

— PHOSPHORUS STEWARDSHIP FOR AFRICA'S FOOD SECURITY

From Dialogue to a Continental Platform

The evolution of the African Phosphorus Platform for Food Security (APPFS) — from an emerging strategic concept into a growing, Africa-led coordination and knowledge platform.

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Africa's agricultural systems continue to face interconnected pressures: rising fertilizer costs, declining soil fertility, climate variability, food insecurity, and the growing need for more resilient and sustainable food systems. Across much of the continent, phosphorus-phosphorus-deficient soils remain a major constraint to agricultural productivity and long-term soil restoration. Yet despite phosphorus being fundamental to crop productivity, fertilizer efficiency, soil health, and agricultural transformation, it has often remained insufficiently visible within broader agricultural policy, investment, and coordination frameworks.

The African Phosphorus Platform for Food Security (APPFS) was established to address that gap — connecting fragmented evidence, elevating phosphorus within continental agendas, and building the coordination infrastructure needed to translate science into policy and practice. Today, APPFS continues evolving as an Africa-led coordination and knowledge platform connecting institutions working across research, policy, development, implementation, fertilizer systems, soil health, and food systems transformation. Its objective is not to duplicate existing initiatives, but rather to strengthen coordination, improve science-to-policy translation, and elevate phosphorus stewardship as a strategic pillar for Africa's food security and soil health agenda.

Over the past year, APPFS has progressively transitioned from an emerging strategic concept into a growing continental platform — positioning phosphorus as a critical entry point for advancing food security, soil health restoration, fertilizer efficiency, and resilient agricultural systems across Africa.

THE BEGINNING

The need for a more coordinated approach

APPFS evolved progressively through institutional reflections, technical exchanges, and strategic discussions around the growing need for a more coordinated phosphorus agenda in Africa.

Almost a year before formal Founding Members discussions began, the Global Phosphorus Institute (GPI) had initiated internal thinking under its Strategic Direction 2030 (SD2030) about what a dedicated continental platform could look like. These early reflections recognized a persistent challenge across the continent: phosphorus-related evidence, policy engagement, monitoring systems, and implementation efforts remained fragmented despite the central importance of phosphorus to agricultural productivity, soil restoration, and long-term food systems resilience.

The same concerns surfaced repeatedly. African soils remain widely phosphorus-deficient, but phosphorus is rarely treated as a strategic resource within policy and investment discussions. Evidence exists, on use efficiency, soil restoration, fertilizer systems, but remains fragmented and insufficiently translated into decision-making. Broader fertilizer and soil health discussions often overshadow phosphorus-specific challenges and opportunities. And the institutions working on related issues frequently operate in parallel rather than through coordinated engagement.

These reflections progressively laid the foundation for what would later become the African Phosphorus Platform for Food Security (APPFS).

FROM CONCEPT TO PLATFORM

Designing a mechanism to connect

As discussions matured, the GPI structured a more deliberate process under its SD2030 framework. The platform that emerged was designed not as a new implementing organization, but rather as a coordination and knowledge-support mechanism – one focused on connecting fragmented phosphorus-related initiatives; strengthening science-to-policy translation; improving visibility of phosphorus within continental frameworks including the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health (AFSH) Action Plan; and supporting evidence-informed decision-making across the continent.

Phosphorus is not simply a fertilizer issue. It is a strategic lever for food security, soil health, resilience, sustainability transitions, and long-term agricultural transformation in Africa.

The central message that took shape through the SD2030 process

APPFS's role is to make that case effectively, and to support the institutions already doing the work.

EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT

Building partnerships across the ecosystem

As APPFS evolved, it began engaging a broader ecosystem of institutions across research, policy, development finance, private sector, implementation, and regional coordination spaces. These engagements focused on identifying practical areas where institutions could collectively contribute to phosphorus use efficiency, soil fertility restoration, fertilizer access and affordability, phosphorus monitoring and evidence systems, science- to-policy translation, investment alignment, and regional and continental coordination.

Throughout these exchanges, APPFS consistently emphasized building upon existing expertise, datasets, institutional networks, and ongoing initiatives rather than creating parallel systems. This collaborative positioning helped strengthen confidence in APPFS as a platform designed to connect rather than compete.

THE FOUNDING MEMBERS PROCESS

From institutional dialogue to collective ownership

A defining moment in APPFS's first year came at the African Food Systems (AFS) Forum 2025 in Dakar, Senegal. A dedicated Founding Members discussion was convened on the sidelines of the Forum, chaired by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), bringing together GPI, the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), and the African Plant Nutrition Institute (APNI).

During those discussions, GPI presented the evolving APPFS concept, its strategic rationale, and the proposed positioning of the platform. The exchanges helped collectively cement both the concept itself and the broader institutional recognition that Africa required a dedicated yet collaborative mechanism capable of strengthening phosphorus stewardship within food systems, fertilizer, and soil health discussions. The Dakar meeting marked the point at which institutional dialogue began transitioning into collective ownership.



PICTURE 1 — DAKAR, SENEGAL

Founding Members convened on the sidelines of the African Food Systems (AFS) Forum 2025.

In the months that followed, additional institutions joined the process: the African Union Development Agency — New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFIDA), the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel (RHFSH), and the African Development Bank (AfDB). In total, APPFS now counts ten Founding Members.

10 FOUNDING MEMBERS

Adeliberately light-touch framework — voluntary, in-kind, and free of governance burdens that would limit participation.



The Founding Members framework was designed to be deliberately light-touch: voluntary, in-kind, and free of governance burdens that would limit participation. Meetings have served as productive spaces for reviewing priorities, identifying collaboration opportunities, surfacing phosphorus evidence gaps, and refining the platform’s positioning within broader continental agendas.

APPFS TODAY

Four areas of work

APPFS is now an active platform anchored in four areas of work. These reflect both the gaps identified in early discussions and the needs expressed by partners over the past year. A growing focus is on integration — supporting the inclusion of phosphorus considerations in continental, regional, and national planning and investment processes, and translating the platform’s positioning into concrete policy entry points for partners.

01

Coordination & alignment support

Connecting fragmented phosphorus initiatives and aligning institutional efforts across the continent.

02

Research-to-policy translation

Turning evidence on use efficiency and soil health into decisions partners can act on.

03

Phosphorus monitoring & evidence

Strengthening the data systems that make phosphorus visible within continental agendas.

04

Investment & resource alignment

Aligning financing and resources behind phosphorus stewardship and soil restoration.

RECENT ENGAGEMENTS

The 2026 GPI Stakeholders Forum

APPFS recently contributed to broader stakeholder exchanges during the 2026 GPI Stakeholders Forum, held at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) in Benguerir, Morocco. The Forum brought together research institutions, development partners, policymakers, and technical organizations working across fertilizer systems, soil health, and food systems transformation. The discussions provided an opportunity to further position APPFS as a collaborative coordination and knowledge-support platform — strengthening science-to-policy dialogue, evidence exchange, institutional alignment, and phosphorus stewardship within Africa’s evolving fertilizer and soil health landscape.



Picture 2 — Benguerir, Morocco

Participants at the 2026 GPI Stakeholders Forum, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P).

LOOKING AHEAD

From positioning to active engagement

The next phase for APPFS will focus on deepening partnerships, strengthening technical collaboration, and moving from positioning to active engagement in policy and investment processes. The Founding Members mechanism remains central to collective direction-setting. The path from those early GPI reflections to a ten member continental platform has been one of sustained dialogue and institutional commitment — and that foundation is now the basis for a more active phase of work.



About APPFS

The African Phosphorus Platform for Food Security (APPFS) is an Africa-led coordination and knowledge-support platform connecting research, policy, development, and implementation institutions around phosphorus stewardship, soil health, and food security in Africa.

— Learn more at www.appfs.org