

Draft Concept Note

From Continental Vision to Local Action: Implementing the Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan at National-Levels*

1. Background and Context

Problem Statement

Adopted at the African Union summit in May 2024, the African Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan (AFSH-AP) presents a comprehensive strategy to improve soil health and fertilizer use and effectiveness across Africa, but its success relies heavily on targeted support and effective coordination at the continental, regional, and national levels. However, aligning actions across these scales presents challenges for donors, governments, and researchers. To address these challenges, establishing coordination units at the national level is essential to facilitate the adaptation, localization, and implementation of the AFSH-AP.

The Africa Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes (ANAPRI) and its member centers, with technical support from Michigan State University (MSU) aim to bridge this gap by helping to establish FSH AP policy coordination, implementation, and advocacy units in various countries. These units will focus on ensuring the adaptation of the AFSH-AP is locally driven and supported by government mandates.

To advance the AFSH-AP, we seek support to launch a pilot initiative in six countries: Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria. The selection of these countries is based on ANAPRI's prior analytical and outreach work under the Sustain Africa Initiative, which aims to catalyze the domestication of the FSH AP by understanding stakeholder aspirations for national action plans. Furthermore, MSU has strong relationships with key institutions in these countries that can be the entry-point for technical and institutional support. By leveraging established relationships and expertise of ANAPRI and MSU, we can ensure that these national units effectively coordinate efforts, align local priorities with continental goals, and build sustainable, evidence-based agricultural policies across Africa.

This concept note aligns closely with the many development partners goals of promoting sustainable agricultural practices, enhancing food security, and supporting economic development. Financially supporting this initiative will enable the successful implementation of the AFSH-AP at national level, paving the way for significant progress in addressing agricultural challenges and coordinating AFSH-AP efforts at regional and continental levels.

1.2. Objectives

The proposed pilot initiative aims to achieve several key objectives as follows:

1. Establish national policy coordination, implementation, and advocacy units in six pilot countries, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana that will catalyze the effective implementation of the AFSH-AP, strengthen local capacity, and promote sustainable agricultural practices. These units will be responsible for coordinating local stakeholders in a process of adapting and implementing the AFSH-AP in alignment with locally defined national priorities.
2. Enhance local capacity by organizing and providing targeted training programs and technical assistance to government officials, technical staff, and other stakeholders involved in soil health and fertilizer management.
3. Foster coordination among various stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society organizations, and the private sector, to support effective implementation.

* For a more detailed concept note, contact Antony Chapoto, ANAPRI Executive Director, at antony.chapoto@anapri.net.

Malawi as a model for broader application

Malawi, through the MwAPATA Institute (an ANAPRI member center), provides a prototype for how this coordination role can be implemented. Prior to the adoption of the AFSH AP, Malawi, with support from MwAPATA, developed a draft Malawi Action Plan on Fertilizer and Soil Health for 2024 to 2034 (MAP-FSH). This domesticates the continental Action Plan and provides strategies and actions to address challenges in fertilizer and soil health in Malawi.

The Malawi government has asked MwAPATA to serve as a focal point, or “secretariat,” for initiating and coordinating in-country actions. With this mandate, MwAPATA will leverage its reputation as an independent policy think tank with strong relationships across government, civil society, development partners, and the private sector to coordinate stakeholders implementing the MAP-FSH.

As the secretariat, MwAPATA is in the process of establishing implementation structures that will include a **Steering Committee**, an **Advisory Group** and a **Multi-Stakeholder Platform** to carry forward the adaptation and implementation of the MAP-FSH.

4. Create a scalable model that can be replicated in other African countries, thereby broadening the impact of the AFSH-AP.

2. Implementation Model

Adapting the Malawi Model:

The approach currently being in Malawi (see box) provides a practical and adaptable model for other African countries to follow. By establishing national coordination units with national government mandates, developing tailored action plans, forming multi-stakeholder coalitions, and translating knowledge into policy action, countries can effectively implement the Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan at the national level. This will contribute to coordinating efforts and achieving the broader continental goals of improved soil health and sustainable fertilizer use across Africa.

Each country is expected to develop a local FSH AP for the period 2024 to 2034. This process should be consultative and locally driven in order to account for the various roles of public and private stakeholders involved in soil health initiatives. The national-level Plans will outline strategies and actions to address challenges related to fertilizer and soil health in each country.

The general steps to guide the country's implementation of the FSH AP being conceptualized by ANAPRI/MSU and following the MwAPATA model will include the following:

1. Establishment of a National Secretariat

ANAPRI centers are well-suited for this role due to their reputation as independent policy think tanks with extensive networks in government, civil society, development partners, and the private sector. However, before assuming this role, the centers must obtain endorsement from the government agency responsible for fertilizer and soil health matters, such as the ministry of agriculture.

2. Development of a National Action Plan:

The Secretariat will lead the development of a national action plan adapted to the AFSH-AP but specific to national context through a consultative process involving key stakeholders from government, civil society, the private sector, and development partners.

3. Establishment of the Soil Health Initiative (SHI) Coordination Unit

To facilitate the coordinated implementation of the local national FSH action plan, each national secretariat should establish a Soil Health Initiative (SHI) Coordination Unit.

The SHI Coordination Unit will then have three main objectives:

1. Establishment of a local coalition of organizations under one memorandum of understanding (MoU) by creating a national Multistakeholder Soil Health Initiative Platform (MSHIP).

The MoU will formalize the MSHIP coalition and declare its objective to support the implementation of the FSH AP. The coalition will serve as a platform for donors and other stakeholders interested in investing in post-Nairobi implementation at the country level,

technical research teams, civil society, the private sector, and government ministries, departments, and agencies aiming to identify knowledge gaps and implement relevant policies. The coalition will facilitate the sharing of best practices and resources, ensure a coordinated approach to soil health initiatives, and support fundraising efforts for soil health initiatives.

2. Collaborate with coalition members to identify relevant projects/proposals that can receive funding through the MSHIP. Additionally, assist in attracting and organizing funding and partnerships whenever possible.
3. Utilize the convening power of the SHI Coordination Unit and its members to translate the knowledge gained from project implementation into actionable policies.

To achieve the first objective, the relevant government agency (e.g., Ministry of Agriculture) and ANAPRI Center should establish a process of forming three progressively larger groups:

- a. At the onset, the **Steering Committee (SC)** will consist of relevant government ministries, departments, agencies, and the Secretariat. The SC will provide strategic guidance and management oversight for the formation of an “Advisory Group” and subsequent MSHIP. One aspect to be discussed by the SC is the establishment of **Technical Working Groups**. These groups will discuss and advance key technical components necessary for facilitating FSH AP implementation. Potential working groups are presented as pillars in Figure 1.
- b. The **Advisory Group (AG)** will offer expert advice and technical guidance to the SC and technical working groups of the MSHIP. Membership in the AG will be by invitation from the SC, and can include government entities, local Universities, farmers, National Agricultural Research System (NARS), development partners/donors, private sector representatives, CGIAR System representatives, and civil society organizations.
- c. The **Multi-stakeholder Soil Health Initiative Platform (MSHIP)** will fulfill objectives 2 and 3. Through consultation with the AG, the Secretariat will identify and engage potential MSHIP members from government, civil society, private sector, donors, research institutions, and other non-governmental organizations.

Joining the platform will enable stakeholders to participate in the coordinated effort to implement the FSH AP. For instance, potential grantees can apply for funding with the endorsement of the MSHIP, while donors can easily identify investment opportunities in FSH AP implementation. The SC and AG will determine specific processes for stakeholders to contribute to priority setting.

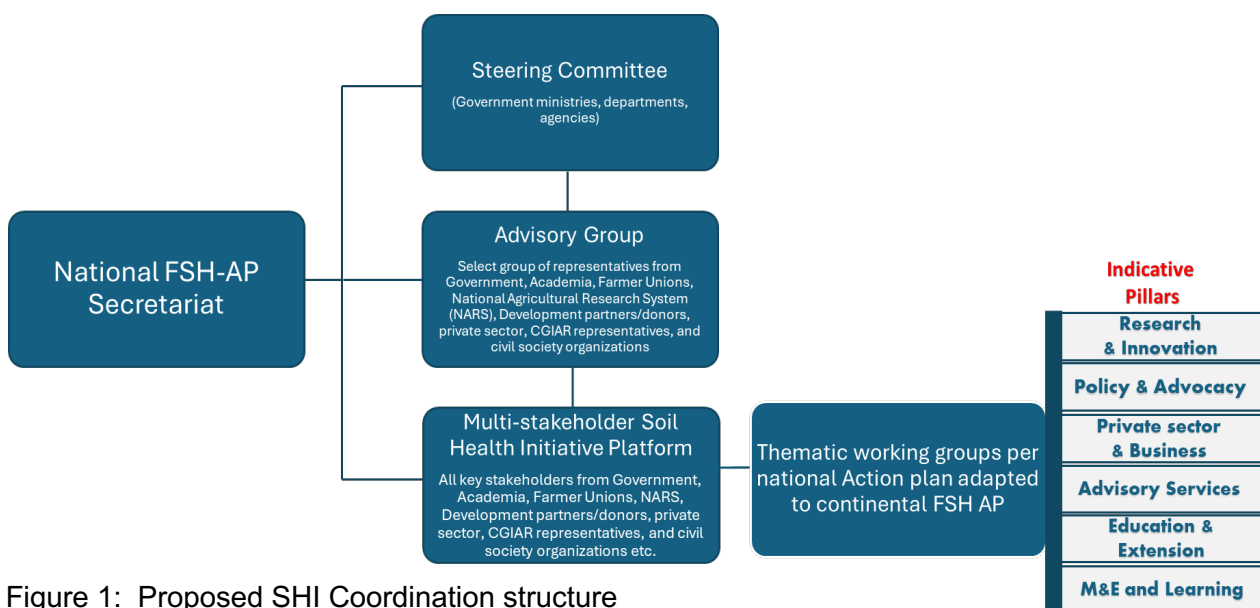


Figure 1: Proposed SHI Coordination structure