

The Farmers' Chronicles

BLOG

13 June 2025



Africa Takes Centre Stage: The Historic 14th G20 Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists (G20-MACS) in Polokwane, Limpopo

For the first time in history, Africa took centre stage at one of the most influential gatherings shaping global agricultural policy and innovation, the 14th Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists (MACS) of the G20 member states. Held from 26 to 28 May 2025 in the vibrant city of Polokwane, Limpopo, this landmark event was hosted under South Africa's G20 Presidency by the Department of Agriculture (DoA) and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC). It marked a fundamental moment for African leadership on the global agricultural stage.

The G20 MACS is more than a routine gathering of experts. Established as an initiative of G20 agricultural ministers, MACS aims to address global challenges in agriculture and nutrition that transcend national borders.

This year's meeting in Polokwane was the first to be held on African soil, a testament to the continent's rising influence and the global recognition of its unique agricultural opportunities and challenges.

This historic milestone is the result of months of dedicated engagements. Comprehensive national consultations within South Africa, alongside broad pan-African dialogues that helped shape an inclusive and forward-looking agenda.

At its core was a commitment to position science and innovation as key drivers for transforming agrifood systems across the continent and beyond. In her opening address, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Nokuzola Capa, warmly welcomed delegates, particularly the international guests representing G20 states. "We meet at a critical time. Over 700 million people globally still suffer from hunger, with Africa the hardest hit. This calls for urgent, collective action to transform our agrifood systems," she said.

Deputy Minister Capa stressed the crucial role of agriculture in ending hunger, creating jobs, and building climate resilience. Through science, innovation, and collaboration, she underlined the opportunity to shape a more sustainable and inclusive food future, not only for Africa but the world at large.



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G20 Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists (G20-MACS)

She also commended the G20 agricultural science community for its commitment to providing the knowledge and innovation needed to address food insecurity, environmental sustainability, and the climate crisis. South Africa's G20 Presidency came at a critical juncture for the continent. Earlier this year, African Union member states adopted the Third Strategy and Action Plan of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) 2026–2035 during a landmark summit in Kampala, Uganda.

This continental framework aims to accelerate agricultural transformation, enhance productivity, and secure food and nutrition for all Africans.

Deputy Minister Capa described the G20 MACS as “not just timely, it is catalytic,” noting its potential to accelerate CAADP's implementation and fortify Africa's agricultural agenda over the next decade. Under South Africa's leadership, the G20 Agriculture Working Group shaped its deliberations around four key priorities. First, it championed inclusive market participation, advocating for policies that enable all farmers particularly smallholders to access markets and fair opportunities. Second, it focused on the empowerment of youth and women by promoting programmes that enhance their roles in agriculture and agribusiness.

Third, it prioritised innovation and technology transfer, encouraging voluntary, mutually agreed sharing of technologies while respecting intellectual property rights. Finally, it emphasised climate resilience, aiming to strengthen environmental, economic, and sanitary resilience within agriculture and food systems to better withstand the impacts of climate change.

Informed by extensive consultations with governments, research institutions, farmers, and civil society, six key thematic areas were identified for in-depth discussion during the 14th G20 MACS. These included the transformation of agrifood systems through innovative approaches aimed at making them more sustainable, equitable, and resilient.

The stewardship of biodiversity, genetic, and natural resources was highlighted to ensure the conservation and responsible management of ecosystems. Soil health and sustainable management emerged as another critical theme, focusing on practices that maintain soil fertility and support long-term agricultural productivity. Climate-smart agriculture was also prioritised, promoting adaptive and mitigation strategies to enhance resilience in the face of climate change.

In addition, the meeting addressed the importance of building resilient agricultural bioeconomies by advancing sustainable, bio-based economic models. Finally, digital agriculture and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies were recognised as being essential for increasing productivity and inclusivity across modern farming systems.

In his opening remarks, Dr Litha Magingxa, CEO and President of the ARC, highlighted the crucial role of science and innovation. He emphasised the need for long-term partnerships and the integration of traditional knowledge with modern science to co-create sustainable and inclusive agricultural solutions. “Agricultural scientists are at the forefront of transforming agrifood systems,” Dr Magingxa said. “Their research is fundamental to addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and food security challenges.”



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The 2025 G20 MACS concluded with the adoption of a landmark communiqué, the first to be finalised on African soil, unanimously endorsed by all G20 member states. This powerful declaration represents a shared commitment to advancing resilient, innovative, and inclusive agricultural systems worldwide. It also reflects a significant milestone in Africa's leadership in global agricultural science and policy, reinforcing the continent's voice and vision in shaping the future of food systems.

Hosting the 14th G20 MACS placed the spotlight on Limpopo, a province renowned for its agricultural heritage and natural beauty.

Known as South Africa's "Gateway to the North," Limpopo is home to fertile soils, diverse climates, and a dynamic farming community spanning from smallholder to commercial producers. The province has made commendable strides in adopting innovative farming practices, sustainable water management, and community driven agricultural initiatives. By hosting this global gathering, Limpopo not only showcased its agricultural potential but also positioned itself as a hub for scientific dialogue and leadership in African agriculture.

The MACS is a strategic platform within the G20 framework that brings together top agricultural researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders to collectively address the complex challenges confronting global food systems. Since its establishment, MACS has played an instrumental role in promoting international scientific collaboration, advancing research and innovation in agriculture and nutrition, and aligning scientific agendas with global development frameworks, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Additionally, it provides evidence-based advice to G20 agricultural ministers, ensuring that policies are informed by the latest science and innovations.

The successful hosting of the 14th G20-MACS in Polokwane marks the beginning of a new chapter for African agriculture on the global stage. It signals the continent's growing influence and leadership in shaping science-driven sustainable solutions to the most pressing food security and environmental challenges of our time.

As South Africa concludes its G20 Presidency later this year, the momentum generated by this historic meeting and its progressive communiqué offers hope that global agricultural policies will increasingly reflect inclusive, resilient, and forward-thinking strategies that empower farmers, protect the planet, and secure food systems for generations to come.

-Prince Mtsweni-