

UNFSS+4 UPDATES: Elevating Youth and Smallholder Voices in Global Food Systems



The opening ceremony at the 2nd UNFSS+4 Food Systems Summit in Addis Ababa on 28th July 2025. Source (CSBAG)

“Smallholder farmers, who feed much of Africa, continue to face systemic barriers, receiving less than 1% of direct climate finance.”

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia— CSBAG is attending the 2nd United Nations Food Systems Summit Stock take (UNFSS+4) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which began on July 27, 2025. Hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the summit convened global leaders, including Prime Ministers Abiy Ahmed (Ethiopia) and Giorgia Meloni (Italy), and Vice President Jessica Alupo (Uganda), which serves as a collective for countries to take on accountability on the progress made by the globe since 2021 to increase

financial investments and policy implementation and upscaling of food systems. While opening, the African Union(AU) Commission Chairperson H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat stressed the urgent need for food systems transformation to combat hunger, reduce poverty, and achieve the SDGs. Countries were urged to break down silos, as food systems are everyone’s business, strengthen policy coherence, unlock and connect finances to scale up food systems.

A key summit event, "Young People as Changemakers," highlighted youth-led innovation in reimagining food systems. With 85% of the world’s 1.3 billion young people residing in low- and middle-income countries, their role is crucial. In Uganda, where over 73% of the population is under 30 and more than 65% of the workforce is in agriculture, youth are already central to food systems.

A high-level roundtable session addressed data, innovation, and the policy role in ensuring the right to food while supporting national development. Discussions emphasized scaling local solutions, strengthening small-scale producers, and integrating food sovereignty into national planning. Uganda shared strategies for empowering smallholder farmers and incorporating local knowledge, aiming to reduce import dependency and enhance resilience.

Country progress sessions featured Nigeria’s Agriculture Minister, Senator Abubakar Kyari, highlighting reforms in agro-industrialization and climate-smart farming. Kenya’s President William Ruto outlined a roadmap for global transformation, celebrating progress since 2021. Ethiopia was recognized for its food sovereignty achievements, and Uganda was commended for using science and technology to support small-scale producers. Uganda’s role in advancing sustainable, equitable food systems alongside countries like Ethiopia and Vietnam was recognised.

With five years until the 2030 Agenda deadline, the summit emphasized accountability, investment, and public-private partnerships. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), FAO, and UN Global Compact showcased successful co-investment models.

The summit prioritized inclusive approaches, with pre-summit sessions led by civil society groups. CSBAG on 27th July 2025 was part of a series of field visits to key agricultural hubs including the Bishutu feed processing plant, the Bishoftu dairy farm, the Melkasa Agricultural Research Centre in Adama City, and the Dina Food Processing Company. These visits offered a practical perspective on Ethiopia’s progress in agri-food value chains, innovation, and investment which is a good benchmark for other countries to adopt.

Despite progress, leaders acknowledged challenges like rising hunger and climate pressures. Concerns included inaccessible credit, lack of traceable finance mechanisms, and exclusion of grassroots voices. To note is that smallholder farmers who feed much of Africa continue to face systemic barriers, receiving less than 1% of direct climate finance.

Delegates proposed a grassroots smallholder fund, agricultural credit reforms, and compensation for farmers in policymaking. For Uganda, proposed actions include a National Youth Agripreneur Fund, reformed financing frameworks, District Innovation Hubs, and institutionalized youth and farmer representation in food systems platforms.

We believe that investing in youth and smallholders is strategic for sustainable food systems and equitable development. CSBAG reiterated its commitment to inclusive, traceable, and equitable financing.

The UNFSS+4 summit builds on previous summits, reinforcing commitments to integrate food systems into national policies, strengthen governance, invest in research, and promote inclusive participation. Summit outcomes are expected to influence events like the World Food Forum and COP30, positioning food systems centrally within climate, economic, and health agendas.