



SESSION N°26

Financing African Agrifood Entrepreneurs: Strategies to access investment

Tuesday 26 March 2026 - 12:00-13:45 UTC

BIODATA OF THE SPEAKERS

BOCAR ALPHA BA, COUNTRY MANAGER, INVEST IN AFRICA MAURITANIA

Bocar is an economic development professional with over 20 years of experience across Africa and Europe. He works closely with SMEs to support their growth, with a particular focus on improving access to finance. Through Invest In Africa, he has contributed to mobilising significant funding from international partners such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Union, and GIZ. He has also played a key role in national programmes on local content development and women’s inclusion. His approach is highly practical, focused on building meaningful partnerships and delivering tangible results to strengthen SMEs, which are key drivers of Africa’s future prosperity.



INES BASTOS, SENIOR EXPERT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, COLEAD

Inês Bastos has over two decades of expertise in technical assistance, monitoring, network management, and policy development, with a strong focus on agri-food sector development. At COLEAD, she has spent the past seven years coordinating and overseeing technical activities in Eastern and Southern Africa, managing programs/projects in agri-food production and processing, business management, access to finance and network development. Since 2024, Inês has also served as COLEAD’s Gender Focal Point, championing women’s empowerment within the organization’s programs. Additionally, she currently serves as COLEAD Team Leader under contract agreements, providing technical assistance to companies supported by social and impact investors, including the EDFI-AgriFI blending facility. Prior being at COLEAD Inês worked for the Bank “Caixa Geral de Depositos” and “Hay Group - Korn Ferry”.



JOEL DEGBOE, DIRECTEUR FINANCIER, CAJOU ESPOIR, TOGO

Joël Degboe is a Togolese finance professional with extensive experience in agribusiness and financial management. He currently serves as Finance Director at Cajou Espoir Togo, where he oversees financial management, cost accounting, and compliance with international certifications including organic, Fairtrade, and BRCGS standards. Prior to this, he was Administrative and Finance Director at Gebana in Togo, managing budgeting, cash flow, producer payments, and financial reporting within a fair-trade value chain. He began his career as a financial auditor at Grant Thornton, building



strong expertise in audit and financial control. Joël holds advanced degrees in accounting and finance and brings a solid track record in structuring financial systems and supporting sustainable agrifood businesses.

PERRINE DUFFAURE, CHARGÉE D'INVESTISSEMENT AGRIFI, EDFI MANAGEMENT COMPANY



Perrine Duffaure is an impact investment professional with over 14 years of experience in climate finance, agrifood value chains, and renewable energy. She currently serves as Senior Investment Officer at EDFI Management Company, where she contributes to the AgriFI initiative supporting sustainable agriculture and smallholder integration in emerging markets. She also sits on the Board of the Fairtrade Access Fund, which finances agricultural enterprises committed to fair trade. Prior to this, she built extensive experience in renewable energy and project finance, including roles at Total Eren and Ernst & Young. With a strong combination of financial expertise and field experience across Africa, Latin America, and Europe, she focuses on structuring impactful investments that support sustainable and inclusive growth.

IBA FALL, DIRECTEUR DE PAYS, INVEST IN AFRICA SENEGAL



Iba Fall is an expert in economic development and entrepreneurship, with over 20 years of experience across Africa, North America, and Europe. As Director of Invest In Africa Senegal, he supports SMEs in accessing markets and finance, while also assisting international investors in establishing operations in Africa. He leads projects funded by major institutions such as the African Development Bank, the Mastercard Foundation, and the World Bank. He holds an MBA from Thunderbird School of Global Management and is a graduate of the Stanford Seed Transformation Program. He is committed to fostering sustainable partnerships and promoting inclusive growth.

JOVIA KISAAYE, COFONDATRICE DE SPARKLE AGRO BRAND, UGANDA



Jovia is a Ugandan social entrepreneur and Founder & CEO of Ecobed Biotech Brand, a climate-smart bio-manufacturing enterprise transforming food and agricultural waste into high-impact products. Her leadership has been shaped by global exposure and strategic fellowships, including the Vital Voices Global fellowship in Washington, D.C., and the Young African Leaders Initiative EA. She has participated in international accelerators and funding programs such as the Dovetail Impact Foundation, .ORG Impact Awards, and the Moonshot Awards. Her work has also been recognized by UNCTAD through the Empretec Women in Business Award, and supported by institutions including the Mastercard Foundation, AGRA, Tony Elumelu Foundation, and the RUFORUM. A former Youth and Women Representative under the African Union Youth Reference Committee and a climate advocate, Jovia emerges as a thought leader in circular bioeconomy systems, climate resilience, and inclusive food markets across East Africa.

STEVE NDENDE, FONDATEUR D'AGRIZOOM, REPUBLIC OF CONGO



Steve Ndende is a Congolese tech entrepreneur and agribusiness innovator, founder of AgriZoom, a digital platform connecting farmers to finance and markets through crowdfunding and e-commerce solutions. He is also CEO of MboteShop and founder of Essengo Solutions, supporting businesses in their digital transformation. With a strong background in software development and entrepreneurship, he has built multiple tech

solutions across sectors. His work in agricultural innovation has been internationally recognised, including winning the FAO–IFPRI “My Food, My Future” global competition and being selected by the Tony Elumelu Foundation. Through his initiatives, he is committed to leveraging digital technologies to improve access to finance and market opportunities for African agrifood entrepreneurs.

DR. BABAFEMI OYEWOLE, CEO, PAFO



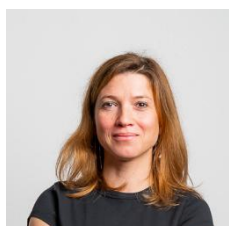
Dr. Babafemi Oyewole, the CEO of Pan African Farmers Organization (PAFO), is a tri-sector executive and professional with experiences in the public, private and non-government sectors, and a veteran in the management of international institutions. Prior to his appointment at PAFO, he was the CEO of the 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.

AHOEFA SOKLOU, PROJECT OFFICER, COLEAD



Ahoefa Immaculée Soklou is a Project Officer at COLEAD, where she designs and implements programmes that promote entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainability in the agrifood sector across the global south countries. She holds a master’s in development studies from Senghor University, Egypt, and a bachelor’s in economics from the University of Kara, Togo. Ahoefa has extensive experience coordinating high-impact leadership and entrepreneurship initiatives, supporting participants in skills and capacities development, expanding business opportunities, and fostering inclusive economic growth. Before joining COLEAD, she led a large-scale digital and entrepreneurship capacity-building programme for 1,200 women entrepreneurs, primarily in agrifood, in collaboration with national and international partners. Passionate about inclusive economic opportunities, women’s empowerment, and resilient food systems, she is committed to creating impactful programmes that enable local communities to thrive.

NATALIA SVARINSKA, HEAD OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, EDFI MANAGEMENT COMPANY



Natalia Svarinska is a development finance and investment professional, currently Head of Technical Assistance at EDFI Management Company. She brings over a decade of experience in structuring and managing investment and technical assistance initiatives supporting private sector development, particularly in emerging markets. Prior to this role, she worked as a Senior Investment Officer, focusing on financing projects in areas such as energy access and sustainable mobility across Sub-Saharan Africa. Earlier in her

career, she held roles at Fluxys and ENGIE, where she gained strong expertise in project finance, investment structuring, and business development. Natalia combines solid financial expertise with a strong commitment to fostering sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

WEITING YAO, PROGRAMME MANAGER, COLEAD



Weiting Yao is a sustainable finance and development professional working at the intersection of access to finance, agribusiness, and impact investment. She is currently Project Manager for Access to Finance at COLEAD, where she supports agri-MSMEs and smallholder farmers across Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific in strengthening their investment readiness and connecting with financing opportunities. With a background in environmental engineering and international business, and a graduate of HEC Paris and the CEMS programme, she brings a multidisciplinary approach to sustainable development. Her work focuses on fostering inclusive and sustainable growth by bridging financial actors and agrifood enterprises, while promoting capacity building and innovative financing solutions.



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