



**OPENING SPEECH FOR THE COMMISSIONER ARBE H.E MOSES VILAKATI
DURING THE MULTISTAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP ON STRENGTHENING
RESEARCH, EXTENSION AND DEVELOPMENT (R-E—E-D) THROUGH
SUBREGIONAL ORGANISATIONS
22–23 DECEMBER 2025 | KAMPALA, UGANDA**

Distinguished Representatives of Regional Economic Communities, Heads of Subregional Research Organisations, Leaders of Farmer Organisations, Development Partners, Members of the Private Sector, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the African Union Commission, I am honoured to address this distinguished gathering as we convene to shape the next generation of Africa's Research, Extension and Development architecture. Allow me to begin by expressing our sincere appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Uganda for hosting us in Kampala a city that continues to play a pivotal role in advancing Africa's agricultural transformation, and the birthplace of the historic Kampala CAADP Declaration.

Colleagues,

Africa's food systems are under immense pressure. Climate shocks, market disruptions, conflict, and global supply chain volatility continue to expose structural vulnerabilities in our production systems. Yet, at the same time, we stand at the threshold of unprecedented opportunity. Digital innovation is accelerating. Youth-led agripreneurship is rising. The AfCFTA is opening new frontiers for intra-African trade. And through the Food Systems Resilience Program (FSRP), we now have a continental platform to strengthen preparedness, build resilience, and drive long-term transformation.

This workshop is therefore not a routine technical meeting. It is a strategic moment for Africa. A moment to consolidate the achievements of the CAADP-XP4 Programme. A moment to align our institutions and investments with the FSRP. And a moment to design a continental R-E-D ecosystem that is integrated, digitally enabled, climate-smart, and market-driven.

Today, I wish to emphasise three imperatives that must guide our deliberations.

FARA, ASARECA, CCARDESA, CORAF, and NASRO are the backbone of Africa's research and innovation ecosystem. They connect national systems to continental priorities. They facilitate cross-border research, knowledge exchange, and technology scaling. Strengthening their institutional capacity is not optional—it is essential for Africa's agricultural transformation.

The African Union Commission is committed to deepening our collaboration with SROs, ensuring that their mandates, comparative advantages, and operational capacities are fully aligned with the FSRP and the broader CAADP agenda.

For too long, research outputs have remained on shelves, disconnected from extension systems and farmer realities. This must change.

Our vision is clear:

Research must inform extension. Extension must empower farmers. Farmer feedback must shape adaptive research. And production must connect seamlessly to processing and structured markets.

This continuum from research to markets—is the engine of Africa’s agricultural transformation. It is also the foundation of resilience, productivity, and competitiveness under the AfCFTA.

Digital advisory services, AI-enabled early warning systems, interoperable knowledge platforms, and climate-resilient technologies are no longer optional—they are the new frontier of agricultural development.

Through the AU Digital Agriculture Strategy, KM4AgD, and the FSRP, we have the opportunity to build a continental digital ecosystem that empowers farmers, strengthens institutions, and enhances preparedness for shocks.

Distinguished participants,

Over the next days, we will review the XP4 bilan, design an integrated R-E-D framework, strengthen extension systems, explore digital pathways, and validate investment and market integration roadmaps. The outputs of this workshop will feed directly into continental policy processes, including CAADP, the AU Digital Strategy, and the FSRP implementation architecture.

But beyond frameworks and declarations, what we seek is impact impact for the smallholder farmer, the young innovator, the woman entrepreneur, the agribusiness investor, and the millions of Africans whose livelihoods depend on agriculture.

Let us therefore approach this workshop with ambition, with unity of purpose, and with a shared commitment to building resilient, competitive, and food-secure African food systems.

On behalf of the African Union Commission, I wish you productive deliberations and a successful workshop.

I thank you.