



## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# Integrating Grassroots Knowledge and Research into Water and Soil Management in Africa

Eka Hotel, Nairobi 15–16 June 2026 | Hybrid Format

## Final Hybrid Agenda

### Background

Africa has great potential not only to feed itself but also to play a strategic role in global food systems, thanks to its natural resources, people, and growing markets. Its diverse ecosystems - wetlands, rainforests, and savannahs - provide essential services to local communities. If effectively leveraged, agriculture can boost investment and competitiveness, create employment, reduce poverty, and strengthen food security and well-being.

However, food security and agricultural development are constrained by increasingly extreme and erratic climatic conditions, strong seasonality of precipitation, inter-annual variability, and frequent droughts linked to climate change. The degradation of soil, land, water, and ecosystems further limits productivity, while economic barriers - such as limited access to inputs, markets, capital, and finance - remain significant.

At stake is the capacity to develop sustainable agronomic practices and innovation while scaling up existing good practices to enhance regional impact, meet food and nutritional needs, ensure farmers' socio-economic sustainability, and advance the agro-ecological transition. Agriculture accounts for 70% of global freshwater withdrawals and around 30% of global energy consumption through food production and supply chains. With food demand expected to rise by 60% by 2050, bridging local knowledge and research and strengthening multi-level modelling to support sustainable water, soil, and energy management in agriculture is a central challenge.

A two-day International Conference is organised in Kampala (Uganda) on 15-16 June 2026 with the support of the WATDEV<sup>1</sup> (Climate Smart **WAT**er Management and Sustainable **DEV**elopment for Food and Agriculture in East Africa) Initiative.

The overall aim of the International Conference is bridging and integrating local communities – grassroots knowledge and research developed through a bottom-up approach in sustainable agricultural water and soil management while strengthening the resilience of agro-ecosystems to climate change in Africa.

The international workshop of Kampala will be an occasion to take-stock of some of the outcomes of the WATDEV initiative as well as other initiatives carried out by DeSIRA<sup>2</sup> and other AU-EU

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<sup>1</sup> Funded under the European Union's DeSIRA Initiative, WATDEV is executed by the Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (AICS), with CIHEAM Bari as leading scientific institution, in partnership with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa - Uganda (ASARECA), the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization - Kenya (KALRO), Water, Land Resources Centre – Ethiopia (WLRC), Water Research Centre - Sudan (WRC), and Heliopolis University - Egypt (HU). WATDEV seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of water–agriculture system dynamics at different spatial scales, from farm to basin level, and of the socio-economic and environmental dimensions of climate change impacts. This is pursued through an integrated approach bringing together: identification and validation of Best Management Practices, eco-agro-hydrological modelling, training and capacity building, multi-actor engagement and policy dialogue. Info on: [www.watdev.eu](http://www.watdev.eu)

<sup>2</sup> [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/desira-development-smart-innovation-through-research-agriculture\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/desira-development-smart-innovation-through-research-agriculture_en)



programmes in the sector of research and innovation in food and agriculture in Africa, to build synergies and complementarities in implementation of future follow-up actions.

## Participants

The Conference will gather about 70 participants, including:

- Members of the WATDEV Stakeholders' Forum
- Governmental agencies
- National decision-makers and planners from Africa
- Representatives of EU institutions
- African regional and sub-regional organisations
- International Organizations
- Projects' partners, researchers and PhD students

## Venue and Date

The International Workshop will be held in Hybrid format (approximately 60% in person / 40% online) at Eka Hotel in Nairobi (Kenya) on **15-16 June 2026**.

## Organized by:



## The WATDEV project is managed by:

### Executive Agency



### Scientific Lead Partner



## The partners:



### CNR-IPSP

The National Council for Scientific Research, Institute for Sustainable Plant Protection (Italy).



### SYKE

Finnish Environment Institute (Finland).



### ISRIC

International Soil Reference and Information Centre, independent research foundation (The Netherlands).



### ASARECA

Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (Uganda).



### WLRC

Water and Land Resources Center (Ethiopia).



### HU

Heliopolis University (Egypt).



### WRC

Water Research Centre (Sudan).



### KALRO

Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (Kenya).



## Agenda

### “Integrating Grassroots Knowledge and Research into Water and Soil Management in Africa”

Eka Hotel, Nairobi (KE) / online, Monday 15 June 2026

Theme: *From strategic framing to project experience and collective lessons learned*

Chairperson: Wole OFATUMBI (FARA)

Time Zone: EAST – Nairobi Time (3:00 + GMT)

<b>Welcome and Introduction (1h)</b>	
08.30-09.00	On-site registration and welcome coffee / Online access open at 08:50
09.00-09.30	<b>Welcoming remarks and Institutional Opening</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sylvester Dickson BAGUMA (ASARECA) (in person)</li> <li>• Tiberio CHIARI (AICS Cairo) (online)</li> <li>• Etienne COYETTE/Christophe LAROSE (DG-INTPA) (online)</li> <li>• Representative of Government of Kenya (in person)</li> <li>• Representatives of other Countries Governments (in person/online)</li> <li>• Biagio DI TERLIZZI (CIHEAM Bari) (online)</li> </ul>
<b>Step 1 - Framing the Strategic Challenges – Keynote Speeches (1h30’)</b>	
09.30-10.00	High-Level Keynote 1: Presenter: Victor ONGOMA (Mohammed VI Polytechnic University) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Resilience and Agricultural Water and Soil Governance in Africa</li> </ul>
10.00-10.30	High-Level Keynote 2: Presenter: Maria Jose MARQUEZ PEREZ (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) (online) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridging Farmer Experience and Field-Based Research for Resilient Soil and Water Management in Semiarid Agroecosystems</li> </ul>
10.30-10.55	Hybrid Plenary Dialogue, Q&A collected by Mentimeter. Moderator: Wole OFATUMBI (FARA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive exchange with in-room and online participants</li> </ul>
<b>Group photo &amp; Coffee break (45’)</b>	
<b>Step 2 – From Challenges to Actions: Cross-cutting Initiatives in Africa (1h15’)</b>	
11.45-11.50	Introduction to the interactive tool during Step 2: Silvia LECCI (CIHEAM Bari) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants are invited to actively contribute reflections during the presentations using Padlet; Display the QR code on screen/share the link on the chat.</li> </ul>
11.50-12.40	Short project presentations focused on scaling BMPs, capacity systems, modelling and basin planning, institutional uptake and policy alignment. Moderator: Moses ODEKE (ASARECA) Presenters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maimbo MALESU (CIFOR-ICRAF) (in presence)</li> <li>• Chalachew Gebeyehu BAYE (HRNS) (online)</li> <li>• Tiina Marianne HUVIO (FFD) (in presence)</li> <li>• Julius RONO (SNV-NDO) (in presence)</li> </ul>
12.40-13.00	Hybrid plenary dialogue using shared board inputs (padlet) (CIHEAM Bari)
<b>13.00-14.00 Lunch break (1h’)</b>	
<b>Step 2 – From Challenges to Actions: Cross-cutting Initiatives in Africa (continuation) (1h30’)</b>	
14.00-15.00	Short project presentations focused on scaling BMPs, capacity systems, modelling and basin planning, institutional uptake and policy alignment. Moderator: Moses ODEKE (ASARECA) Presenters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jules RUTEBUKA (IUCN) (in presence)</li> <li>• Angharad JOHNSTON (University of Galway, Ireland) (online)</li> <li>• Regis CHIKOWO (University of Zimbabwe) (in presence)</li> <li>• Gaetano LADISA (CIHEAM Bari) (online)</li> <li>• Francesco ANICHINI (University of Florence, Italy) (in presence)</li> </ul>
15.00-15.30	Hybrid plenary dialogue using shared board inputs (padlet) (CIHEAM Bari)



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Time Zone: EAST – Nairobi Time (3:00 + GMT)

### Coffee break (15')

### Step 3 – Lessons learned: Taking Stock from AU-EU project’s experiences (45')

15.45-16.30	Hybrid group work: in-room working groups and online breakout groups use the same template to identify win-win strategies, structural weaknesses, and innovative ideas.
16.30-17.00	<b>Plenary Reporting and Key Messages (30')</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rapporteur present Group outcomes (5'/group) (20')</li><li>• Final synthesis: Lesson learned finalization (10') Moderator: Wole OFATUMBI (FARA)</li></ul>
17.00-17.15	<b>Presentation of WATDEV Layman Report (15')</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gaetano LADISA (CIHEAM Bari)</li></ul>
<b>Wrap-up and closure (15')</b>	
17.15-17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wrap-up of day 1, impressions using Mentimeter, and introduction to day 2 Claudio BOGLIOTTI (CIHEAM Bari)</li><li>• Official closure: Moses ODEKE (ASARECA)</li></ul>
<b>Social dinner</b>	



## “Integrating Grassroots Knowledges and Research into Water and Soil Management in Africa”

Eka Hotel, Nairobi (KE) / online, Tuesday 16 June 2026

*Theme: From policy uptake to the WATDEV legacy and operationalisation of the Toolbox*

Chairperson: Wole OFATUMBI (FARA)

Time Zone: EAST – Nairobi Time (3:00 + GMT)

Welcome and Introduction (1h30')	
08.30-09.00	On-site arrival / Online access opens at 08:50
09.00-09.15	Opening and Recap of Day 1 and framing of Day 2 objectives Moses ODEKE (ASARECA)
09.15-09.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Triggering presentation on bridging research, modelling and decision-making Claudio BOGLIOTTI (CIHEAM-Bari)</li> </ul>
Step 4 - The WATDEV Journey: From Local Action to Regional Knowledge. (15')	
09.30-10.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation of WATDEV Documentary Movie - Ernesto PAGANO (LaboratorioRosso)</li> <li>Hybrid reaction round (word cloud/comments using Mentimeter) (CIHEAM Bari)</li> </ul>
Coffee break (15')	
Step 5 - Policy Uptake & Institutional Integration (2h)	
10.15-11.00	<b>High-Level Panel 1:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate adaptation strategies, Food security planning: Moderated by Ayman AYAD (EEAS- CAIRO) (online)</li> </ul> Panellists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jean Jacques MBONIGABA (AGRA)</li> <li>Ato Abebe TEWACHEW (Government of Ethiopia) (online)</li> <li>Ahmed Mohammed ELDAW (AUC) (online)</li> <li>Alaa ELBABLY (MOA)</li> <li>Lillian LIHASI (AFAAS)</li> </ul>
	<b>High-Level Panel 2:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of scenario modelling in basin-scale planning, Cross-border Data exchange: Moderated by Claudio BOGLIOTTI, (CIHEAM Bari) (online)</li> </ul> Panellists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sylvester Dickson BAGUMA (ASARECA)</li> <li>Aggrey AGUMYA (FARA)</li> <li>Komla Kyky GANYO (CORAF)</li> <li>Sherif MOHAMADY (NWRC) (online)</li> <li>Ermias BETEMARIAM (ICRAF)</li> </ul>
12.00-12.15	Plenary discussion - Moderator: Wole OFATUMBI (FARA)
12.15-13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint synthesis and feedback from Panels</li> <li>Presentation of feedback from joint synthesis - Wole OFATUMBI (FARA)</li> </ul>
13.00-14.00 Lunch (1h)	
Step 6 – WATDEV Legacy: Operationalizing the Toolbox. (2h45')	
14.00-14.30	Presentation of Modelling Toolbox’s video and Guidelines – Joao CARVALHO NUNES (ISRIC) / Katri RANKINEN (SYKE)
14.30-14.45	Introduction to the Working Groups (15') - Gaetano LADISA (CIHEAM Bari)
14.45-16.15	<b>Hybrid Thematic Group Work (90')</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data Governance &amp; Institutional Ownership: Facilitator: Aymen SAWASSI (CIHEAM Bari)</li> <li>Investment Planning &amp; Financing: Facilitator: Jacopo TAVASSI (AICS Cairo)</li> <li>Capacity Building &amp; Regional Knowledge Platform: Facilitator: Richard MIIRO (Makerere University)</li> </ul>
Coffee break (15')	



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Chairperson: Wole OFATUMBI (FARA)

Time Zone: EAST – Nairobi Time (3:00 + GMT)

16.30-17.00	<b>Plenary Reporting and Key Messages (30')</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rapporteurs present group outcomes (5'/group) (15')</li><li>• Discussion to support preparation of a Position Paper (15')</li></ul>
<b>Closing Reflections (30')</b>	
17.00-17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alaa ELBABLY (MOA) - Representative of Stakeholders' Forum (in presence)</li><li>• KALRO representative (in presence)</li><li>• Jacopo TAVASSI (AICS Cairo) (online)</li><li>• Claudio BOGLIOTTI (CIHEAM Bari) (online)</li></ul> Impressions and final evaluation using Mentimeter (CIHEAM Bari) Official closure ceremony: Sylvester Dickson BAGUMA (ASARECA)
<b>Social dinner</b>	