



Agri-Connections 2026 Call to Action & Key Messages

Food Security and Agri-Investment in the Era of Climate Change

Lahore Expo Centre | 1–2 October 2026

Pakistan Agricultural Coalition’s Agri-Connections 2026 brought together policymakers, farmers, agri-businesses, investors, financial institutions, technology providers and development partners around a central question: how can Pakistan build a more productive, climate resilient and investment-ready agricultural economy that ensures food security?

Call to Action

The discussions point to four priorities for moving from agricultural potential to results:

- 1. We cannot build agri exports with an unprofitable agri sector—Make farming profitable and food affordable.** Align farmer returns, consumer affordability and food-security objectives instead of focusing on only one of these priorities. Predictable policy matters here: ad-hoc interventions in supply chains, particularly wheat, and sudden export restrictions undermine the farm profitability that food security depends on.
- 2. The wheat deregulation process can make or break Pakistan’s farmers—Strengthen competitive markets and value chains.** Give farmers stronger market signals and connect them to processors, exporters, technology and finance. This means completing wheat deregulation with predictability and certainty for private stakeholders, and aligning federal and provincial policy to achieve results. Rice, maize and sesame have shown this is possible.
- 3. Investment successes already exist—Multiply successes by building an ecosystem for agriculture investments.** Facilitate bankable opportunities for investors across livestock, dairy, crops, aquaculture, processing, storage and technology. Support this through a level playing field (e.g., between formal dairy and the informal dairy sector), seed certification

and food safety standards for export markets, and strategic government support for emerging sectors such as shrimp cultivation.

4. Agriculture needs more capital—De-risk agricultural finance. Implement a coordinated strategy that scales up crop insurance, protects accredited warehousing and warehouse-receipt financing, expands agricultural credit, and facilitates the capital markets. A national crop insurance program will need public funding support, as in other countries, and long-term finance for cultivation, processing and services remains a gap, which an agriculture infrastructure fund could help address.

Key Messages

“Food security is a matter of national security for Pakistan today”

Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research

“The objective of the government is not to become the lender or the investor in the agriculture sector. Instead, the goal is to make agriculture risk investable by providing the necessary ecosystem”

Adnan Pasha, Advisor to Federal Minister for Finance

“The Middle East and Pakistan can learn from Europe’s experience after the Second World War, when countries chose regional cooperation to address shared food-security challenges as a precursor to the European Union.”

Kazim Saeed, CEO, Pakistan Agricultural Coalition

A clear message emerged across the two-day conference: food security is not simply a question of producing more. It is equally about affordability, farmer profitability, functioning markets, competitive value chains, climate resilience and the ability to attract investment. The discussions pointed towards a shift from fragmented interventions to a connected agricultural ecosystem linking farmers, markets, finance, technology, risk management and investment. The key messages from the Agri-Connections 2026 conference are:

1. SECURING AFFORDABLE FOOD

“Before we look beyond our borders, we need to put our own house in order.”

Jahangir Piracha, MD and CEO, Fauji Fertilizer Company

“Pakistan is among the countries of the Middle East-North Africa-Pakistan region with the highest food insecurity among households.”

Olivier Durand, Lead Agriculture Specialist, The World Bank

The opening discussions challenged the idea that Pakistan’s food-security problem can be solved simply by producing more. Supply matters, but so do affordability, accessibility, nutrition and the efficiency of the food system. The discussion also called for a move beyond

a predominantly wheat-based diet and recognized agriculture's role in generating incomes and jobs.

A food-secure country also needs a farm sector that makes money. Farmers are entrepreneurs who will plant what pays, and if agriculture is unprofitable, production and investment will suffer. The implication is that food security needs to be viewed through both sides of the market: affordable food for consumers and profitable agriculture for producers.

2. CONNECTING FARMERS TO MARKETS

“You cannot build an export economy on an unprofitable farm sector.”

Aamer Hayat Bhandara, Progressive Farmer

Weak connections between farmers, processors, markets, storage, finance and technology prevent productivity gains from translating fully into higher farmer incomes and competitive businesses. A key message from the poultry sector was that Pakistan's growers can serve premium markets—not just the bottom end of the market—for agri products on the global landscape with the right facilitation (**Hammad Khan**, Director, Wahdat Poultry).

The discussion emphasized the importance of connecting farmers to industry and markets. Pakistan's rice sector offered a useful example, with advances in hybridization, laser levelling and mechanization contributing to a much stronger export-oriented industry. Connecting farmers to markets similarly in other supply chains is a precondition for competitiveness, food security and trade.

Chief Guest **Mr. Usama Leghari**, Member of the Provincial Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, emphasized the Government of Punjab's focus on agricultural value chains, calling on the corporate sector to work directly with farmers to add value to their produce, reduce intermediaries, and create a more profitable model for both farmers and businesses.

3. COMPETING IN OPEN MARKETS

“Pakistan's storage deficit is a major constraint on the reliability of our grain supply chain. We need to look at viability-gap funding and other mechanisms that can make investment in storage commercially viable and bring the private sector in at scale.”

Ahmed Umair, Prime Minister's Coordinator for Agriculture

“We can export to the region, but we need to do deregulation right.”

Fuad Garib, CEO, Garibsons

Pakistan's food-security and export ambitions should not be treated as competing objectives. A competitive agricultural sector can supply domestic consumers while building opportunities in regional markets.

Rice, maize and sesame show how more open markets support commercial responses from farmers and industry. Wheat shows the difficulties when market signals and policy

incentives are less predictable. The deregulation of wheat must first work to farmers' benefit. Speakers also noted that federal and provincial policies often pull in different directions. Beyond traditional commodities, Pakistan can serve regional markets in more agri products if it improves quality, food safety, logistics, processing and connectivity. The objective should therefore be competitive and predictable agricultural markets, with appropriate safeguards for food security and vulnerable consumers. In the dairy sector, a minimum pasteurization law will not change anything for the farmer but it will put pressure on the middleman and bring a better product to the end-consumer (**Usman Zaheer Ahmad**, CEO FrieslandCampina Engro and Chairman Pakistan Dairy Association).

Mahmood Nawaz Shah, President of the Sindh Abadgar Board, noted that during huge crises such as Covid and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, Pakistan did not face a food crisis but instead exported, and that the need now is to capitalize on this opportunity through mechanization and credit.

4. ATTRACTING INVESTMENT

“Investor interest alone is not investment. The ecosystem has to give investors enough confidence to actually commit capital.”

Omar Sagga, Chairman, Taraf Meat

“Private capital is ready to play a much greater role in modern warehousing and cold-chain infrastructure, but we need to streamline the regulatory environment so that investment can move more quickly into these critical parts of the agricultural value chain.”

Muhammad Danyal, CEO and Country Head, Louis Dreyfus Company Pakistan

Investment opportunities extend well beyond the major crops. Meat, poultry and dairy cases showed the scale of existing successful investments, with Gulf investors interested in meat processing. Private-sector voices argued that Pakistani businesses can compete in premium livestock products, and that dairy companies need a level playing field with the informal sector. The shrimp session pointed to a new, higher-value export industry in aquaculture, but one that needs strategic government support to move from individual projects to scale.

Speakers stressed building integrated ecosystems, hatcheries, feed supply and processing, rather than isolated pilots (**Faisal Iftikhar**, CEO, AquaHatch), and the need to “segregate subsidy from commercial financing” so that new sectors such as aquaculture are sustainable (**Kashif Thanvi**, Investment Director, Acumen). Large private investments can be mobilized for agri-warehousing with the right investment climate and facilitation by government (**Zunee Muhtashim**, Principal Investment Officer IFC). The capital markets have an extremely small footprint in agriculture but an agri-warehousing fund is a possibility (**Dr. Amjad Waheed**, CEO NBP Fund Management).

Olives show the size of the opportunity: global demand continues to grow while production is unable to keep pace, leaving room for Pakistan to become a significant player (**Shaukat Rasul**, CEO, Loralai Olive). Export competitiveness also needs testing infrastructure at home: responsive laboratories in Pakistan, financed and operated with private-sector participation,

would avoid sending samples abroad and waiting weeks for results (**Rana Uzair**, CEO and Founder, GH2 Industries). Reaching international markets takes a consistent culture of food safety across the whole supply chain, not certifications alone, and a problem with a single consignment can damage the reputation of the whole country (**James Okoth**, Acting Country Representative, FAO Pakistan).

The challenge is to build the conditions—infrastructure, regulation, finance, skills, market access and commercial partnerships—that can turn sectoral potential into actual investment.

5. FINANCING THE FARMER

“Make the farmer visible and the finance will follow.”

Zafar Masud, President, The Bank of Punjab and Chairman, Pakistan Banks Association

“There are three binding constraints for farmers and the agriculture sector: risk and the lack of proper insurance coverage... the non-availability of accredited warehouses... and access to finance.”

Saleem Ullah, Deputy Governor, State Bank of Pakistan

Agricultural financing cannot scale through credit alone. High production risk, inadequate insurance, limited accredited storage and weak control over commodities all constrain lenders. Crop insurance, warehouse receipts and agricultural finance need to develop as parts of one ecosystem supported by government subsidies where market failure justifies it, as done even in developed countries (**Zafar Masud**, President, The Bank of Punjab). New products, risk-sharing mechanisms and distribution channels could connect available capital to the farmers who currently cannot access it (**Aamir Kureshi**, General Manager, President’s Office and Strategic Initiatives, HBL)

The private sector was explicit that a national crop insurance program cannot be built without government doing what governments do all over the world: providing public funding support for subsidizing the insurance premium for small farmers (**Aminuddin**, CEO TPL Insurance). Carbon credits can also add value to agribusiness projects, and voluntary carbon markets can work where a buyer is secured early through an offtake agreement. (**Gediz Kaya**, Founding Partner GAIA Climate).

6. INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY

“Where the next rupee should go: closing the yield gap at farmer level.”

Jahangir Piracha, MD and CEO, Fauji Fertilizer Company

“The new national seed and biotechnology policies can be a turning point for Pakistani agriculture.”

Dr. Asif Ali, Chairman, National Seed Development & Regulatory Authority

Climate change, water constraints and rising input costs are changing the economics of farming. The response cannot be to use more inputs. It must be to use land, water, nutrients and technology more efficiently. The nutrient management discussion framed this as a shift

from how much fertilizer to apply to how effectively crops turn nutrients into output, and the same logic applies to water, seed, mechanization and digital tools.

Major input producers stressed the need for greater emphasis on the application of phosphatic fertilizers, with a focus on improving fertilizer efficiency and effectiveness rather than simply increasing volumes (**Siham Jabrane**, OCP Morocco). For livestock, it is critical to support farmers by categorizing breeds nationally and specifying which breeds must be actively developed for competitiveness.

7. TECHNOLOGY THAT PAYS OFF

“Technology must follow value, not the other way round. If a solution cannot prove its worth on a farmer’s own field, it has no business being scaled.”

Yasin Seker, CEO, Al-Ghazi Tractors

“The real opportunity is in the ‘moments that matter’ — the everyday decisions farmers make on irrigation, pests and crops. Technology should help us get those decisions right.”

Zeeshan Baig, CEO and Country General Manager, Syngenta Pakistan

Technology should solve real economic problems for farmers. This matters most for smaller farmers who cannot justify owning expensive machinery and may benefit from rental, custom-hiring or mechanization-as-a-service models (**Jehiel Oliver**, Hello Tractor). Farmers’ needs are moving from raw horsepower to machine uptime, efficient input use and reliable servicing. Machines can also help farmers absorb climate-related shocks, by shortening land preparation, sowing and harvesting and by reducing water use. The same test applies to AI and precision agriculture: adoption depends on measurable gains in productivity, costs or returns.

Looking Ahead

Mustafa Kamal Pasha Ataturk said that farmers are the masters of the nation (**Aykut Sengul**, TopCon Positioning Systems Japan). Pakistan must give respect to its farmers and take pride in their outputs, rather than treating them unfairly (**Hasan Hanif**, Progressive farmer). Pakistan does not lack agricultural opportunity. To take our agriculture to the next level, we must link profitable farmers to markets, finance to risk management, technology to farm-level value, and investor interest to bankable opportunities, so that the task moves from dialogue to delivery and creates the conditions for farmers to earn, businesses to invest and agriculture to become more productive, resilient and competitive.

For more information on the Agri Connections Conference, please reach out to Rabia Zulfiqar, Senior Strategy Associate, Pakistan Agricultural Coalition (rabia@pac.com.pk)