



AgriTech Innovation, Financing and Policy in Kenya





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At a glance – 5 key messages on scaling AgriTech in Kenya




-  **Kenya leads African start-up funding, but its AgriTech share is collapsing** (section 1). Kenya raised ~USD 984 million in 2025 (31% of the African total). Less than 1%, about USD 4 million, flowed to AgriTech, an 86% drop from 2024. A single Q1 2026 deal (Sistema.bio, USD 53M) has since changed that picture, but the underlying skewness remains.
-  **Capital is concentrating; the pipeline is thinning** (section 1). Five start-ups captured 82% of Kenya’s 2025 funding. The number of funded start-ups fell 31%, and the active investor base shrank 31%, a pattern not observed elsewhere in Africa’s ‘Big Four’. AgriTech sits squarely in the thinning early-stage segment.



 **The binding constraint is alignment, not innovation** (section 2). The workshop’s consistent message: Kenya does not lack innovation or actors. It lacks alignment between farmers and technology, grants and capital, investors and start-ups, ministries and counties, research and practice.



 **Trust precedes technology, and intermediaries precede scale** (section 4). Kenya’s AgriTech sector needs more trusted intermediaries such as cooperatives, county extension officers, data-providers and orchestrators, as well as the farmer-grounded product design (frugal, tested and iterated, holistic) that turn technologies into adoption at scale at the farm gate.



 **Each actor can take concrete steps to help the ecosystem scale** (sections 3 and 4):

Policy-makers: Shift focus from drafting new frameworks to operationalising existing ones: Coordinate AgriTech across ministries, translate national policy strategy into national and county-level delivery through cooperatives and extension structures, tax incentives and public procurement.

Investors and funders: Redesign AgriTech capital as a coordinated pathway by sequencing instruments across growth stages, standardising terms and exits, tying disbursement to gender and social inclusion metrics and coordinating pipelines and co-investments.

Accelerators and hubs: Make AgriTech support more relevant, seasonal and sector-specific by **auditing the curriculum against what founders have already received elsewhere**, aligning cohorts with agricultural cycles, being transparent about investor access and building stronger links to cooperatives, counties, technical experts and markets.

Founders: Prepare for scalable AgriTech growth by building cooperative, agro-dealer and county relationships **that will make farmers aware of products early**, using grants without becoming grant-dependent, strengthening governance and financial discipline and engaging proactively with emerging policy.

HEADLINE NUMBERS FROM THE SIIA RESEARCH

USD 984M

Kenya start-up funding raised in 2025; 31% of Africa's total



6%

AgriTech share of Kenya's cumulative start-up funding (2023-2025)



-31%

Drop in Kenya's funded start-up count 2024-2025



<10%

Of African AgriTech capital reaches women-led firms (panel testimony)



82%

Share of 2025 Kenya funding captured by the top 5 deals



Sources: SIIA Research Findings; The Big Deal Africa funding tracker; SIIA AgriTech database (status December 2023 and 2025 updates).





Why this briefing

On 29 January 2026, the Nuvoni Centre for Innovation Research and the University of Wuppertal convened thirty stakeholders from across Kenya's AgriTech ecosystem at the Mövenpick Hotel in Westlands, Nairobi. Around the table were ministry officials, national innovation agencies, founders, accelerator and incubator leads, venture capital and impact investors, research scientists and development partners. Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA) provided the policy keynote. The day combined a presentation of multi-country SIIA research findings, a moderated panel and structured World Café discussions on five themes that recur across the data: product–market–environment fit, financing gaps, policy and institutional coordination, the role of accelerators, and how to measure impact in AgriTech.

This briefing turns that conversation, grounded in the SIIA evidence base into a reference document for the people working to scale AgriTech in Kenya and, by extension, sub-Saharan Africa. The Sustainable and Inclusive Innovation Africa (SIIA) is a consortium

formed among Nuvoni Centre for Innovation Research, the University of Wuppertal, the Oxford Smith School of Enterprise & Environment (within the University of Oxford) and the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems for a GIZ sponsored project centered around mapping AgriTech startups in the Sub Sahara Africa region while encouraging market visibility and dissecting trends. The argument is the same throughout: Kenya's AgriTech challenge is no longer about the absence of innovation; it is about whether the institutions, capital and policy frameworks around innovators can align fast enough to make that innovation matter.

“Kenya does not lack innovation or actors. It lacks alignment.”

Synthesis from the panel and World Café, 29 January 2026

How to read this document.

- **Section 1** sets out the state of the ecosystem from the SIIA evidence.
- **Section 2** distills what stakeholders themselves told us, organised around five tensions that emerged from the panel and World Café.
- **Section 3** captures what has shifted in the months since the workshop.
- **Section 4** sets out what should happen next, by ecosystem actor, namely: policy, investors, incubators and accelerators, as well as start-ups and innovators. The question that guided the workshop guides this briefing: what does the Kenyan AgriTech ecosystem need to scale, and what does it need to fix?

01

The State of Kenya's AgriTech Ecosystem

1.1 A leading ecosystem, increasingly concentrated

Kenya remains the highest-volume start-up market in Africa. In 2025 Kenyan start-ups raised approximately USD 984 million, or 31% of the continent's total, ahead of Egypt (USD 614M, 19%), South Africa (USD 599M, 19%) and Nigeria (USD 343M, 11%). Eighty per cent of all African start-up funding now sits in this 'Big Four'.

But beneath the headline, the breadth of the Kenyan ecosystem is narrowing. Funding rose 52% on 2024, yet the count of start-ups raising more than USD 100,000 fell 31%, and the active investor base contracted by the same proportion, with first-time investors down 35% and repeat investors down 45%. The pattern is specific to Kenya: Egypt and South Africa both grew funding and breadth, while Nigeria contracted on both axes. Kenya alone shows rising capital combined with a thinning pipeline, raising real questions about the conditions for the next cohort of start-ups.



2025 Kenyan start-ups raised approximately **USD 984 million**, ahead of Egypt (USD 614M, 19%), South Africa (USD 599M, 19%) and Nigeria (USD 343M, 11%).

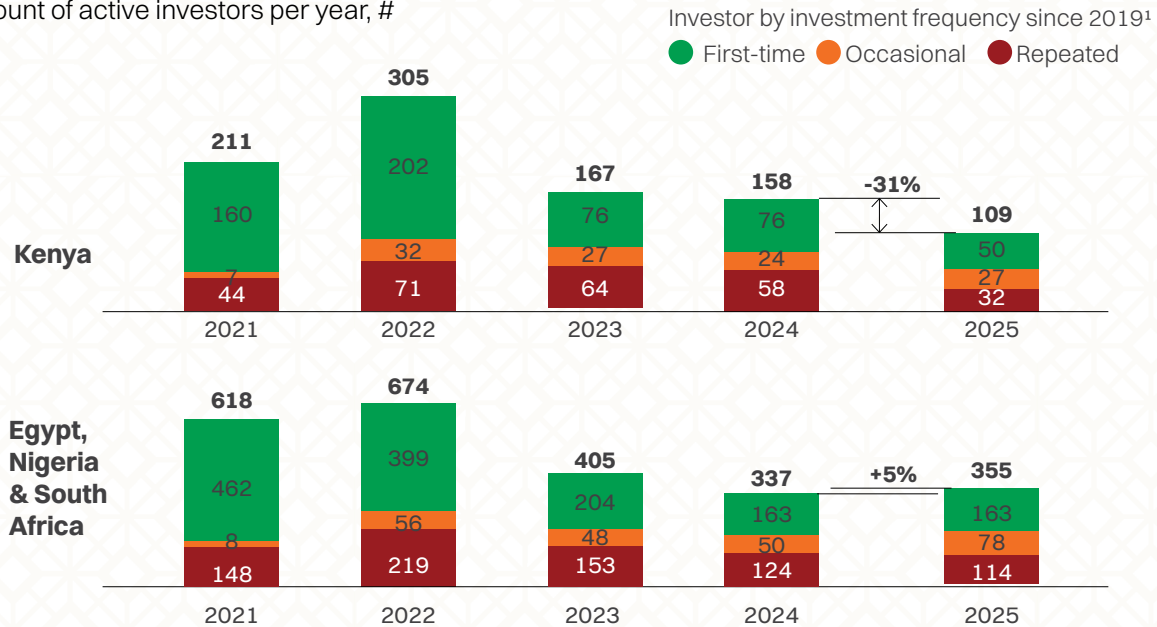


Figure 2.

Kenya investor base 2021-2025, contrasted with Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa. Source: SIIA Research Findings.

Kenya's investor base decreased by -31% in 2025, contrary to other Big 4

Count of active investors per year, #



¹ First-time investor has not invested in specific region since 2019. Repeated investors have already invested in region ≥ 2 times during 2 years prior to given invest. Occasional investors are all other investors investing in given year. Investor count includes all disclosed investors from deals $> 100k$ USD.

Within 2025, five start-ups (d.light, Sun King, M-KOPA, BURN and PowerGen) captured USD 807 million, or 82% of the total. Deal count fell at every funding stage, with the steepest declines in debt deals (-44%) and seed deals (-36%). Kenya's position as a foundation ecosystem is intact, but

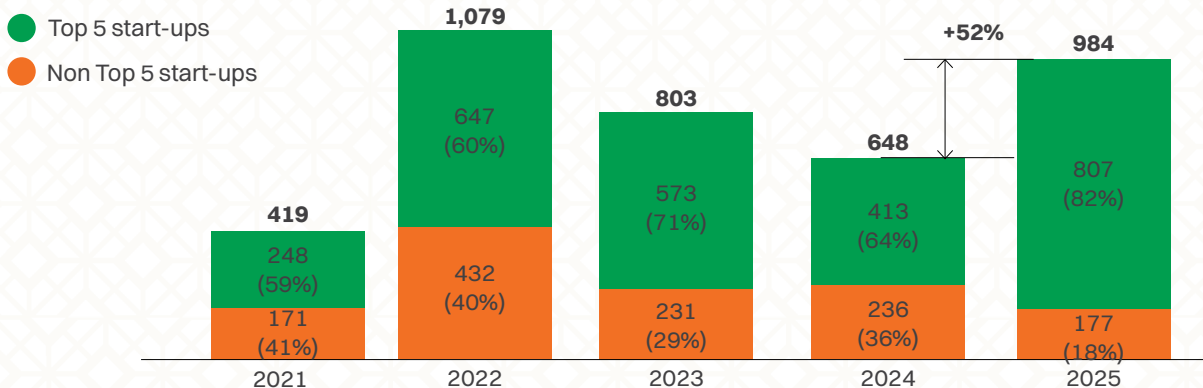
on the African Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Index it still trails the continent's best three countries by more than 25% on every dimension: market access, finance, support, infrastructure, human capital, governance and culture.

Figure 1.

Kenya start-up funding 2021-2025, top 5 vs rest. Source: SIIA Research Findings, drawing on The Big Deal.

Kenyan start-ups raised +52% more funding in 2025 vs 24, with concentration on top start-ups

Annual start-up funding volume in Kenya, in mn USD



Note: Include equity, debt, grant deals (excl. exits) of deals $> 100k$ USD; Top 5 start-ups with the highest funding volume for respective year. Source: The Big deal

1.2 Where AgriTech sits in this picture

AgriTech is the paradox at the heart of Kenya's start-up story. The SIIA database records 52 funded Kenyan AgriTech start-ups in 2023–2025, the largest cohort in Africa, ahead of Nigeria (30), Tanzania (26) and Ghana (23). They span the full value chain: production, post-harvest, cold chain, market access, financial services, logistics and AI-enabled advisory.



The SIIA database records 52 funded Kenyan AgriTech start-ups in 2023–2025, the largest cohort in Africa.

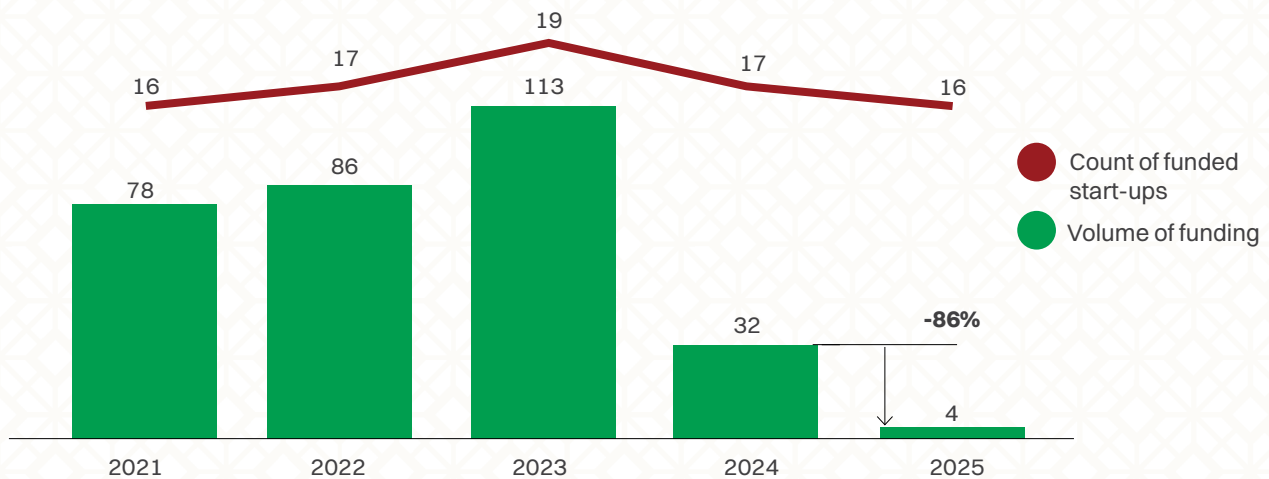
Yet capital has not followed activity. AgriTech represents 18% of all funded Kenyan start-ups, but only 6% of cumulative funding (2023–2025). In 2025 the share fell to under 1%, just USD 4 million across deals such as Farm to Feed (USD 1.6M), Keep it Cool (USD 0.5M) and Agrails (USD 0.4M), an 86% year-on-year drop. By contrast, Tanzania directs 30% of its smaller funding pool to AgriTech, and Ghana 11%, both better reflecting agriculture's economic weight. Among East Africa's three major agriculture-dependent economies (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania), Tanzania alone has a start-up funding mix that visibly reflects agriculture's weight in the wider economy.

Figure 3.

Kenya AgriTech funding volume and count of funded AgriTechs, 2021–2025. Source: SIIA Research Findings.

However, funding volume decreased by -86% while AgriTech is stable in 2025 in Kenya

Annual AgriTech funding volume and count of funded AgriTechs (> 100k USD) in Kenya 2021–2025



Note: AgriTech includes Agriculture and Food start-ups; Includes equity, debt, grant deals (excl. exits) of deals > 100k USD; # of start-ups includes undisclosed deals
Source: The Big deal

What changed in Q1 2026

Systema.bio, the bio-digester company, closed a USD 53 million growth round in Kenya in Q1 2026, single-handedly larger than all of Kenya's 2025 AgTech funding combined and larger than Kenya's entire AgriTech total for 2023–2025. The deal is a positive signal, but it also reinforces the briefing's wider observation: capital is going to a small number of late-stage, climate-adjacent ventures, while the early-stage AgriTech pipeline behind them remains underfunded.

1.3 How AgriTech capital is distributed across the value chain

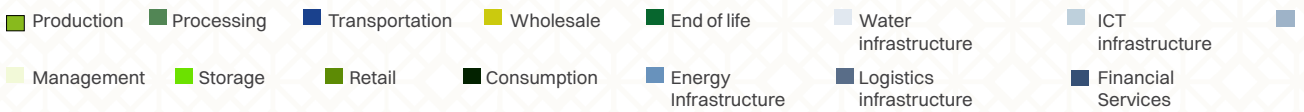
Cumulative Kenyan AgriTech funding (~USD 544M as of December 2023) is heterogeneously distributed across the value chain, with the largest shares going to financial services (16%), production (10%), wholesale/retail (15%) and storage (13%). Critically thin segments include processing, end-of-life, energy infrastructure and skills development, the very

segments associated with reducing post-harvest losses and building system capacity. Comparator countries are more concentrated: Nigerian AgriTech funding is heavily weighted toward production (22%) and finance (20%); Egyptian funding clusters in production (19%) and processing (45%).

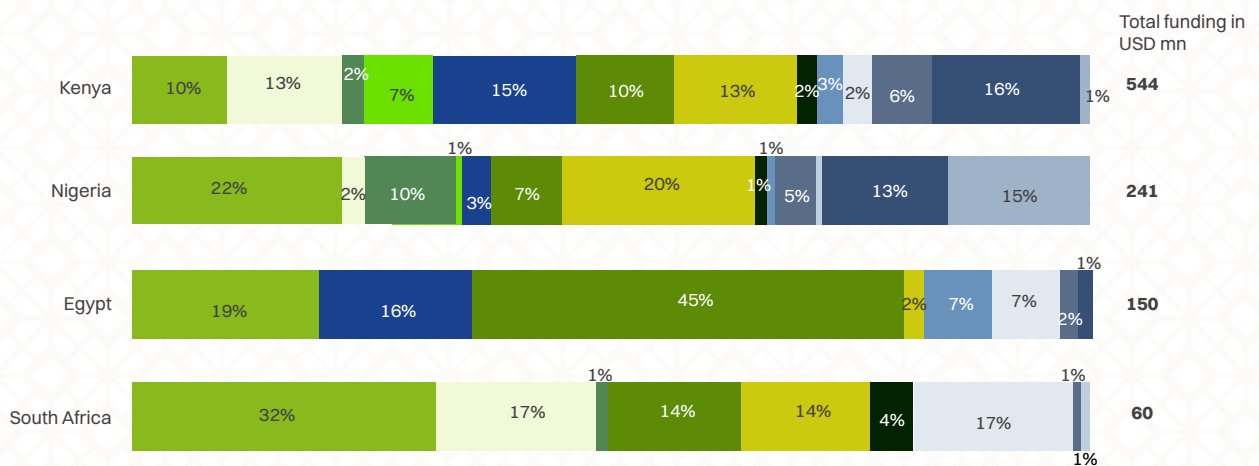
Figure 4.

AgriTech funding distribution across the agricultural value chain by country, status December 2023. Source: SIIA database (Wuppertal-Nuvoni).

STATUS AS OF DECEMBER 2023



Funding distribution¹ across value chain withing country (in % of total funding of respective country)



¹Figures based on relevant completed agritechs founded after 2009 with disclosed funding data; assuming equal weights of all parts
Source: SIIA Database

Among Kenyan AgriTechs, AI adoption is concentrated in a small number of firms: roughly 3.5% of African AgriTechs use AI today, with USD 64.6 million in cumulative funding to AI-enabled AgriTechs. Apollo Agriculture alone accounts for USD 61.7M of that. Use cases cluster in farm management, ICT, production analytics & processing; consumption-end and water-management AI is essentially absent.





Three observations follow.

👉 **Funding does not follow the largest economic contributor.**

In a country where agriculture remains the largest sectoral employer and a major share of GDP, AgriTech receives less than a tenth of start-up capital, less than fintech, energy or mobility.

👉 **Funding is not aligned with where loss happens.**

The thinnest segments of AgriTech finance (processing, storage and end-of-life) are also where smallholder farmers lose the largest share of value to post-harvest losses.

👉 **Funding is increasingly bimodal.**

A handful of late-stage AgriTechs raise large rounds; the early-stage pipeline behind them is shrinking. Without intervention, the pool of future scale-ups will narrow.



02

What the Ecosystem is Telling Us

Tensions around adoption, the nature of existing capital, the efficiency of startup accelerator programs, gender-biased funding and uncoordinated policy implementation arose consistently across the panel, World Café discussions and participant feedback. Each is paired below with the SIIA evidence anchor and the implication for stakeholders.

2.1 Trust first, technology second

“Investors want a tech platform. Farmers want seeds, credit, trust and reliable distribution. Trust comes before technology.”

Panel reflection from a founder and an investor, 29 January 2026

Across Kenya’s AgriTech sector, the binding constraint on scale is rarely the technology itself. The SIIA database documents start-ups across every productivity lever along the value chain, from quality seed and sensor-enabled irrigation to AI disease detection and cold-chain logistics. Yet adoption at farm gate stays low.

Two messages from the event cut through. The first is that intermediaries (cooperatives, agro-dealers, off-takers and county extension structures) are the architecture through which adoption actually happens, because they carry the social trust no individual start-up can manufacture. Farmers exhibit herd behaviour; co-operative leaders are the inflection point. The second is that the World Bank’s One Million Farmers Platform, described by Beryl Agengo on the panel, succeeded because it routed through county governments and cooperatives rather than around them. The lesson is architectural, not technological.

Cooperative leaders are aware of this leverage and use it deliberately, controlling which external parties get access to their members. Building those relationships is therefore not a downstream go-to-market activity for AgriTechs operating in Kenya, but a structural feature of the business model itself.

Across Kenya’s AgriTech sector, the main barrier to growth is not a lack of technology. While start-ups already provide solutions across the agricultural value chain, including improved seeds, smart irrigation, AI-powered disease detection, and cold-chain logistics, adoption by farmers remains limited.





The adoption barriers on the farmer side are equally specific. AgriTechs that succeed design for the realities documented in the workshop synthesis: seasonal cash flows (so payment terms cannot assume monthly income), financial strain (so

adoption cost-of-entry has to be low) and low formal literacy (so interfaces must be usable without advanced reading or specialised device skills). The next callout names the three product features this implies.

Three features of a climate-smart AgriTech product for smallholders

From the SIIA research and the World Café synthesis, climate-smart AgriTech products that work for Kenyan smallholders share three features:

- **Frugal:** low technical complexity, low cost-to-adopt, designed for users with limited resources, devices, internet connectivity and formal literacy.
- **Dynamic:** responsive to climate variability and seasonal shocks rather than designed against a fixed-environment assumption.
- **Holistic:** treats the farm as a whole system, not a single crop, transaction or data point. Integrates with inputs, finance, advisory and market access rather than solving one isolated step.

Source: SIIA workshop, World Café synthesis, 29 January 2026.



Implication. Co-creation with farmers and routing through county and cooperative structures is no longer a “nice-to-have” for inclusion; it is the dominant cost-of-entry for adoption. Investment due diligence and accelerator selection criteria should treat demonstrated intermediary relationships as a leading indicator of scaling potential.

The data tells a story of capital scarcity: AgriTech receives less than 1% of Kenya’s 2025 funding yet investors on the panel reported the opposite within their portfolios: when they have invested, AgriFood has outperformed. The contradiction is resolved by a single word from the World Café synthesis: **design**. Capital exists, but it is misaligned. Ticket sizes are too large for early-stage AgriTechs (the gap between USD 100K seed and USD 1–5M venture funding is the chasm in which most AgriTechs stall). Grants and commercial capital are not sequenced. The transition from Series B to growth capital, where founders meet expectations of operational maturity, governance and predictable returns, is where viable ventures fall out of the pipeline.

2.2 The challenge isn’t primarily money: it’s design

“Five or ten years ago AgriFood was seen as risky. Honestly, in our portfolio AgriFood has been among the best-performing sectors. We’re increasing our allocation.”

Hiram Githuku, Goodwell Investments · SIIA Panel, January 2026



AgriTech receives less than 1% of Kenya’s 2025 funding yet investors on the panel reported the opposite within their portfolios: when they have invested, AgriFood has outperformed.



The structural account from the workshop is sharper still:

AgriTech sits between venture capital and commercial lending because of misaligned incentives across founders, investors and public actors; because the data infrastructure for credit assessment in agriculture is thin; and because trust between ecosystem actors is low. None of those is fixed by more capital alone.

The panel also flagged a less comfortable

consequence of poorly designed grants: founders who learn to optimise for the funder rather than the farmer ('grantpreneurs') produce pilots that never become businesses. The World Café puts the same dynamic in complementary terms: enterprises that successfully secure the first grant round can quietly reshape themselves into 'funder-darlings', designing their organisations around funder requirements rather than around the farmer problem they were founded to solve.



Implication. Public, donor and catalytic capital should be designed to crowd in private investors at specific bottlenecks, not to substitute for them. Instruments that work for AgriTech are demand-side: first-loss capital, partial credit guarantees, risk-sharing facilities, working-capital lines and demand guarantees. These should be standardised, transparent and time-bound, with clear exit pathways into private capital. Done well, these instruments shift AgriTech from a high-risk niche into a viable asset class for institutional capital.

2.3 Programmes without pathways

"Access to the right investors and mentors matters more than another round of pitch training."

Founder voice during the World Café, 29 January 2026

Kenya is one of the densest accelerator markets in Africa. Founders typically participate in two, three or more programmes. The panel's assessment of that density was unsparing. While some programmes deliver strong networks and investor introductions, many repeat the same content (pitch decks, governance basics, business-model canvas) without delivering the things founders actually need: capital, technical depth and access to the end-user. Repeated participation produces diminishing returns and crowds out time that founders should be spending in the field.

Workshop participants set out two layers of feedback.

- The first was a set of complaints: programmes that misalign with agricultural cycles, that are redesign requests about which investors will actually be in the room at demo day, and that repeat generic pitch and governance content rather than build the sector-specific technical and market-access depth AgriTech founders need.
- The second was three concrete asks for redesign, listed below.



Three asks for accelerator and hub redesign- from the World Café

- **Build direct exchange between AgriTechs and smallholder farmers.** Programmes should run forums where founders sit with end customers and should provide farmer-level data so founders understand the people they are designing for. Pitch training cannot substitute for time in the field.
- **Bring in deeper external technical and service-provider collaboration.** Long-term partnerships with agronomists, food-systems specialists, logistics and infrastructure providers not one-off mentor sessions are what build the capabilities AgriTechs need to scale.
- **Build the ecosystem, with deliberate spillovers.** Programme design should invest in closer ties with investors and potential business partners, and should produce spillover benefits for non-participating AgriTechs in the ecosystem rather than treating the cohort as a closed island.

Source: SIIA workshop World Café, 29 January 2026



Implication. Programme density is not the problem. Programme relevance is. Selection into accelerators, and accelerator design itself, should be filtered for sector-specific value add: technical and market-access services, real investor pipeline, and seasonal alignment with the realities of agriculture. Workshop participants were emphatic that quality, not quantity, of support is now the question.

pattern: many are visible in pitch competitions and accelerators, but fewer translate that into Series A or beyond.

The broader SIIA research treats gender, inclusion and frugality as first-order selection criteria for sustainable AgriTech, rather than afterthoughts.



Implication. Inclusion targets should be operationalised in selection criteria, in investor due diligence and in donor reporting. Public and catalytic capital is well placed to set the standard: gender-disaggregated portfolio reporting, gender-lens financing facilities, and explicit founder-pipeline metrics tied to disbursement.

2.4 Inclusion is a capital allocation question

“Funding flows to women-led businesses remain below 10%. Inclusion must be visible; where the capital actually goes, not in the rhetoric around it.”

Synthesis of panel and World Café reflections on gender, 29 January 2026

Inclusion was one of the most directly framed challenges of the day, not as a soft theme but as a question of where capital actually moves. Women-led AgriTechs continue to receive a disproportionately low share of investment across the continent (panelists and participants converged on under 10% as the order-of-magnitude estimate), despite evidence that women-led ventures perform competitively. Youth founders face a related

2.5 Policy exists; coordination doesn't

“We have policies. We need implementation. And we need counties.”

Synthesis of the policy keynote and World Café, 29 January 2026

Philip Gondi, Startup Economy Development and Management Lead at the Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA), set the tone in the policy keynote: Kenya has well-articulated innovation and agricultural strategies that recognise the role of technology, but implementation remains

fragmented across ministries, agencies and levels of government. The Startup Bill 2022, which would establish a framework for incubation, tax incentives and credit guarantees, had passed both Houses of Parliament at the time of the workshop but was still awaiting presidential assent, a long-running theme in Kenyan startup policy.

Three coordination failures were named in the room.

1. **Research-to-market:** public research institutions produce valuable findings that are not consistently translated into commercial AgriTech ventures.
2. **Cross-ministry:** agriculture, ICT, finance and trade ministries operate in silos that founders must navigate transaction by transaction.
3. **National-to-county:** counties hold the relationships with cooperatives, extension officers

and farmer data that determine whether national digital agriculture initiatives actually reach the farm. The Kenyan AgriTech ecosystem has the policy vision; it lacks the institutional plumbing to make that vision land at the last mile.



Implication. The next phase of policy support should focus less on new framework documents and more on the connective tissue: cross-ministry coordination on AgriTech, county-level implementation of digital extension, clear definitions of what counts as an AgriTech for the purposes of incentives, and operational public-private partnerships that build the shared infrastructure (data, identifiers, logistics) start-ups currently each re-build alone.





03

What's changed since the workshop

Developments between the workshop (January 2026) and publication of this briefing (May 2026) that update or sharpen the workshop conclusions.

Funding signals

Sistema.bio secured a USD 53 million growth round in Q1 2026, a single deal larger than Kenya's entire 2025 AgriTech funding total.



Apollo Agriculture continued scaling its satellite- and machine-learning-based credit platform, reporting 350,000 farmers served and targeting 2.3 million farmers by end-2026, with cumulative funding exceeding USD 78 million.



Other notable post-workshop investments included Victory Group Farms (USD 15 million, April 2026) and Sokofresh (USD 500,000, April 2026).



SunCulture launched *SunCulture Protect*, a parametric weather-insurance product integrated into its solar irrigation systems, demonstrating how climate-risk management is increasingly embedded within AgriTech solutions.



Despite these positive developments, a key concern remains: capital continues to concentrate among a small number of late-stage, climate-adjacent ventures, while the early-stage AgriTech pipeline continues to thin.

Policy signals

Two post-workshop policy moves are worth flagging. In March 2026 the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development launched the Draft Kenya Agricultural Data, Information and Digital Policy, which provides a framework for managing digital technologies, data and knowledge systems in agriculture, and proposes a central Kenya Agricultural Digital Information Centre (KADIC) for

sector-wide data coordination. The policy explicitly devolves frontline digital advisory delivery to county governments, mirroring the workshop's call for stronger national-to-county connective tissue. Kenya also launched its National AI Strategy 2025–2030 in early 2025, with agriculture named as a priority sector and AI-enabled agricultural advisory systems listed as a priority use case.

The Startup Bill 2022, having passed both Houses, has continued to attract debate over its requirement that registered start-ups maintain wholly-Kenyan ownership and allocate at least 15% of expenses to research and development, provisions that critics argue would exclude founders with foreign co-investors, who include many of Kenya's AgriTech scale-ups. The bill's eventual operationalisation will be a leading indicator of whether the policy stack supports the actual structure of the AgriTech sector or constrains it.



Implication. The post-workshop policy moves narrow rather than widen the gap the workshop identified between policy vision and implementation. KADIC, county-level digital extension and the AI strategy each create new sites where alignment will be tested. The AgriTech community has a near-term opportunity to shape how that alignment is built.

The Startup Bill 2022 remains controversial because its requirements for full Kenyan ownership and minimum R&D spending could exclude many AgriTech startups with foreign investors, making its implementation a key test of whether Kenya's policies will enable or restrict sector growth.





04

What needs to happen next

Four audience-specific action sets. Each reflects the convergence of SIIA evidence and stakeholder voice from the January workshop.

For policymakers and public agencies

- **Operationalise the Digital Agricultural Data Policy at county level:** treat KADIC and county digital-extension platforms as the connective tissue between national strategy and last-mile farmer impact. Co-design with cooperatives and county directors of agriculture from the outset.
- **Define what counts as AgriTech:** for the purposes of the Startup Bill, tax incentives and public-procurement preferences. Without a working definition, the policy stack will not target the sector it intends to support.
- **Resolve the Startup Bill ownership and R&D-spend clauses pragmatically:** in a way that supports rather than excludes hybrid Kenyan–international AgriTech ventures.
- **Coordinate AgriTech across ministries:** (agriculture, ICT, finance, trade) through a standing inter-ministerial forum rather than a series of project-by-project workarounds.

For investors, funders and donors

- **Fix the design of capital, not just the supply:** sequence grants, technical assistance, blended instruments and growth capital so AgriTechs can move along a pathway rather than fall between stages.
- **Standardise blended-finance instruments:** first-loss, partial credit guarantees, working capital and demand guarantees, with transparent terms and exit pathways into private capital, so they crowd in rather than substitute.
- **Operationalise inclusion in disbursement:** gender- and youth-disaggregated portfolio reporting, gender-lens facilities and clear founder-pipeline metrics tied to capital deployment.
- **Coordinate with one another:** the workshop's repeated complaint was not lack of capital but the silos between investors, donors and government. Joint pipeline reviews, shared due-diligence platforms and co-investment vehicles all exist; what is missing is the will to use them.

For accelerators, hubs and support programmes

- **Audit programme content against founder needs:** founders did not ask for less acceleration; they asked for less repetition and more relevance. Drop generic pitch training where it duplicates earlier programmes.
- **Align with agricultural cycles:** cohort timing, milestones and demo days should respect seasonal realities. An AgriTech cohort that ends at the start of the long rains is a missed market test.
- **Be honest about investor presence:** if no aligned capital will be in the room at demo day, say so up front. Misaligned expectations damage trust faster than absent capital.
- **Build sector-specific connective tissue:** routes to cooperatives and counties, technical mentorship from agronomists and food-systems experts, and structured market-access support.

For founders and start-ups

- **Build intermediary relationships before scale:** the most reliable adoption channels run through cooperatives, agro-dealers and county structures. Treat these as core go-to-market infrastructure, not a downstream concern.
- **Distinguish grants from capital:** use grants for what they do well (R&D, pilots, early demonstration) and avoid letting them shape the firm into a grant-dependent operation.
- **Invest in operational maturity early:** the workshop's data on where founders fall out of the pipeline points consistently to the transition from venture to growth capital, where governance, financial discipline and team depth begin to matter as much as innovation.
- **Engage policy actively, not reactively:** the policy stack is moving (Startup Bill, AI strategy, agricultural digital policy). AgriTech founders have a near-term window to shape how it lands.



Participants from the workshop



Where this evidence comes from

The references below are also intended as an invitation: readers wishing to engage with the underlying SIIA research, or to collaborate on the questions this briefing raises, are welcome to contact the Nuvoni Centre.

➔ SIIA research outputs

- “The State of Kenya’s Start-up Ecosystem and Deep-dive into Kenya’s AgriTech Ecosystem.” SIIA Research Findings presented by the SIIA research team at the AgriTech Innovation, Financing and Policy in Kenya workshop, Nairobi, 29 January 2026.
- SIIA AgriTech Database. Database of 1,000+ African AgriTech start-ups across 30+ countries, status December 2023 and 2025 updates. Methodology and access via the SIIA consortium.

➔ Public data sources cited

- The Big Deal Africa funding tracker. Country-level start-up funding data, 2021–2025.
- The African Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Index. Cross-country comparative metrics on entrepreneurial ecosystem conditions.
- Pitchbook, Crunchbase and Deal Room. Triangulating sources for SIIA database completeness.

➔ Post-workshop policy developments

- Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development. (2026). Draft Kenya Agricultural Data, Information and Digital Policy. Launched March 2026.
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