



## PAFO-COLEAD INNOVATIONS SERIES:

Innovations and successes of African farmer-led businesses and SMEs

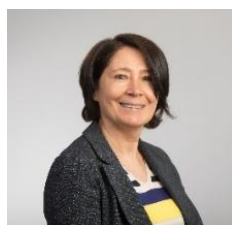
### SESSION N°23

Opportunities in cross-border value chains for entrepreneurs

Tuesday 3 June 2025 - 12:00-14:00 UTC

### BIODATA OF THE SPEAKERS

#### 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.

#### AÏSSATA DIAKITÉ, FOUNDER & CEO, ZABBAAN HOLDING



Aïssata Diakité is a Malian entrepreneur and the founder of Zabbaan Holding, an innovative agribusiness company that specializes in processing local fruits and plants into natural products such as juices, herbal teas, jams, and dried fruits. Zabbaan combines nutritional quality, local know-how, and compliance with international standards to create value-added products. Through her company, Aïssata champions inclusive and sustainable agricultural value chains by working with smallholder farmers mostly women ensuring fair income and improved access to regional and international markets. She is actively involved in advancing regional economic integration



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and promoting “Made in Africa” products across borders. Aïssata also serves as the President of NALA (New African Leaders for Agribusiness) and is the founder of the Youth and Food Security Forum, both initiatives aimed at empowering young entrepreneurs in the agrifood sector. Her impactful work has earned her multiple accolades, including the Best Entrepreneur of Mali Award and selection among the AfricaFrance Young Leaders, recognizing her role in transforming Africa’s agribusiness landscape.

#### **SARAN KEÏTA, CEO & FOUNDER, AMIDJOR AGRIBUSINESS**



Dr. Saran Keïta is a dynamic Guinean entrepreneur and a strong advocate for women's economic empowerment across Africa. She is the founder and CEO of Amidjor Agrobusiness, an agro-processing company that adds value to local agricultural products and has expanded its reach beyond Guinea, tapping into regional and international markets. As the President of AWEP-Guinea (African Women Entrepreneurship Program), Dr. Keïta plays a key role in building economic bridges between women entrepreneurs across West Africa. She actively promotes regional trade, cross-border partnerships, and inclusive policies that enable women-led SMEs to grow beyond national borders. Dr. Keïta also champions financial inclusion and the removal of barriers to cross-border trade for women. Her work supports greater access to regional financing, regulatory harmonization, and integration into African value chains—critical enablers under frameworks such as the AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area).

#### **ANTHONY EGERU, MANAGER SKILLING, ENGAGEMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, RUFORUM**



Anthony Egeru is the Training and Community Development Engagement Officer at the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a pan-African network of 163 universities across 40 countries. In this role, he leads the design and implementation of training programs that aim to strengthen the capacity of African universities in agricultural innovation and community development. He plays a key role in major initiatives such as the 19th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting held in Yaoundé in 2023, which brought together educators, researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders to explore the role of higher education in driving sustainable development across Africa. His work helps position African universities as central actors in transforming agri-food systems and empowering local communities.

#### **LESLEY MARANGE, FOUNDER & CEO, GYLTIME FOODS**



Lesley Marange is a dynamic Zimbabwean entrepreneur and industry thought leader, known for combining innovation, strategy, and passion to drive young, disruptive entrepreneurship. Founder and CEO of Glytime Foods, he has positioned the company as a leading force in the production of non-GMO, high-fibre, low-sugar, and low-salt food products for international markets, with a strong commitment to health and wellness. Under his leadership, Glytime Foods champions sustainable value chains, environmental stewardship, and economic empowerment, especially for women and youth. Lesly also serves as a consultant for Zimtrade’s export development programs, including

Eagles' Nest and Next, She's Exporter, where he trains young entrepreneurs in export readiness, branding, sustainability, and market access. He holds an MBA in Strategic Management from the National University of Science and Technology, a BSc in Food Science and Technology from Chinhoyi University of Technology and completed the Stanford Seed Transformation Programme.

#### **WEZI MZUMARA, FOUNDER & CEO, KWANZA COCOA**



Wezi Mzumara is a cocoa farmer, chocolate maker, and chocolatier with a background in Public Relations, Events Management, and accessory design. Since 2020, Wezi has focused her career on agriculture. After the pandemic impacted the events and PR sectors, she transitioned to become a full-time cocoa farmer. She explored the potential for adding value to cocoa products in Malawi, leading to the creation of Kwanza Cocoa. In 2021, Wezi applied for the Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Program and received seed capital to bring her cocoa value-addition concept to life. This opportunity also led to her selection for the Women Entrepreneurship 4 Africa program, and she successfully completed the construction of a new cocoa value addition production facility in Mzuzu. Wezi is also a 2024 African Woman in Food Fellow and views this as just the beginning of her journey in cocoa. As Kwanza Cocoa continues to grow, she is excited to introduce more innovative flavors, experiences, and products to the market.

#### **OUSSEINI OUEDRAOGO, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, ROPPA**



Ousseini Ouedraogo is the Executive Secretary of the Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA), where he plays a key role in promoting family farming, food sovereignty, and agroecology across the region. A trained agronomist, he brings extensive experience in strengthening and organizing farmers' organizations. Before assuming his current position, he served as a program officer in ROPPA's technical implementation unit, overseeing information and communication activities. He previously worked with the Fédération Nationale des Groupements Naam (FNGN), one of the largest farmers' organizations in West Africa, and has been actively involved with the Permanent Secretariat of the Fédération Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (FENOP) in Burkina Faso. He is also engaged with the West African branch of Afdi (French Farmers and International Development), contributing to international cooperation efforts. His expertise supports the development of inclusive agricultural policies and practical tools to strengthen the resilience of producers in the face of climate and economic challenges.

## 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 was a Regional Consultant on natural resources management policy in African countries with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). He is a member of Africa Regional Experts on Policy Dialogue on Natural Resource-based Development at the Organization 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 attended several management and executive development programmes in top universities including Lagos Business School, Nigeria, and Harvard university, United States. He has published articles in international journals and made conference presentations on development policy, banking and finance, agriculture, agribusiness, and sustainable development issues.



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