

Gates Foundation calls for bold and immediate action at COP27

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation echoed African leaders' calls for countries to rapidly scale-up finance for climate adaptation and pledged to invest \$1.4bn to help smallholder farmers address the immediate and long-term impacts of climate change.



Source: Supplied.

The announcement was made by Gates Foundation chief executive officer, Mark Suzman at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27).

For many regions, climate change is a food and economic crisis without precedent.

More than 2 billion people depend on smallholder farms for food and income, yet less than 2% of global climate finance is devoted to helping these farms adapt to climate change.

Food and economic crises will last longer and become more severe as climate threats escalate and further threaten food security by limiting smallholder farmers' yields and resilience.

"The effects of climate change have already been devastating, and every moment the world delays action, more people suffer, and the solutions become more complex and costly," said Suzman.

“Our commitment will help smallholder farmers adapt today and build resilience for the future. It is essential for this climate summit to produce bold commitments that address immediate and long-term needs. Leaders must listen to the voices of African farmers and governments to understand their priorities and respond with urgency.”

The foundation’s commitment will fund immediate action and long-term initiatives over four years to help smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia build resilience and food security.

Climate-smart projects

Funding will focus on spurring African-led innovation to build a pipeline of climate-smart agriculture projects, new applications of digital technologies, climate-smart innovations for smallholder livestock farming, and support for women smallholder farmers to capitalise on their untapped potential.

“Women in rural Africa are the backbone of their food systems, but they have never had equal access to the resources they need to reach their full potential or build resilience to looming climate threats,” said Melinda French Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



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“As the climate crisis accelerates, women’s vital role in their economies is too important to overlook. With the right financing and marketing support, women smallholder farmers could earn more in a day than they currently earn in a month, ultimately transforming these regional food systems and unlocking a healthier, more sustainable, and more prosperous future for families and communities across the continent.”

To improve the livelihoods of rural women in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the foundation is deepening its ongoing partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (Ifad).

The goal is to scale up initiatives that empower women farmers, support innovations at the nexus of gender and climate adaptation, and increase climate finance that gives rural women better access to the climate-smart resources they need to strengthen food systems.

To accelerate the development of new adaptation innovations, the foundation is continuing to work with a coalition of partners to double the budget for the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR) agriculture research system.

The CGIAR excellence in agronomy initiative partners with African research institutes, local businesses, and farmer organisations.

Together, they are using Big Data Analytics, and digital platforms to deliver insights that can boost incomes, food security, and ecosystem health in smallholder farming communities.

“The climate crisis is causing enormous harm every day as it jeopardises entire regions of people and economies,” said Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



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Aidan Lewis 12 Sep 2022



“More funding is necessary to ensure agricultural and technological innovations are widely available to vulnerable communities, helping them to adapt to climate change, save lives and increase economic growth.”

Additional investments included in the announced commitment will support:

- The Africa Adaptation Initiative (AAI) to quickly build a pipeline of climate-smart agriculture projects across 23 countries in Africa. Funding will provide targeted support for the technical capacity, planning, and project development required to implement programmes
- The development of new applications of digital technologies to ensure smallholder farmers can anticipate and respond to climate threats. This includes an innovative weather intelligence platform developed through a new partnership between the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (Kalro) and
- TomorrowNow, which provides climate-smart agriculture strategies to farmers in East Africa by means of text messages., and
- African-led innovations to develop climate-smart options for improving livestock health and productivity while also reducing their climate footprint. This will be done in partnership with Canada’s International Development Research Center (IDRC).

This funding builds on more than a decade of investments and the foundation’s recent announcement during the United Nations General Assembly of \$100m in funding to help alleviate the current food crisis in Africa and South Asia and address its underlying causes.

It also builds on funding commitments focused on agriculture adaptation made at previous climate summits:

- In 2021 at Cop26: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledges \$315m to support innovations that help smallholder farmers adapt to climate threats; and
- In 2017 at the One Planet Summit, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation committed \$300m (€255m) to help farmers in Africa and Asia cope with climate change

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