African Union

An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa

Permanent Mission of the AU to China

Speech Delivered at the 8th Global Forum of Leaders for Agricultural Science and Technology (GLAST 2026)

Theme: Shaping Future Agriculture with Science & Innovation; How can technology and global partnerships enable future agriculture

By

H.E. Ambassador Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, PhD
Permanent Representative of the AU to the People's Republic of China

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Distinguished President Huang Sanwen, President of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences;

My Brother Professor Felix Dapare Dakora,

Excellencies, Distinguished Heads of Agricultural Academies and Research Institutions,

Representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the CGIAR and IAEA

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

It is my great honour to be with you in this majestic city of Sanya, in Hainan Province to participate in the 8th Global Forum of Leaders for Agricultural Science and Technology, hosted by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. I thank the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences for the invitation, and for having kept this forum going since 2006. Few gatherings bring together so many agricultural institutions from so many regions like GLAST.

Let me, from the outset, on behalf of H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the AU Commission, commend H.E. President Xi Jinping for his strong and clear leadership, which continues to deepen China-Africa relations. As we meet here today, China, under the able leadership of President Xi, is celebrating its two miracles of rapid economic growth and long-term social stability.

Excellencies, you will agree that food security remains one of the defining challenges of our time. Across continents, smallholder farmers, rural communities and national governments grapple with overlapping pressures: shifting climate patterns, land degradation, water scarcity, growing population demands, and persistent gaps in access to modern agricultural inputs and knowledge.

Africa holds a very large share of the world's remaining uncultivated arable land, and most of our people still earn their living from farming. At the same time, we spend tens of billions of dollars a year on imported food. Visitors sometimes read this as a failure of the land or of the farmers. But the dynamics are more nuanced than that. The land is willing, and the farmers are hardworking; what has been uneven is access to knowledge, finance and infrastructure, and these are areas a forum like this one can help to change.

The vision of a sustainable, resilient future for agriculture cannot be realised by nations acting in isolation. In light of this, I would like to share with you my thoughts on two aspects of the theme for this gathering, namely the pivotal role of science and technology and partnerships.

So, let me start with science and technology, which constitute the foundational engine for reshaping tomorrow’s agriculture. Modern agricultural innovation spans climate-smart crop

varieties, digital farming solutions, sustainable soil management, efficient water-saving technologies, and advanced agri-food processing systems. These technologies are not abstract laboratory achievements. They have real-world power: to lift crop yields, reduce post-harvest losses, strengthen climate resilience, protect biodiversity, and improve livelihoods for millions of farming households, especially in developing regions. Nevertheless, technology on its own is not enough. Unfortunately, many promising agricultural innovations remain confined within research institutes. Too many communities in Africa and other developing regions still cannot access, afford, or adapt these breakthroughs to local ecological and socio-economic realities. Technology transfer cannot be merely about equipment handovers. It must be accompanied by capacity building, knowledge sharing, and locally tailored adaptation. Innovation succeeds only when it reaches the hands of those who feed our societies, the farmers.

This brings me to my second point: global partnerships are the indispensable enabler that turns scientific progress into tangible agricultural impact. No country, however strong its research system, can address climate variability, food insecurity and pests that ignore borders alone. Cooperation is a practical necessity here. The harder question is what kind of cooperation serves best.

In our experience, cooperation works when it is aligned and respects the priorities of the region being served. Africa has clearly set out its priorities, including food security, in Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want. Through Agenda 2063, we have laid out a comprehensive roadmap for food security, and last year in Kampala, Uganda, we adopted a ten-year agricultural programme that elaborates how to improve farming and food systems for long-term food sovereignty. The African Continental Free Trade Area, the largest free trade area by number of participating countries, provides our farmers with a market of 1.4 billion consumers. The question is what role can China play in realising the goals of Agenda 2063?

China is well placed to contribute to the realization of Africa’s vision of a secure and sustainable food security. In just a few decades, China has reduced rural poverty on an unprecedented scale and built one of the largest agricultural research systems anywhere. Chinese demonstration centres, technical teams and training programmes are already at work in many African countries. We would hope to see this move from demonstration to wide adoption, from technical assistance to joint research, and from separate projects to alliances that also include African universities, national research institutes and private companies.

Market access belongs to the same discussion, since better harvests mean little if the farmer cannot sell. China's decision to grant zero-tariff treatment to products from all African countries

with which it has diplomatic relations, announced at the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and which took effect in May this year, is a significant step.

Excellencies, I would like to emphasize that partnerships must uphold equity as a central principle. We need joint research programmes co-designed to solve local priority problems, rather than one-way imposition of external solutions. We need open exchange of scientific data, joint training for young agricultural scientists, and collaborative pilot projects that test innovations in real−field conditions. The long-standing cooperation between the African Union, through the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences exemplifies this spirit: practical, science-driven cooperation that directly serves rural transformation and food security on the African continent.

I remain convinced that the China-Africa Agricultural Science and Technology Innovation Alliance (CASTIA), driven by CAAS and the African Academy of Sciences, will respond to the many challenges affecting food security in Africa. I commit to facilitating, wherever possible, CASTIA's activities to ensure its success.

I can also see synergy in agricultural delivery if the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Hainan Free Trade Port were operationally linked through a formal agreement to ensure

the free and easy exchange of germplasm between China and Africa for scientific research and business. The AU Permanent Mission to China would be willing to facilitate such an initiative.

I commend GLAST 2026 for creating this vital platform for open dialogue. Forums such as this allow us to move beyond separate national agendas, to listen to one another, and to forge practical collaborative paths forward. I am confident that the exchanges over these days in Sanya will yield concrete ideas for deeper international agricultural science cooperation.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, feeding our world sustainably is a shared global mission. Let us harness science, advance fair global partnerships, and jointly shape a prosperous agricultural future for all.

Thank you for your kind attention.