



# 7<sup>th</sup> Africa-Wide Agricultural Extension Week (AAEW) 2025

## Draft Concept Note for Gender Side Event (Advanced Version)

**Theme: Scaling Up Gender-Responsive Agricultural Extension for Inclusive Public/Private Sector Driven Commercialized, Industrialized and Transformed Agri-Food Systems**

*Hybrid Capacity Building Workshop (Virtual and In-Person)*

**Venue:** Side event 2, Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC), Lilongwe, Malawi

**Date:** 12 May 2025, 16:30-18:30 (Malawi time Zone)

**Zoom registration link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/jtDNpK2AST6vXiQQFEVW8w>

**Convened by:** AFAAS Gender Technical Working Group in Collaboration with Africa Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and CAADP XP4 Gender Technical Working Group



## Introduction:

Drawing from the 6th Africa-Wide Agricultural Extension Week (AAEW), held from 5th to 11th November 2023 at the Abuja Intercontinental Hotel in Abuja, Nigeria, under the theme “Harnessing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services in Scaling Regenerative Agriculture and Nature-Based Solutions for Food System Transformation in Africa,” the first-ever Gender Side Event was successfully convened by AFAAS.

The Gender Side Event, themed “*Enhancing Sustainable Food Systems: Empowering Women and Youth in Regenerative Agriculture and Nature-Based Solutions*,” marked a significant milestone in the AAEW agenda. It brought together a total of 57 participants (23 women and 34 men) from 11 countries: Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia. Additionally, two key sub-regional organizations—CORAF and CCARDESA, actively participated in the side event, reinforcing the collaborative spirit and regional commitment to gender equality and youth empowerment in agriculture. The 2023 Gender Side Event served as a catalytic moment for advancing gender mainstreaming within agricultural extension systems. It fostered consensus on empowerment strategies, facilitated the review and sharing of gender-responsive tools, and established a sustainable platform for ongoing engagement. Notably, key gender issues raised during the event were integrated into the overall AAEW 2023 Communique read out as a call to action.

## Rationale:

This year's event takes place at a critical moment, as global efforts intensify to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With 2025 marking the start of the final five-year window for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is an urgent need for renewed commitment and coordinated action. However, there is growing concern that SDG 5, which calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, remains significantly out of reach. Adding urgency to this agenda is the 2025 International Women's Day theme, “For All Women and Girls: Rights, Equality, and Empowerment,” which underscores the indispensable role women and girls play across agri-food value chains.

Yet, persistent gender disparities continue to undermine progress, particularly in access to and use of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS). These challenges especially faced by women include a widening gender digital divide, limited engagement in food safety and nutrition initiatives, and the underutilization of opportunities in biodiversity and agroecology. These barriers are further exacerbated by the lack of robust, gender-responsive policies and legal frameworks in many countries hindering the full and meaningful participation of women and youth in agricultural commercialization, industrialization, and the transformation toward inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems.



Most notably, Africa has just developed the CAADP Strategy and Action Plan: 2026-2035 and the Kampala CAADP Declaration, emphasizing evidence-based planning, policy efficiency, dialogue, and mutual accountability. The fourth strategic objective focuses on advancing inclusivity and equitable livelihoods, underscoring the need to improve access to productive resources; implement inclusive social protection programmes; promote digitalization and Agri Tech; improve market access and integration, and accountability.

Against this backdrop, and with a firm recognition that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a cornerstone for achieving equitable and inclusive development outcomes, a Gender Side Event has been convened by the AFAAS Gender Technical Working Group in collaboration with Africa Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and CAADP XP4 Gender Technical Working Group. The Gender Side Event is part of the 7th Africa-Wide Agricultural Extension Week (AAEW), scheduled to take place at 16:30 – 18:30 PM (Malawi Time) on 12 May 2025 in Lilongwe, Malawi.

The keynote address will be delivered by Dr. Susan Kaaria, a distinguished leader in gender-responsive agricultural development and Director of the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) program, hosted by CIFOR-ICRAF. Her address will set the tone for high-level dialogue grounded in empirical evidence on gender-responsive Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) policy and practice, while highlighting strategic pathways for building inclusive and transformed agri-food systems across Africa.

#### Gender Side Event Sub themes

The Gender Side Event, themed ***“Scaling Up Gender-Responsive Agricultural Extension for Inclusive Public/Private Sector Driven Commercialized, Industrialized and Transformed Agri-Food Systems,”*** is fully aligned with the overarching 7<sup>th</sup> AAEW 2025 conference theme: ***“Rebranding Extension for Enhanced Public/Private Sector-Driven Commercialization, Industrialization, and Inclusive Food Systems.”***

The side event will have a three-fold focus, encompassing:

1. Advancing gender-responsive strategies and women-led innovations in food safety and nutrition by harnessing opportunities in biodiversity and agroecology to build inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems.
2. Fostering scalable gender-responsive AEAS initiatives for inclusive public/private sector driven commercialized, industrialized and transformed Agrifood Systems .
3. Promoting evidence-based gender responsive AEAS policies and legal frameworks for equitable public-private sector-led extension and advisory service delivery in transformed agrifood systems.



### **AWARD's Focus for Gender Side Event:**

At the 2025 Gender Side Event, the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) will play a central role by setting the narrative on scaling gender-responsive AEAS for inclusive commercialization, industrialization, and resilient agri-food systems across Africa through the delivery of the keynote address, by Dr. Susan Kaaria, AWARD Director. Additionally, AWARD will spotlight the contributions of two GRASP Fellows through a dedicated session on gender-responsive AEAS policies and legal frameworks. This session will showcase empirical findings and policy briefs produced by the Fellows, offering valuable insights to guide public-private sector agricultural extension policy reforms. AWARD remains committed to shaping Africa's agricultural transformation agenda by promoting evidence-based, women-led initiatives and gender-responsive solutions in Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS). These efforts aim to enhance the inclusivity and sustainability of agri-food systems, particularly for women, youth and other marginalized groups.

### **CAADP XP4 Focus for Gender Side Event:**

CAADP-XP4 will lead the agenda on advancing gender-responsive strategies and women-led innovations in food safety, nutrition, biodiversity, and agroecology to foster inclusive and resilient food systems. Drawing on the draft Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme ex-Pillar 4 (CAADP-XP4) Project and Development Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture (DeSIRA) gender study supported by the European Union (EU), the Gender Side Event will highlight best practices from female innovators, encompassing both technological and social innovations implemented at the farm level, within agricultural value chains, and across broader systems. The event will also serve as a platform for learning and validating the findings with the aim of enhancing investment in scaling gender-inclusive innovations and providing recommendations for action priorities for Africa and the CAADP Kampala declaration. The insights from this session are critical for shaping gender-inclusive approaches that advance the transition of women-led innovations towards inclusive, commercialized, industrialized, and transformed agri-food systems.

### **Workshop Objectives**

The overall objective of the gender side event is to catalyze dialogue, learning, and action on gender-responsive Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) by sharing evidence on AEAS policy analysis and findings on women-led innovations that have the potential to drive inclusive agricultural commercialization and the transformation of resilient agrifood systems.



### Specific Objectives:

1. Validate and present findings from the CAADP-XP4 gender study on women-led innovations, emphasizing emerging issues and offering concrete policy recommendations to support gender-inclusive approaches in agri-food systems.
2. Identify investment opportunities to scale up successful women-led innovations that align with CAADP goals, leveraging existing national and regional policy frameworks to enhance their uptake and impact.
3. Enhance awareness and stakeholder engagement on the critical role of gender inclusivity in transforming African agri-food systems, with a particular focus on empowering women and youth in commercialization, industrialization, and the scaling of innovative AEAS solutions.
4. Synthesize and disseminate key gender insights and emerging issues to inform policy, guide practice, and shape recommendations for integration into the official AAEW 2025 communiqué.

### Workshop Approach:

The workshop will be conducted in a hybrid format, combining both virtual and in-person participation, on **12 May 2025, from 16:30 to 18:30 (Malawi Time)**, during day one of the 7th Africa-Wide Agricultural Extension Week (AAEW) in Lilongwe, Malawi. The session will feature a dynamic mix of technical presentations, plenary discussions, and a synthesis of key issues, culminating in actionable recommendations for inclusion in the official communiqué. It will provide a valuable space for learning, reflection, and collaboration among a diverse range of stakeholders.

### Activities of the Gender Side Event:

In preparation for the Gender Side Event, the AFAAS Gender Technical Working Group, the CAADP XP4 Gender Group, and AWARD will coordinate a series of activities to ensure effective planning and successful delivery. These activities will span pre-event preparations, on-site facilitation, and post-event follow-up, all requiring technical and logistical support to achieve the event's intended outcomes.

### Pre-Event Activities

Pre-event activities will include, among others, the development of the concept note, programme, and budget for the Gender Side Event. Participants will be actively mobilized to ensure broad and inclusive attendance. Presenters will be selected based on their alignment with the event objectives, as well as their expertise in gender-responsive agricultural extension, policy analysis, and women-led innovative solutions.



## On site Activities:

The event acknowledges the critical importance in advancing gender-responsive AEAS strategies in policy and practice to foster inclusive agricultural commercialization and transformed agrifood systems, and will therefore prioritize the following:-

1. Presentation of the keynote address on *“Scaling Up Gender-Responsive Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) and Women led Innovations for Inclusive Public / Private sector Driven Agricultural Commercialization, Industrialization and Transformed Agri-Food Systems,”* linking the theme to the gender side event objectives.
2. Presentation of findings from the CAADP-XP4 gender study on *“Agricultural Development and Women-led Innovations in Africa’s Food System,”* highlighting proven solutions from female innovators at the farm level, within value chains, and across broader systems. The presentation aims to catalyze investment in scaling gender-inclusive innovations and to inform policy priorities aligned with Africa’s development agenda and the CAADP Kampala Declaration.
3. Presentation of evidence on gender responsive agricultural extension policies: best practices, gaps and opportunities to influence transformation of inclusive agrifood systems.
4. Plenary session on reflections, insights and agreed strategic recommendations for gender responsive and inclusive AEAS and transformed Agrifood Systems.
5. Key gender messages emerging from the Director’s keynote address, study findings, and policy presentations will be synthesized to stimulate meaningful dialogue and generate concrete actions for inclusion in the final communiqué.
6. The session will conclude with a summary of key takeaways and an official closing.

## Audience:

The event will attract a diverse range of partners, including global and national Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) actors across the value chain, as well as researchers, policymakers, farmers, and civil society representatives. It will also convene AFAAS Board Members, staff, Country Chapters, members of the AFAAS and CAADP-XP4 Gender Technical Working Groups, AWARD Fellows, DeSIRA-LIFT project implementers, development partners, and other delegates attending the 7th Africa-Wide Agricultural Extension Week (AAEW). The gathering will foster cross-sectoral dialogue, knowledge exchange, and strategic collaboration.

## Expected Outcomes:

The expected outcome is that there will be enhanced competencies and shared learning on gender equality and social inclusion in Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) in policy and practice for improved inclusiveness in agricultural commercialization and resilient sustainable agri food systems.



**The specific outcomes include:-**

1. Findings validated from the CAADP-XP4 gender study on women-led innovations, highlighting the need to enhance investment in scaling gender-inclusive innovations and to provide policy recommendations aligned with Africa's development priorities and the CAADP Kampala Declaration.
2. Investment opportunities identified for scaling successful women-led innovations and demonstrating their contributions to achieving CAADP goals, supported by existing policy frameworks.
3. Increased awareness on the importance of gender and youth inclusivity in African agrifood systems, particularly in enhancing equitable participation, access to opportunities, and benefits across the value chain.
4. Key gender insights and policy recommendations synthesized and incorporated into the AAEW 2025 communiqué to guide inclusive policy and practice in agricultural extension.

In conclusion, this side event aims to address persistent gender gaps and barriers within Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS), particularly those related to policy and practice, more specifically on women-led innovations. It presents a valuable opportunity to make concrete strides towards positioning women and youth as active drivers of agricultural commercialization, industrialization, and agrifood systems transformation across Africa.

