



Climate Smart WATER Management
and Sustainable DEVELOPMENT
for Food and Agriculture in East Africa



FINAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ISSUE | JUNE 2026

WATDEV FINAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Integrating Grassroots Knowledge and Research into Water and Soil Management in Africa

Nairobi, Kenya | 15–16 June 2026 | Hybrid Format

1. OPENING SECTION

A Final Conference to Take Stock – and Move Forward



The WATDEV Final International Conference brought together around 80 participants, including project partners, researchers, representatives of public institutions and international organizations, technical experts, DeSIRA project coordinators, policymakers, and local stakeholders from the study areas.

The conference opened in Nairobi with welcoming remarks from the main institutions behind the project: ASARECA, AICS Cairo and CIHEAM Bari.

In their opening addresses, Sylvester Dickson Baguma, Tiberio Chiari and Biagio Di Terlizzi framed the event as an opportunity not only to reflect on four years of collaboration and achievements, but also to look ahead to future cooperation, policy uptake and practical solutions for more resilient water and soil management.

Held in a hybrid format, the conference connected participants in Nairobi with partners joining remotely, creating a shared space for dialogue and knowledge exchange across countries and institutions. At the heart of the event was a shared conviction: resilient solutions for water, soil and food security cannot be developed in isolation. They emerge through the integration of grassroots knowledge, scientific research, modelling, policy dialogue and institutional cooperation.

[Read the Conference Story](#)

2. FROM STRATEGIC CHALLENGES TO SHARED SOLUTIONS

Water, Soil and Food Security at the Centre



Across Africa, water and soil are among the most decisive resources for the future of agriculture. They are also increasingly under pressure from climate change, land degradation, erratic rainfall, droughts and growing food security needs.

The WATDEV Final Conference addressed these challenges through keynote speeches delivered by senior technical experts, researchers, programme managers, and institutional leaders, as well as through high-level panel discussions, plenary discussions, and group work.

The discussions focused on:

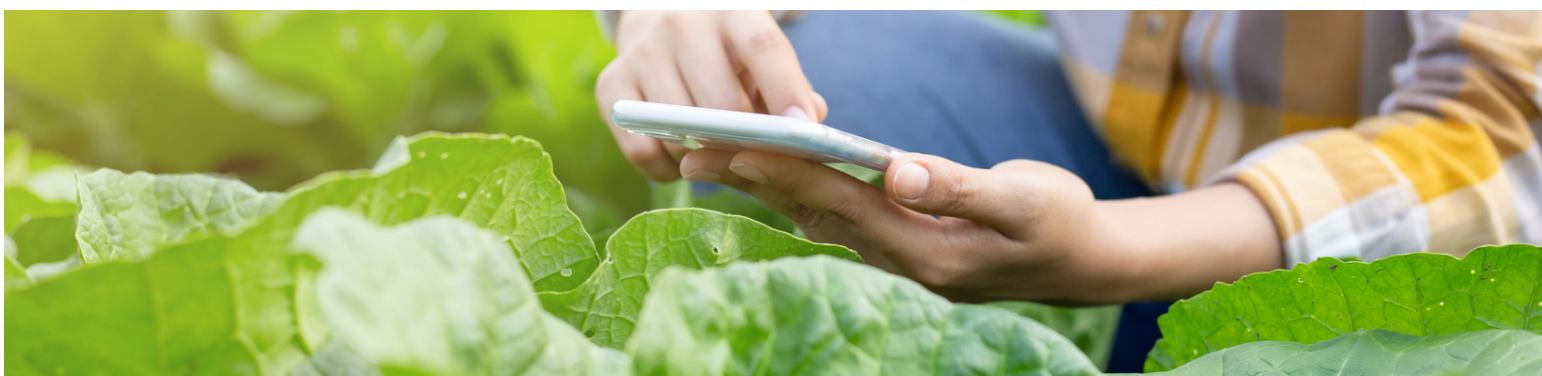
- climate resilience
- agricultural water and soil governance
- food security planning
- basin-scale management
- cross-border data exchange
- Best Management Practices
- institutional uptake
- policy alignment

The conference showed that sustainable management requires both technical solutions and shared governance.

[Explore the Conference Coverage](#)

3. THE WATDEV METHOD

Bridging Farmers' Knowledge and Scientific Research



One of the strongest messages emerging from the conference was the need to connect local knowledge and scientific evidence. WATDEV has worked from the field to the policy level, linking farmers' practical experience with research, modelling and decision-support tools. This approach helped identify and validate Best Management Practices, assess their potential impact and understand how they can be adapted to different local, national and regional contexts. The result is not a single solution, but a method: listening to farmers, connecting institutions, training researchers, testing practices, building scenarios and supporting better decisions.

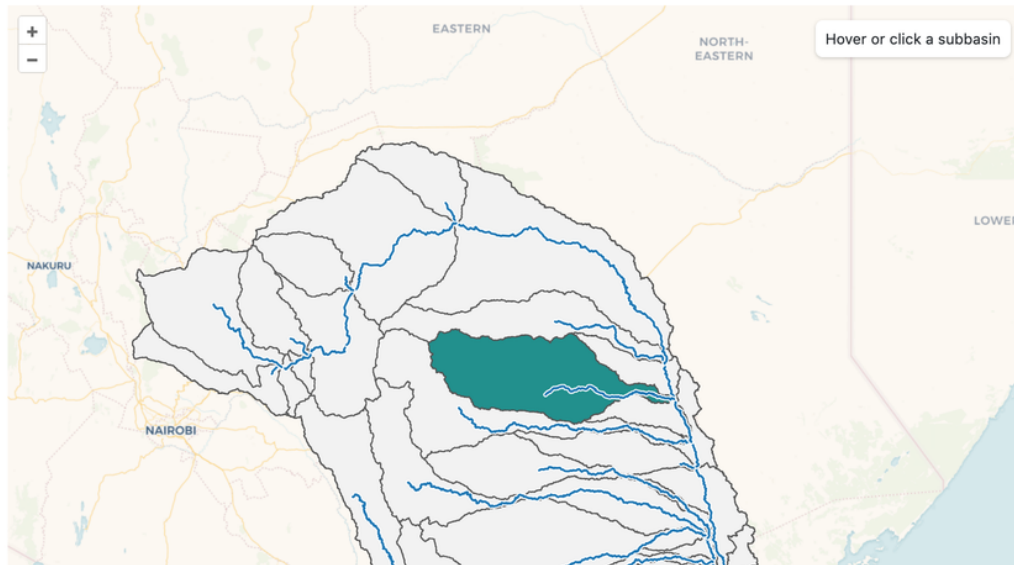
[Discover How WATDEV Connects Knowledge and Action](#)

4. OPERATIONALISING THE WATDEV TOOLBOX

From Research Outputs to Planning Decisions

Study area: [Egypt](#) [Ethiopia](#) [Kenya](#) [Sudan](#)

Subbasins — Kenya



Controls — Kenya

Datasets / scenarios

Default datasets

- ☒ Water use association ⓘ
- ☐ Agroforestry plus WUA ⓘ
- ☐ Agroforestry ⓘ
- ☐ Baseline ⓘ

Use the checkboxes to enable or disable scenarios.

None of the selected datasets are currently available for download.

Metric

Nitrate in groundwater

Average nitrate leaching to groundwater per hectare, aggregated to subbasin and crop.

Crop

The second day of the conference focused on policy uptake, institutional integration and the WATDEV legacy. A central part of this legacy is the WATDEV Toolbox: a modelling and decision-support tool designed to help users compare agricultural scenarios, assess Best Management Practices and support planning choices for water and soil management. During the conference, participants discussed how the Toolbox can move from project output to practical use, helping decision-makers evaluate different options and understand what works best, where, and under which conditions. The Toolbox represents a bridge between data, modelling and action.

[Explore the WATDEV Toolbox](#)

5. WATDEV IN THE MEDIA

The Final Conference Through Partner and Press Coverage



The WATDEV Final International Conference received coverage from partner channels and media outlets, highlighting the relevance of sustainable soil and water management for Africa's agricultural future. The media coverage focused on the project's contribution to climate resilience, food security, grassroots knowledge, scientific cooperation and the future use of decision-support tools.

Featured Articles

ASARECA

Bridging the Soil and Water Divide: Africa's Agricultural Revolution Ignites at Nairobi WATDEV Conference

[Read Article](#)

African News Agency

WATDEV Conference 2026 Seeks Solutions to Africa's Growing Food Security Challenges

[Read Article](#)

Kenya News Agency

Sustainable Soil, Water Management Key to Africa's Agri-Food Future

[Read Article](#)

Kenya News Agency

Experts Call for Better Soil and Water Management in Africa

[Read Article](#)

Kilimo News

Turning Climate Challenges into Opportunities Through Smart Water and Soil Management

[Read Article](#)

6. WATCH THE VIDEO

Sustainable Soil and Water Management for Africa's Agri-Food Future



The conference was also covered through video, helping bring the key messages of the event to a wider audience. The video highlights the importance of sustainable soil and water management for Africa's agri-food future and gives visibility to the voices and priorities that shaped the Nairobi discussions.

[Watch the Video](#)

7. PHOTO GALLERY

Faces, Moments and Connections from Nairobi

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[Download
Photo Gallery 1](#)

[Download
Photo Gallery 2](#)

8. WATDEV LEGACY

A Network, a Method, and longlasting results

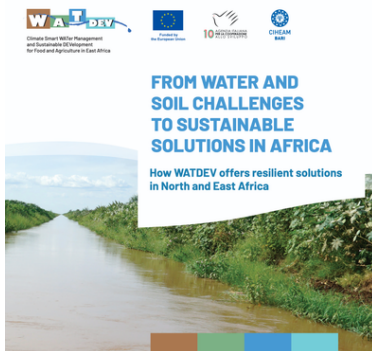
The WATDEV Final Conference closed a project, but not the path it opened. Over the years, WATDEV has built more than technical outputs. It has created a shared method, a network of partners and a space for dialogue between farmers, researchers, institutions and decision-makers.

Its legacy includes:

- Validated Best Management Practices
- Field-based evidence
- Integrated modelling and scenario analysis
- The WATDEV Water and Management Toolbox
- Training and capacity building sessions
- Policy dialogue
- Stronger cooperation among African and European partners
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The future of water and soil management will depend on the ability to make innovation shared, practical and useful.

Have a look at the final project publication summarizing project results and processes activated:



Ladisa G., Lecci S., Sawassi A., Bogliotti C., Bianco C., Tavassi J. (2026). From water and soil challenges to sustainable solutions in Africa. How WATDEV offers resilient solutions in North and East Africa. Valenzano: CIHEAM Bari. WATDEV project. <https://doi.org/10.48259/bc1963e>

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Funded by
the European Union

This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the WATDEV partnership and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.