

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great privilege to write to you for the first time as President of the African Association of Agricultural Economists. I am deeply grateful for the confidence members have placed in me, and conscious of the strong foundation built by previous leaders of our Association.

This is an important time to be an agricultural economist in Africa. Across the continent, questions of productivity, jobs, food prices, trade, technology, climate resilience, and economic transformation are becoming ever more pressing. These are questions about choices, incentives, institutions, and trade-offs. Good agricultural economics can help make those choices clearer.

That suggests both opportunity and responsibility for AAAE. We must remain a home for excellent scholarship and a strong professional community, while continuing to ask the question emphasized by my predecessor, Dr. Joshua Ariga, in his Presidential address: Does our work sufficiently influence the decisions that matter? I hope we can continue to help narrow the distance between rigorous research and the choices being made by governments, businesses, farmers, and others shaping Africa's future.

We must also invest in the future of our profession. I am particularly keen that AAAE provide an even stronger professional home for younger agricultural economists across the continent than it currently does. Africa's agricultural economists work in universities and research institutes, certainly, but also in consulting firms, banks and agribusinesses; ministries and central agencies; the World Bank and African Development Bank; United Nations agencies such as the World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organization; foundations and nongovernmental organizations; and increasingly in data, technology, finance and investment. Drawing more members from this wide range of professionals would greatly strengthen AAAE.

Our new Vice President, Dr. Zuhal Elnour, has also rightly emphasized the need to increase the participation and visibility of women agricultural economists, both within AAAE and in the profession more broadly. This must be an important part of how we strengthen our community.

Above all, AAAE is its members. I therefore begin my term committing to listen to the membership: to understand what you value about the Association, what we can do better, and where AAAE can make a distinctive contribution.

Thank you again for your confidence. I look forward to working with the Executive Committee and with all of you to make AAAE an Association whose scholarship is strong, whose community is vibrant, and whose work matters.

Steven Were Omamo, PhD
AAAE President