



Post-Harvest Loss: The African Union Commission’s Post-Harvest Management Strategy

Background and Context

Commitment 3 of the Malabo Declaration (Ending Hunger in Africa by 2025) calls for African Union Member States to cut 2014 levels of post-harvest losses by half until 2025 –, as measured in the Biennial Review. In line with this target, and with support from the FAO, the African Union Commission’s Department for Rural Economy and Agriculture (AUC-DREA) has since developed the African Union Continental Postharvest Management Strategy (AUC 2018). In addition to achieving the targets of the Malabo Declaration, the implementation of this strategy will support the attainment, at the global level, of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Goal 12.3 which aims, by 2030, to halve per-capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels, as well as to reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.

This strategy presents an integrated approach to dealing with post-harvest losses by bringing together all possible technical and policy approaches across the entire agricultural value chain to address the causes of post-harvest losses along priority commodity food chains.

Main Challenges to Improving Post-Harvest Loss Management

Food loss and waste is a global phenomenon: roughly one-third of the food produced in the world for human consumption is wasted. This loss and waste amounts to roughly US \$680 billion in industrialised countries and US \$310 billion in developing countries annually (FAO 2019). Total quantitative food loss in sub-Saharan Africa, meanwhile, has been estimated at a 100 million metric tonnes per year. For grains alone, the value of post-harvest losses are estimated to equate to approximately US \$4 billion per year (at 2007 prices). This quantity could meet the annual food requirements of about 48 million people, exceeds the annual value of grain imports into Africa, and even exceeds the value of total food aid received in sub-Saharan Africa over the past decade.

KEY MESSAGES

Post-harvest losses occur both in quantitative terms, affecting food availability and nutrition security, and in qualitative terms, affecting the use, utilisation and availability of food. Apart from reducing the total amount and quality of food available, PHL also exacerbates already fragile and poverty-ridden rural economies by eroding income generation along the food value chain and thereby, affecting the accessibility, as well as the sustainability, of food and nutrition security. Overall, post-harvest losses have a tremendous impact on the totality of food and nutrition security. Halving post-harvest losses from current levels will, therefore, have a tremendously positive impact in reducing food insecurity on the African continent.



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In the Inaugural Biennial Review Report for implementing the Malabo Declaration, very few countries reported on the indicator measuring Post-Harvest Loss. Based on the African Agriculture Transformation Scorecard derived from the Report, it would appear that African countries still face significant challenges in addressing post-harvest loss (PHL) management. Some of these challenges are summarised in Table 1.

It is challenges such as those listed that the African Union Post Harvest Loss Management Strategy will address from a continental perspective, in support of actions to be taken in the same areas at the regional economic community level and, ultimately, at Member-State level also.

Objective	Key Challenges
1. Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lack of policy direction and focus on post-harvest loss (PHL) management ▶ Lack of standardised structures within national PHL management strategies
2. Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lack of awareness at all levels and lack of high-level focus on PHL
3. Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lack of coordination among country actors and institutions dealing with PHL ▶ Poor involvement of the private sector and other disciplines in coordinated action on PHL ▶ Lack of institutional capacity development on PHL management ▶ Poor enforcement of existing PHL regulations and guidelines (eg. regarding marketing systems and storage structures)
4. Knowledge management and data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fragmented and uncoordinated efforts at research and development on PHL ▶ Lack of PHL best practices and knowledge platforms, universities, research institutions and training centres ▶ Lack of PHL data, lack of harmonised data and poor reporting ▶ Poor agricultural market information systems
5. Skills and human development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lack of PHL training at all levels of the education system ▶ Poor extension services which also lack PHL management training
6. Technology, agri-business and agro-processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lack of appropriate technology and access to PHL reducing technologies ▶ High cost of PHL-reducing technologies ▶ Lack of regulations on standards and efficiency ratings for PHL reducing technologies ▶ Poorly developed agri-business and agro-processing due to lack of incentives for the private sector involving in PHL management, particularly in agri-businesses and agro-processing
7. Markets and market infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lack of formal coordinated marketing structures ▶ Lack of trading and / or marketing regulations ▶ Lack of grades and standards for both commodities and storage structures ▶ Lack of or weak market infrastructure such as roads, transport, storage
8. Financing and investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ High cost of, and poor access, to financing for PHL technologies ▶ Lack of funding for PHL activities ▶ Poor involvement of the private sector in PHL initiatives, including policy formulation
9. Cross-cutting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Weak capacity to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change on PHL ▶ Poor engagement and training of women and youth in PHL management ▶ Poor regulations on use and disposal of pesticides and other storage chemicals

Table 1: Challenges in addressing post-harvest loss management.
Source: African Union Post Harvest Loss Management Strategy (2018)

Recommendations for Anchoring Post-Harvest Loss Management Within NAIPs

NAIPs are implemented at country level, with support from the regional and AU levels. The AU Strategy is designed to support the implementation of country- or regional-level PHL activities through better investment planning.

Post-harvest loss management, in particular, calls for multidimensional and multi-disciplinary support throughout the agricultural value chain. To this effect, the African Union Post-Harvest Loss Management Strategy is structured around four pillars – outlined in Table 2 below – which can be used as guiding principles for revising the NAIPs.

Pillar	Strategic focus area(s)	Specific objectives cluster
I	Policy, Awareness and Institutional Capacity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Facilitate the development and effective implementation of structurally standardised and robust PHL policies and strategies. Awareness: Facilitate and create awareness about the impact, economic value and consequences of PHL on food security. Institutional: Facilitate the establishment of institutional and organisational mechanisms that allow for effective coordination and support of post-harvest loss initiatives.
II	Knowledge Management, Data, Skills and Human Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge management: Support the creation, generation, dissemination and reporting of data, knowledge, knowledge products and best practices in post-harvest loss and its management. Skills and human development: Facilitate the development of skills and capacities in PHL management and training.
III	Technology, Markets and Infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Technology, agri-business and agro-processing: The promotion of technological advancements, value addition and preservation through improved agri-business and agro-processing, to support PHL management best practices. Markets and market infrastructure: Support the development of improved markets and market infrastructure, including grades and standards in PHL management throughout agricultural value chains. Cross-cutting: Promote the use of environmentally friendly, labour-saving and gender-sensitive technologies in PHL management.
IV	Finance and Investment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Financing and Investment: Support governance that induces the macro-economic conditions conducive for financing and investment in PHL management. Private-sector involvement and investment in agriculture: Support the establishment of engagement mechanisms in PHL management with the private sector in order to allow for leveraging private sector expertise, financing and business interests in food and nutrition security.

Table 2: The Strategic Objectives of the African Union Post-Harvest Loss Management Strategy.

Source: African Union Post Harvest Loss Management Strategy (2018) .



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How Post-Harvest Loss is measured in the Biennial Review

Malabo Commitment	Commitment Performance Category	Objectives	Indicator	Target value
Ending Hungry by 2025	3.3 Post-Harvest Loss	Provide logistics support to all stages of the food production chain (field/harvest, storage, processing, transportation, final retail market) to limit degradation both in quantity and in quality of the produced food.	3.3 Reduction rate of Post-Harvest Losses for (at least) the 5 national priority commodities, and possibly for the 11 AU agriculture priority commodities.	50%



Further Information

- ▶ AUC (2018). *African Union Commission Post-Harvest Loss Management Strategy*. - [View](#)
- ▶ FAO (2019). 'SAVE FOOD: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction' - Key findings. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: Rome. - [View](#)

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