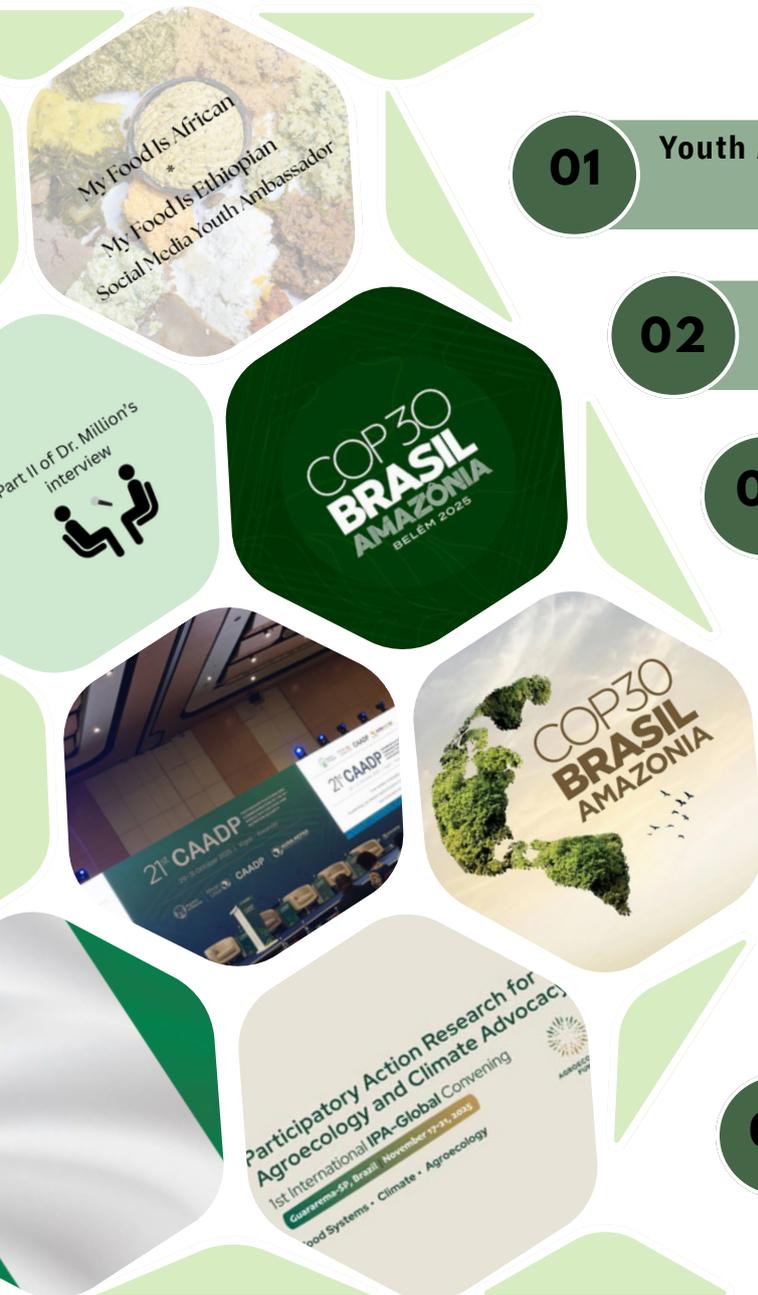


# Bimonthly Updates

Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium Bimonthly Newsletter



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## Welcome to the Seventh Issue

### ESFSAC Insights

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC) bimonthly Newsletter. This newsletter shares updates on key initiatives, events, and Ethiopia's role in sustainable agriculture and agroecology, with a focus on women and youth empowerment, global climate and sustainable food system discussions. Stay tuned for insights into our progress and upcoming opportunities to get involved.



**Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems  
and Agroecology Consortium  
(ESFSAC)**

# MY FOOD IS AFRICAN ★ MY FOOD IS ETHIOPIAN



## Social Media Ambassador Campaign

The Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC), in partnership with AFSA, is part of the continent wide campaign known as "My Food Is African". Beyond its symbolic significance, the campaign served as a catalyst for tangible change, advocating for the intrinsic value of traditional and indigenous foods amidst the detrimental health impacts of ultra processed foods from industrial food systems.

To amplify this crucial message, ESFSAC introduced a Social Media Ambassador campaign. This select group of ambassadors has been tasked with promoting the significance of nutritional and health benefits of indigenous foods to a wider audience. Their mission is to showcase the unique stories of Ethiopian indigenous foods, highlighting not only their cultural importance and nutritional benefits but also their fundamental role in building resilient and sustainable food systems for the future.

The youth group were given a comprehensive two-days training, which provided them with deep insights into the campaign's goals and equipped them with the knowledge to effectively communicate its core principles.

On October 6, 2025, the campaign commenced with a formal signing ceremony inducting the ambassadors. This event marked their commitment to becoming the leading voices for the "My Food Is African/ My Food Is Ethiopian" movement.

With this passionate youth group now officially on board, the campaign is set to create tangible change. These ambassadors will ignite a digital conversation that reconnects Ethiopians with their culinary heritage. By celebrating the dishes that tell our story, they will inspire a collective appreciation for how traditional, organic foods nourish our bodies, preserve our culture, biodiversity and protect our environment.

The Social Media Ambassador Program has successfully built a network of motivated young advocates committed to promoting sustainable food systems in Ethiopia. Initial activities show high enthusiasm, fresh content ideas, and strong community interaction. Ambassadors have begun amplifying messages starting with indigenous foods and youth engagement in agriculture. Their creativity and authenticity is already contributing to stronger online engagement and visibility to ESFSAC's work.



### Key aspects of the campaign

- Promoting the consumption of healthy, culturally appropriate foods.
- Advocating for the immense value of traditional and indigenous foods.
- Promoting sustainable food systems.



Social Media Ambassadors of My Food Is African / My Food Is Ethiopian campaign

## Interview With Dr. Million Belay – Part II

### From the markets of Merkato to the forefront of Africa’s environmental movement.



Dr. Million Belay, General Coordinator, AFSA

**ESFSAC:** Where did your journey take you after you founded the Ethiopian Heritage Youth Club?

**Dr. Million:** I then joined ISD, where I worked with farmers in Tigray, learning from their deep knowledge of sustainability and the challenges they faced. I later pursued a Master’s in Tourism and Conservation. After graduating, I was invited by Liz Hosken to participate in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10) in South Africa. Another turning point was meeting Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize laureate, who inspired me further.

A book on the Spiritual and Cultural Values of Biodiversity pushed me further to develop the idea of cultural biodiversity in Ethiopia. With Sue Edwards, I proposed training teachers on participatory mapping. With support from the Gaia Foundation, we secured funding. This initiative evolved into an annual cultural celebration that spread across Africa. Some credit it to the starting of the Ethiopian nations and nationalities day.

Later, I founded **MELCA-Ethiopia (Movement for Ecological Learning and Community Action)**. Through MELCA, I developed the Segni (Seeds in Oromiffa language) initiative, which engaged youth and elders in environmental learning. Segni became MELCA’s flagship program, with a guide developed for replication.

**ESFSAC:** Did your environmental activism remain within Ethiopia, or did it extend to other African countries?

**Dr. Million:** My activism extended far beyond Ethiopia. It began jointly, with the other founders, the conceptualization and creation of the African Biodiversity Network (ABN). This Network became a platform for extending the biocultural celebrations to eight African countries.

While working with MELCA, I participated in developing a proposal on environmental litigation in Sheka. Today, Sheka is one of five biosphere reserves in Ethiopia, two of which were registered through the initiative and support of MELCA-Ethiopia. These achievements further strengthened to keep up my activism as an environmentalist.

With MELCA, I also worked closely with colleagues such as Solomon Kebede (MELCA’s current Director) and Mellese Damtie (a Lawyer and Lecturer at Addis Ababa University) on environmental governance initiatives. MELCA proposed a cross-sectoral environmental agenda and drafted a law for the Ethiopian Parliament, which led to a full environmental impact assessment being commissioned.

My mobilization also expanded into a continental movement, which ultimately led to the establishment of the **Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)**. Four networks started AFSA and I was fortunate enough to be one of the founders. I am serving as AFSA’s General Coordinator since 2013.

Through AFSA, I came to realize the central importance of Africa’s food diversity for community resilience. We promoted seed and food fairs as a way to celebrate and share knowledge about diverse seeds. This inspired the My Food is African campaign, which continues to raise awareness about food sovereignty and agrobiodiversity.

We also saw the importance of engaging Africa’s youth, the continent’s most productive generation, in agroecology and food sovereignty. AFSA now promotes agroecological entrepreneurship and platforms for youth to share knowledge and innovations.

Today, AFSA’s work combines advocacy, research, and collaboration, including cross-border trade initiatives, in partnership with the Swedish Embassy.

**ESFSAC:** We extend our deepest appreciation to Dr. Million Belay for his lifelong dedication to environmental stewardship, biocultural diversity, and food sovereignty in Africa. His leadership from mobilizing youth to shaping continental movements stands as an inspiration to all of us working toward resilient and sustainable food systems.

At ESFSAC, we honor and acknowledge pioneers like Dr. Million whose vision and tireless activism have paved the way for stronger community engagement, youth empowerment, and the protection of Africa’s rich ecological heritage. We celebrate his contributions and remain committed to carrying forward this legacy by nurturing the next generation of leaders in agroecology, indigenous knowledge, and sustainable food systems.



# COP30 BRASIL AMAZONIA

From November 10 - 21, 2025, the Brazilian government hosted the 30th UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Belém at the heart of Amazon. The Summit brought together over 50,000 delegates including national leaders, heads of states, women groups, youth representatives indigenous people, civil society representatives and various stakeholders.

The conference has been heralded as the "**COP of Implementation**", moving decisively from pledges to action. While the global negotiations advanced across all sectors, the outcomes present particularly transformative opportunities for Africa's food systems, framing them not as a vulnerability but as a powerhouse for climate solutions, resilience, and equitable development.

The COP30 Global Climate Action Agenda (GCAA) established a robust, six-axis framework for voluntary action, with the transformation of agriculture and food systems (Axis 3) and the stewardship of forests and biodiversity (Axis 2) as central pillars. This structure formally recognizes that healthy soils and ecosystems are the non-negotiable foundation for food security, nutrition, and climate adaptation. The conference amplified a powerful scientific truth echoed from earlier dialogues: "soil anemia breeds human anemia," directly linking land degradation to malnutrition and making investment in soil health a critical public health strategy.

COP30 delivered concrete financial and programmatic tools with direct implications for Africa:



- Scaling Investment in Regenerative Agriculture.
- Advancing Soil Health and Fertilizer Transition.
- Unlocking Finance for Nature-Based Solutions.

Beyond agriculture, COP30 outcomes strengthened the enabling environment for resilient African economies. Furthermore, the new Climate-Resilient Social Protection and Smallholder Agriculture Finance Partnership launched at COP30 will pilot integrated support in countries including Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Zambia, directly operationalizing the human-centered declaration on hunger, poverty, and human-centered climate action.

The message from Belém is clear: **siloed approaches are obsolete**. The future lies in integrated action where restoring land, securing tenure, empowering smallholders, and leveraging digital innovation converge. For African stakeholders, COP30 has provided a strengthened toolkit and a renewed framework. The challenge now is to harness these commitments, partnerships, and financial mechanisms to accelerate a just transition towards food systems that nourish both people and the planet.



# The First International IPA Global Convening



The first IPA global convening in Guararema, Brazil successfully brought together a diverse coalition of over 90 participants representing 41 collaboratives across 11 countries and the EU. This gathering was dedicated to advancing Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a critical methodology for strengthening climate and agroecology policy advocacy. The event opened with powerful reflections on Brazil's historical journey and their most influential social movements advocating for agrarian reform and an equitable food economy grounded in family farming. This set the stage for a rich exchange of strategies on building equitable food systems encompassing community-led solutions.

Throughout the convening, deep discussions centered on the transformative potential and practical challenges of PAR. Participants critically examined how to move beyond extractive research models to co-create knowledge genuinely with farmers and indigenous communities, affirming their agency and ownership of data. This theoretical framework was powerfully brought to life during a field visit to the Florestan Fernandes National School and an MST family settlement. These visits offered a grounded perspective on how social movements, agroecology and community-led action can shape more just and sustainable food systems.

The IPA global convening also hosted a vibrant communications exhibition, sharing agroecology products, grains, honey, herbs, along with cultural items representing the knowledge and traditions of indigenous communities. Partners also reflected on ways to strengthen communication strategies for agroecology advocacy, reinforcing shared messages and amplifying movement led solutions.

Day 4 of this powerful gathering coincided with two significant dates, honoring the historical significance of Brazil's Black Awareness Day and Mexican Revolution Day, uniting the global gathering in a shared commitment to justice and dignity.



## Key insights exchanged

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) and its relevance for grassroots movements.
- Women in agroecology and the urgency of securing land rights.
- Youth and agroecology, highlighting the importance of intergenerational transfer of knowledge.
- Strategies for influencing narratives to elevate agroecology as a climate and justice solution.
- The role of animals in agroecology—far beyond bio inputs, integral to healthy ecosystems.
- The importance of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) in strengthening local markets and trust.
- International perspective of the social movement from the start.
- The culture of appreciating their heroes.

The Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium, contributed valuable insights from the Ethiopian context. The meeting was a pivotal learning platform for forging partnerships and integrating into broader African and international agroecological advocacy networks, signaling a strengthened, unified movement poised to drive systemic change. The convening concluded with a firm resolve to strengthen global and cross-regional collaboration and amplify advocacy efforts.



IPA Global Convening participants

# The 21st Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme Partnership Platform (CAADP PP) and the 16th Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS)

## “Investing in Healthy Soils transforms Africa’s Agri-food Systems”

The 21<sup>st</sup> Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme Partnership Platform (CAADP PP) and the 16th Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS) was held in Kigali, Rwanda, from 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025. During which, a powerful consensus emerged: securing Africa’s future hinges on the health of its foundation, its soil. Stakeholders were urged to take urgent, integrated action to restore the continent's degraded lands and transform agrifood systems. This is not merely an agricultural issue but a central pillar in the pursuit of food and nutrition security for all Africans.

Beyond nutrition, healthy soils are a linchpin for environmental sustainability and climate resilience. They represent the planet's largest terrestrial carbon sink, storing more carbon than all plants and the atmosphere combined. Practices like cover cropping and reduced tillage enhance this capacity while improving biodiversity and protecting water systems.

This multifaceted value of soil is now centrally embedded in the CAADP framework, which links soil health directly to sustainable production, resilient investments, and ecosystem health. The accompanying Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan sets clear 2034 targets, including tripling fertilizer (both organic and inorganic) use and restoring 30% of degraded soils.

Echoing the call for decisive movement, Dr. Lawrence Haddad of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) underscored the need for rapid implementation.



Dr. Janet Edeme, Head of the Rural Development Division and Acting Head of Agriculture and Food Security at the African Union Commission (AUC)



Youth agripreneurs

The message from Kigali is clear: protecting and revitalizing Africa's soil is a non-negotiable investment in the continent's people, economies and environmental future. The time for integrated action is now. For deeper insights into the event, [read more](#).

## *A taste of Nigeria*

### *Jollof Rice*

This one-pot dish of rice slowly cooked in a rich, spicy tomato and pepper stew is the undisputed star at every Nigerian celebration, from birthdays and weddings to holidays and family gatherings. Its deep red hue symbolizes joy and festivity. While several West African nations have their version, the friendly rivalry over who makes the best Jollof (with Nigeria firmly in the lead!) is a cherished part of the region's banter, showcasing food as a core part of identity and community.



### **Key Ingredients**

- **The Base:** 3 cups long-grain parboiled rice, rinsed.
- **The Sauce:** 4 large red bell peppers (tatashe), 3 scotch bonnet peppers (atarodo, adjust for heat), 2 large tomatoes, and 1 large red onion—all blended into a smooth paste.
- **The Flavour:** ½ cup vegetable oil, 2 tablespoons tomato paste, 3 cups chicken or beef stock, 2 teaspoons curry powder, 2 teaspoons dried thyme, 3 bay leaves.
- **The Essentials:** 1 tablespoon salt (or to taste), 1 knorr or maggi chicken cube.

### **Instructions**

1. **Make the Base:** In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, heat the vegetable oil over medium heat. Add the sliced remaining onion and fry for 2 minutes. Add the tomato paste and fry for 3-4 minutes, stirring constantly until it darkens slightly.
2. **Build the Stew:** Pour in the blended pepper mixture. Add the thyme, curry powder, bay leaves, salt, and seasoning cube. Stir and let it cook, uncovered, for 20-25 minutes until the sauce thickens and the oil rises to the top.
3. **Cook the Rice:** Add the stock to the reduced sauce and bring to a boil. Taste and adjust seasoning, it should be flavorful and peppery. Stir in the rinsed rice until fully coated. Cover the pot tightly with foil, then the lid, to trap the steam.
4. **Slight Burn:** Reduce the heat to the absolute lowest. Allow the rice to steam for 30 minutes. Do not stir. After 30 minutes, check; the rice should be cooked.
5. **Serve & Enjoy:** Gently fluff the rice from the top, incorporating the crust if desired. Serve hot with fried plantains, coleslaw, or grilled chicken or fish.



## UPCOMING EVENT

Get ready for a series of exciting upcoming events that will bring together experts, policy makers, and stakeholders to advance sustainable food systems.

- **Event Title:** Women in Agroecology and Food Systems training hosted by the Ethiopian Sustainable food Systems and Agroecology Consortium.  
**Date & place of Event:** 11 December 2025. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **Event Title:** Launch of the national agroecology strategy.  
**Date & place of Event:** 11 December, 2025. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **Event Title:** Launching of the Ethiopian Fertilizer and Soil Health Roadmap.  
**Date of Event:** 15 December 2025.. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **Event Title:** Indigenous Foods, Culture Fair and Conference.  
**Date of Event:** 20 December, 2025. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **Event Title:** Climate Change and Its Implication on Community. Multi-Stakeholder Advocacy and Technical Workshop.  
**Date of Event:** 22 December 2025.. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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We are excited to invite you to be featured in our upcoming special December edition of ESFSAC's newsletter. If you have any projects, achievements or announcements you'd like to share, please send us your content by mid-December. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase your work. For submissions or inquiries, feel free to contact us or email your content to: [contact.esfsac@gmail.com](mailto:contact.esfsac@gmail.com) / [natnaelbirhanu14@gmail.com](mailto:natnaelbirhanu14@gmail.com) / [lensagirma146@gmail.com](mailto:lensagirma146@gmail.com) . We look forward to featuring your highlights.

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### Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC)

#### Consortium Members

- MELCA Ethiopia
- Land for Life Ethiopia
- PELUM Ethiopia
- Enhanced Rural Self-Help Association
- Pesticide Action Nexus Ethiopia
- Agri Service Ethiopia
- CST Ethiopia
- Home Grown vision
- PHE Ethiopia
- Ethio-Organic Seed Action
- Action Aid Ethiopia
- Ethio Africa Youth & Green Legacy Charitable Organization
- ORDA Ethiopia

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