

**Speech by Hon. Mutahi Kagwe, EGH Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development, Republic of Kenya At the CABI Africa Regional Consultation Meeting 11–13 June 2025 | Nairobi, Kenya**

**Your Excellencies, Fellow Ministers of Agriculture, Ambassadors, Heads of Delegation, Distinguished Delegates, Partners, and Friends,**

On behalf of the Government and the people of Kenya, it is my great honour to welcome you all to Nairobi for the 2025 CABI Africa Regional Consultation. We are delighted to host this important gathering of minds and institutions committed to advancing sustainable agriculture, food safety, and environmental stewardship across Africa. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to CABI and our host institutions for organising this timely and strategically relevant consultation.

Kenya takes immense pride in being a founding member of CABI, and equally in hosting CABI's Africa Regional Centre right here in Nairobi. Since its establishment in 1995, the Centre has played a pivotal role in supporting agricultural development in Kenya and across the continent. From innovations in biological control and pest surveillance to capacity building and, more recently, pesticide risk reduction, CABI's work has left a lasting impact on our agricultural systems.

Our partnership with CABI has helped us strengthen national and regional capacity to respond to major transboundary pests such as African armyworm, fall armyworm, and desert locusts. These efforts have directly contributed to enhanced food security, economic growth, and the conservation of biodiversity. In addition, CABI's support in addressing climate-related challenges such as invasive species and land degradation has been invaluable. A notable example is the development of the National Prosopis Strategy, which is now being implemented across our counties as a nature-based solution to landscape restoration.

This year's Regional Consultation comes at a time when Kenya is actively implementing its Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy (ASTGS), which seeks to modernise and transform the agricultural sector through three key pillars: promoting climate-smart and inclusive agriculture; enhancing productivity through sustainable input use; and improving market access by strengthening compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards. Central to the ASTGS is the empowerment of farmers and small and medium enterprises through knowledge, technology, and innovation.

The theme of this consultation **pesticide risk reduction** is highly aligned with our national objectives. As Kenya works to enhance the global competitiveness of its agricultural exports, we must ensure responsible use of agro-inputs, strengthen our regulatory and enforcement systems, and uphold international food safety standards. These are non-negotiables for a sustainable and resilient food system.

Kenya remains deeply committed to regional and continental integration efforts, particularly under the **Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)**, which continues to guide our agricultural transformation agenda. We are working closely with the African Union Commission, AUDA-NEPAD, and the East African Community to harmonise policies that support integrated pest management, biosafety, farmer education, and trade facilitation—including within the framework of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

These efforts are in line with the emerging **Africa Common Position on Food Systems**, which calls for coordinated actions, strong regulatory frameworks, and cross-border cooperation to ensure food safety, environmental protection, and the resilience of rural livelihoods. We commend CABI for its long-standing commitment to regional collaboration and for supporting African countries and Regional Economic Communities in strengthening phytosanitary systems, pest control, and food safety frameworks.

Here in Kenya, we particularly value CABI's strategic partnership with the **Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO)**. This partnership has spanned decades and delivered transformative results from collaborative research to farmer advisory services and innovative pest management solutions. We also acknowledge CABI's continued collaboration with local institutions, including universities, county governments, and agricultural extension systems, which helps to bridge the gap between science and practice.

It is also important to situate this consultation within the broader continental momentum generated by the **Africa Climate Summit**, held here in Nairobi last year. At that historic summit, African nations, including Kenya, made bold commitments to climate-resilient food systems and nature-based solutions. Today's discussions on pesticide governance, environmental protection, and knowledge-driven agriculture reinforce those commitments and signal a clear path forward.

Looking ahead, the success of our shared ambitions depends on our ability to coordinate effectively, share knowledge, and align policies across sectors and borders. In this regard, CABI's role as a neutral, science-based organisation is more critical than ever. We are navigating complex challenges including the escalating impacts of climate change on pest dynamics and pesticide use; increasing public health concerns related to chemical residues; and the urgent need for harmonised standards, from farm to fork.

### **Distinguished colleagues and partners,**

As I conclude, I urge that we seize this opportunity. Let this not be just another meeting. Let it be a milestone a space where our collective expertise, political will, and institutional partnerships converge to generate solutions that make a difference on the ground. I encourage all of us to actively contribute to the development of CABI's future strategy. This is our opportunity to ensure that the strategy is rooted in African realities, responsive to national ambitions, and aligned with continental frameworks.

Let us also explore how we can deepen collaboration with CABI to build a more cohesive African agenda for pesticide governance, food safety, and sustainable intensification. Let us tap into global partnerships, including opportunities for **triangular cooperation with the Global South**, to scale up innovations and improve the livelihoods of millions of African farmers.

Kenya stands ready to work closely with CABI and fellow Member Countries to realise this shared vision. Together, we can accelerate Africa's transformation into a food-secure, environmentally sustainable, and economically vibrant continent.

Finally, while you are here, I invite you to experience the richness of Kenya from the bustling innovation hubs of Nairobi to our serene landscapes, cultural heritage, and warm hospitality. Kenya is not only a hub of agricultural innovation it is also a land of diversity, resilience, and inspiration.

**Thank you. Karibuni Kenya.**