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MAGAZINE

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Ulla Setswalo (Editor)

A farmer can plant the right seed, manage the crop well and still find the economics of the harvest altered by decisions made thousands of kilometres away.

That is the new reality of agriculture. Fertiliser supply can be reshaped by geopolitical tensions, trade policy can redirect commodity flows, climate volatility is changing what farmers can grow, while artificial intelligence, biotechnology and automation are redefining how production is managed. The farm is becoming part of a much larger contest for inputs, technology, capital and resilience.

That is the lens through which we approach this edition. Our cover story ex-

amines how these forces are rewiring the global agricultural system and what they mean for competitiveness. As governments seek greater control over strategic commodities and companies race to secure inputs, technology and resilient supply chains, agricultural advantage is increasingly being determined beyond the farm gate.

The implications for Zambia are significant. A sector with ambitions to expand production and strengthen its role in regional food markets must also contend with the cost and availability of fertiliser, access to technology, climate risk, infrastructure and finance. Producing more remains important but resilience, efficiency and the ability to capture value are becoming equally critical.

This edition explores those building blocks across the agricultural value chain. Our local coverage looks at financing, mechanisation, irrigation, skills, post-harvest infrastructure and market access, reflecting the growing need to connect production with processing, storage, distribution and trade.

The regional perspective widens the lens to the movement of agricultural products, capital and technology across borders. As Zambia strengthens its position in regional food markets, efficient trade corridors, access to finance and productive cross-border partnerships will be increasingly important.

President Hakainde Hichilema's September state visit to the United Arab Emirates adds another dimension to this investment agenda. With agriculture, food

processing, logistics and value-chain development identified among the areas for deeper cooperation, the UAE presents an opportunity to connect Zambian production with capital, processing capacity, technology and international markets.

Technology is another defining thread. From artificial intelligence and digital agriculture to machinery, robotics and biotechnology, innovation is moving closer to the farm. Our news coverage of Zambia and South Africa's growing cooperation on digital agricultural solutions reflects this shift, while developments elsewhere show how quickly the global technology race is accelerating.

Climate resilience remains central to that transformation. Water management, resilient genetics, conservation practices and stronger post-harvest systems are becoming essential as farmers face greater uncertainty and pressure on resources.

The international picture adds another layer, with changing fertiliser markets, agricultural machinery demand, evolving trade standards and advances in crop science reshaping the competitive environment. Capital is also becoming more selective, increasing the pressure on agricultural technologies and businesses to demonstrate tangible commercial value.

The stories in this edition point to an agricultural economy being shaped by forces far beyond production itself. Finance, trade, technology, climate, infrastructure and market access are increasingly interconnected. Therefore, the opportunity for Zambia lies in building those connections deliberately.



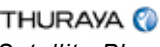
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South Africa and Zambia Put Artificial Intelligence to Work

In an effort to deepen cooperation on digital agriculture and artificial intelligence, South Africa and Zambia are exploring how technology can improve agricultural services, strengthen farmer support and modernise production systems.

A South-South Cooperation Exchange Visit taking place from 14 to 17 September 2026 brings together agricultural and technology stakeholders from both countries to share practical experience in digital transformation. The National Department of Agriculture, in partnership with the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, is hosting a Zambian delegation comprising representatives from the Zambian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Zambia and Smart Zambia. FAO South Africa is also participating in the programme. The discussions focus on the design, implementation and governance of digital agriculture systems, alongside the application of artificial intelligence to agricultural services.

The value of digital systems lies in access to timely information on weather, markets, production practices, pests, diseases and government support for farmers. Platforms accessed through mobile phones and other connected devices can improve the speed and reach of communication between farmers and public institutions. Artificial intelligence can support these systems by analysing large volumes of agricultural data, identifying patterns and assisting with decision-making. Potential applications include crop monitoring, forecasting, information services and digital decision-support tools. The exchange is therefore focused on how these technologies can move from technical concepts into practical systems that respond to the needs of farmers and agricultural officials.

The participation of agricultural authorities, technology institutions and FAO representatives reflects the wider requirements of digital transformation. Technology alone cannot sustain effective digital agriculture. Institutions also need appropriate policy frameworks, data governance, reliable infrastructure and systems that can operate over time. South Africa's Western Cape provides a practical setting for discussing the development and use of digital agricultural services. Engagement with the visiting delegation offers an opportunity to examine implementation challenges, including technology adoption, data management, accessibility and institutional coordination.

The exchange creates a platform for Zambia to draw lessons from South African experiences while contributing knowledge from its own agricultural and digital transformation efforts. South-South cooperation allows participating countries to examine approaches that can be adapted to their own institutional and agricultural environments. The discussions also recognise that digital access remains uneven. Farmers with limited connectivity, digital skills or access to suitable devices may struggle to benefit from technology-led services. Ensuring that digital agriculture is inclusive will therefore be as important as developing the systems themselves.

As agricultural sectors face pressure to improve productivity, respond to climate-related risks and deliver better services, digital tools are becoming an increasingly important part of the policy conversation. The cooperation between South Africa and Zambia places that conversation on a practical footing, linking digital innovation and AI with the everyday needs of farmers, agricultural institutions and rural economies.

African Exporters Face New EU Pesticide Compliance Risk

Tighter pesticide residue rules being considered by the European Union (EU) could raise the cost of doing business for exporters, with some agricultural products potentially shut out of the European market even when the pesticides used remain legal in their countries of origin.

The proposed changes would allow maximum residue limits (MRLs) for certain pesticides not authorised in the EU to be lowered to the limit of quantification, effectively the lowest level laboratories can reliably detect. This could result in imported products being rejected where traces of substances are detected. The European Commission introduced the proposal in December as part of a broader package to simplify food and feed safety legislation. Its potential impact on trade has since drawn concern from several African countries and other major agricultural exporters.

A study published in August by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre examined the potential economic effects of lowering MRLs for 18 active substances considered among the most hazardous. The analysis covers 235 commodities and 86 exporting countries, including products such as citrus, tomatoes, grapes, avocados, bananas, beans, berries, mangoes, coffee, tea and spices. For producers supplying the EU, the implications could extend beyond pesticide use. Exporters may need to increase residue testing, strengthen traceability, train farmers and adjust production practices to meet tighter requirements.

Smaller farms could face the greatest pressure as additional compliance costs are absorbed across supply chains, potentially affecting export volumes and producer incomes. Kenya has raised the issue at the World Trade Organization (WTO), arguing that some EU decisions on pesticide MRLs diverge from Codex Alimentarius standards and internationally recognised scientific risk assessments. The country has warned of shipment rejections, increased uncertainty and potential income losses for smallholder farmers.

Kenya has also called for greater consultation with exporting countries, adequate transition periods and consideration of the needs of developing economies. South Africa, Egypt, Kenya, Uganda and Morocco are among the African suppliers with significant exposure to the EU market. Their export baskets include fruit, vegetables, horticultural products, flowers, coffee and tea. South Africa has more than 11 of the 18 active substances covered by the JRC analysis registered for at least one use, while Kenya's exposure is particularly significant across horticulture, including green beans, peas and cut flowers, as well as tea and coffee.

Morocco is also exposed through major exports, including tomatoes, citrus fruit, strawberries, melons, peppers, beans and other vegetables, while Egypt has significant fruit and vegetable trade with the EU. The European Commission's proposal does not immediately reduce all affected MRLs. Instead, it would create a framework allowing the Commission to withdraw import tolerances and lower limits where an impact assessment supports the move.

The proposal remains under consideration by the European Parliament and Council of the EU. If adopted, the changes could add another layer of compliance pressure for agricultural exporters seeking to maintain access to the European market.

The Global Farm Is Being Rewired

Geopolitical tensions are reaching deeper into agricultural supply chains as governments increasingly wield fertiliser, food and strategic commodities as instruments of economic influence. Trade disputes are reshaping established sourcing relationships, climate volatility is accelerating the race for resilient crops, and artificial intelligence and biotechnology are moving rapidly from experimentation to commercial application. Across the sector, control of critical inputs, access to technology and the capacity to withstand disruption are emerging as defining sources of agricultural competitiveness.

The shift is already visible in the fertiliser market. Washington is exploring a potential potash arrangement with Belarus as it seeks cheaper alternatives to Canadian supply amid the continuing US-Canada trade dispute. President Donald Trump has said the United States would continue buying Canadian potash while pursuing lower-cost supply from Belarus, illustrating how agricultural inputs have become entangled with wider trade negotiations. The significance extends well beyond North America. Canada, Belarus and Russia are among the world's major potash suppliers, meaning changes in their trading relationships can reverberate through international fertiliser markets. Global fertiliser prices were already climbing in September, with six of eight major fertilisers tracked in the United States rising during the week of 23 September 2026.

For farmers and import-dependent markets, including much of Africa, the lesson is increasingly clear. Input security is becoming inseparable from trade policy. That pressure is also driving new supply routes. Uzbekistan is seeking to more than double its mineral fertiliser exports to the European Union to \$500 million a year, following an agreement for 10,000 tonnes of fertiliser to be delivered to France by the end of 2026. EU imports of Uzbek fertilisers were worth \$233.5 million in 2025. Europe is simultaneously reassessing the policy architecture supporting its farmers. Agriculture ministers met on 28-29 September 2026 to discuss the post-2027 Common Agricultural Policy, including farmer incomes, risk management, resilience and the balance between common rules and incentives for climate and environmental objectives. The Council also reviewed market pressures linked to Russia's war against Ukraine.

Trade tensions are reaching directly into farm businesses. Canadian dairy producers are facing weaker sales to American buyers, while Mexico is preparing to increase imports of US agricultural products as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement enters its review phase. Meanwhile, Indonesia is advancing a single-gate system for palm oil exports, reflecting a broader global movement towards tighter control over strategic agricultural commodities. China is moving in a different direction, using regulation to consolidate its crop-protection market. New pesticide registration requirements are putting pressure on smaller manufacturers, while tighter enforcement against illegal online pesticide sales has brought major e-commerce platforms into the regulatory spotlight.

The country's pesticide market nevertheless continues to expand. Registrations reportedly increased 22% in the first half of 2026 to 2,406 ap-

provals, including the arrival of two domestically discovered active ingredients. At the same time, tighter product rules have contributed to price pressure in products such as glufosinate-ammonium. The message from the crop-protection market is becoming increasingly complex. Farmers need effective chemistry to protect yields, yet regulators are demanding greater control over how those products are developed, registered, distributed and sold. Innovation is accelerating alongside that regulation.

In seeds and biotechnology, climate resilience has become one of the industry's most important development targets. Vylor and Belgium's Rainbow Crops have joined forces to develop gene-edited corn traits using artificial intelligence, multi-plex gene editing and automated phenotyping. Their focus includes resilience to heat, drought and flooding as well as more efficient use of agricultural inputs. The development illustrates a broader transition in plant breeding. Breeders are increasingly working with multiple traits simultaneously as climate risks become more complicated. A drought-resistant crop may also need to tolerate heat, flooding, disease or nutrient stress. The commercial race is therefore shifting towards technologies capable of addressing several variables at once.

The research infrastructure supporting that race is evolving too. Dutch companies Certhon and PhenoKey have launched ClimaRack, a modular platform that allows seed companies and research institutions to test multiple climate conditions in parallel within a compact controlled environment. The system is designed to generate faster and more reproducible data for breeding and seed research. Elsewhere, researchers are turning to biologicals and genetics to reduce agriculture's dependence on conventional chemistry. India has continued expanding its indigenous crop-protection pipeline, while Brazil is developing genome-edited biological products. In the Philippines and United Kingdom, researchers are working through the Temp-Resist Rice project to identify heat-tolerance traits that could strengthen rice production as temperatures rise.

For farmers, however, technology adoption ultimately comes down to economics. That reality is particularly visible in India's agritech market, where investment has cooled despite a strong pipeline of innovation. AgriTech companies raised \$134 million across 41 equity funding rounds through July 2026, compared with \$198 million across 77 rounds during the same period in 2025. Investors are becoming more selective, placing greater emphasis on technologies that demonstrate measurable value across areas such as precision agriculture, water management, soil health, supply chains and post-harvest systems.

Automation is meanwhile moving closer to the field. One of the more striking developments comes from Tanzania, where researchers field-tested LiteWeed, a low-cost semi-autonomous laser-weeding robot. Trials in Arusha achieved a 96% weed-removal success rate, compared with 97% in Vancouver. The platform was designed at an approximate cost of CAD500 and uses edge artificial intelligence to identify weeds and direct a laser at individual plants. The significance lies in the design philosophy.

Advanced agricultural technology is increasingly being developed for variable, resource-constrained environments rather than exclusively for highly mechanised farms. That opens a different conversation for African agriculture, where farm sizes, infrastructure, labour availability and capital constraints differ substantially from those of North America and Western Europe.

China's agricultural drone sector offers another indication of how quickly automation is scaling. Drone spraying and monitoring have become deeply embedded in parts of Chinese farming, demonstrating how aerial technologies can move from experimental tools into mainstream agricultural infrastructure. Yet the global technology race is occurring alongside a more cautious investment environment. Capital is becoming harder to secure for agritech businesses that cannot demonstrate a clear commercial pathway, even as AI, robotics, biotechnology and precision agriculture attract attention. The result is a global agricultural sector being pulled in several directions simultaneously.

Governments are seeking food and input security. Farmers are demanding lower costs and greater resilience. Regulators are tightening control over chemicals and agricultural technologies. Investors want commercially viable innovation. Breeders are racing to develop crops capable of surviving increasingly unpredictable conditions. And technology companies are attempting to turn data, artificial intelligence, robotics and biological science into practical farm-level tools. For Zambia and the wider African agricultural economy, these developments matter because the global farm is becoming more interconnected even as trade itself becomes more fragmented.

Fertiliser prices are shaped by conflicts and diplomatic agreements thousands of kilometres away. Seed technologies developed in Europe or North America are increasingly designed around climatic stresses that African farmers also experience. Biological crop protection is creating new alternatives to conventional chemicals. Low-cost robotics could eventually offer precision tools for smaller farms. And data is becoming an increasingly important agricultural input alongside land, water, seed and fertiliser. The strategic challenge for African agriculture is therefore moving beyond production alone. Access to technology, affordable finance, reliable input supply, research capacity, intellectual property, digital infrastructure and regional markets will increasingly determine who captures value from the next agricultural cycle.

The global race is already underway. The countries and companies shaping the next generation of agriculture are competing simultaneously for resilient genetics, secure fertiliser supplies, biological alternatives, intelligent machinery and the data needed to make farming more precise. For farmers everywhere, the consequences will ultimately be measured in the cost of inputs, the reliability of harvests and the ability to produce more from increasingly unpredictable land and climate. The global farm is being rewired. The next competitive advantage may belong to those who can connect all of these systems before the pressure reaches the field.

Mumbwa's Agriculture, Minerals and Tourism Potential Gains Fresh Focus

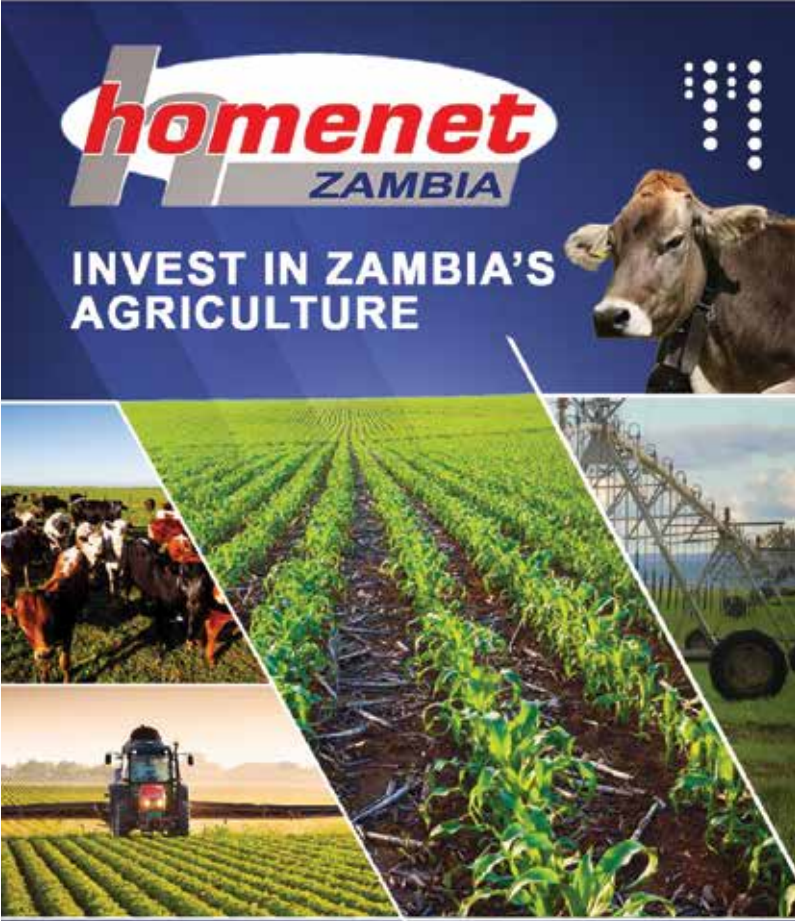
The Mumbwa district could play a bigger role in Zambia's economic growth as the Government's Grow Zambia agenda places greater emphasis on production, industrialisation and private-sector investment.

Mumbwa Central's Member of Parliament Clarence Chisuku said the constituency has the agricultural, mineral and tourism resources needed to contribute to the country's broader economic transformation. He welcomed President Hakainde Hichilema's Grow Zambia agenda, saying its focus on increasing production and expanding private-sector participation could create opportunities for communities and businesses in Mumbwa.

"Grow Zambia will mostly benefit us as people, especially here in Mumbwa, where we have minerals, agriculture and tourism. Mumbwa is one of the areas with the potential that the President has spoken about, and as a Member of Parliament, I have to make sure that our people are benefiting," said Chisuku. He said the shift towards production, industrialisation and private-sector development could help create jobs, expand businesses and improve livelihoods if Mumbwa's available resources are effectively developed.

In addition, Chisuku said his role would include working with Government, local authorities, traditional leaders, farmers, investors and other stakeholders to translate the constituency's resources into tangible economic opportunities. He identified increased agricultural production, responsible mineral development and tourism promotion as areas that could strengthen Mumbwa's local economy while contributing to national growth targets.

The MP said the Grow Zambia agenda should therefore provide communities with opportunities to participate more directly in economic development. In conclusion, he said, "Our task is to make sure Mumbwa does not only have these resources, but that our people benefit from them and that they become part of the growth of Mumbwa and Zambia as a whole."



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China Expands Agricultural Skills Transfer to Zambia

Modern farm machinery can transform productivity, but its value ultimately depends on the people who operate, maintain and adapt it. The emphasis on skills development took centre stage in Lusaka as Zambia, through a training programme supported by China, enhanced its technical capacity in agricultural mechanisation.

The programme brought together 40 officials and technicians from the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and the Ministry of Agriculture for specialised training focused on modern agricultural machinery and technologies. Organised by CAMCO College, part of CAMCO Group, in collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Mechanization Sciences (CAAMS), the training formed part of ongoing technical cooperation between Zambia and China.

Participants were exposed to a range of technologies aimed at improving agricultural efficiency, including high-efficiency irrigation, conservation tillage, new energy applications

and post-harvest technologies. The training also highlighted the growing importance of technical knowledge as Zambia seeks to expand mechanisation across its agricultural sector. While access to machinery remains critical, the ability to operate, maintain and apply equipment effectively is equally important to ensure that mechanisation delivers lasting value on farms.

Speaking during the programme, Chinese Embassy Counsellor Jin Jun said the initiative was aligned with the outcomes from bilateral cooperation and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The programme builds on wider skills development efforts, with Jin noting that nearly 400 Zambians participated in various training programmes supported by China in 2025.

The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Max Choombe, welcomed the training, highlighting the value of strengthening technical capabilities within Zambia's agricultural institutions. In addition, the Project Manager at the International

Cooperation Centre of CAAMS, Wang Yubo, described the programme as part of practical cooperation aimed at sharing agricultural mechanisation expertise and experience.

CAMCO Group Chairman Li Tie noted that the training underscored a broader lesson for countries investing in agricultural technology as machinery alone cannot deliver the desired transformation without the technical expertise required to use it effectively. The focus on skills comes as Zambia continues to pursue greater mechanisation and productivity in agriculture, placing human capacity alongside equipment and technology in the country's efforts to modernise farming.

The programme therefore provided more than technical exposure for the participating officials and technicians; it strengthened the knowledge base needed to support the deployment and effective use of agricultural machinery, while deepening practical cooperation between Zambian and Chinese institutions.

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Looking Beyond Subsidies to Fund Agricultural Growth



Record harvests are putting Zambia's agricultural ambitions into sharper focus, with the next phase of growth set to depend on how effectively the country can finance farmers, infrastructure, productivity and market access. With agriculture set to become a major engine of economic growth by 2030, attention is increasingly turning to how the sector will be financed, particularly as the Government seeks to reduce farmers' reliance on input subsidies and encourage more sustainable forms of agricultural finance.

A key proposal is to expand the Sustainable Agriculture Financing Facility (SAFF), providing farmers with greater access to financing while gradually shifting support away from the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP). The financing question is becoming more pressing as Zambia sets ambitious production targets for the next decade. By 2030/2031, maize production is targeted to reach 10 million tonnes, while productivity is expected to rise from historical averages of about 1.7 tonnes per hectare to eight tonnes per hectare.

Wheat production is targeted at one million tonnes and soya bean production at three million tonnes, alongside efforts to double rice production under the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD) Phase II framework. Achieving those targets will require investment well beyond seasonal inputs. Irrigation, research, extension services, storage, mechanisation,

human resource development and market infrastructure will all be critical to raising productivity and reducing the risks faced by producers.

The Presidential Irrigation Initiative, for instance, aims to bring 500,000 hectares under irrigation, while the Government has also set a target of reducing post-harvest losses to below 15%. The scale of the transformation is reflected in Zambia's second National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP II), a US\$5.7 billion, 10 year framework running from 2024 to 2033. Through the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme (CATSP), the plan positions agriculture alongside mining as a primary driver of national economic growth.

The sector has already shown its capacity to deliver stronger output. Zambia recorded a record maize harvest of 4,937,605 tonnes during the 2025/2026 season, generating a national food surplus of more than 500,000 tonnes. Growth has also been recorded across alternative value chains, including soya, rice and wheat, helping lift agriculture's contribution to real GDP back above 4%.

The performance provides a stronger platform for diversification, although converting higher production into sustained agricultural growth will depend heavily on access to finance and reliable markets. Under FISP, more than 1,024,434 small-scale farmers accessed inputs through

the direct supply and e-voucher modalities. SAFF, meanwhile, has expanded beyond crop production to include livestock, poultry and beef.

Expanding SAFF could give more farmers access to financing suited to productive investment while supporting the transition towards a more business-oriented agricultural sector. That transition will also require stronger technical support. Greater investment in agricultural extension officers could help small-scale farmers adopt improved production techniques, identify commercially viable value chains and understand market opportunities.

Similar capacity gaps remain across fisheries and livestock, while farmers' training institutes and agricultural research stations require investment in personnel, equipment and infrastructure to strengthen their contribution to productivity and innovation. Market access remains another critical piece of the equation. Small-scale farmers often lack the scale and capacity to reach export markets directly, creating scope for stronger aggregation and market-linkage mechanisms.

The Food Reserve Agency could also play a broader role by purchasing a wider range of crops, including soya beans and cassava, helping create predictable markets and encouraging farmers to diversify beyond maize. Storage capacity will become increasingly important as production rises. Investment in facilities capable of handling maize, wheat, soya beans and other commodities will be necessary to limit post-harvest losses and preserve the value of larger harvests.

The push to expand local fertiliser production could also ease one of the sector's major cost pressures. The resuscitation of Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia (NCZ), alongside partnerships with private input manufacturers, is expected to help reduce reliance on imports and improve access to fertiliser.

The country's agricultural ambitions to move from production targets to sustained economic returns mean financing will have to extend across the entire value chain. The emerging policy direction points towards a model in which farmers have greater access to productive finance, infrastructure, technical knowledge and markets, allowing agriculture to develop beyond dependence on annual input support and towards a more commercially driven growth sector.

Afreximbank Mobilises \$500 Million to Bridge Africa's Trade Gap



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Realising Africa's full trade potential requires reliable systems that connect producers, processors, manufacturers and markets...

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A \$500 million Afreximbank facility is set to support the expansion and financing of trade corridors across Africa. Afreximbank and the Africa Trading and Distribution Company (ATDC) signed the global credit facility agreement on 21 September 2026 to support ATDC's trading and distribution operations across Africa and international markets.

The facility will finance the full trade chain, from purchasing and aggregating goods to transportation, storage and distribution. Loans will be repaid from revenue generated through the sale of financed products, allowing ATDC to consolidate supplies into commercially viable volumes and move them into other markets. ATDC, which operates in Egypt, Nigeria, Malawi and Zimbabwe, also plans to develop trade corridors linking African markets where limited access to trade finance remains a constraint on cross-border commerce.

“Realising Africa's full trade potential requires reliable systems that connect producers, processors, manufacturers and markets,” said Stewart Makura, Chief Executive Officer of ATDC. The financing comes against a persistent trade finance gap across the continent. According to Afreximbank's African Trade Report 2025, Africa faces an annual trade finance shortfall of

about \$100 billion, limiting the ability of businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to participate fully in regional value chains.

Intra-African trade reached \$220.3 billion in 2024, an increase of 12.4% from the previous year, although it represented 14.4% of the continent's formal trade. The wider merchandise trade picture also points to growing commercial flows. African merchandise trade reached about \$1.5 trillion in 2024, up 13.9% year on year. Exports increased 21% to \$758 billion, while imports rose 7.6% to \$769 billion.

The ATDC facility adds to efforts to expand financing for trade within Africa as the institution seeks to deepen connections between producers, processors and markets. The bank disbursed \$17.5 billion in trade financing in 2024 and is targeting \$40 billion in intra-African trade finance in 2026. Therefore, the ATDC transaction places trade finance at the centre of efforts to move more goods across African borders, while supporting the development of distribution networks and trade corridors capable of linking fragmented markets.

Mozambique and Italy Deepen Agribusiness Cooperation



Agriculture is emerging as a stronger pillar of Mozambique's economic partnership with Italy. Businesses and institutions from both countries are converging in Maputo to identify investment opportunities across the agri-food value chain.

The Mozambique-Italy Forum, held on 14 and 15 September 2026, brought together government officials, financial institutions, investors and agribusiness professionals for two days focused on expanding commercial cooperation in agriculture and food production. Organised by the Italian Embassy, the ICE office in Maputo and the Mozambique-Italy Chamber of Commerce and promoted by the Agrifood Africa network, the forum brought representatives from Italy's Tuttofood and Cibus Tec trade shows together with companies seeking opportunities with Mozambican businesses and institutions.

The first day attracted around 60 industry professionals and was attended by Planning and Development Minister Salim Vala, representatives of international financial institutions and the Mozambican Investment Agency (Apiex). Opening the forum, Italian Ambassador to Maputo Gabriele Annis highlighted agriculture's strategic role in bilateral cooperation, pointing to initiatives planned under the Mattei Plan for Africa, including the Manica Agri-Food Center (CAAM).

The forum follows an agribusiness meeting held in Maputo a year earlier with Italy's Minister of Agriculture Francesco Lollobrigida, reinforcing agriculture as an expanding area of bilateral engagement. Vala highlighted the sector's contribution to economic growth and called on entrepreneurs to invest in modernising Mozambique's agricultural sector. The second day shifted from policy discus-

sions to commercial engagement, with B2B and B2G meetings and visits to local businesses and markets, including Rural Focus and Inalca.

A working dinner at the Italian Embassy was attended by Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Minister Roberto Albino, providing further opportunity for discussions around investment and cooperation. The engagement comes as Mozambique seeks to modernise agricultural production, strengthen domestic value addition and attract investment into its wider agri-food economy. For Italian companies, the forum provides a platform to explore commercial opportunities in one of Africa's emerging agricultural markets, while Mozambique gains access to international agribusiness expertise, technology and potential investment.

Tanzania Eyes New Date Palm Industry After Saudi-backed Pilot

A crop better known for thriving in the Middle East could become a new commercial opportunity for Tanzania after a Saudi Arabia-backed pilot confirmed the potential for date palms in some of the country's driest regions. The conclusion of an exploratory project has given Tanzania new evidence that date palms can perform in selected drought-prone areas, opening the door to investment in commercial production, processing and exports.

The initiative, titled "Emergency and Resilience Building Support for Smallholder Farmers Affected by Drought through Exploratory Date Palm Cultivation in Tanzania", was implemented through a partnership between the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). Feasibility studies found that date palms can perform well in selected areas of Dodoma, Singida and Tabora, provided farmers have appropriate water-management systems and follow good agricultural practices.

At a handover ceremony at the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute in Dodoma,

FAO Representative in Tanzania Nyabenyi Tipo said the project had generated valuable evidence and created a foundation for further investment. "The infrastructure, knowledge and experience established through this initiative provide an important foundation for future growth," said Tipo. The project has supported research, farmer training, irrigation development and the introduction of quality date palm planting materials. TARI also received irrigation systems, a screenhouse, a tractor and other equipment to support continued research and development.

The next opportunity lies beyond proving that the crop can grow. Tipo said Tanzania would need to develop an integrated value chain spanning production, processing, marketing and value addition. She added, "Moving forward, continued collaboration among government institutions, research organisations, development partners and the private sector will be essential in transforming the sector into a sustainable economic opportunity for farmers and communities."

The pilot has also strengthened agricultural cooperation between Tanzania and

Saudi Arabia, with Saudi Arabia signalling interest in supporting the emerging sector. Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Tanzania, Yahya Bin Ahmed Okeish, described the initiative as a foundation for deeper cooperation around a complete date palm value chain, including production, processing, trade and marketing. Deputy Minister for Agriculture David Silinde welcomed the partnership and said the government would support the emerging sector through research, policy measures and investment promotion.

The opportunity for Tanzania's semi-arid regions extends beyond introducing another crop. A commercial date palm industry could create new demand for irrigation, processing, packaging, logistics and marketing while diversifying farmer incomes in areas increasingly exposed to drought. The pilot has therefore moved the date palm opportunity into a new phase, with attention now turning towards whether Tanzania can translate field evidence into a commercially viable agricultural value chain.



Angola and Brazil Put 800,000 Hectares in Play for Agribusiness

Angola is putting land, capital and Brazilian agricultural expertise behind an ambitious drive to expand grain production, with a new cooperation framework setting the stage for large-scale farming projects from 2027. Angola and Brazil signed a farm investment memorandum of understanding in Luanda on 15 September 2026, targeting cereals and grains, including beans, rice, soybeans and peanuts.

Signed by Angola's Minister of Agriculture Isaac dos Anjos and Brazil's Minister of Agriculture André de Paula, the agreement moves bilateral agribusiness cooperation beyond trade towards production on Angolan soil. The memorandum falls under the Programme for Productive Agricultural Investment Brazil–Angola, which brings governments, private operators and financial institutions into a framework for developing agricultural projects and mobilising investment. At the centre of the initial programme is Terra Lunda, a 20,000 hectare grain project in Lunda Norte province with an estimated investment envelope of about \$83.2 million.

The project is scheduled to run from 2027 to 2030, bringing approximately 5,000 hectares into production each year. Angola has framed the scheme as an integrated crop and livestock initiative that will also test Brazilian agronomic practices under local conditions and build domestic technical capacity. The ambition extends well beyond the pilot. Angolan authorities have identified around 800,000 hectares of arable land for surveying, spatial planning and potential Brazilian-led agricultural enterprises, with grain and protein production at the centre of the programme.

The push forms part of Angola's broader effort to diversify its economy beyond oil while increasing domestic food production and reducing reliance on imports. Financing structures are also being developed around the agricultural programme. An indicative blended model would see Brazil's development bank BNDES provide about 45% of project funding, while Brazil's export financing programme BB Proex would contribute 23%. Angola's Sovereign Wealth Fund would provide around 17%, the Development Bank of Angola about 5% and producers the remaining 10%.

BNDES is also preparing to resume project financing in Angola, with agriculture identified as a focus, potentially giving investors access to credit lines and export-finance support. The emerging framework gives the partnership a more commercial structure, connecting Angola's agricultural land and investment ambitions with Brazilian production expertise and financing mechanisms. The scale of the land allocation, however, makes implementation critical. The next phase will determine how quickly projects such as Terra Lunda move from agreed frameworks to operational farms, financed investments and measurable production.



Malawi Unlocks \$8.6 Million for Smallholder Agriculture

More capital is set to reach Malawi's rural economy through an \$8.6 million financing facility targeting the smallholder farmers and micro agribusinesses that keep the country's agricultural economy moving. The European Investment Bank (EIB), through EIB Global, will provide Centenary Bank Malawi with €7.5 million to expand access to finance for smallholder farmers and agrifood microenterprises.

Announced on 15 September 2026, the facility will divide the funding equally between sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture and businesses supporting women's economic empowerment. Centenary Bank will channel the financing

to agrifood microenterprises with fewer than 10 employees and to smallholder farmers, widening access to longer-term funding for businesses and producers that remain underserved by conventional finance. The facility also includes technical assistance to strengthen the bank's capacity to increase agricultural lending, reach underserved customers and encourage the adoption of climate-resilient practices.

"Our partnership with Centenary Bank allows us to channel long-term financing where it is needed most: in rural communities. When a microenterprise can borrow, it can invest and grow. And when it grows, that means more jobs and income for the entrepreneur and their

family," said Marko Primorac, Vice-President of EIB. The financing forms part of the European Union's Global Gateway initiative, which supports investment partnerships outside the bloc.

Agriculture contributes about 25% of Malawi's gross domestic product and employs more than 70% of the workforce, according to the World Bank. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises contribute an estimated 47% of GDP and support about 1.7 million jobs, according to the European Union. Yet access to finance remains a constraint on investment across the sector, while increasing exposure to droughts, floods and other climate-related shocks is adding pressure on rural livelihoods. The new facility is therefore positioned to support both agricultural investment and resilience, giving farmers and small businesses greater capacity to invest, expand production and withstand climate-related disruptions.

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AgLeaseCo Puts Productive Assets Within Reach of Modern Farmer

Agriculture is taking on a more commercial identity, with farmers looking beyond seasonal production to build businesses that can expand, create jobs, and generate sustainable returns. This shift is changing how farmers approach investment. A successful farm increasingly relies on the ability to plan ahead, manage cash flow and enhance productive capacity without placing excessive strain on working capital.

For many farmers, machinery is central to this equation. Tractors, planters, harvesters, irrigation systems and other equipment significantly impact how much land a farmer can cultivate, the efficiency of operations and the effective use of labour and resources. AgLeaseCo (Agricultural Leasing Company Zambia Limited), a licensed non-bank financial institution, provides leasing solutions designed to help agricultural businesses acquire the equipment they need while managing the financial demands of investment.

Treating the farm as a business is increasingly critical, with commercial agriculture demanding the same financial discipline, strategic planning and operational rigour expected of any growth-oriented enterprise. Farmers must understand their costs, plan production, manage cash flow and assess investments according to their ability to strengthen the operation over time. The focus is therefore shifting beyond what a farm produces in a single season towards what each investment can enable in the seasons that follow.

Machinery can play a central role in that progression. The right tractor or planter can expand productive capacity, improve timing and reduce reliance on manual labour, turning equipment from a major expense into an asset that supports future growth. AgLeaseCo helps farmers access such productive assets through leasing arrangements structured around longer-term affordability. Reinvestment is another route to building a stronger farming enterprise. Rather than directing all farm income towards

short-term needs, farmers can channel part of their returns back into the operation through machinery upgrades, new equipment and other productive investments.

This approach can allow the farm to build capacity progressively, creating a stronger foundation for future seasons. Financing growth around the farming cycle is important, as agricultural income does not always arrive evenly throughout the year, making the timing of investment particularly important. Leasing can provide farmers with an alternative to waiting until they have accumulated enough cash to purchase equipment outright. Through AgLeaseCo lease agreements, farmers can acquire productive machinery while managing their cash flow over time. Access to the right equipment can therefore become part of a broader growth strategy, helping transform the farm from a seasonal production operation into a business with the capacity to expand.

Source: Benine Ackermann



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The Strategic Agricultural Asset Is Data



Africa has spent decades trying to close its agricultural productivity gap. The next frontier may be closing its agricultural information...



For decades, agricultural decisions across Africa have been made with incomplete pictures of what is happening on the ground. Farmers plant without reliable forecasts, governments plan food imports with imperfect production estimates and financiers often struggle to determine where productive capacity actually exists.

That information gap is beginning to close. Satellites, artificial intelligence and geospatial analytics are giving African governments the ability to see agricultural activity at a scale and speed that traditional field surveys cannot match. The significance extends beyond technology. The data generated by these systems could become one of the most valuable assets in Africa's agricultural economy.

Namibia's experience illustrates both the opportunity and the governance challenge. The country terminated a \$2.4 million contract with US-based 6th Grain Corporation in August 2026 following an internal review that found the agreement did not meet legal and procedural requirements. The proposed system was intended to map cultivated areas, monitor crops, forecast production and assess drought risks.

The procurement dispute should not obscure the larger strategic issue. African countries increasingly need reliable agricultural intelligence, and the ability to generate that intelligence is becoming central to food security and economic planning.

Nigeria launched its National AgroProductivity System (NAPS) in July 2026 with OCP Africa and Ground Truth Analytics. The platform combines satellite imagery and AI to provide information on cultivated areas, crop distribution, expected yields and food security risks.

Kenya has also moved in this direction. Its Crop Measurement and Evaluation initiative, CroME, launched in February 2026 by the Kenya Space Agency and Ministry of Agriculture, uses satellite imagery and AI to map agricultural plots, monitor crop conditions and generate yield forecasts. Rwanda launched its Geospatial Hub, GeoHub, in December 2025, combining satellite data, AI and machine learning to map crops, monitor development and produce national yield forecasts.

The common thread is clear. Governments are moving from estimating agricultural performance to measuring it digitally. That shift matters because better data can change decisions across the value chain. Accurate information on what is planted, where it is planted and how crops are performing can strengthen input planning, food import decisions, storage investment, agricultural finance and responses to drought and other climate shocks.

For African economies seeking to move agriculture from subsistence towards commercially driven production, this intelligence could be particularly valuable. Banks and investors need better visibility

of production and risk. Insurers need reliable information to assess exposure. Commodity traders need clearer forecasts. Governments need credible numbers when designing policy.

Yet the strategic value of agricultural data also raises a bigger question: who owns and controls it? Deploying satellite platforms through external technology providers can accelerate access to sophisticated capabilities, but African governments need to understand the systems they are adopting, retain appropriate control over their data and build local expertise to interpret and manage it.

The next phase should therefore focus on more than acquiring technology. It should build African capacity around the technology. Data infrastructure, local technical skills, transparent procurement and interoperable national agricultural information systems will determine whether satellite and AI investments become long-term public assets or remain dependent on external platforms and expertise.

Africa has spent decades trying to close its agricultural productivity gap. The next frontier may be closing its agricultural information gap. The countries that can turn timely, trusted farm data into better decisions will have a powerful new tool for managing food security, attracting investment and building more resilient agricultural economies.

The World Is Hotter. El Niño Is Testing Global Resilience

By Dr Kelvin Kamayoyo, Technical Advisor, African Rivers

El Niño is developing against a hotter global baseline, amplifying risks across food, water, energy and critical infrastructure. From India's weakened monsoon and Spain's record wildfire to Indonesia's haze and Zambia's vulnerable rivers, the emerging pattern is global. For governments and businesses, the challenge is turning climate warnings into resilience before disruption becomes economic damage.

In a world already strained by conflict, food insecurity and economic uncertainty, El Niño is emerging as a threat multiplier. Its significance extends far beyond the Pacific Ocean, because climate shocks increasingly travel through interconnected food, commodity, energy and water systems. India provides an early indication of the scale of the exposure. El Niño years have historically been associated with below-average monsoon rainfall, and by 22 September the southwest monsoon had delivered about 15% less rain than normal, according to the India Meteorological Department. The implications extend beyond Indian agriculture. Disruptions in one of the world's major food-producing economies can reverberate through commodity markets, supply chains and food prices.

A global climate signal

The pattern is appearing across very different geographies. In South Sudan, prolonged rainfall deficits have left crops withering. Across East Africa, erratic rainfall continues to produce the opposite extreme, with destructive flooding threatening communities and infrastructure. Further south, drought places pressure on the river systems that underpin agriculture, energy generation and livelihoods, including in Zambia. African rivers sit at the intersection of food production, electricity generation, irrigation, fisheries and rural incomes. When rainfall becomes less predictable, the consequences move rapidly from ecosystems into economic systems.

Yet the exposure is not uniquely African. Spain is confronting the consequences of extreme heat and wildfire. In the Gredos mountains west of Madrid, farmers are grazing cattle among blackened pine and oak trees following a July wildfire that merged with two others and burned around 80,000 hectares, reportedly the largest wildfire recorded in the country. Indonesia is facing another dimension of the same problem. More than 12.5 million people have reportedly been exposed to haze from El Niño-fuelled wildfires, bringing public health into the climate-risk equation.

Europe has also seen the consequences reach critical infrastructure. Extreme heat has triggered heat-health alerts, school closures and pressure on electricity networks. In South West England, heat contributed to school closures

and power disruption affecting more than 800 homes in Devon. Forestry authorities have simultaneously raised wildfire risk, underscoring how climate extremes can place simultaneous pressure on public services, infrastructure and emergency response systems.

Why this El Niño matters

The developing event is significant because it is unfolding against a fundamentally different climate baseline. Scientists at the UK Met Office have been warning that the emerging El Niño could be unprecedented in modern climate records. The concern is not simply the strength of the Pacific warming itself but the interaction between that natural climate phenomenon and a planet that is already considerably warmer.

El Niño can alter rainfall and temperature patterns across continents. A warmer baseline means that the same climatic disturbance can occur on top of higher temperatures, greater evaporation and already stressed ecosystems and infrastructure. The result can be more acute exposure to heat, drought, wildfire and water stress. That distinction matters for policymakers and businesses. Historical experience remains valuable but it cannot be treated as a perfect template for future risk.

Agriculture is both exposed and part of the solution

Agri-food systems sit directly in the line of fire but they also offer some of the most practical opportunities for building resilience. The Food and Agriculture Organization argues that restoring degraded land, expanding agroforestry and making livestock and aquaculture more sustainable can strengthen resilience while supporting food security, biodiversity and emissions reduction. FAO Assistant Director-General, Kaveh Zahedi, said, "There is no better investment in climate or in food security, probably in biodiversity as well, than agri-food system solutions."

The strategic implication is significant. Climate adaptation cannot sit separately from agricultural policy, land management and economic planning. Farms, forests, rivers and food markets form one interconnected system and investment in one can strengthen the others.

Resilience starts close to home

The same principle applies to urban and community environments. The UK has around 30 million residential gardens, while only a small proportion of its land retains natural woodland cover. The Royal Horticultural Society has highlighted the role that trees, soil, water management and planting can play in reducing heat and supporting urban resilience.

These measures may appear modest beside the scale of global climate change, but resilience is built across systems. Protecting soil, harvesting water, restoring vegetation and supporting biodiversity can reduce pressure on larger infrastructure and natural systems. For Africa, the equivalent priority is protecting rivers, catchments and forests. These are economic assets as much as environmental ones.

What this means for Zambia

Zambia's exposure illustrates why the global climate story ultimately becomes a national economic story. The country's agriculture depends heavily on rainfall, while the Kariba and Kafue systems are central to electricity generation. Rivers and wetlands also support irrigation, fisheries and rural livelihoods. A prolonged dry period therefore creates interconnected risks across food security, energy supply, water availability and household incomes. The 2023/2024 drought remains a stark reminder. Its effects extended from failed harvests and food insecurity to electricity shortages, load-shedding and increased pressure on public finances. The coming rainy season therefore needs to be viewed through a broader resilience lens. Contingency planning should extend beyond emergency relief to the protection of critical water infrastructure, agricultural productivity, energy security and the natural systems that support them.

El Niño is ultimately a test of whether institutions can translate increasingly sophisticated climate intelligence into decisions before disruption arrives. The science is available and the warnings are becoming more precise. Solutions are increasingly visible across agriculture, water management, ecosystem restoration and infrastructure planning.

What remains is execution.

A hotter world changes the assumptions on which many economic systems were built. Rainfall patterns that once appeared relatively predictable can no longer be treated as fixed. Infrastructure designed around historical climate conditions faces a different risk environment. Agricultural strategies built around reliable seasons face greater uncertainty.

The lesson from India, Spain, Indonesia and Southern Africa is therefore larger than El Niño itself. Climate shocks do not respect borders, and their economic consequences rarely remain within the sector where they begin. The strategic priority is to build resilience before the next shock arrives. The world is hotter and El Niño is a reminder that adaptation is no longer a long-term climate ambition, it is becoming a core requirement for protecting food, water, energy and economic stability.

The Netafim 5G Dosing Portfolio Wins Global Precision Fertigation Award

On the back of the recent launch of NetaJet™ 5G, an adaptive precision fertigation solution powered by GrowSphere™ technology, in the Southern and East African market, comes exciting news from the global market.

The Netafim 5G Dosing Portfolio has been announced as the winner of the “Precision Fertilization Solution of the Year” award in the 7th annual AgTech Breakthrough Awards program conducted by AgTech Breakthrough. Based in the USA, this organisation analyses global FoodTech and AgTech markets to identify and recognise standout technologies driving digital transformation of the end-to-end food supply chain.

Fertilizer has become one of the most constrained and costly inputs on the farm, yet conventional dosing systems remain reactive and operator-dependent, often requiring manual calibration and struggling to stabilise under changing field conditions. The result can be over-application, nutrient waste and inconsistent crop performance. Netafim Dosing 5G solutions take a different approach to fertigation, treating it as an optimisation solution rather than a dosing task.

The full Dosing 5G range includes several fertigation solutions for different use cases and markets. Netafim Southern & East Africa places strong emphasis on testing technologies in local conditions before officially launching these products into the market. Farmers and irrigation suppliers are encouraged to speak to their local Netafim representative about available solutions.

The GrowSphere™ platform was launched for the Southern & East African market in 2024 and has been making an impact on many farms since. Since then, the system has been active across farms in the region, supporting a range of crops and production scales. The fertigation systems offered in our market has also been scaled up from the previous generation. “We recently launched the NetaJet™ 5G, which incorporates the new and advanced injection technology. The fertilizer injection method used by Dosing 5G solutions is a game changer that is linked to the AI-driven learning and precise fertigation injection,” explains Nickie Theron, Netafim Southern & East Africa’s Product Manager specialising in Digital Farming. “We are extremely proud of this accomplishment in California,” he adds.

The launch of NetaJet™ 5G came after approximately two years of field testing.

The launch event took the form of dedicated dealer training, equipping suppliers to support farmers in applying the new technology successfully. This reflects Netafim Southern & East Africa’s commitment to introducing solutions that are fit for local farming conditions, while also building the skills needed to apply these technologies optimally.

The Netafim Dosing 5G product range is designed to advance precision fertigation through AI-automated dosing technology, intuitive remote control and real-time monitoring. The system continuously analyses key hydraulic and agronomic parameters, including flow, pressure, EC and pH, and automatically adjusts nutrient and water delivery to maintain stable, accurate conditions throughout each irrigation cycle. Its self-learning capabilities help growers respond to changing crop needs and field conditions with less manual intervention, while integration with the GrowSphere™ platform brings irrigation and fertigation into one connected workflow, enabling farmers to plan, manage and validate the process from a single digital environment.

“Dosing 5G reflects our commitment to delivering intelligent, comprehensive solutions that help farmers make better decisions, improve performance and farm more sustainably,” said Ofer Oveed, VP, Technologies & Crops at Orbia Netafim. “This recognition reinforces what drives our innovation, helping farmers succeed with greater precision, efficiency and confidence in an increasingly complex world.”

“We are very proud of this achievement, and it is very well deserved. This is just another stepping stone, this time in the fertigation space, on our journey of continuous innovation as market leaders in this industry. We continue to work hard

to develop advanced solutions and intelligent practices that will help farmers grow more with less,” added Michael Esmeraldo, Managing Director of Netafim Southern & East Africa.

The AgTech sector is rapidly redefining how food is produced, managed and distributed, transforming one of the world’s most essential industries. From AI-driven crop analytics and precision farming platforms to sustainable agriculture solutions and autonomous equipment, AgTech is delivering greater efficiency, transparency and environmental responsibility.

The mission of the annual AgTech Breakthrough Awards program is to recognise the innovators transforming the global agricultural and food production landscape through technology. The program conducts a comprehensive analysis of the companies, technologies and solutions redefining the industry. “Input efficiency has been one of the strongest themes across this year’s entries, and fertigation is becoming one of the most important areas of innovation in precision agriculture,” said Bryan Vaughn, Managing Director, AgTech Breakthrough. “Dosing 5G stood out in our evaluation for how completely it automates a task growers have long managed by hand, and for delivering that capability across an entire product line rather than a single device. We are proud to recognise Orbia Netafim as our 2026 Precision Fertilization Solution of the Year.”





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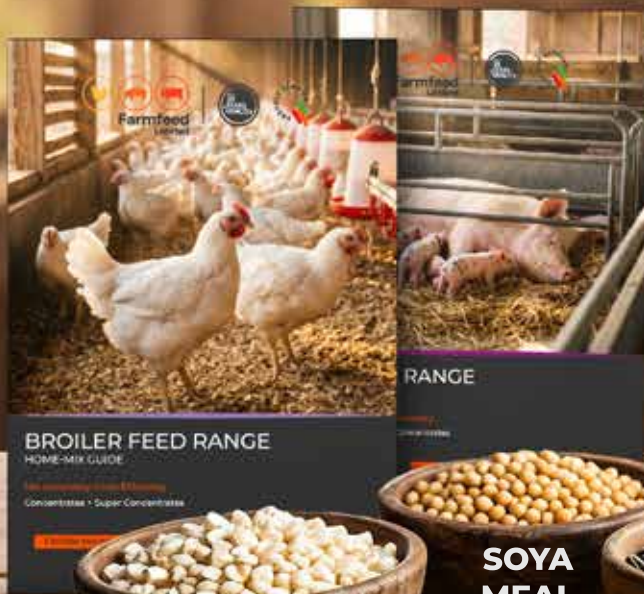
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