

Towards an African Bioeconomy Vision

Concept Note

Co-organized by: *icipe*/BioInnovate Africa, East African Science and Technology Commission, Stockholm Environment Institute- Africa Centre, and AKADEMIYA2063.

**25 – 26 August 2026
Nairobi, Kenya**

1. Background and rationale

The bioeconomy offers Africa a transformative opportunity to convert its abundant biological resources into sustainable economic value, while addressing pressing challenges around food security, climate change, industrial/economic development, and job creation. As global interest in bio-based solutions, bio-based trade and investments accelerates, the case for a coordinated African response has never been stronger. This workshop convenes experts from Eastern and Southern Africa and beyond to share regional experiences and initiate dialogue on a shared continental bioeconomy vision.

South Africa and Namibia have emerged as continental pioneers in this space, having launched dedicated national bioeconomy strategies in 2013 and 2024, respectively. More broadly, Eastern and Southern Africa are particularly well positioned to advance the bioeconomy agenda and serve as enablers and pull-factors for Western, Central, and Northern Africa, owing to the regions' strong research ecosystems, maturing regulatory environments, and dynamic innovation and entrepreneurship capacities.

In December 2022, the East African Community (EAC) announced a dedicated regional bioeconomy strategy for East Africa 2022-2032 – the only one yet of its kind in the continent. Since then two regional bioeconomy status reports have been prepared under the leadership of the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO) to track progress in the implementation of the strategy. A couple of year later, in 2024, partners in East Africa including *icipe*/BioInnovate Africa, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) – Africa Centre, and EASTECO, in collaboration with the International Advisory Council on Global Bioeconomy (IACGB), co-hosted the 4th Global Bioeconomy Summit in Nairobi, Kenya - the first time GBS was held outside Germany since its start in 2015. GBS 2024 made several recommendations, including the need to integrate bioeconomy strategies into broader economic policy. Shortly after, Ethiopia published its dedicated national bioeconomy strategy in December 2024, while Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya have advanced their efforts to prepare dedicated national bioeconomy strategies. In 2025, South Africa hosted the G20, and continued the discussions on the G20 Initiative on Bioeconomy (initiated by the Brazilian G20 Presidency) focusing on financing, metrics and standards and governance of the bioeconomy. Since then Africa's policy makers have discussed the value of regional bioeconomy strategies anchored on the regional economic blocks. In September 2025, a West Africa Bioeconomy Workshop was convened in Senegal to advance dialogue on national and regional bioeconomy strategies, share emerging experiences, and explore pathways toward a regional bioeconomy strategy for West Africa. The workshop highlighted the growing momentum across African countries to harness biological resources and the connected traditional knowledge to drive development of a sustainable economy.

Given the growing global momentum around the bioeconomy - underscored by the European Commission's recent publication of its second Bioeconomy Strategy, expanding trade opportunities for bio-based products, and rising international investment in biotechnology and sustainable resource use - there is a strong case for Africa to articulate a shared continental vision. Such a vision would support the implementation of Africa's Agenda 2063, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA), the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and other related continental initiatives. To this end, the workshop will bring together experts from East Africa, Southern Africa, and beyond to share experiences in developing and implementing regional bioeconomy strategies, and to kickstart discussions on a coherent African bioeconomy vision that could pave the way for a continental strategy.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the workshop are to:

- a. Discuss the state of bioeconomy development in Africa, focusing on sustainable industrialization, the business and investment opportunities, and the contribution of traditional knowledge.
- b. Discuss lessons learnt, challenges, and opportunities emerging from implementing dedicated regional and national bioeconomy strategies or frameworks.
- c. Contribute to a longer-term process toward a continent-wide bioeconomy vision.

3. Expected outcomes

- a. This workshop is expected to advance a shared understanding of bioeconomy development in Africa, while contributing to the development of a continent-wide bioeconomy vision.
- b. Additionally, the workshop is expected to contribute to a broader African narrative on bioeconomy and opportunities for investment and international cooperation, which can be shared at the Global Bioeconomy Summit scheduled for 20-21 October 2026 in Dublin, Ireland.

4. Participants

The workshop will bring together a diverse group of 40 to 50 stakeholders, including:

- a. Policymakers from relevant government ministries, departments and agencies (e.g., science and technology, agriculture, environment, industry, energy, and finance).
- b. Researchers and academics working on bioeconomy-related topics.
- c. Representatives of regional bodies, initially including AfCFTA, ECOWAS, EAC, SADC, and UMA.
- d. Representatives from continental bodies (AUC and AUDA-NEPAD).
- e. Innovators, entrepreneurs, and private sector actors active in bio-based sectors.
- f. Civil society and community-based organizations, particularly those linked to traditional/indigenous knowledge.

5. Draft Agenda

Date/Time (Hrs) EAT	Session	Content
Day 0, 24 August Arrival and check in at Hotel		
Day 1, 25 August		
08:30 – 09:00	Registration and Coffee	
09:00 – 10:00	Opening Session	Opening Statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DG, icipe • HE Ambassador, Embassy of Ireland, Kenya • CEO, AUDA-NEPAD • Commissioner DARBE, AUC • PS, State Department for Science, Research & Innovation in the Office of the Prime Cabinet Secretary, Kenya • CS, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry, Kenya.
10:00 – 10:30	Launch of the Kenya National Bioeconomy Strategy	National Bioeconomy Strategy Working Group
10:30 – 11:00	Group Photo/Coffee Break/Press Conference	
11:00 – 12:30	Session 1: Setting the Scene & Bioeconomy in Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop objectives and expected outcomes (Organizers). • Keynotes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bioeconomy in Africa – Editor, AJFAND & launch of the Special Issue; ○ Sustainable industrialization in East Africa– Authors, State of the Bioeconomy in East Africa Report 2026 report, and launch of the report.
12:30 – 13:45	Lunch Break	
14:00 – 17:00	Session 2: National and Regional Experiences, Stocktaking, and Pathways (How are countries and regions addressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa) and EAC will share their lessons from developing and implementing their national bioeconomy strategies – forming five stations • Participants will form five groups which will rotate through the five stations

	challenges and amplifying opportunities from implementing national and regional bioeconomy strategies?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups will gain insights from African countries with bioeconomy strategies • At each station, they will discuss pathways, challenges, and the enabling environment and governance of the bioeconomy • Groups will converge in plenary to share key emerging issues from the discussion.
19:00 – 21:00	Reception at the Irish Ambassador’s Residence (Proposed & TBC)	
Day 2, 26 August		
9:00 – 10:30	<p>Session 3: Thematic Focus I – Traditional knowledge as an integral part of the African bioeconomy</p> <p>(How can Africa leverage traditional /indigenous knowledge to advance its bioeconomy?)</p>	The session will be a panel discussion, where experts will discuss indigenous and local knowledge, and its integral role in the African bioeconomy. Discussions will include benefit-sharing (incl. biodiversity credits), ethics and governance of traditional knowledge.
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00 – 13:00	<p>Session 4: Framing the African Bioeconomy Vision</p> <p>(What elements/principles should define the African bioeconomy vision? What bioeconomy value chains should a continental vision support? How does bioeconomy synergise with the continental frameworks such as CAADP, STISA and AfCFTA, and how might it be governed in light of these frameworks?)</p>	Participants will break out into four groups to discuss (1) bioeconomy principles; (2) important or emerging bioeconomy value chains – includes showcasing bioeconomy entrepreneurship (ideally business that are beyond the idea-stage, i.e. ones that are truly scalable; (3) synergy with existing continental frameworks, and governance framework, and (4) financing the bioeconomy. Each group will select a representative who will report back in report back in plenary.
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break	

14:00 – 15:00	Session 4 - continued: Framing the African Bioeconomy Vision continues with plenary	Moderated conversation with the AUC, AUDA- NEPAD, EAC and EU
15:00 – 16:00	Closing Session 5: Final reflections and closing statement	AU Special Envoy for Food Systems
16:00	END	