



PAFO-COLEAD INNOVATIONS SERIES: Innovations and successes of African farmer-led businesses and SMEs

SESSION N°17

The potential of African regional markets: Successes from SMEs and Smallholders

Wednesday 21 February 2024 – 12:00-14:00 UTC / 13:00-15:00 CET

Online ([Zoom](#))

English-French-Portuguese interpretation available

BIODATA OF THE SPEAKERS

ANDREW AHIAKU – DIRECTOR & HEAD OF FINANCIAL SECTOR, ACELI AFRICA

Andrew Ahiaku is the Director and Head of the Financial Sector of Aceli Africa, a not-for-profit donor-funded agribusiness finance market initiative that supports lenders to increase financing to agri small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Andrew oversees and leads all Aceli's country operations and programmes, is responsible for lender onboarding and engagement, lender capacity building, policy lead and Aceli's entry into new markets in sub-Saharan Africa.



A food and agricultural finance specialist, Andrew is a certified expert in agricultural finance, FAO-certified agricultural risk manager and Chartered Marketer. He has a deep interest in the intersection of banking, agriculture, alternative finance, and policy, and is passionate about the impact and access to finance.

Andrew has experience working in the tri-sectors (public, private, and development). In addition to his engagement with Aceli, he is also working to deploy philanthropic capital to attract private investment to improve lending to agri SMEs and improve farmer livelihood.



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ISOLINA BOTO – HEAD OF NETWORKS AND ALLIANCES, COLEAD

Isolina Boto is the Head of Networks and Alliances at COLEAD, a non-profit Association of private sector operators in the agrifood sector active in the EU, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) regions. Isolina has more than 25 years of experience in agricultural development. She started her career with the European Commission and has also worked with various ACP embassies and NGOs in areas related to food security, rural development and trade. Before joining COLEAD, she was the Manager of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) Brussels Office (2004-2020) implementing policy initiatives related to the ACP-EU cooperation in the field of agricultural and rural development. She has led agribusiness projects in support of capacity development of SMEs, entrepreneurs and farmers organisations across Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.



MAIMOUNA COULIBALY – FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, FASO KABA, MALI

Maimouna Coulibaly is Mali's first female seed entrepreneur, and the founder of the Malian seed company Faso Kaba. Maimouna is passionate about increasing female involvement in agribusiness. She believes that women should feature more prominently in food distribution due to their significant contribution to food production.



Faso Kaba promotes public-private relations by serving as a relay between producers agricultural and research organisations such as IER, ICRISAT, IITA, CORAF, WORLDVEG, AFRICARICE, and CIMMYT which select new Open Pollinated Varieties (OPV) and high-yielding hybrid biofortified and adapted to climate change to contribute to food and nutritional security.

Maimouna has a longstanding interest in agriculture and is dedicated to the development of the agricultural sector. She is a member and delegate to several national and international associations and networks, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USAid, Mali's Rural Economy Institute and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). Maimouma's work has won her a number of awards and distinctions, including Best Enterprise by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan and co-winner of the African Food Prize.

ISMAEL NTWALI – OPERATIONS MANAGER, S&I FRESH LTD, RWANDA

Ismael Ntwali, 24 years old, is operations manager at S&I FRESH and also manages the company packhouse. He has been working for S&I FRESH from its starting point and has gained experience in business development and management. The company - based in Rwanda - grows fresh and organic horticultural products on their own farm but also works with local smallholder farmers. They support farmers by supplying them with seeds and training them on agricultural practices.

S&I FRESH exports their produce to international markets (Middle East and Europe). The company main office is located in Kigali and the packhouse is located at Mugomero nearby vegetables and fruits market.

JEREMY KNOPS – DELEGUE GENERAL, COLEAD



Jeremy Knops holds a master’s degree in business engineering from the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (SBS-EM). Prior to joining COLEAD in 2009, he was involved in Guatemala with the daily operations of a farmers’ cooperative exporting loquats to the EU and the US. He started to work for COLEAD as an expert in charge of matters related to private standards and certification for ACP producers and exporters of fruit and vegetables. Jeremy is an accredited coach for leadership and professional development. He was appointed as General Delegate of COLEAD in June 2019.

HARRY MALICHI – CO-FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, WUCHI WAMI, ZAMBIA



Harry Malichi is co-founder and managing director of Wuchi Wami Ltd, specialising in sustainable bee-keeping practices, processing and distributing. The company, created in 2018, aims at empowering local farmers in Mwinilunga, a North-Western province of Zambia, with modern beehives that are environmentally friendly and do not support deforestation. The honey is processed through the cooperative called Kwasha Indimi that has 2500 small scale farmers and then packaged, branded and distributed by Wuchi Wami. The company also trains their farmers on financial literacy and onboards them on a programme called Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) to accompany them in competitive growth and support their children.

Harry is passionate that sustainable beekeeping will create sustainable livelihoods. For his work in sustainable bee-keeping, he has received many distinctions and was recognised as Entrepreneur of the Year at the Quality Awards Zambia in 2022.

Harry has a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Zambia.

VICTORIA MWAFULIRWA – MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOMES INDUSTRIES LTD-AN, MALAWI



Victoria Mwafulirwa is the founder and managing director of Homes Industries LTD, an award winning agro-processing company based in Karonga, Malawi. The company is the leading manufacturer of branded sunflower cooking oil, maize and peanut flour (Nsinjiro) in the region and works with over 6,000 smallholder farmers in an out-grower scheme.

Victoria is also the Secretary General of the Cross Border Traders’ Association of Malawi (CBTA). In addition to supporting the development of regional trade, she is involved in several community women and youth empowering activities aimed at achieving economic empowerment, good nutrition, and climate change interventions. Victoria also advocates for better prices for farm produce, as she believes this is the gateway to a decent income for rural farmers.

Victoria has experience as a communications and supply chain professional, formerly working as a Communications and External Relations officer, as well as a Supply Chain Officer. She also worked as a News Correspondent for SABC Africa in Malawi, served as Regional Chairperson for the African Network for Environmental Journalists under the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), and was Regional Editor for Earth Wire Africa, a digital news platform that focuses on environmental and current affairs in Africa.

DR. BABAFEMI OYEWOLE – CEO, PAFO



Dr. Babafemi Oyewole, the CEO of Pan African Farmers Organization (PAFO), is a tri-sector executive and professional with experiences in the public, private and non-government sectors, and a veteran in the management of international institutions. Prior to his appointment at PAFO, he was the CEO of the African Agribusiness Alliance; former CEO of African Cashew Alliance; former Executive Director/CEO of African Energy Investment Corporation (AEICORP); Deputy Secretary General of the West African Bankers Association (WABA); General Manager, Banque Internationale du Benin, and Senior Economist with the Bank of Industry, Nigeria. He is a member of Africa Regional Experts on Policy Dialogue on Natural Resource-based Development at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD).

Dr. Oyewole was a Chevening Scholar for his PhD in development economics at the university of Bradford, United Kingdom, and obtained an MBA in Technology, Marketing and Business Strategy from Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria. He has published articles in international journals and made conference presentations on development policy, banking and finance, agriculture, agribusiness, and sustainable development issues.

KHALIFA ALADJI ABDOULAYE THIAM – MANAGER, JOULEU, SENEGAL

Khalifa Aladji Abdoulaye Thiam is a Senegalese entrepreneur, founder and the manager of JOULEU, a company that produces and trades horticultural products, serving domestic and foreign markets including through e-commerce.

Khalifa has a Master's degree in Management of Tourism and Hotel Companies from the Université Gaston Berger de Saint Louis, Senegal and a Higher Diploma in Business Management, specialising in agricultural business management and plant and animal production. Khalifa is also a trainer in employability and soft skills at the the Inclusion Division in the Department of Scientific Innovation, Inclusion, Forecasting and Community Service (D2iPS). For his innovation as a youth entrepreneur in agriculture, Khalifa has won several national and international entrepreneurial programmes (i.e., ENABLE AgreenLab programme, Senegalese Youth Entrepreneurship Programme, Virtual Academy for the promotion of renewable energies by Nuertingen-Geislingen University in Germany).



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