



SESSION N°27

Empowering Youth and Women in Agrifood: Bridging Entrepreneurship and Job Creation for Sustainable Impact

Tuesday 7 July 2026 - 12:00-14:00 UTC

BIODATA OF THE SPEAKERS

OLUSOLA ADEYEMO LEAD SUSTAINABLE FARMING, DISTRIBUTION AND EXTENSION, AGRA



Olusola Adeyemo is the Lead for Sustainable Farming, Input Distribution and Youth in Extension at AGRA, where he provides strategic leadership and technical support across multiple African countries to strengthen agricultural extension systems, last-mile service delivery, youth employment, and smallholder farmer resilience. With over 20 years of work experience, Olusola works with governments, private sector actors, farmer organizations, and development partners to expand farmers' access to quality inputs, advisory services, finance, markets, and climate-smart innovations. Olusola holds a first degree in Agriculture, a master's in international development, and is a graduate of the Senior Executive Program for Africa at Harvard Business School. He is widely recognized for advancing inclusive agrifood systems that create opportunities for youth and women through entrepreneurship, employment, and sustainable agricultural growth.

AKEJO GORDON VICTOR, CEO, GORDON AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATION, UGANDA



Gordon Victor Akejo is the Chief Executive Director of Gordon's Agricultural Organisation-Uganda (GAO-UG) Limited. He is an agripreneur and agricultural development professional with experience in entrepreneurship development, agricultural extension, market linkages, climate-smart agriculture and youth and women empowerment. Through GAO-UG, he supports smallholder farmers, youth and women with bundled agricultural solutions, including climate-resilient production, irrigation, market access and business support. He is a RUFORUM TAGDev-Mastercard Foundation alumnus, a Mandela Washington Fellow and an East African Community Youth Fellow.



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FATOUMATTA JOOF, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS, THE WOMAN BOSS, GAMBIA



Fatoumatta Joof is Director of Programs at The Woman Boss in The Gambia. She is a gender equality advocate with experience in programme design, implementation, stakeholder engagement and advocacy, particularly in the areas of women's and girls' rights, leadership, entrepreneurship and social justice. Through her work, she contributes to initiatives that promote women's empowerment, equal opportunities, community engagement and inclusive development.

CHIAMAKA NDUKWU, CEO, AGROHIVE, NIGERIA



Chiamaka Ndukwu is an international development professional and founder of AgroHive, a digital workforce development and management company for Africa's agricultural sector. She specializes in youth employability, workforce development, programme management and food systems transformation, with experience supporting skills development, leadership, digital agriculture and workforce readiness for young people and women. She is a World Bank Youth Summit Delegate, an AIARD Future Leader Fellow, a CALA delegate, a One Young World Ambassador, and holds a Master's degree in Agricultural Education and Communication from the University of Florida.

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.

GENNA TESDALL, DIRECTOR, YOUNG PROFESSIONALS FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (YPARD)



Genna Tesdall is the Director of Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), a global network supporting young professionals in agriculture and food systems. She is an agrifood systems thinker with experience in youth engagement, intergenerational collaboration, rural youth employment and sustainable agricultural development. Through her work with YPARD, she supports young people's leadership, networking and participation in shaping more inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems.

MATHABO TSEPA, WOMEN LEADER, SACAU, PAFO



Mathabo Tsepa is a horticulture and livestock farmer with diverse experiences including in agri-business, governance and board leadership, diplomacy and international relations. She holds a PhD in Food Security, Environmental Education and Indigenous Knowledge from the University of British Columbia (UBC). She has extensive experiences in governance and board leadership currently representing Africa's Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as a Steering Committee member for Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), a board member in the Southern African Confederation of Agriculture Unions (SACAU), a non-executive director for the Centre for Coordination of Agriculture Research and Development (CCARDESA). She is an elected president for the Lesotho National Farmers Union (LENAFU) and a chairperson for the Qacha's Nek district Farmers Association. Her previous board appointments include serving as a non-executive director for the Millennium Compact Account - Lesotho II, and non-executive director for Lets'eng Diamonds Mine (Lesotho's largest mine). Her Excellency Dr. Mathabo Tsepa served as the High Commissioner of Lesotho to Canada, Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago (2010 - 2016). She also served 6 years as the Ambassador of Lesotho to Cuba.

She is a recipient of the prestigious Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship and the American Association of University Women Scholarship.

AIMABLE TWAGIRAYEZU, PROGRAMS OFFICER, PAFO



Aimable Twagirayezu is a Programs Officer at the Pan-African Farmers' Organization (PAFO), where he supports the design and coordination of programmes that strengthen farmer organisations, promote agribusiness development, and enhance smallholder participation in continental and regional value chains. With experience in project management, agricultural policy, and youth engagement, Aimable contributes to initiatives advancing innovation, digitalisation, and sustainable food systems across Africa. He plays a key role in facilitating partnerships between farmers, private sector actors, and development partners, helping to translate policy frameworks into practical opportunities for African agripreneurs.

LAURA WAUTERS, HEAD OF TRAINING DEPARTMENT, COLEAD



Laura Wauters is Training Manager at COLEAD, where she leads the development and deployment of training activities, tools and learning approaches to strengthen capacities across the agrifood sector. She has extensive experience in professional training, e-learning, active pedagogy and capacity-building for public and private actors in ACP horticultural value chains, including on food safety, good practices, entrepreneurship and sustainability. She holds a degree in bioengineering with a specialisation in tropical agronomy from Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech.



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