# PAN ACRICAN VISIONS

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim On The Africa Energy Bank

Kenya: The Gen Z Hurricane

Senegal: 100 Days Of Bassirou Diomaye Faye

South Africa: Dawn Of A New Political Era

From Pumela Salela Comes Invest Global



# CONTENTS

Editorial-Kenya's Gen Z Message To Africa	2	Gas Processing C
Kenya- The Gen Z Hurricane	. 4	Tanzania -Growi
Senegal -A Hundred Days Of Bassirou Diomaye Faye	. 7	Postmortem Rev
Burundi-Navigating a Legacy of Political Turmoil and Uncertain		Malawi at 60 - A Opportunities_
South Africa-Dawn Of A New Political Era		Journalist Erick
Malawi-June of Sorrow As VP Dies In Plane Crash	. 15	Mauritius - Sout
Rwanda-Kagame Talks Tough On DRC Conflict	17	Cameroon-ICT U
Confederation of Sahel States Floated	19	Advancement
Focus On Africa Energy Bank With Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim _	20	Photo News-From
Tanzania-A Profile In Courage and Leadership For Ambassador Liberata Mulamula		Africa's ICT Min Strategy
Akume Tinubu and The Fight Against Corruption	28	Lessons from the
South Africa -Rand Holding Strong With New Government	29	Soaring Above A Adventure Touri
Q & A With Invest Global CEO Pumela Salela	31	The Nigerian Fes

Gas Processing Centre	35
Tanzania -Growing Questions On Mining Forum From Postmortem Review	36
Malawi at 60 - A Sober Reflection on Challenges and Opportunities	39
Journalist Erick Kabendera Takes on Vodacom	42
Mauritius - South Africa's Rising Star for Offshore Property  Investment	44
Cameroon-ICT University Spearheading Technological Advancement	46
Photo News-From London With Optimism For AEW 24	50
Africa's ICT Ministers Adopt Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy	53
Lessons from the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit	56
Soaring Above Africa Serengeti -Balloon Safaris Redefine Adventure Tourism	58
The Nigerian Festival UK-A Tempting Third Attempt	60

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Cameroon-First Gas Delivery To Local Industry From The Bipaga

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### The Potential of Regenerative Agriculture in Africa: Lessons from the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit

Op-ed by-lined by Dr Mel Oluoch, Strategic Partnership Director, Sasakawa Africa Association, and Dr Stella Kabiri, Lead Regenerative Agriculture, Sasakawa Africa Association



he declining state of soil health in Africa has reached a critical tipping point, with 65% of agricultural land deemed degraded.1 Sub-Saharan Africa now holds the highest rate of land degradation worldwide, significantly limiting agricultural productivity and threatening food security.

The rapid degradation is driven by population growth, urban demands for food, water and fuel, increased land use intensity, and excessive exploitation of resources, leaving many rural communities without access to necessary water. Shockingly, 40% of the world's population lacking access to clean water resides in sub-Saharan Africa.2

## Ecosystem Services and Soil Health

Soil, the greatest terrestrial carbon sink, is essential for plant growth, food security, biodiversity conservation, rainfall retention, and environmental resilience. Degraded soil compromises these ecosystem services, leading to increased poverty,

conflict, and instability. Improving soil health is key to addressing Africa's water shortage and food security challenges.

#### **Convening Regional Priorities**

Held in Nairobi in May 2024, the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit brought together over 4,000 stakeholders, including government officials, regional economic blocs, private organizations, and civil society, to address critical issues concerning Africa's soil health and fertilizer use. The summit reviewed progress since the 2006 Abuja Declaration and developed strategies to improve soil health and agricultural productivity across the continent.

Regenerative agriculture emerged as a major focus of the Summit, emphasizing the necessity of practices that restore and maintain soil health, enhance biodiversity, and improve water management.

Reversing land degradation and regaining soil health offers a high return rate on investment—up to \$5 for every \$1 invested—and offers hope

for Africa. Regenerative agriculture can enhance this trend by boosting soil organic matter, strengthening soil structure, and increasing microbial activity.3

# Benefits of Regenerative Agriculture

Regenerative agriculture, a holistic approach of blending sustainable innovation with tradition, focuses on practices that can sequester carbon in the soil, restore soil health, increase biodiversity, and improve soil-water retention. Healthier soils lead to more consistent and higher yields over time, increasing farmers' incomes and resilience against climate change.

Regenerative agriculture has the potential to strengthen rural communities by promoting culturally appropriate and knowledge-intensive practices. It encourages farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange and revitalizes traditional agricultural practices in a modern context. Supporting smallholder farmers in adopting regenerative agriculture practices requires a multi-faceted

approach addressing their specific needs and challenges.

The summit underscored the importance of a comprehensive approach to soil health that includes the use of both organic and inorganic fertilizers, improved land tenure for farmers, and increased investment in agricultural research and development.

In Malawi and Ethiopia, the effective use of fertilizers has led to notable improvements in agricultural output and the nutritional quality of produce. The need for flexible and targeted subsidies to support smallholder farmers has been emphasized, along with the importance of investing in local research capacity to develop sustainable farming practices.

Notably in Malawi, the Malawi Farmer-to-Farmer Agroecology (MAFFA) program has used participatory education and agroecology to achieve significant results. Over 6,000 rural families have seen dramatic improvements in maternal and child nutrition, food security, crop diversity, land

management practices, and gender equality. Central to the success of this long-term program has been the use of iterative, participatory, transdisciplinary research methods, which employed multiple measures to assess and improve farming and social change among participating farmers.5

#### Key Outcomes and the Way **Forward**

The summit concluded with the Nairobi Declaration, a 10-year plan to triple domestic fertilizer production 2034, promote local raw materials, and strengthen sustainable agriculture policies. Key strategies include innovation in fertilizer technology, increased research investment, policies supporting regenerative agriculture, improved education and training.4

Crucial steps identified enhancing market access, financial services. information and tailored financial products for farmers. Climate-smart agriculture and supporting women and youth through education and financial also prioritized. services were Developing frameworks to track progress and inform policy adjustments is essential.

The Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit has set the stage for agricultural transformation in Africa. Embracing regenerative agriculture can improve soil health, food security, climate resilience, and economic 1. International Food Policy Research opportunities. Success requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders and a commitment to nurturing



Africa can achieve a sustainable and prosperous agricultural future.

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