

America's next frontier: Unlocking Africa's \$3.4T agribusiness market

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In an exclusive AgroSpectrum interview, Brent Boydston, Founder, Ag Center Solutions outlined how U.S. agribusiness can seize Africa's \$3.4 trillion AfCFTA opportunity. Feed grains, soy, and DDGS are prime entry points, but success hinges on relationship-driven partnerships, not just transactions. He stressed the need for investments in smallholder modernization, mechanization, and digital agtech to boost productivity and resilience. Boydston also called for next-generation trade frameworks that combine IP protection, technology transfer, and carbon-credit access. Africa's low-input, biodiversity-aligned farming models, he noted, offer critical lessons for sustainable growth. Strategic collaboration, he concluded, can transform Africa into a hub for high-value food production and U.S.-Africa agricultural synergy.



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sustainable growth. Strategic collaboration, he concluded, can transform Africa into a hub for high-value food production and U.S.-Africa agricultural synergy.

I. Market Potential & Geopolitics



Africa's Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) represents a \$3.4 trillion market. From your perspective, what segments of agribusiness—inputs, processing, logistics, retail—are most attractive for U.S. companies to enter first?

From my perspective, feed grains such as corn, sorghum, DDGS from ethanol production, soybeans, and soybean meal represent the most attractive first entry points into African markets. Feed demand for the continent's expanding poultry and livestock industries continues to rise, and population growth will only intensify the need for affordable protein. Market entry will not be without challenges, differing regulatory requirements across the continent will need to be navigated, but these can be addressed through engagement and partnership.

The U.S. is late to Africa compared to China, Brazil, and increasingly India. What does America need to do differently to avoid being boxed out of Africa's agricultural future ?

U.S. businesses need to recognize and seize the opportunities emerging in Africa. Companies must understand that African nations and their people want to partner with American firms, but success requires relationship building rather than transactional thinking. Business in Africa is fundamentally relationship-based. U.S. firms must invest in learning the cultures of the countries where they operate, which is entirely achievable with the right guidance.

They should also collaborate with established U.S. government entities active in Africa such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA FAS) and with cooperators like the U.S. Grains and Bioproducts Council and the United Soybean Export Council. Both have strong local networks across the continent and can play a key role in facilitating market entry and building lasting partnerships.

II. Investment & Capital Flows

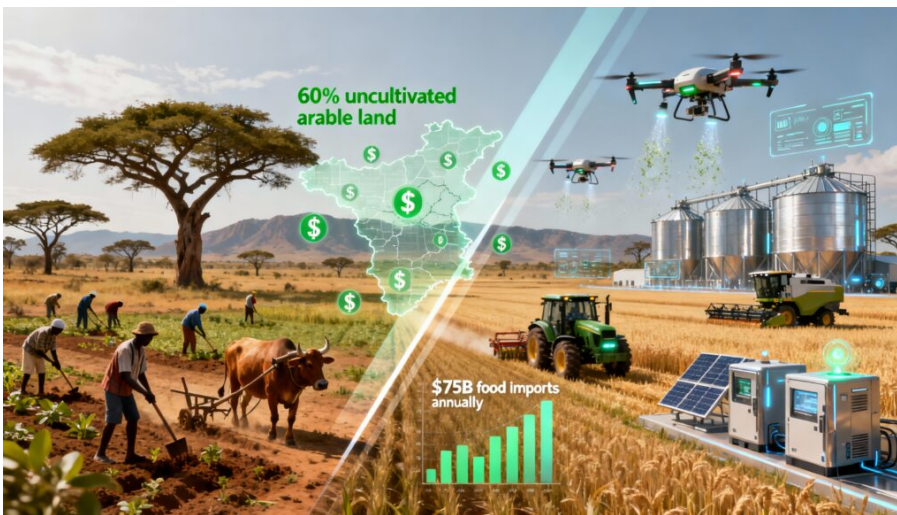


African agriculture still receives less than 5 per cent of total FDI inflows. Where can U.S. venture capital and private equity make the most immediate impact? financing smallholder resilience, scaling agtech, or building midstream infrastructure?

Smallholder resilience, agtech scale-up, and midstream infrastructure are all vital investment avenues, but one area often overlooked is agricultural education paired with modernization. Farming practices in many African regions lag for several reasons, limited access to capital, weak risk-management tools, insufficient training in modern methods, and regulatory systems that are sometimes influenced by outside pressures rather than science.

Take genetically modified organisms (GMOs), for example. Since their adoption in the U.S. in the mid-1990s, GMO crops have helped drive a transition from heavy tillage to minimum- or no-till systems, conserving soil and reducing input use. Yet in several African nations, bans on GMO seed cultivation or import prevent farmers from accessing these technologies and the benefits they bring in pest resistance, yield improvement, and soil protection. Investment that supports education, modernization, and science-based regulation would have immediate and lasting impact.

III. Supply Chains & Infrastructure



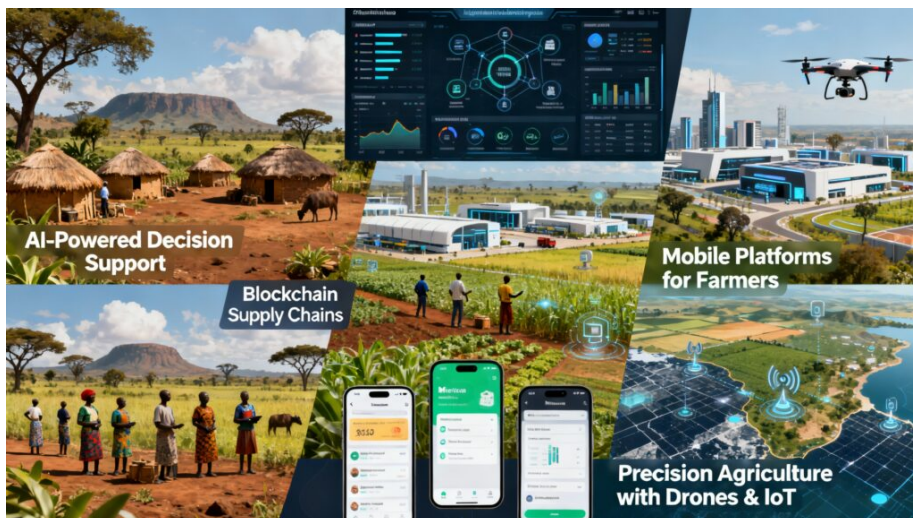
Africa faces a paradox: it holds 60 per cent of the world's uncultivated arable land but imports \$75 billion in food annually. Where can U.S. companies intervene most effectively? fertiliser supply, mechanisation, grain storage, cold chain?

U.S. companies can make an immediate difference by strengthening fertilizer supply chains, investing in farm mechanization services, and developing modern grain-storage and cold-chain infrastructure to reduce post-harvest losses. These interventions not only increase productivity but also improve food security and the profitability of local producers.

With the U.S. pushing for "friend-shoring" and resilient supply chains, can Africa realistically become a hub for U.S. agri-commodity processing and re-export into global markets?

Africa is uniquely positioned to become an exporter of food and processed agricultural products. Large-scale production for the EU already makes Europe one of Africa's top export destinations, while trade ties with India and other Asian markets continue to deepen. With a growing egg and broiler industry, African nations have the opportunity to expand value-added food production while importing feed grains from the United States. When paired with education and technology transfer, currently uncultivated lands could be brought into sustainable production allowing Africa to export higher-value commodities to its key markets.

IV. Technology & Innovation



Digital platforms in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa are redefining input distribution and farmer credit. Where can U.S. tech giants and agri-startups collaborate to leapfrog Africa into next-generation farming ecosystems?

Technology and innovation go hand in hand, and Africa is poised to lead in digital agriculture. Internet access has expanded rapidly, a 115 per cent increase in Sub-Saharan Africa between 2016 and 2022, and this connectivity creates opportunities for improved efficiency and integration with global market.

U.S. agri-tech startups should look to Africa not only as a market but as a collaborative partner for developing scalable digital solutions. Whether in AI-driven crop consulting, digital finance platforms, or precision-farming applications, the continent's young, tech-savvy population offers fertile ground for next-generation agricultural innovation.

V. Policy & Trade Architecture



AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act) is set to expire in 2025. What kind of next-generation U.S.-Africa trade framework would best unlock agribusiness potential?

While it remains uncertain whether the U.S. Congress or Administration will renew or replace AGOA, that uncertainty will likely drive some African nations to pursue bilateral trade agreements with the United States or to pivot toward other markets. Fortunately, a foundation already exists: the U.S. has a full free-trade agreement (FTA) with Morocco; a Trade & Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the East African Community (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan); and multiple other TIFAs and Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) across the continent.

These frameworks provide blueprints for deeper engagement between African nations and the United States. They can also help offset the loss of AGOA by encouraging commercial linkages between countries that already have agreements with the U.S. and those that do not.

Are tariff concessions and export incentives enough??or do we need more holistic agreements covering knowledge transfer, IP, and carbon credits for regenerative farming?

More comprehensive agreements are needed beyond tariff concessions or export incentives. Global integration requires frameworks that protect intellectual property and facilitate technology exchange while ensuring fair access to emerging markets like carbon credits.

For example, to receive carbon credits, farmers must conduct soil sampling and meet strict verification requirements, activities that generate valuable data. That data should remain the property of the farmers who create it, reflecting their knowledge and stewardship. At the same time, they need access to improved tools, such as corn seed varieties designed for maximum carbon sequestration. Protecting the intellectual property behind those seeds and precision-agriculture systems is vital. Formal trade agreements can safeguard both farmersâ?? rights and corporate innovation, maximizing benefits for all parties.

VI. Sustainability & Climate Diplomacy



What lessons can Africa teach the U.S. about low-input, biodiversity-aligned farming models??and how can that shape bilateral partnerships?

Though the U.S. and African farm sectors differ in scale and technology, they share a common goal: producing food sustainably for a growing population. Increasingly, African nations are turning to the United States for guidance on boosting production while conserving natural resources.

A good example is the U.S.-based consulting company Sustainable Agricultural Solutions for Africa, which has worked in Ghana, Rwanda, and Kenya to transfer U.S. know-how on sustainable practices. These collaborations demonstrate a strong mutual interest in sharing best practices and are critical to shaping future bilateral partnerships. They provide tangible proof that sustainability can be achieved through cooperation and knowledge exchange on both sides of the Atlantic.

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