

GLOBAL CONVENING 2026 SUMMARY

Sustainable food systems through BDS Market Transformation

*Agri-SMEs as the engine of **change***

10 YEARS amea

6th & 7th October, 2026
Kampala, Uganda

Over **60 members and partners** came together in Kampala to celebrate 10 years of AMEA and discuss how to ensure that investments in food systems lead to stronger agri enterprises, more resilient farmers and lasting impact.

Key message: Uganda has made progress in food-systems policy, agricultural finance, digitalization and BDS standards. The recurring challenge is execution: translating frameworks into coordinated, investable and measurable interventions that improve enterprise performance, farmer livelihoods, nutrition, resilience and access to markets.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Food Systems Transformation – an execution challenge

Food-systems transformation (from Farm-to-Fork) requires an ecosystem approach: policy, finance, technology, BDS markets, nutrition and environmental resilience must operate as one connected system. **Implementation is the key constraint:** Uganda has strategies, standards and coordination structures, but funding, execution and local-level functionality remain uneven. Food system success should be measured through availability, affordability, nutrition, safety and livelihood outcomes, not production alone.

Agri-SMEs as Engines of Change - tailored BDS a must

Agri-SMEs and organized producer groups are central delivery vehicles: stronger farmer organizations, cooperatives and anchor enterprises can connect production, finance, services and markets. **BDS must move from activity-based delivery to a tailored package** that solves specific bottlenecks for the agri-SME segments they are targeting. BDS markets must transform into a genuine marketplace where success is measured by clients' revenue, resilience, competitiveness and repeat business. **Funders must support the local BDS market to transform.**

Financing Food Systems: Right Capital, Right Business

Unlocking agri-finance needs co-ordinated investment. Agricultural finance remains constrained by risk perception, weak data, informality and unsuitable instruments. However **coordinated finance and technical assistance/BDS can significantly improve bankability.** Better segmentation can also build stronger pipelines as the right financing is matched to the right businesses at the right time. There are **real opportunities to work smarter, share learning and become more efficient through collaboration and cooperation.**

9 SPECIFIC ACTIONS EMERGING FROM THE CONVENING

1. **Professionalize the BDS ecosystem:** support BDS Associations, such as UBSP, to roll out business models based on member value creation. This includes enabling provider certification and supporting peer learning.
2. **Enable better matchmaking between BDS and SMEs** Advocate collectively for the development of BDS policy, frameworks and registries which connect specialized BDS supply to SME demand.
3. **Invest more in promoting segmentation at scale** by leveraging the drive for standardization and cost-effectiveness
4. **Strengthen local coordination** at district and sub-county level to avoid duplication and bring quality BDS beyond capital cities
5. **Advance the AMEA Learning into Action agenda** through the 3 existing Working Groups (Environment, Youth and BDS Market Systems), as well as case studies on relevant projects documenting BDS approaches, costs and impact on agri-SMEs, cooperatives and farmer organizations
6. **Build evidence on BDS return on investment** in coordinated Food System investments. ROI will be measured by outcome data on enterprise growth, jobs, food security and climate results. Assess how the S(ocial) component can be included in ROI calculations
7. **Document learning from new BDS business models,** including lender-embedded BDS and shared payment models linked to measurable results
8. **Focus on a few joint initiatives:** select one to three practical collaborations for members and partners to support together next year, perhaps focused on Youth, in conjunction with the newly launched multi-year, Pan-African programme on Supporting Youth and Women-led Agri-enterprises.
9. **Finalize the revised AMEA Strategy and Theory of Change to 2030.** Develop improved pitches to donors and governments clarifying AMEA's value added and menu of interventions

The Next Decade of AMEA

AMEA's 10th anniversary is a moment to celebrate how far we have come and to look ahead. The next decade must be about putting these foundations to work at greater scale: better quality and more sustainable BDS, stronger local networks, and agri-SMEs and farmer organisations that can access the support they need to grow, compete and create value for farmers.

READ FULL REPORT: www.ameaglobal.org/globalconvening