



**CALA**

Centre for  
African  
Leaders in  
Agriculture

Cohort 3

# Progress Narrative

Transforming food systems  
requires leaders who can turn  
ambition into reality.



# Advanced Leadership Programme

Africa's food security challenges require results-oriented leaders in all sectors who are responsive, adaptable, and able to lead collaboration, mobilize real change, and ensure delivery of country priorities.

At the country-level, food systems leaders must be ready to lead change and deliver on their priorities with practical tools and strategies.

The Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture's (CALA) Advanced Leadership Programme is a collaborative, hands-on, and tailored experience for senior and rising leaders in Africa's food systems transformation ecosystem. Designed for individuals spearheading and directly implementing specific country-level food systems initiatives, the programme has been open to participants from eight countries (see eligibility).

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## PREFACE

Africa's agricultural sector holds immense promise to feed the continent, drive economic growth, create jobs, and build climate resilience. Yet this potential can only be realised through visionary, capable, and collaborative leadership.

The Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA), an AGRA initiative launched in 2021, is built on this conviction transforming food systems requires leaders who can turn ambition into reality.

This publication brings together stories and insights from the CALA Advanced Leadership programme cohort 3, drawn from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. These senior leaders and rising stars share a commitment to reshaping food systems across Africa.

Their journeys demonstrate the power of peer-driven learning and real-world problem solving to unlock systemic change. Through Action Learning Projects, country-level collaborations, and an enduring alumni network, CALA leaders from Public, Private, and Civil Society-transforming food systems-are advancing national priorities and showcasing what's possible when expertise aligns with shared purpose.

This collection celebrates their achievements, captures key lessons, and aims to inspire the next generation of African leaders to carry on the work of food systems transformation.

## FOREWORD

A food-secure, prosperous, and resilient Africa is within reach. Yet turning commitment into results requires more than policy, it requires leaders who can navigate complexity, build coalitions, and act decisively.

At AGRA, we have long recognized that food systems transformation depends not only on technical solutions, but on people who can champion change and collaborate across sectors. CALA reflects this belief, equipping leaders from government, business, and civil society with the practical skills, knowledge, and networks to deliver on national and continental goals.

As Africa advances the Kampala Declaration and the third CAADP Strategy and Action Plan, CALA leaders are ready to turn vision into impact. This publication showcases their efforts from reducing seed gaps and post-harvest losses to boosting trade, nutrition, and climate-smart practices.

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**It reminds us that transformation stems not from strategy alone, but from the courage and creativity of those who lead.**

We commend the CALA cohorts 3 for their commitment and look forward to the continued impact of their leadership on Africa's food system transformation journey



*Alice Ruhweza,  
AGRA  
president*





## FOREWORD

The graduation of CALA Cohort 3 marked not just the close of a 16-month leadership journey, but the continuation of a movement that Africa's food systems urgently need. I have watched these leaders grow in courage, collaboration, and clarity of purpose and I am convinced that the future of our continent's transformation rests in such hands.

What stood out most in this cohort was not only their technical expertise, but their ability to navigate complexity: aligning diverse actors around national food systems priorities, inspiring trust across government, private sector, and civil society, and pushing through challenges with resilience. Their Action Learning Projects were proof that when leaders work together, they can generate impact that strengthens institutions, shifts markets, and leaves lasting benefits for farmers, women, and youth.

CALA was founded on the belief that Africa does not lack leaders, but it does require leaders with the right set of skills to move ambition into action. Cohort 3 has demonstrated this truth. They remind us that transformation depends as much on emotional intelligence, coalition-building, and persistence as it does on policy frameworks and strategies.

As we look to the future, our task is to sustain and grow this leadership ecosystem to anchor alumni within country priorities, to expand across new regions, and to build a critical mass of leaders who will carry forward Africa's food systems transformation agenda for generations. Cohort 3 has set the bar high.

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**My hope is that their stories will inspire others to lead differently, with courage and collaboration, until a resilient, food-secure Africa is not just envisioned, but realized.**

*Lilian Githinji*  
Senior Specialist – Institutional Strengthening and  
CALA  
AGRA





## FOREWORD

At the African Management Institute (AMI), we believe that leadership is not only about what you achieve individually, but about how you enable others to achieve collectively. Food systems leadership, in particular, is not just about growing food, it is about growing futures. It requires visionaries who can convene, collaborate, and create practical solutions that take root in communities and scale across countries.

Through the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA), we have had the privilege of walking alongside leaders who embody this systems mindset. Cohort 3 has shown us what it looks like in action: navigating complexity with clarity, rallying partners around shared priorities, and turning ambition into impact through their Action Learning Projects. Their work is a reminder that real transformation happens when leaders move together, not as isolated figures, but as connected networks holding each other to account.

At AMI, we remain deeply committed to equipping leaders with the tools, skills, and mindset they need to make change that lasts. CALA has proven that when leadership is anchored in both competence and character, it can spark change that feeds nations, empowers youth, and unlock prosperity across the continent.

The leaders we celebrate in these pages have set a strong foundation. Our shared responsibility now; across institutions, partners, and alumni is to carry this momentum forward, nurturing a growing community of leaders who will ensure Africa's food future is resilient, inclusive, and sustainable for generations to come.

“

**The leaders we celebrate in these pages have set a strong foundation**

*Brenda Wandera  
Partnerships & Programmes Lead- Food Systems,  
African Management Institute.*



# EPIGRAPH

ELYSE  
MUHORO

// SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER AT  
INTERNATIONAL ALERT, RWANDA.

"Before joining the program, I might not have realized gaps in my leadership. But after starting, it became clear that there were areas where I could do better like planning, setting clear goals, and measuring success. Some of the courses, especially on emotional intelligence and influence, opened my eyes to concepts I wasn't even aware of before."

SADUZA  
TUDRISU

// MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE,  
GHANA

"In the past, I focused mainly on technical results and performance. After the programme, I realised it's important to look deeper and understand why someone might not be performing well. It's not just about results; it's also about identifying the root causes and supporting people to overcome challenges."

MARY  
JULES KIGALU

// GACI SPECIALIST AT THE SOUTHERN  
AGRICULTURE GROWTH CORRIDOR,  
TANZANIA

"I'm an environmental scientist by profession, and since finishing university I've worked in food systems. But I felt there was a gap in leadership skills I needed to fill. I was motivated because it's all about leadership, and I wanted to become a better leader to help develop more leaders in Africa."



# EPIGRAPH

OTIM  
BENSON



// CEO, PRINCO GROUP (U)  
LIMITED

"We need a critical mass of capable leaders who can drive innovation, enhance capacity and build sustainable food systems. AGRA's commitment to equipping emerging leaders supports our shared vision for a resilient, competitive, and inclusive agricultural sector across Africa."

ROSEMARY  
NDUNGE  
MWANZA



// ASSISTANT DIRECTOR LIVESTOCK  
PRODUCTION/PROGRAMME OFFICER, VALUE  
CHAIN DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST, MINISTRY  
OF AGRICULTURE, KENYA

"One big challenge is the bureaucratic culture in government. If I'm at a certain level, trying to drive change upward can be very difficult. Change often happens more easily downwards, at lower levels. I really feel they could also benefit from leadership development to help us communicate better and build alignment."

DR. EUNICE  
BAMSHAYE



// ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AT THE NIGERIAN  
STORED PRODUCTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE,  
NIGERIA.

"The CALA program taught us to communicate effectively and navigate team dynamics, value emotional intelligence by listening and respecting all voices regardless of titles, work collaboratively across public and private sectors, and adapt quickly to innovate under pressure."





# INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2021, the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) was designed to place leadership development at the centre of Africa’s agricultural transformation.

The Advanced Leadership Programme is a 16-month, hands-on journey that convenes senior and emerging leaders from eight countries to tackle national food systems priorities in real time.

Its design is distinctive – combining Action Learning Projects aligned with national strategies, in-country coaching, and case studies of African agricultural “game changers.” Beyond training, CALA fosters an alumni network across government, private sector, and civil society to drive collaboration beyond the programme’s duration.



Through CALA, leaders address shared challenges from closing yield gaps and strengthening value chains to improving food security and resilience to climate shocks.

Their work aligns with continental frameworks such as the Malabo Declaration and the CAADP Strategy and Action Plan.

This publication introduces these leaders and the collective journey they’ve undertaken—a journey rooted in the belief that strong, inclusive leadership is essential to achieving sustainable agricultural transformation in Africa.





# CALA Cohort 3 Meet Our Graduates



## KENYA



**Lucy Komen**

Ag. Chief Executive Officer,  
Warehouse Receipt System  
Council



**Florence Jelegat**

Deputy Director, Agriculture  
and Food Authority



**Rosemary Ndunge  
Mwanza**

Assistant Director Livestock  
Production/Programme  
officer, Value Chain  
Development Specialist,  
Ministry of Agriculture



**Aisha Langat**

CEO, Sulma Whole Foods  
Ltd



**Naphtaly Waruhiu**

CEO, Horticultural  
Producers and Marketing  
Association of  
Kenya/HPMAK

## UGANDA



**Mary Teddy Asio**

Assistant Commissioner,  
Ministry of Agriculture,  
Animal Industry and  
Fisheries



**Otim Benson**

CEO, Princo Group (U)  
Limited



**Erongu Moses Edward**

Senior Agricultural  
Inspector, Ministry of  
Agriculture, Animal Industry  
and Fisheries



**Caroline Wamono**

Intervention Manager  
Agribusiness, aBi  
DEVELOPMENT LIMITED



**Lilliane Byarugaba**

Sector Head of Agriculture  
Sector, Equity Bank



## ETHIOPIA



**Marshal Negussie**  
Manager, Ethio-Root Agro  
and Industrial Share  
company



**Freyhiwot Nadew  
Belachew**  
Country Director, Precision  
Development



**Alemnesh Hadgu Berhe**  
Senior Expert and case  
team leader, Ministry of  
Agriculture



**Yenenesh Egu Bezabih**  
Lead Executive Officer,  
Agriculture and Horticulture  
Extension, Ministry of  
Agriculture



**Reta Wegary Gissa**  
Director for food systems  
policy and food systems,  
Ethiopian Agriculture  
Transformation Agency

## GHANA



**Ernest Bonah**  
Senior Regulatory Officer,  
Food and Drugs Authority



**Adisatu Iddrisu**  
Head of Fertilizer Analytical  
Unit, Ministry of Food and  
Agriculture



**Margaret Davids Opoku  
Agyeman**  
Agribusiness Expert, MOFA -  
Food Systems and  
Resilience Project



**Prince Akoto-Adipah**  
CEO, Chamber of Fertilizers  
- Ghana



**Peter Awin**  
CEO, Cowtribe Inc



## MALAWI



**Driana Guwa Lwanda**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
African Institute of  
Corporate Citizenship



**Victoria Mwafulirwa**  
Founder and Managing  
Director, Homes Industries  
Ltd



**Gladys Chigamba**  
Fisheries Research Officer,  
Department of Fisheries  
(Government of Malawi)



**Anderson Chizimba  
Chikomola**  
Deputy Programme  
Manager, Ministry of  
Agriculture- Mzuzu ADD



**Enock Tambalamtuwa  
Mzembe**  
Chief Agriculture Officer,  
Ministry of Agriculture

## TANZANIA



**Mary Kigalu**  
Grower Social Liaison  
Specialist, Kilombero Sugar  
Company Limited



**Moses Kabogo**  
Senior Country Program  
Manager, Lutheran World  
Relief



**Kobusinge Aloys  
Nyabwisho**  
Head, Soil laboratory works



**Samora John Chacha**  
Director of Planning, Policy  
and Research, The Ministry  
of Tourism and Heritage  
Zanzibar



**Abel Mtembeji**  
Senior Agricultural Officer,  
Ministry of Agriculture



## NIGERIA



**Tajudeen Yahaya**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Extension Africa



**Adebayo Adeniyi**  
Agric Officer, Ekiti State  
Ministry of Agriculture and  
Food Security



**Ekum Oba Ojogu**  
Chief Agricultural Officer,  
National Agricultural Seeds  
Council, Abuja



**Olatundun Kalejaiye**  
Nutrition & Post-Harvest  
Manager, HarvestPlus



**Eunice Bamishaiye**  
Assistant Director, Nigerian  
Stored Products Research  
Institute

## RWANDA



**Elyse Mahoro**  
Agribusiness Advisor, SNV



**Alexis Kabayiza**  
Chief Technical Advisor,  
Ministry of Trade and  
Industry



**Aimable Gatete**  
Coordinator of Rwanda-Israel  
Horticulture Center of  
Excellence, Rwanda  
Agriculture and Animal  
resources Development  
Board(RAB)



**Ildephonse Niragire**  
Director of farm products  
and processes inspection  
unit, RICA



**Musemakweli Prosper**  
Country Director, Muhondo  
Organic Farming Center





# CALA Cohort 3 Testimonials



## Sadia Fuseini Iddrisu – Ghana



Sadia Fuseini Iddrisu is the **Head of Fertiliser Analytical Services at Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture**. She leads efforts to regulate fertiliser quality and safeguard food systems, combining technical expertise with an inclusive style of leadership.

A recent graduate of the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) programme, Sadia describes the experience as an “enlightenment.” It reshaped her approach to leadership, introducing her to tools such as emotional intelligence and influence, which she now applies to build stronger, more productive teams. She is known for setting clear goals and ensuring accountability through structured planning.

## Mary Jules Kigalo – Tanzania



Mary Jules Kigalo is **an environmental scientist working at the Southern Agriculture Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT)**, where she bridges environmental sustainability and agricultural growth. Her career reflects a deep belief that food systems and the environment are inseparable, and that strong leadership is essential to make both thrive.

Mary describes the experience as transformative. Through the programme's training and coaching, she strengthened her ability to collaborate, manage emotions, and build multi-stakeholder platforms. These new skills enabled her to influence colleagues and bring partners together to tackle environmental challenges linked to food systems.



## Freyhiwot Nadew – Ethiopia



Freyhiwot Nadew is the **Ethiopia Country Director for Precision Development**, a non-governmental organisation focused on improving the livelihoods of farmers through data-driven agricultural support. With a strong background in leadership, she joined the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) programme to sharpen her skills specifically for the food systems sector, a space she felt demanded a more targeted approach than general management training could provide.

Through CALA's 16-month programme, Freyhiwot reshaped her leadership style and her organisation's operations. She led a staff restructuring, fostered a culture of open communication, and introduced systematic planning and follow-up. These changes strengthened her office's ability to deliver results, resulting in new partnerships, including a major project with AGRA.

## Ekum Ujogu – Nigeria



Ekum Ujogu serves with **Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security** and is a graduate of the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) Cohort 3. His leadership philosophy was shaped by navigating collaboration at the highest levels – where strong personalities, differing expertise, and competing priorities must converge on a shared goal.

For Ekum, leadership is not about dominance but about enabling others to thrive. His mantra "Leave people better than I met them" captures his belief in leadership as service. He views fame not as personal achievement but as recognition of impact, always grounded in the idea that true progress comes from going far together, not fast alone.



## Elise Mahoro – Rwanda



Elise Mahoro is a **Senior Project Manager at International Alert**, where she works at the intersection of food systems and peace-building. Her story reflects both professional advancement and personal resilience. She completed the intensive 16-month course while expectant, becoming a new mother, and transitioning into a new leadership role, all at the same time.

Elise joined CALA to strengthen her leadership skills, having realized that while many professionals are equipped with technical expertise, fewer understand how to lead diverse teams effectively. Through training and coaching, she gained deeper insight into emotional intelligence and adaptive management, lessons that reshaped her leadership style. She now takes a tailored approach to supporting team members based on their unique strengths and needs, while fostering collaboration and accountability.





# Country Spotlights

## CALA Cohort 3

## Projects and Priorities

### Performance Overview

These projects successfully empowered local communities, particularly women and youth, creating sustainable models for economic growth and food security.

#### NIGERIA

transformed the local soybean tofu business by developing a new shelf-stable product and training youth entrepreneurs, which eliminated product losses and more than doubled their profits.

6 Months of Shelf-Life

#### UGANDA

boosted climate resilience and productivity by creating a youth-led village agent network to distribute certified drought-tolerant maize seed, significantly increasing farmer outreach and crop yields.

50% Productivity Increase

#### KENYA

enhanced financial inclusion for women and youth in the rice value chain through targeted financial literacy training and establishing linkages with financial institutions.

50+ Trained Farmers

#### GHANA

successfully used a voice-messaging platform to train maize farmers on aflatoxin prevention, leading to a significant increase in their knowledge of safer post-harvest practices.

77.7% Aflatoxin Knowledge

#### TANZANIA

revived Zanzibar's seaweed sector by providing a women-led cooperative with advanced processing equipment and business training, tripling their revenue and doubling farmer incomes.

300% Revenue Increase

#### RWANDA

tackled malnutrition and poor soil fertility by introducing vermicomposting for biofortified bean cultivation, which resulted in a more than two-fold increase in crop yields.

3,600 kg/Ha Yield

#### ETHIOPIA

established a multi-stakeholder platform to improve the ag-lime supply chain for wheat farmers, directly benefiting thousands of young people

2,247 Youth Beneficiaries



# Kenya | Empowering Women and Youth in Ahero's Rice Value Chain

In the rice-growing lowlands of Ahero, Kisumu County, the Big5 Kenya team was pioneering a new approach to empower youth and women through improved access to finance and stronger governance within the rice irrigation ecosystem.



As one of Kenya's major rice-producing zones, Ahero held enormous potential to contribute to the national food basket. However, despite this promise, systemic challenges had long undermined productivity and financial inclusion across the value chain.

## Challenges in Financial Inclusion

Women and youth accounted for over 60% of the rice farming labor force in Ahero, yet their participation in formal financial systems remained minimal. In 2022, only 5% of rice farmers qualified for input credit through NCBA Bank's Loop programme, primarily due to poor financial literacy, weak credit histories, and limited training on good agricultural practices (GAPs).

Without access to affordable credit, most farmers could not afford quality inputs such as fertilizers and improved seeds, resulting in yields of 15-18 bags per acre—less than half the potential output of 35-40 bags. These limitations had a direct impact on household incomes, food security, and the economic empowerment of rural youth and women.



## Action Learning Project (ALP)

To address these intertwined challenges, the Big5 Kenya team designed an Action Learning Project (ALP) that focused on building financial capability, improving governance across the rice irrigation value chain, and linking farmers to financial service providers. The project adopted a multi-stakeholder, multi-phase approach that brought together financial institutions, county agricultural departments, agri-tech partners, and farmer groups.

At its core, the project provided targeted training for 50 farmers (30 youth and 20 women) on budgeting, recordkeeping, loan management, and savings. Working closely with Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO), a Kenyan grassroots movement and non-profit organization, and Sulma Wholefoods, the team also introduced youth to agribusiness opportunities within the rice by-product ecosystem, such as the production of biochar, briquettes, and sprayer services.



## Sustainability and Partnerships

To ensure sustainability, the team designed a gender-sensitive and youth-oriented financial model, mapped value chain actors, and initiated partnerships with NCBA Bank and the National Irrigation Board. These collaborations aimed to provide not only access to finance but also practical agricultural advisory services and exposure to irrigation technologies.





## Progress and Future Plans

The initiative had begun to yield measurable progress. Farmers who previously lacked basic financial records were now able to track their inputs and plan their production cycles more effectively. The number of farmers demonstrating “bankable” profiles had increased, setting the foundation for improved access to credit. Moreover, the integration of youth into mechanized services and bio-based production had created new employment pathways beyond traditional farming.

Institutional partnerships had also strengthened governance within the irrigation scheme, with greater coordination among local authorities, financial institutions, and farmer cooperatives. The project’s alignment with Kenya’s national strategies—especially the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda and the Agriculture Sector Transformation Strategy—had reinforced its scalability by directly advancing government priorities on irrigation, post-harvest loss reduction, farmer organization, and market access.

By the end of the project the Big5 team had further reinforced sustainability through its partnership with Sulma Wholefoods, which ensured that farmers continued to generate income and strengthen their business models even after the project phase ended. This guaranteed market link not only stabilized farmer earnings but also attracted additional interest from financial institutions and private sector actors, reinforcing long-term viability.



# Ethiopia | Transforming Wheat Production Through Collaborative Ag-Lime Governance



In Ethiopia's critical wheat-growing region of Wolmera, a silent crisis threatened both food security and livelihoods. Soil acidity had reached alarming levels, affecting 56% of the area's 1,150 hectares of farmland, and reducing wheat yields by 50–100%. This dire situation prompted the ALP Ethiopia Team to launch an innovative initiative focused on agricultural lime (ag-lime) as the key solution for soil reclamation.

## Project Objectives and Implementation

The project began with clear objectives: to strengthen the ag-lime supply system, establish a functional multi-stakeholder platform, and design an efficient distribution system with strong youth involvement by November 2024. These goals directly supported Ethiopia's National Wheat Flagship Program for productivity growth and import substitution.

A comprehensive assessment formed the foundation of the intervention. The team conducted focus group discussions with farmers, cooperatives, and development agents, complemented by Key Informant Interviews with agricultural officers. Field observations at demonstration plots provided visible evidence of lime's impact, creating compelling cases for adoption.



## Innovative Governance Structure

The solution's core innovation lay in its governance structure. A steering committee chaired by the Woreda Office of Agriculture brought together research institutions, finance offices, and cooperatives. This platform united 16 stakeholder groups, including seven cement manufacturers, agro-dealers, and NGOs like GIZ and AGRA. Monthly steering meetings and quarterly multi-stakeholder forums ensured coordinated action across the supply chain.



## Youth Empowerment and Economic Opportunities

Youth empowerment had become a hallmark of the initiative. The project directly engaged 2,247 young people in limestone extraction, lime production, transportation, and distribution. These roles transformed the youth from bystanders to active participants in creating solutions while addressing critical last-mile delivery challenges.

## Outcomes and Lessons Learned



The results demonstrated the power of collaborative action. Farmers gained access to lime through streamlined distribution systems, while youth found new economic opportunities. The platform's real-time tracking and coordinated logistics ensured timely delivery before planting seasons. Perhaps most significantly, the initiative broke down traditional silos, creating unprecedented cooperation between farmers, industrial partners, and government agencies.



## Looking Ahead

The team had learned that bottom-up approaches generated the most sustainable solutions, that leadership manifested through collaboration rather than hierarchy, and that every participant had valuable contributions to make. These insights, captured in project documentation, informed broader efforts to address soil health challenges across Ethiopia.

Sustainability of the interventions of ALP was hinged on the original platform structure and partnerships. The ALP Ethiopia Team acknowledged the crucial support of CALA, AGRA Ethiopia, the Ministry of Agriculture, and GIZ SLM in making these achievements possible.

What had begun as a response to soil acidity had grown into a model for collaborative agricultural transformation, one that continued to yield benefits for wheat farmers and their communities.



# Ghana | Reducing Aflatoxin in Maize for Safer Food and Markets

In Ghana's Ashanti Region, aflatoxin contamination posed a significant challenge for smallholder maize farmers, affecting food safety, market access, and public health. In response CALA delegates from Ghana, through CALA, initiated a data-driven intervention to transform how rural farmers received and applied agricultural knowledge.

The project aimed to fill the knowledge gap among farmers regarding aflatoxin management. Due to limited literacy among most farmers, conventional extension materials were ineffective. To overcome this, the team created 13 concise, one-minute audio messages in the local language, offering guidance on best practices for reducing aflatoxin risks from pre-harvest to storage.



## Implementation and Stakeholder Engagement

Informed by baseline assessments that had revealed low awareness and poor practices, the intervention was rolled out to over 2,000 farmers. The project engaged key stakeholders, including policy experts, regulators, and community leaders, to ensure broad support and contextual relevance.



## Monitoring and Impact

The team implemented a rigorous monitoring framework with knowledge tests and field visits. Post-intervention assessments showed significant improvements in farmers' knowledge and behavior, with better post-harvest handling, drying techniques, and storage conditions. Local agricultural institutions had shown interest in adopting the messaging tool as a scalable model for farmer education.





## Conclusion and Future Plans

The project highlighted how digital tools, tailored to local contexts, bridged communication gaps in rural food systems. By delivering information in the local language via mobile phones, the initiative enhanced knowledge uptake and behavioral change, emphasizing inclusive development by targeting underserved groups and aligning with national food safety priorities.

The team planned to scale the initiative by integrating it into government-led extension services and exploring partnerships with telecom providers and development partners. The Ghana case exemplified the potential of simple, localized technology to drive systemic improvements in agricultural health and productivity, offering a replicable model for other countries facing similar challenges.





# Rwanda | Empowering Rogatini Farmers Through Biofortified Beans

In Rwanda, delegates launched an initiative aimed at increasing incomes and nutrition by promoting biofortified beans among Rogatini farmers. This initiative addressed challenges such as limited export competitiveness and malnutrition by positioning biofortified beans as both a health solution and a premium market opportunity.

## Project Goals

The project focused on increasing the value of Rwanda's bean exports while improving the livelihoods of local farmers. By promoting biofortified beans, the team sought to align national nutrition objectives with income generation strategies, linking smallholder production directly to structured markets.



## Challenges Faced by Farmers

Rogatini farmers, like many others across Rwanda, encountered barriers such as inconsistent quality, fragmented aggregation systems, and limited access to premium markets. Despite Rwanda's ambition to scale up bean exports, farmers struggled to meet export standards or capture higher-value opportunities, especially with biofortified varieties that combated micronutrient deficiencies.

## Interventions and Strategies

The CALA Rwanda team aimed to strengthen aggregation models and develop traceability systems to connect Rogatini farmers more effectively with exporters and processors. The project involved collaboration among government actors, farmer groups, exporters, and youth-led enterprises. Key interventions included setting up shared facilities for sorting and grading, piloting systems to improve compliance with export requirements, and raising awareness about the nutritional and economic value of biofortified beans.



## Outcomes and Future Plans

As a result of these efforts, farmers began to recognize biofortified beans not just as subsistence crops, but as products with export potential and health benefits. Early outcomes showed better organization within farmer groups and increased interest among youth and women in the bean value chain.

By the end of the project, the ALP had made plans for formalization of partnerships with exporters, improving market intelligence tools, and expanding training to help more farmers meet quality standards.

Additionally, the team aimed to advocate for stronger policy support to make biofortified beans central to Rwanda's goals of nutrition security and increased agricultural revenue.







# Tanzania | Empowering Seaweed Farmers through Value Addition and Blue Economy Innovation

In Zanzibar, seaweed became a cornerstone of the blue economy and a crucial income source for women and youth in coastal areas. Despite its potential, poor quality production and inadequate post-harvest practices resulted in low earnings and restricted access to premium markets.



## The "Pesa Pesa" Initiative

The team's first step was partnering with a women-led seaweed farming group headed by Aisha, a local leader who produced low-grade seaweed. The intervention included training, providing equipment, and forming strategic partnerships, such as with a stakeholder who donated solar dryers to enhance product quality.



## Partnerships and Interventions

The team's first step was partnering with a women-led seaweed farming group headed by Aisha, a local leader who produced low-grade seaweed. The intervention included training, providing equipment, and forming strategic partnerships, such as with a stakeholder who donated solar dryers to enhance product quality.



## Achievements and Recognition

The efforts led to the production of higher-quality seaweed, three of which were certified by the Zanzibar Bureau of Standards. These improvements attracted political attention, including from the First Lady of Zanzibar. Aisha, the group leader, was nominated for a national cultural contest award, acknowledging her contributions.





## Market Response and Future Plans

By the end of the project farmers were earning a couple of folds more. Early market feedback had been positive. Farmers By were earning more. In addition there was increasing interest from other communities to replicate the model. Team Tanzania's inclusive approach, centered on co-creation, local leadership, and dignity in rural enterprise, and helped transform seaweed from a subsistence activity into a viable, quality-driven business.

## Future Directions

Implementation of the ALP laid a foundation for strengthened partnerships with certification bodies and processors, expanding training to other seaweed clusters across Zanzibar, and advocated for stronger policy support for women in the blue economy.



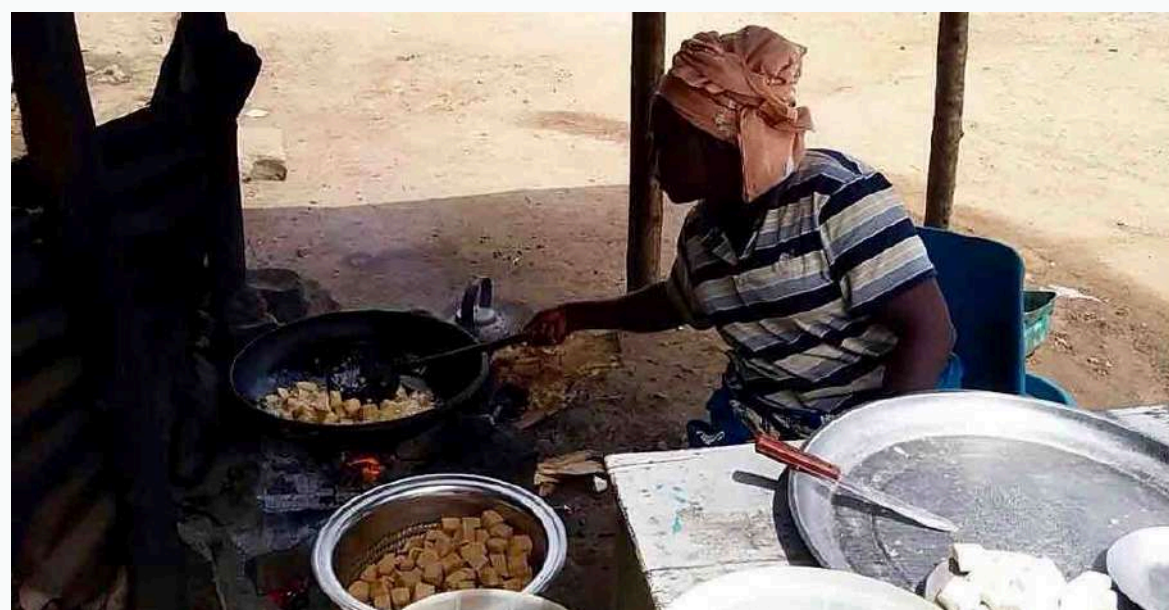


# Nigeria | Empowering Youth with Shelf-Stable Tofu Enterprises in Kwara State

In Ilorin West, Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, the CALA delegate team known as “Team Resilience” set out to address a pervasive yet overlooked issue in local food systems—the perishability and poor market access of soybean tofu.

## The Problem

Tofu, a protein-rich staple produced primarily by women in rural Nigeria, often spoiled within 24 hours due to unhygienic practices and lack of preservation methods. This not only affected food safety but also limited income opportunities for small-scale processors and contributed to post-harvest losses.



## The Solution

Team Resilience, composed of leaders from research institutions, ministries of food systems, and the private sector, developed an action learning project to produce shelf-stable, packaged tofu with an extended shelf life of three to six months. Their goal was to train and empower 30 youth-led soybean tofu enterprises, each producing at least 50 kg of high-quality tofu monthly by November 2024. The initiative aligned with Nigeria’s National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP), which prioritized value addition and nutrition in the soybean sector.

## Research and Development



The team conducted extensive research and multiple product development trials. With support from food technologists, microbiologists, and packaging experts, they created a tofu product that retained nutritional quality while meeting food safety standards. A drying chamber developed by the National Stored Products Research Institute (NSPRI) was used to reduce moisture content, extending the product’s shelf life. The team then trained youth and women in hygienic processing, packaging, marketing, and business management.

## Market Integration

A key milestone was linking beneficiaries to markets. Processors had been introduced to microfinance institutions for credit, certified by Nigeria’s food safety agency (NAFDAC), and mentored through access to incubation facilities. By mid-implementation, the tofu product was available in five retail outlets, with an 80% consumer acceptance rate. Beneficiaries reported improved hygiene, increased profits, and reduced production time—from 12 hours a day to under 6 hours using improved methods.







## Broader Impact

This project highlighted the value of integrating innovation, youth empowerment, and local food systems priorities. By transforming a traditional food into a nutritious, commercially viable product, Team Resilience not only elevated local livelihoods but also contributed to food safety and dietary diversity.

## Future Plans

The ALP leveraged opportunities for establishment of incubation centers, expand training programs, secure NAFDAC certification, and connect processors with microfinance for business growth. Implementation of the ALP illustrated local knowledge, when combined with science and leadership, could drive grassroots transformation.





# Uganda | Strengthening Access to Certified Drought-Tolerant Maize Seed for Climate Resilience

In Northern Uganda's Lira District, climate change posed a significant threat to smallholder farmers, especially in Agali sub-county, where erratic rainfall and prolonged droughts severely impacted crop productivity. Maize, despite not being Uganda's most iconic crop, played a crucial role in food security, nutrition, and income generation.

With nearly 86% of Ugandan households cultivating maize, its value chain sustained over six million people through farming and related jobs. However, access to certified seed was a major challenge, with only 11% of farmers using improved varieties and an estimated 60% of maize seed on the market being counterfeit. This issue was exacerbated by limited public sector research funding, restrictive patent control by NARO and Makerere University, and an underdeveloped last-mile distribution system.

## Initiative by the Awamu Team

To tackle these issues, the Awamu Team, launched an initiative under CALA to improve access to certified, drought-tolerant maize seed in Agali sub-county. Their strategy focused on a village agent model that connected farmers to reliable agro-inputs and empowered local youth as agri-preneurs and intermediaries.



## Counterfeit Seed Solution

A key aspect of the intervention was addressing the counterfeit seed problem by establishing trusted distribution points within the community. The team had recruited and trained 17 youth, surpassing the initial goal of 10, to serve as village agents. These young people were trained in pesticide handling, safe input use, financial literacy, and business management. With this training, they set up and operated input shops, supplied quality seed, and acted as a credible link between farmers and the formal seed market.

## Farmer Sensitization and Demonstration

Farmer sensitization had been a priority, with the team reaching 850 farmers in Agali and the neighboring Gomi sub-county, nearly tripling their target. This was achieved through field demonstrations, training sessions, and awareness campaigns. Four demonstration gardens were established to illustrate the benefits of certified seed, helping to rebuild trust among farmers who had previously been misled by counterfeit products.



## Financial Access and Market Integration

To support financial access, the project had collaborated with Equity Bank and telecom operators to facilitate SIM card registration and mobile banking services. This enabled youth and farmers to open accounts, receive agricultural loans, and conduct transactions efficiently. Additionally, a partnership with Tulima Solar, brokered through Equity Bank, provided access to solar-powered irrigation equipment on concessional loan terms, supporting climate adaptation efforts.

Recognizing the importance of market access for productivity gains, the team had established formal partnerships with four off-takers in Lira town, doubling their original goal. These agreements ensured market access and price stability for participating farmers. Furthermore, the team had worked with local government authorities to incorporate seed subsidies into the Lira District sub-county development budget for FY2024/25, securing the sustainability of their interventions through public funding and policy support.





## Project Outcomes

By the project's conclusion, maize yields had increased by an average of 50% among participating farmers. Beyond the 17 trained village agents, 217 youth were engaged in agribusiness, with one youth group formally registered and linked to district-level programs.

The initiative demonstrated that rural youth could drive agricultural transformation when provided with the right tools and incentives, while also underscoring the importance of strong public-private partnerships, community-based models, and integrated government support. Importantly, during the 2024/25 sub-county budget speech, interventions from the ALP were officially recognized, and a resolution was passed to incorporate them into the sub-county budgets and work plans for the coming years



# Malawi | Improving Household Income Through Post-Harvest Loss Management

In the Karonga district of Northern Malawi, the women and youth of the Mpata Farmers Group had long relied on tomato production for their livelihoods. However, they struggled with low income and household poverty, largely due to staggering post-harvest losses that wiped out a significant portion of their produce.

## Challenge

Tomato farming in Malawi was not only widespread but also held significant promise for profitability. Nevertheless, for the Mpata group, much of this promise withered away, as nearly 40% of their harvested tomatoes were lost before reaching the market.

Upon conducting a root cause analysis, several critical challenges were brought to light. Chief among these were poor handling and storage practices, which contributed significantly to the spoilage. Additionally, the group faced difficulties due to limited access to reliable markets, compounded by severe fluctuations in prices.

Their reliance on traditional markets further restricted their opportunities, offering little to no scope for value addition. Moreover, the absence of adequate preservation facilities meant that extending the shelf life of this highly perishable crop was nearly impossible.



## Solution

Team Malawi to improve the household income of the group's women and youth by reducing post-harvest losses by 20% by October 2024. This was achieved through a multi-pronged approach focused on training, low-cost technology, and market access.

Technological Intervention: The team had introduced two simple and effective technologies that could be built with locally sourced materials. They facilitated the fabrication of two solar dryers for preserving tomatoes and the construction of two local cooling chambers, which kept vegetables fresh for up to seven days.



## Youth and women empowerment

Fifty farmers, including 28 women and 22 youths, received training in Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), proper harvesting techniques, and post-harvest loss management.

A crucial step had been connecting the farmers to a reliable buyer. The group was linked with Homes Industries, which guaranteed a fair price and a steady market for their produce. This shifted the farmers from a speculative 'grow-and-sell' model to a more secure grow-to-sell concept.







## Project Outcomes

The interventions had a dramatic and immediate impact. Post-harvest losses dropped sharply, allowing farmers to sell more of their produce. The price for tomatoes rose from MK600/kg to MK1000/kg, boosting household incomes by 30% for participating women and youths. Youths received training as Agripreneurs and Trainers of Trainers (ToTs) in building cooling chambers and fabricating solar dryers, creating new job opportunities and expanding the technology's reach.

Farmer Agness Mzumara shared that instead of discarding spoiled tomatoes, she could sell them at a good price, store them in cooling chambers, or dry them for future use or income. The project showed that simple, low-cost technologies, paired with training and market access, significantly and sustainably improved farmers' livelihoods.



# Cohort 3 Progress Narrative

Transforming food systems  
requires leaders who can turn  
ambition into reality.