



# Translating Policy Intent into Action:

## 15 Factors for Determining the Implementability of Agricultural Policies in Africa

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Agriculture is crucial for Africa's development and there is wide consensus that an inclusive agricultural transformation is needed. However, progress has not kept pace with ambition. Even when governments identify, design, and approve policies based on the best available evidence, they often struggle to implement them. Policy implementation is an often overlooked and underappreciated component of the policy process. Understanding and improving the "implementability"<sup>1</sup> of a given policy is therefore key. Potential barriers to implementability include numerous technical and nontechnical issues.

To assist policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders in identifying, understanding, and addressing these implementation barriers to African agricultural policies, the Urban Institute, with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, developed a Policy Implementation Assessment Framework.<sup>2</sup> The framework draws insights from interviews with 27 African agriculture policy experts and from a review of approximately 120 documents. The framework is designed with three uses in mind:



<sup>1</sup> Implementability is the degree to which a policy can be successfully carried out and is determined by factors at the intersection of a given policy's design and its implementation environment.

<sup>2</sup> Eldridge, Matthew, Justin Milner, and James Ladi Williams. 2020. *Translating Policy Intent into Action: A Framework to Facilitate Implementation of Agricultural Policies in Africa*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

# Framework Structure

The framework identifies five domains that are crucial to effective policy implementation:



The full framework provides detailed information on each factor and demonstrates how stakeholders might assess the relevance of each factor for a given policy.

This document presents a summary of key information for each factor using the following template:

Domain	I. Resources			
Factor	Political priorities	Design ●●●	Planning ●●	Implementation ●
How we are defining the factor	Definition	[Line connecting Design, Planning, and Implementation]		
A sample of relevant questions partners can ask to consider the factor's impact on a given policy	Sample relevant questions	[Empty]		
Potentially appropriate actions that donors can take to help governments better understand this factor or mitigate its impact on a policy's implementability	Potential actions	○ ○ ○	[Empty]	
		Design ←	Planning ←	Implementation ←

These icons indicate the policy stage(s) where each action is most relevant

- = Relatively limited opportunities for donors and partners to support governments on the factor at this stage
- = Some opportunities for donors and partners to support governments on the factor at this stage
- = Significant opportunities for donors and partners to support governments on the factor at this stage

## I. Resources

Budget		Design	Planning	Implementation
		● ● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Funding to support policy implementation, including both capital and operational expenditures			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the policy's start-up and ongoing operational costs and who is responsible for them?</li> <li>• What are the main threats to sustainable funding for the policy?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒🕒 Create a multiyear budget.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Use sound budget assumptions.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒🕒 Explore and help secure funding for the policy.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Develop a costed work plan.</li> </ul>	

  

Human resources		Design	Planning	Implementation
		● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Sufficient staff with the necessary technical and nontechnical knowledge, expertise, and skills in key roles and levels of authority (e.g., senior leadership, midlevel bureaucrats, frontline staff, short-term contractors)			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has an assessment been conducted to understand how the workloads of staff at implementing agencies will change because of the policy?</li> <li>• Where are the greatest technical and nontechnical gaps in capacity and how might they be addressed?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒🕒 Conduct a rapid human resources review.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Develop tools and resources to assist frontline implementers.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Embed technical advisers to support management and implementation.</li> </ul>			

  

Infrastructure and physical resources		Design	Planning	Implementation
		● ● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Public assets needed to carry out a given policy, including infrastructure, vehicles, buildings, and physical resources			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What physical resources are required to successfully implement the policy and can any of these needs be met by sharing resources with others?</li> <li>• How might needs vary by geography and over time?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒🕒 Map required infrastructure and physical resources to identify opportunities and gaps.</li> </ul>			

## II. Planning and Coordination

		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Targeting</b>		● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Policy focus on intended beneficiaries, products, and locations where it can have the biggest impact			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can target populations be identified and served distinctly from other populations?</li> <li>• What supports or investments are needed to improve targeting?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Use data to ensure the policy is targeted to support its goals.</li> <li>🕒 Facilitate the development of practical methods for targeting policies.</li> </ul>			
		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Guidelines and documentation</b>		●	● ● ●	● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Guidelines and planning documents that specify roles, responsibilities, and procedures, including clarifying which units “own” elements of implementation			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of guidelines, rules, and regulations might be necessary for policy implementation?</li> <li>• Who has the authority to interpret the policy and translate it into guidelines?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Provide external support for guideline development.</li> <li>🕒 Support occasional reviews of and updates to implementation guidance.</li> </ul>			
		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Management and coordination</b>		● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Capacity of implementing agencies to support effective planning and performance management			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What offices or agencies are directly responsible for implementation and oversight of the policy?</li> <li>• Are there overlapping authorities that need to be delineated more clearly?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒🕒 Map implementation roles and potential conflicts of authority.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Analyze alternative implementation models.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Support the formation of an implementation team.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Support intragovernmental coordination mechanisms.</li> </ul>			

Policy alignment and sequencing		Design	Planning	Implementation
		● ● ●	● ●	●
Definition	Fit or conflict between the policy and other domestic laws and policies and external commitments			
Sample relevant questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other policies are needed as prerequisites or complements to facilitate successful implementation?</li> <li>• What steps might be taken to preserve the policy's intent while improving alignment with existing commitments?</li> </ul>			
Potential actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Conduct a policy coherence and alignment review.</li> <li>🕒 Strengthen funder coherence and coordination.</li> </ul>			

### III. Leadership and Ownership

		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Public sector champions</b>		●	● ● ●	● ● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Leaders at multiple levels to drive momentum and “own” implementation			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the known policy champions and what roles do they play in implementation?</li> <li>• How can resources motivate or empower champions to advance implementation?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Develop adaptable tactical toolkits.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Sponsor networks of policy champions in priority policy areas.</li> </ul>			
		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Inclusive stakeholder engagement</b>		● ● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
<b>Definition</b>	The landscape of actors in the policy ecosystem whose actions can facilitate or undermine implementation progress and policy design and implementation processes that are inclusive of diverse stakeholders			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are stakeholders consulted during policy design and implementation planning?</li> <li>• What stakeholders are critical for implementing the policy and do they hold conflicting views?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Support meaningful public engagement in the policy design process.</li> <li>🕒 Map key stakeholders.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Build and equip advocacy coalitions.</li> </ul>			
		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Education, messaging, and awareness</b>		●	● ● ●	● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Education and awareness of key groups (e.g., designated implementers, private and civil society actors, and the public) regarding a policy’s purpose, implementation requirements, and potential impacts			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How might high-level political leaders effectively communicate the policy’s vision?</li> <li>• Who will be responsible for executing the communication strategy and how will the strategy change for different audiences?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Develop a communication strategy.</li> <li>🕒 Provide technical assistance to support implementation of the communication strategy.</li> </ul>			

## IV. Measurement and Accountability

		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Monitoring systems</b>		● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Data systems and processes to track implementation, provide evidence to inform modifications, and to benchmark against measures of progress and success			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What elements need to be tracked and what types of data are needed?</li> <li>• How can existing data systems support monitoring?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Develop a monitoring plan.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Conduct a data systems diagnostic review to determine the availability, accessibility, and quality of data needed to monitor policy implementation.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Develop implementation dashboards and templates for regular policy implementation reports.</li> </ul>			
		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Transparency and public access to information</b>		●	● ●	● ● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Systems and protocols that enable transparent access to information, as a necessary condition for accountability, and empower public scrutiny			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What could prevent the public from accessing timely information about this policy and are there steps that can address these barriers?</li> <li>• How can implementing stakeholders know what information can and cannot be disclosed?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Encourage the delegation of or recruitment of a staff person to be responsible for providing public updates on implementation.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Help set clear expectations, and provide a template for public access to data on implementation.</li> <li>🕒 Organize information sessions with key user groups.</li> </ul>			
		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Institutional accountability</b>		● ● ●	● ●	●
<b>Definition</b>	Administrative and political oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability for results by discovering and addressing poor implementation because of incompetence, fraud, or negligence			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the implementing ministry ensure accountability for implementation?</li> <li>• What ability do citizens have to create accountability for results?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Develop an accountability map to clarify roles and responsibilities, and identify accountability “blind spots” that require oversight.</li> <li>🕒 Assess the oversight capacity of relevant parliamentary committees.</li> <li>🕒 Support the establishment of a permanent delivery unit within the responsible agency.</li> </ul>			

## V. Political Economy

		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Power, incentives, and institutional norms</b>		● ● ●	● ●	● ●
<b>Definition</b>	Implications of stakeholder incentives, power relationships, and institutional norms for implementation; ensuring policies take account of distributional impacts by identifying “winners” and “losers” and address potential barriers through design or follow-on activities			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What incentives shape the attitudes and behavior of key stakeholders toward the policy?</li> <li>• Which groups will benefit and which will lose from the policy change? How?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒🕒 Conduct a political economy analysis (PEA).</li> <li>🕒 Identify policy design options to ease or offset negative impacts.</li> <li>🕒🕒 Provide incentives to implementing agents as needed.</li> </ul>			
		Design	Planning	Implementation
<b>Political priorities</b>		● ● ●	● ●	●
<b>Definition</b>	Assessment of the relative importance and urgency of a given policy on the political agenda of leaders across levels of government			
<b>Sample relevant questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How important is the policy to national priorities for agricultural development, food security, or poverty alleviation?</li> <li>• How does the election cycle intersect with the implementation timeline or political support?</li> </ul>			
<b>Potential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Assess the alignment between a policy and national priorities.</li> <li>🕒 Map the political calendar during implementation planning.</li> <li>🕒 Strengthen engagement with incoming governments during leadership transitions.</li> </ul>			

