

**Proposed Coordination Mechanisms for the Implementation  
of the African Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan (AFSH-  
AP) and Soil Initiative for Africa (SIA)**

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## Summary

The African Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan (AFSH-AP) is the implementation instrument of the long-term Soil Initiative for Africa (SIA) Framework and must be implemented within the first ten years. Successful implementation of the AFSH-AP is vital to the agenda to halt soil degradation in Africa and ensure improved and sustained soil health. The Nairobi Presidential declaration (2024) specified strong milestones to be covered and tracked by key indicators. Achieving these milestones will require collaborative efforts by a wide range of stakeholders at all levels (global, continental, regional, and national, sub-national, etc.) with expertise in different thematic areas. Effective implementation of the AFSH-AP therefore requires effective and rigorous coordination to ensure coherent actions by all partners to achieve measurable impact in improved soil health. Mechanisms and arrangements to ensure such coordination will be needed at every level of aggregation. The coordination mechanisms that are needed at the continental, regional, and national levels are described below.

The coordination mechanisms proposed in this document has been reviewed by the authorizing environment and partners in African agricultural research and development. This document is still considered open and may be revised from time to time to accommodate changes as they occur or are required.

This version provides two pictograms to illustrate our thoughts around SIA and AFSH-AP implementation and coordination. It further provides a brief narrative on the coordination and Terms of Reference (ToR) for each segment and group of actors.

This coordination document and ToR will be followed by the development of a comprehensive work plan led by AUDA-NEPAD<sup>1</sup> and approved by the AU at the upcoming CAADP-PP<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> AUDA-NEPAD = African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Agricultural Development

<sup>2</sup> CAADP-PP = Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program – Partnership Platform

## 1.0 Background

The Soil Initiative for Africa (SIA) Framework has been formulated to guide efforts to improve the health and productivity of African soil. The framework informs the development of a system to address all elements of the enabling environment as well as implementation on the ground. As such, the SIA Framework identifies the institutional, policy, programs, investment, partnership, and services that will be needed at each level (farm, community, national, regional and continental) across Africa. This will ensure that farmers and communities have the support they need to utilize and sustain their soils for optimal agricultural production, positive environmental outcomes, and sustainable livelihoods. As a long-term Framework (situated within CAADP<sup>3</sup>), the SIA will be implemented in consecutive 10-year phases as structured in the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan (AFSH-AP 2024-2034).

Effective implementation of the AFSH-AP will be conducted by multiple partners and organizations at multiple levels (i.e., continental, regional, national, and sub-national levels) and will require efficient coordination and facilitation to ensure optimal impact in improving soil health. The following considerations are essential to ensure successful coordination of implementation that would leverage the existing knowledge and understanding of multiple organizations that were involved in preparing the two instruments (SIA framework and AFSH-AP) approved at the AFSH Summit:

1. Emphasis on the AUC and AUDA-NEPAD's overall leadership in the post-summit implementation coordination to accentuate the African-owned and African-led process.
2. Recognizing that post-summit implementation will be executed by a wide range of stakeholders and partners i.e., a combination(s) of technocrats, practitioners, scientists, donors, development partners, public and private entities, industry actors, civil society organizations, consumers, and land users.
3. Recognizing the likelihood of diverse funding models and flows in support of post-summit implementation.
4. Recognizing and leveraging the valuable contributions and institutional memory of multiple organizations and donor partners in preparing for the Summit and in post-summit activities.

Considering the complexity, range of stakeholders involved in post-summit implementation, and potential range of funding models, a coordination mechanism is being proposed, as illustrated in Figure 1. Figure 2 illustrates the anticipated organizational structure; from the SIA Secretariat to partnering technical organizations.

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<sup>3</sup> CAADP = the African Union's Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program

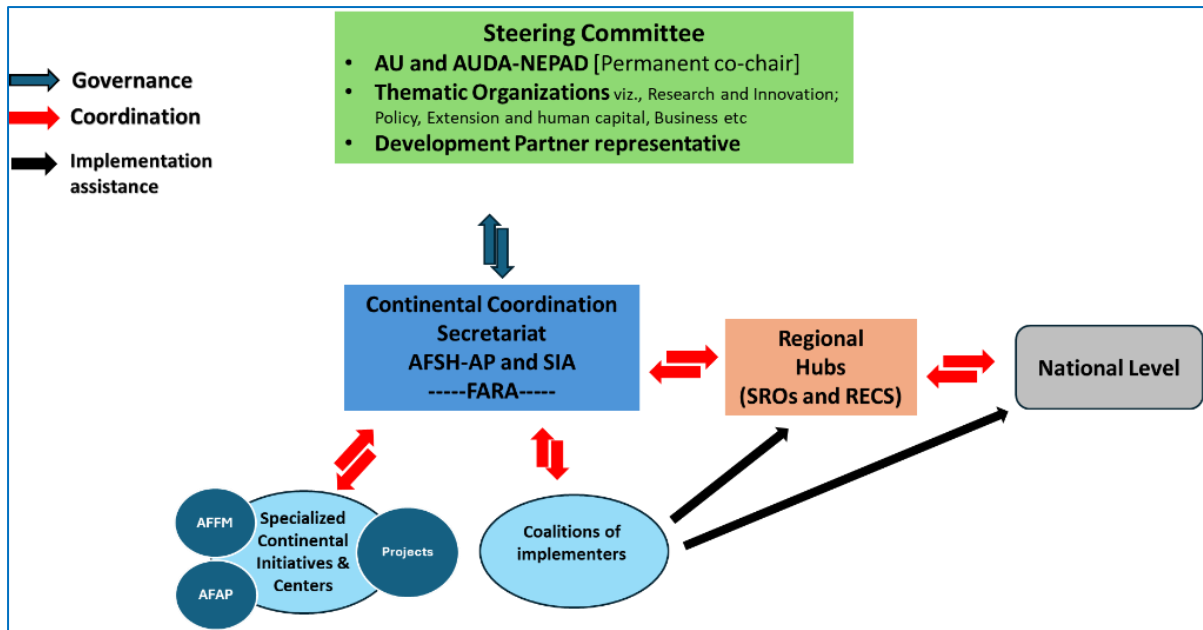


Figure 1. The AFSH-Action Plan and SIA Secretariat's governance structure.

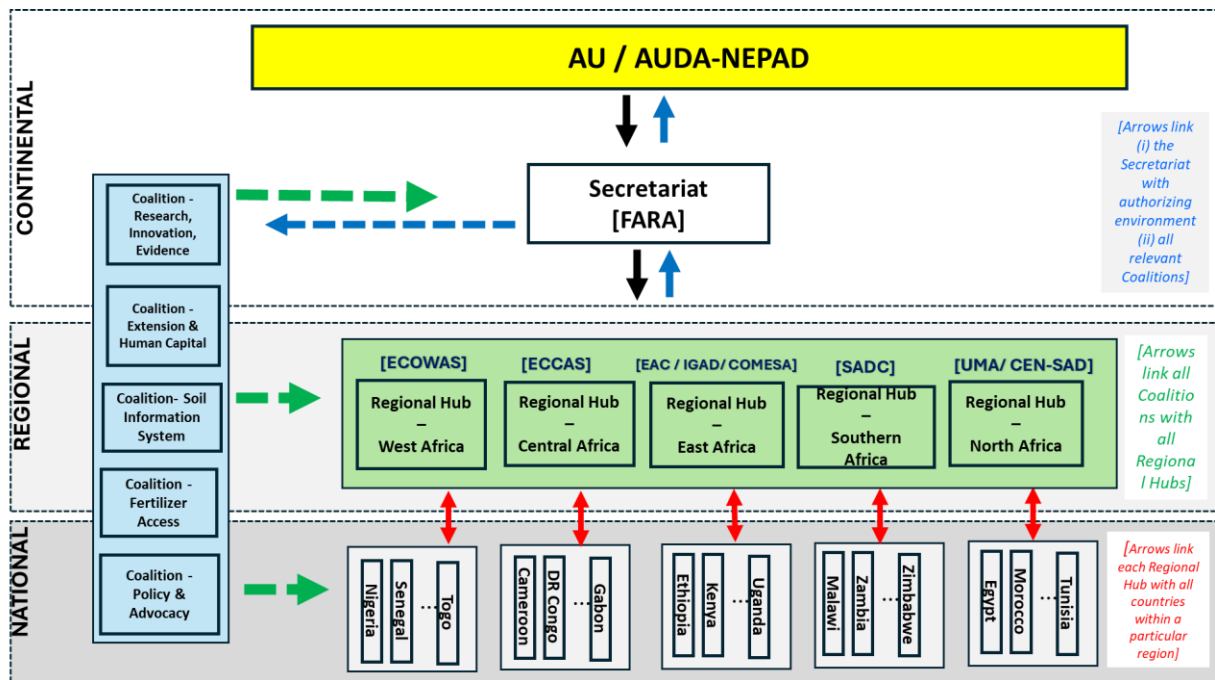


Figure 2 . Organizational Structure for the Implementation of AFSH-AP

## **2 Terms of Reference for the Coordination and Implementation Entities**

### **2.1 ToR for the African Union Commission (DARBE)**

The African Union Commission (AUC) is responsible for organizing all continental development efforts. It has the statutory role of engaging other entities on the continent to develop initiatives and seek the highest political backing to implement them. The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE) is responsible for all matters relating to fertilizer and soil health in Africa. Having played the overarching leadership role in conceptualizing and developing the AFSH-AP and the SIA, the commission through DARBE, will execute the following functions in the coordination of the implementation of the AFSH-AP.

1. To serve as the authorizing body for the AFSH-AP and the SIA.
2. To serve as the permanent co-chair of the Steering Committee along with AUDA-NEPAD (Figure 1).
3. To receive progress reports from the secretariat and authorize the structuring of the report into CAADP BR processes.
4. To convene relevant political stakeholders at the continental level, such as heads of government and ministers on the issues of fertilizer and soil health in Africa.
5. To provide guidance to the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and national governments on the issues of fertilizers and soil health.
6. To facilitate collaboration and partnerships with global stakeholders, including donors, governments (including the European Commission), development partners, and private sector partners.
7. To develop continental policies relating to the SIA and AFSH-AP.

### **2.2 ToR for African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)**

The mandate of AUDA-NEPAD is to coordinate and execute priority continental and regional projects to promote regional integration towards the accelerated realisation of Agenda 2063. Statutorily, AUDA-NEPAD plays a pivotal role in creating a conducive environment for effective coordination of continental initiatives. It provides technical backstopping to the AU in implementing policy recommendations at the continental, regional and national levels. AUDA-NEPAD will therefore play a leading technical role in galvanizing the support of member states in developing the implementation work plan for the AFSH-AP and the SIA. The following roles are proposed for AUDA-NEPAD:

1. To serve as the co-authorizing body, along with the AUC, for the AFSH-AP and SIA with a focus on implementation.
2. To serve as the permanent co-chair of the Steering Committee along with the AUC (Figure 1).
3. To provide guidance on delivery mechanisms and impact pathways to implement the SIA and AFSH-AP.
4. To provide oversight for the development of indicators for reporting into the CAADP-BR.
5. To provide guidance and support at the regional and national levels for the domestication and implementation of the AFSH-AP and SIA at these levels.
6. To contribute to developing and sustaining the partnership strategy required for the implementation of the AFSH-AP and SIA.
7. To contribute to developing and rolling out continental policies on fertilizers and soil health.

### **2.3 ToR for the SIA Secretariat's coordination and implementation of the AFSH-AP and the SIA Framework**

Considering that the SIA is the long-term framework for managing soil action until 2063 (in alignment with Agenda 2063), it is recommended that a SIA Secretariat be established for long-term coordination and facilitation of implementation of the SIA and AFSH-Action Plan.

The broad stakeholder group in African agriculture has proposed and recommended the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) to host the SIA Secretariat. This is consistent with and corresponds to FARA's role as the technical arm (by special arrangement) of the AUC and AUDA-NEPAD in matters related to agricultural science, technology generation, and innovation. The SIA Secretariat would provide overall leadership in coordinating the implementation of the AFSH Action Plan and the SIA Framework. In this capacity, the SIA Secretariate would coordinate closely with various thematic coalitions of organizations to lead actions on key designated technical components of the AFSH-Action Plan. These technical components would include, for example, detailed technical guidance and support on issues related to soil information systems and the actual provision of services related to Africa's soil information system that are best located at the continental level. The SIA Secretariat would delegate responsibility for such technical components to other agencies possessing relevant capacity and expertise required to fulfil these roles.

The role of the SIA Secretariat will, *inter alia*, be as follows:

1. Lead advocacy and support the development and scaling up of, investments and programs related to AFSH-AP and SIA.
2. Lead advocacy and support for the alignment of current programs, potential investments, policies, implementation approaches with the recommendations of the AFSH-AP and the SIA – including generation of opportunities for scaling these programs, policies, and approaches.
3. Serve as a technical exchange platform, recognizing the need for technical assistance in planning and implementation of activities under the SIA Framework and the AFSH Action Plan and help to mobilize such technical assistance.
4. Mobilize the support of stakeholders and partners to invest resources toward building the capacity of the SIA Secretariate to coordinate the implementation of the AFSH-AP and the SIA Framework.
5. Ensure strong alignment of all initiatives related to the SIA and AFSH Action Plan implementation, especially capacity development, policies, fertilizer manufacture, trade, and utilization.
6. Lead the engagement process related to resource mobilization and efficient resource utilization for implementing AFSH-AP and SIA.
7. Support discussions and planning processes leading to the domestication of the AFSH-AP and SIA at the regional and country levels. This includes the mainstreaming of the recommendations of the AFSH-AP and the SIA Framework in the Regional and National Agricultural Investment Plans.
8. Coordinate the collation, harmonization, curation, standardization and accessibility of information sources relating to the AFSH-AP and SIA.

9. Coordinate the monitoring, analysis, and reporting on progress in the implementation of the AFSH-AP and the SIA Framework.
10. Serve as a platform for learning from experience and exchanging experiences through the implementation of the SIA Framework and the AFSH Action Plan.
11. Build, maintain, and sustain an effective partnership strategy for the implementation of AFSH-AP and SIA.
12. Perform communication and outreach activities to garner awareness and support for the implementation of the SIA Framework and AFSH Action Plan.
13. Engage in continuous development of responses to emerging issues on fertilizer and soil health and complementary areas.
14. Support and facilitate policy and advocacy actions at regional and national levels
15. Provide opportunity information via an investment dashboard to disseminate information on investable projects, programs, or opportunities in Africa's soil health sector.
16. Facilitate the definition of key metrics and their regular collection for the SIA and AFSH Action Plan at the continental level and below, leveraging the CAADP biennial review process

**Box 1. Governance of the SIA Secretariat (Ref. Figure 1)**

Responsibility for coordination and technical leadership of the SIA and the AFSH-AP has been delegated by the AU to the SIA Secretariat housed at FARA. A SIA steering committee, with partner representation and technical competencies, will provide guidance and oversight for the SIA Secretariat's actions.

**ToR for the SIA Steering Committee:**

The SIA Steering Committee is expected to provide strategic guidance, including the endorsement of programs, activities, budgets, etc., for implementing the AFSH-AP and SIA. It is recommended that the SIA Steering Committee be composed of representatives of key thematic organizations involved in issues around fertilizer and soil health in Africa. The issues include research, extension, capacity building, policy, private sector, research coordination organizations, etc.

The key elements of Steering Committee would be as follows:

- The AUC and AUDA-NEPAD would be the permanent co-chair of the Steering Committee respectively.
- Other members of the committee will have a term of two years, after which a replacement will be sourced.
- Other members will include representatives from implementation coalitions, a representative from the Donor and Development Partner group, and other members as required. At the end of each 2-year cycle, at least 50% of the members will be retained for a second 2-year term to retain institutional memory and understanding of the key issues related to coordination and implementation.

The SIA Steering Committee will appoint a secretary to guide its activities and decisions.

The SIA Steering Committee will hold its meetings twice a year, one in-person and one virtual meeting. Members from key organizations may be included as observers as required.



## **2.4 ToR Joint Development Partners Group (JDP) for the SIA**

Recognizing the importance of coordinating their efforts in support of the SIA. Accordingly, SIA's external development partners have expressed interest developing a mechanism to so coordinate their efforts to support the SIA and AFSH-AP implementation.

The donor and development partners will perform the following roles:

1. The Joint Development Partners Group (JDP) will lead the efforts to mobilize, coordinate, and disburse the funds required for implementing the AFSH-AP and SIA.
2. The JDP would support development partners efforts to develop projects that are consistent with members' areas of priority and of interest, as long as they align with and contribute to the implementation of the AFSH-AP/ SIA
3. The JDP will provide relevant technical assistance to the secretariat and its partners as the need arises.
4. The JDP will serve as a strategic thought partner for the SIA Secretariat and SIA actors regarding the implementation of the AFSH-AP and SIA.
5. The JDP will have membership in, and represent development partners in, the SIA Steering Committee.

## **2.5 Regional Coordination**

Implementation of the AFSH-AP and SIA requires clear and dedicated coordination mechanism and related technical support functions at the regional level, as shown in Figures 1 and 2 above. The functions will be integrated into the establishment of the regional Hubs for fertilizer and soil health. Each of the five defined geographical regions of Africa, viz., West, East, Central, Southern, and North, is expected to establish a hub to play key roles in the implementation of the continental instruments.

## **2.6 ToR for the Role of RECs and SROs in Managing Regional SIA Hubs**

Leadership, coordination and support for SIA and the AFSH-AP will also be needed at the regional level. In order to provide these services in each region of Africa, it is expected that the relevant Regional Economic Community (REC) will establish a regional SIA Hub at the (West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa, and North Africa), the corresponding sub-regional agricultural research organization (SRO) [as depicted in Figures 1 & 2 above]. The roles of the RECs, in collaboration with their respective SROs, would include the following<sup>4</sup>:

1. Lead and facilitate cooperation and coordination for AFSH initiatives in their respective regions in accordance with the SIA and AFSH-Action Plan.
2. Facilitate and contribute to the discussion, development, harmonization, and implementation of sub-regional policies and regulations related to fertilizer, quality control, and soil management in accordance with the SIA.
3. Facilitate and support the development and implementation of plans to strengthen regional and country-level capacities for institutions and programs related to fertilizer and soil health management.
4. Lead the establishment of a regional fertilizer and soil health hub to coordinate the provision of technical services to countries in the region based on their demand.

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<sup>4</sup> Further elaboration of these roles and functions will require input from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other regional bodies (including the Sub-Regional Research Organizations [SROs]).

## **Box 2. The Regional Hubs for Fertilizer and Soil Health (Ref. Figure 1 & 2)**

A regional hub is a platform that brings together all relevant stakeholders in the fertilizer and soil health sector to implement the African Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan in a specific region of Africa.

### **Role of a Regional Hub**

1. Platform for the delivery and Implementation of the AFSH action plan for the region.
2. It brings together all relevant stakeholders in the fertilizer and soil health sector in the region.
3. Delivers innovations through knowledge sharing and collaboration.
4. Fosters inclusivity around Fertilizer and Soil Health issues in the region.
5. The Hub focuses on transforming ideas into practical solutions that deliver sustainable impact
6. It could provide a coordinated approach to resource mobilization for FSH issues.
7. The Hub will serve as a platform to provide relevant technical support to national and sub-national interventions

### **The Objective of Regional Hub**

#### **• Soil Information System**

1. To support countries in accessing and utilizing digital soil health and fertility maps,
2. To facilitate access to plant, fertilizer, and soil analytical laboratory services, including the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs),
3. To develop a dashboard for soil health and fertility that allows for monitoring productivity, resilience, greenhouse gas emissions, and nutrient and water use.
4. To advise on carbon accumulation and sequestration potential for specific soils

#### **• Knowledge management**

1. To set up, update, and facilitate access to a rationalized and harmonized repository of knowledge products related to soil health and fertility management and climate adaptation, including decision support tools, with specific reference to climate adaptation practices.
2. To provide options for climate change adaptation and mitigation, responding to hazards created by climate change.

#### **• Capacity building**

1. To support farmer-led experimentation to adapt ISFM and 4R+ practices recommendations to local conditions
2. To strengthen the capacities of regional and national institutions responsible for soil health and fertility R&D and dissemination.
3. To operationalize a certification scheme for agronomy recommendation knowledge and expertise.

#### **• Policy and Advocacy**

1. To support policy development, harmonization, implementation and decision-making processes, e.g., in relation to:
  - (i) quality control and regulatory frameworks as well as smart subsidies for fertilizer and soil health management, including the development of nutrient road maps.
  - (ii) incentivizing improved soil and agronomic management practices across agricultural sub-sectors; and
  - (iii) regulatory frameworks and standards to minimize the detrimental effect of land use and soil management practices in other sectors that affect agricultural soils (i.e. from mining, water, and infrastructure sectors).
2. To advise on the integration of gender- and youth-specific aspects.
3. To advocate for topics related to soil health and fertility and create widespread awareness on the role of soil health in sustaining agricultural production and other ecosystem services.

#### **• Resource mobilization**

1. To mobilize financial resources for the operation of the Hub and its programs aimed at improving soil health and fertility.
2. Facilitate policies for country-based financing.
3. To facilitate access to support for sustainability schemes that include aspects of soil health, e.g., in relation to carbon credits or mitigation options, net zero production systems, etc.

## **2.7 ToR for National-Level Actors**

Successful implementation of the Summit outcomes will require the domestication of the AFSH Action Plan and the SIA Framework, and the development of, and effective coordination as needed, of related national activities. National focal points would be critical as central contact points with regional and continental coordination functions.

The ToR for the national actors will be as follows:

1. Ensuring the mainstreaming of the AFSH-AP into national agricultural investment plans.
2. Lead the implementation of AFSH-AP in the countries.
3. Contribute to resource mobilization for AFSH-AP implementation in the countries through national budget allocations, private sector contributions, etc.
4. Lead the mobilization of in-country partnerships, including the different relevant ministries and agencies, to effectively implement actions.
5. Develop and implement effective policies, regulations, and procedures for the implementation of AFSH-AP in the country.
6. Ensure the development and execution of communication and advocacy strategies.
7. Organize an effective monitoring, evaluation, and learning system in alignment with the continental CAADP Biennial review process for the AFSH-AP.

## **2.8 ToR for Coalitions of Implementers**

The Coalitions should provide coordinated thought leadership, capacity building, technical assistance, and backstopping of fertilizer and soil health initiatives related to the specific coalition topics of support. They should also support countries and regional bodies in developing and implementing relevant components of the African Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan.

### **Specific roles for the Coalitions of Implementors for Fertilizers and Soil Health:**

1. The coalitions will support national and regional initiatives and strengthen national and regional partners to ensure local ownership and sustainability of implementation and impact.
2. Develop new opportunities and resource mobilization from the donor community and facilitate the flow of technical and financial resources in support of the above.
3. Leverage the expertise of the member organizations based on existing expertise areas and assets and country presence.
4. The Coalitions will leverage their collective technical expertise, assets, and synergies and lead regional soil fertility hubs (centres of excellence) in West, East, Southern, Central, & North Africa to support the implementation of the AFSH-AP and SIA.
5. Coalition Partners will bring in additional expertise in complementary areas and engage with coalitions on other topics to support interventions.
6. Coalition Partners will operate in a responsive and agile structure with the ability to respond to diverse donor needs quickly and efficiently.
7. The Coalitions will leverage existing funding mechanisms and fertilizer and soil health initiatives of the member organizations to support and strengthen new initiatives.

### **Box 3. Coalitions of Implementors of AFSH-AP (Ref. Figure 1 and 2)**

The Coalitions of Implementors are alliances of organizations with similar but complementary skills, competencies and experience in defined thematic areas that could support the implementation of the AFSH-AP and SIA. Each coalition is made up of willing organizations with their own structure who agreed to work together to support the implementation of actions under each thematic area.

The central role of the coalitions is the provision of an “Implementation Assistant”. The implementation assistant may be involved in technical activities, planning and organization, partnership support, networking, funds mobilization, financial management, etc. The implementation assistance may be at all governmental levels: i.e., continental, regional (Hub), and country level. The support of the coalition may be pulled through demand or pushed in terms of strategic supply instigated by the coordination secretariat to ensure the smooth implementation of actions. The coalitions will have dedicated roles and activities in the central work plan to be jointly developed by AUDA-NEPAD/ AU/ FARA (Secretariat)

Multiple coalitions are envisaged; currently, we have the Coalition for Research and Innovation, the Coalition for Extension and Human Capital Development, the Coalition for Policies and Advocacy, the Coalition for Soil Information Systems, and the Coalition for Fertility Action. In principle, one organization can belong to more than one coalition provided it contributes to the coalition action through its competencies and comparative advantages. It is essential that every organization in a coalition has something to contribute and gain. Every coalition will be expected to have a lead organization and or with a co-lead, it may also embrace rotational leadership. The role of a lead organization will be solely the facilitation of coalition actions, fiduciary management, technical reporting, liaisons, etc. Although coalitions may be formed with a smaller number of member organizations, these coalitions are considered open for additional membership as relevant organizations arise that can constructively and actively contribute to the coalitions’ actions.

A coalition of implementers “is not a new organization” and hence does not require the conventional organizational structures or its own defined personnel structure. The personnel needed for the coalition could be staff of the member organizations who will dedicate a proportion of their time to the coalition activities and will be remunerated based on time to task from the specific organization’s budget. The coalition personnel structure could be benchmarked against a typical EC project with multiple organizations handling different roles; in the case of an EC project, a Person Time is charged, but this may be different in the coalition.

## **3.0 Conclusion**

The proposed organizational structure for implementing the AFSH-AP and the SIA responds to the need for coherent planning for action implementation and effective engagement with minimal overlaps and duplication of efforts.

The Specific ToR for different components further allows the different entities to operate within the boundaries of its terms and deliverables. It allows for effective engagement and the use of subsidiarity principles in implementing the activities.

The establishment of the secretariat for coordination of the AFSH-AP is an important next step, as well as the development of the global work plan.