain systems and processing capacity to reduce post-harvest losses, strengthen market access and accelerate the commercialization and value addition of agriculture.

04 **Scale digital platforms for agricultural finance**
Expand digital financial infrastructure and data-driven lending tools to improve farmer risk assessment, accelerate credit decisions and broaden access to appropriate financing.

05 **Strengthen regional trade facilitation for agricultural goods**
Remove regulatory, administrative and logistical barriers to cross-border trade and streamline customs and market-access processes to enable more efficient movement of agricultural products across the region.

06 **Deepen Africa–U.S. biosciences research and innovation partnerships**
Foster partnerships between African and U.S. research institutions, technology companies and agricultural enterprises to accelerate the development and deployment of technologies that improve productivity, resilience and resource efficiency.

07 **Strengthen farmer capabilities and agricultural knowledge systems**
Expand farmer training, extension services and digital knowledge platforms to support effective technology adoption, improve farm-level decision-making and strengthen climate and market-risk management.

08 **Develop targeted productivity programs for high-potential sectors**
Implement sector-specific initiatives focused on productivity-enhancing technologies, genetics, animal nutrition and other interventions, including in dairy, to raise yields, strengthen value addition and improve regional and global export competitiveness.

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