

RECOMMENDATION 17 OF 20

REGIONAL

Act within 2 years · by September 2028

Build shared regional stores of grain and fertiliser, paid for by Africa

Related briefings: [Food and agriculture](#)

IN BRIEF

- The 2026 fertiliser price shock and the El Niño drought show what it costs when each country faces a crisis alone.
- Southern and West African governments should hold shared stores of grain and fertiliser, with agreed rules for releasing them, a credit line from the African Development Bank and stock bought from African producers.
- Zambia should go first for grain and Nigeria for fertiliser, because each already holds or makes the stock.

Why this matters

About 80% of the fertiliser used in sub-Saharan Africa is imported. A 10% fall in supply could cut maize, rice and wheat harvests by up to 25%. After the Strait of Hormuz closed, urea, the most common nitrogen fertiliser, reached \$850 a tonne in April 2026. Farmers in Ghana, Kenya and Morocco cut their use. Meanwhile, Nigerian urea was selling for about \$492 a tonne by September. African supply did not reach African farmers.

African supply is growing. The Dangote plant in Lagos makes 3 million tonnes of urea a year and plans to make 9 million, backed by \$600 million from the Africa Finance Corporation. Morocco and Egypt supply about 70% of Africa's fertiliser exports.

Governments have already asked for this. On 29 May 2026, ministers of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) met in Victoria Falls. They called for regional stores of cereals and fertiliser, and for joint buying of fertiliser. The World Bank and the African Development Bank recommend buying fertiliser together, to win better prices and reduce the risk of export bans.

Sources for this section (9)

- [AfDB and World Bank: fertiliser imports, the risk to harvests and joint buying](#)
- [World Bank: urea prices after the Strait of Hormuz closed](#)
- [IFDC: farmers in Ghana, Kenya and Morocco, and Nigerian urea prices](#)
- [Africa Finance Corporation: the Dangote fertiliser expansion](#)
- [ISS: Morocco's and Egypt's share of African fertiliser exports](#)
- [CITE: SADC ministers call for regional reserves](#)
- [AfDB: the Africa Fertilizer Financing Mechanism](#)
- [ECOWAS: the exit of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger](#)
- [ARAA: the ECOWAS Regional Food Security Reserve, its stock, releases and funding](#)

Four levels of action

1 What Africa asks of the world

There is no outside ask, because this is an African decision. The West African reserve shows that when a donor pays, the donor's budget decides how big the reserve can be. The stock must therefore be paid for from African budgets and banks.

WHO Not applicable

WHEN Not applicable

2 What the African Union does

The African Development Bank runs the Africa Fertilizer Financing Mechanism for the African Union, and the fund holds about \$36.9 million. In the 2024 Nairobi Declaration, African leaders ordered it to be made fully operational. The Bank adds a window to this fund to buy stock for regional reserves, working with the AU Commission through CAADP.

WHO The African Development Bank and the AU Commission

WHEN Designed by September 2027

3 What regional groups do

SADC builds a reserve, using the mandate its ministers gave in May 2026. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) expands the reserve it has run since 2016. That reserve has released grain to Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali, which left ECOWAS on 29 January 2025. ECOWAS and the three countries must agree whether they keep access and pay in, or hold a separate stock.

WHO

SADC and ECOWAS

WHEN

SADC design by March 2027; access for the three Sahel states settled by December 2027; release rules and first payments by the 2028 SADC summit

4

Which country goes first, and why

Zambia goes first for grain. Its Food Reserve Agency holds 1 million tonnes and already sells to neighbours in direct deals between governments. Nigeria goes first for fertiliser. It makes urea at scale and already pays into the African Development Bank's fertiliser fund.

WHO

Zambia's Food Reserve Agency; Nigeria's government and its urea makers

WHEN

Offers of stock and supply contracts by June 2027

Before another country can do this

- ☒ A national reserve agency with working storage
- ☒ Payments to the reserve written into the national budget
- ☒ Agreed rules for releasing stock when a shock hits several countries at once
- ☒ Quality checks on stored grain and fertiliser

What does not carry over from the first country

- Zambia's stock comes from a year of surplus.
- Nigeria's urea is made from its own natural gas.

Who else is ready

COUNTRY

WHY

SOURCE

Morocco

With Egypt, it supplies about 70% of Africa's fertiliser exports.

[Source](#)

COUNTRY	WHY	SOURCE
Egypt	It is the other main African exporter of fertiliser.	Source
Ethiopia	It imports over 90% of its fertiliser and plans a \$4 billion urea plant at Gode.	Source
Tanzania	Its reserve agency planned to sell about 1 million tonnes of grain in 2025 and 2026.	Source

Has this worked before?

ECOWAS set up a Regional Food Security Reserve in 2013, and it began work in 2016. By the end of 2024 it held 74,162 tonnes of cereals. It had acted 24 times, releasing about 65,000 tonnes to Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mali. Most of its money came from the European Union, so its size depends on a donor. [Source](#)

ARAA: the ECOWAS Regional Food Security Reserve

First steps

- 1 **AFRICAN UNION** the African Development Bank proposes a window in its fertiliser fund to buy stock for regional reserves, by September 2027.
- 2 **REGIONAL GROUPS** SADC agriculture ministers ask the secretariat to design the reserve on the ECOWAS model by March 2027. ECOWAS and the three Sahel states settle access to the West African reserve by December 2027. SADC members agree release rules and make first payments by the 2028 SADC summit.
- 3 **ZAMBIA AND NIGERIA** Zambia's Food Reserve Agency offers part of its stock as the first SADC holding, and Nigeria offers supply contracts for urea, by June 2027.

Who acts, and with what

WHO LEADS

SADC and ECOWAS, with the African Development Bank; Zambia and Nigeria go first

INSTRUMENT	Shared stocks and a credit line, with agreed rules for release
HOW PROGRESS IS CHECKED	The reserve is used in a year of crisis, and releases reach farmers before planting
SIGNAL TO CHANGE COURSE	Countries ban exports in the next crisis
WHAT STANDS IN THE WAY	Storage is costly and grain can spoil. Countries will argue over release rules when several are hit at once. A reserve paid for by donors shrinks when aid falls.
COST AND MONEY	The cost of a SADC reserve is not yet known. The European Union committed about 94 million euros, over several phases, to the ECOWAS reserve. For the new reserves, member states and African banks pay.

Who else contributes

WHO	CONTRIBUTION
Zambia's Food Reserve Agency and other reserve agencies	Manage storage and releases
Fertiliser makers in Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt	Supply stock under long-term contracts
Afreximbank and the African Development Bank	Provide a credit line that is repaid and lent again
Traders	Sell and replace stock so that grain does not spoil
Farmer organisations	Advise on timing and distribution

What each audience can do

AU and regional bodies

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Agree the rules of the reserve

WHAT YOU GAIN

A region that can absorb shocks together

Governments

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Put yearly payments to the reserve in the national budget

WHAT YOU GAIN

Cheaper protection against shocks

Business and investors

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Supply and manage stock under contract

WHAT YOU GAIN

Steady demand

Social entrepreneurs

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Build storage and distribution services

WHAT YOU GAIN

A new market in moving and storing food

NGOs and civil society

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Check that stock is released fairly in a crisis

WHAT YOU GAIN

Food that reaches the people who need it

The briefings behind this

Sector · Observed

Food and agriculture

Africa's hunger stopped rising in 2025 at the highest rate of any region, and the price of food, fertiliser and transport now decides who eats.

[Open the briefing](#)

Words used on this page

El Niño

A warming of the Pacific Ocean every few years that changes weather worldwide. In southern Africa it usually brings drought, and in the Horn of Africa it often brings floods. [Our recommendation on this](#) · [Food and agriculture briefing](#) · [Glossary](#)

SADC

The Southern African Development Community, 16 states from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to South Africa.

[Glossary](#) · [Source: sadc.int](#)

Africa Fertilizer Financing Mechanism

A fund run by the African Development Bank, set up by African Union leaders in 2006. It helps pay for making, buying and delivering fertiliser in Africa, and holds about \$36.9 million from African governments and donors. [Food and agriculture briefing](#)

· [Glossary](#) · [Source: afdb.org](#)

African Union (AU)

The organisation of 55 African states, based in Addis Ababa. Its heads of state meet each February. It can suspend members after a coup. [Glossary](#) · [Source: au.int](#)

African Union Commission

The African Union's secretariat. It prepares decisions for heads of state and carries them out. [Glossary](#)

CAADP and the Kampala Declaration

The African Union's plan for farming and food. The Kampala Declaration sets its goals for 2026 to 2035. [Food and agriculture briefing](#) · [Glossary](#)

ECOWAS

The Economic Community of West African States. Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger left it in January 2025. [Politics and governance briefing](#) · [Glossary](#)

Alliance of Sahel States

Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, each ruled by a military government after a coup. They formed their own alliance and left ECOWAS in January 2025. The African Union has suspended them. [Politics and governance briefing](#) · [Glossary](#)

European Union (EU)

A union of 27 European countries with shared laws, a single market and a large aid budget. [Glossary](#)