



Global  
Alliance

GCRF AgriFood  
Africa



# Collaboration and partnerships between Sub-Saharan Africa and the UK



Innovate  
UK

Connecting for  
Positive Change

[ktn-uk.org/global-alliance](https://ktn-uk.org/global-alliance)

All weeks included presentations on a range of opportunities and resources for finding collaborators in the UK. With regards to Africa, region-specific information was presented for each week. A common aspect highlighted across all three weeks for partners from UK and Africa, was the important role KTN can play in helping connect individuals and businesses from different regions.

During the presentations showcasing the UK, Ian Cox (Innovate UK) and Tim Messeder (KTN) provided valuable information for any individuals or businesses wanting to work in the country. From an academic perspective, Tim gave an overview of research in the AgriFood sector in the UK, which has an important international focus. He also introduced a digital tool created by KTN that provides further information about the AgriFood landscape in the UK, the tool is free-access and is a valuable resource for anyone looking for future collaborations in the UK. Ian Cox gave a presentation on the Agri-tech centres in the UK, an example of collaboration between government, industry and academia to address challenges in the sector. There are four centres (Agrimetrics, Crop Health and Protection Centre (CHAP), CIELivestock and Agri-EPI (Engineering Precision)) and they work with international partners so can be a great point of contact for African stakeholders looking for collaborations in the UK. He introduced GRIP, a precision agriculture system developed by Agri-EPI Centre and two UK AgriTech companies, which is currently used in nine southern African countries. GRIP uses high resolution satellite data to monitor farms' crop performance.

A key aspect to consider when looking for partnerships in Sub-Saharan Africa is that there are significant geographical variations with regards to political, social and economic complexities, this is also observed in the AgriFood sector. As such, it is important to not treat Africa as a homogeneous geographical entity and to think about regional differences when starting new collaborations.

## Southern and Central African region

A recurrent topic in most presentations was the need to collaborate with African stakeholders for projects or businesses in the region to be successful. As highlighted by Michael Shaw during the panel Q&A session, finding an African partner with local links and market knowledge can hugely facilitate business success as accessing reliable market information is challenging.

It is essential to have a previous understanding on the market and economic reality of the region as well as possible competitors and potential distributors. It is highly advisable to test your technology on the ground before upscaling. Even with careful planning and a clear strategy, some complications are difficult to anticipate. As highlighted by Jayne Brookman (KTN), UK companies should think about the best way of monetising their idea in Africa and consider if their technology is likely to succeed. Technologies will often require adaptation to local realities.

Rob Cannavo (South African Chamber of Commerce), amongst other speakers, highlighted the willingness to partner with the UK throughout the Southern and Central African regions. Dr Melody presented various networks of African universities and research councils, such as the Agriculture Research Council (ARC), as a way to simultaneously connect with a range of partners.



## Eastern African Region

Throughout the week, speakers provided insight experiences on how collaborating with different partners was crucial to the success of their projects. In Africa, the importance of engaging with farmers and involving local communities was highlighted by many speakers, including Nicholas (Twiga), Perez (Sacoma) and Gabriele (Climate Edge). Jeremy Cordingley drew attention to how CropNuts works with different region-specific partners in each area.

During the panel Q&A discussion, Mike Shaw listed key factors a company should consider before starting a business in Africa, knowing the market is crucial, this includes not only the size but also potential competitors. People should be looking at present and future opportunities. In order to scale-up, innovations need to have commercial value and a clear impact. Perez also highlighted challenges associated with scaling up from a UK SME perspective. Callum Murray (Innovate UK) focused on how consortium and partnerships are the bases of Innovate UK's work. Feeding the knowledge from academic institutions back into businesses is essential to overcome some of the main challenges the AgriFood sector is facing.

## Western African Region

Both Edwin from Social Farm and The Honourable Amie Faburay spoke of how collaborations with the private sector would help improve technology and create innovation. Amie expressed a desire for private sector innovation in The Gambia as a way to address the current issues. The need to create partnerships across many sectors from the local level to the national/international level was highlighted by David ad CORAF. CORAF has created a consortium of partners across a spectrum sectors from local farmers to banks and universities, Edwin expressed how these collaborations will help build food security. Edwin believes that; pay as you go solar powered irrigation services, tractor services, financial services and seed breeding are the immediate gaps that need to be filled that can be met by UK partners.

Another area where strong collaborations will have a great impact is between industry and educational institutions. Ernest Teye highlighted that one key challenge in the education system in Ghana was that many higher level qualifications were too science focused and not industry led. This has led to universities not creating problem solvers for industry. This can be improved by stronger industrial links with education institutions.

## Technology Needs

Precision farming, conservation agriculture, biological farming, climate-smart farming, vertical and urban agriculture, have all become approaches to produce more with less, and enhance resource use and sustainability in South Africa.

The AgriFood system is benefiting substantially from biotechnology, informatics, robotics, drone technology, digital information systems (for example, for traceability), etc.

The advent of big data management is allowing role players in the value chain to improve efficiencies considerably in order to gain an edge over their competitors.

For more information, visit the **GCRF AgriFood Africa Programme** page.