



South-South Series:

Empowering and Growing Women-led Business



Session n°10:

Food security in the face of climate disasters: women entrepreneurs leading solutions

Wednesday 21 October 2026 – 14:00-15:45 UTC

[Online \(Zoom\)](#)

Live interpretation in English, French and Spanish

1. Context

Food security is defined as "a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life"¹. It encompasses food availability, access, utilization, stability, as well as the dimensions of agency and sustainability².

Climate change is placing growing pressure on global food systems through more frequent and intense climate disasters, including heatwaves, droughts, floods and tropical cyclones. These events damage crops, livestock and fisheries, disrupt food storage, transport and markets, and reduce agricultural productivity, ultimately threatening livelihoods and increasing food prices³. In Small Island Developing States (SIDS), for example, tropical cyclones, coastal flooding and sea-level rise regularly disrupt food production and supply chains, while the limited availability of arable land and high dependence on food imports make these countries particularly vulnerable to food insecurity⁴.

The increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events are driving higher risks of acute food insecurity and malnutrition. These impacts are particularly pronounced in low- and middle-income countries that rely heavily on rainfed agriculture, as well as among vulnerable populations such as smallholder farmers, fishers, women, children and low-income households⁵. While women are among those most affected by climate-related food insecurity, they are also essential actors in sustaining and transforming food systems. Across the Global South, women contribute significantly to agricultural production, food processing, trade and household nutrition.

Women entrepreneurs are drivers of innovative business solutions that help communities prepare for, respond to and recover from climate disasters⁶. Supporting women-led businesses is therefore critical not only for women's economic empowerment, but also for enhancing food security in the face of climate disasters⁷.

¹ FAO (2018). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition

² HLPE (2020). [Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030](#)

³ Kuhla et al. (2021). [Future heat stress to reduce people's purchasing power](#)

⁴ UNCCD (2025). [Small Island Developing States: Information Brief](#)

⁵ De Lima et al. (2021). [Heat stress on agricultural workers exacerbates crop impacts of climate change](#)

⁶ UN. [Why women are key to climate action](#)

⁷ Mbow (2019). [Food Security. In: Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems](#)

2. Solutions

In the immediate aftermath of climate disasters, protecting food security requires rapid and coordinated responses to restore access to food, livelihoods and essential services. Events such as hurricanes, floods and droughts can disrupt food production, markets and supply chains, making it critical to support emergency response measures, restore local food systems and help producers and businesses recover quickly. Local actors, including women-led enterprises and community organizations, often play an important role in delivering solutions and supporting recovery⁸.

Beyond immediate disaster response, building resilient food systems requires a combination of technological, ecological and social solutions. Climate-smart agricultural practices, resilient crop varieties, sustainable livestock management, agroecological approaches and improved water management can help reduce climate risks while supporting biodiversity and long-term productivity⁹. Early warning systems, climate information services, crop insurance and stronger local and regional food supply chains can further strengthen resilience by reducing losses and improving preparedness¹⁰.

However, technical solutions alone are insufficient. Strengthening social protection, addressing structural inequalities and investing in inclusive adaptation are essential to ensure that vulnerable populations can respond effectively to climate shocks¹¹. This therefore requires addressing the persistent barriers that limit women's access to land, finance, technology, markets and decision-making, enabling them to fully contribute to climate adaptation and food security.

When equipped with the right resources and opportunities, women entrepreneurs are well positioned to scale innovative solutions for climate resilience and food security. Across the Global South, they are already leaders of initiatives that help communities adapt to climate shocks while strengthening livelihoods and local food systems¹². Supporting women-led businesses is therefore not only an economic empowerment strategy but also an investment in more resilient, inclusive and sustainable food systems.

3. The way forward

This session will spotlight women entrepreneurs as leaders of innovative, market-based solutions to strengthen food security in the face of climate disasters. It will provide a platform for women entrepreneurs to exchange experiences, showcase practical solutions and identify opportunities for collaboration and scaling. Through South–South exchange, it will:

- Showcase women-led business solutions that strengthen food security and resilience to climate disasters;
- Facilitate the exchange of practical business models and scalable approaches;
- Highlight the partnerships, finance and enabling policies needed to support and scale women-led enterprises.

⁸ UNDP (2026). [Why supporting local actors leads to change](#)

⁹ Challinor et al. (2014). [A meta-analysis of crop yield under climate change and adaptation](#)

¹⁰ O'Dwyer (2020). [Stability Constrains How Populations Spread Risk in a Model of Food Exchange](#)

¹¹ Von Braun (2021). [Food systems: seven priorities to end hunger and protect the planet](#)

¹² Langer et al. (2015). [Women and Health: the key for sustainable development](#).

UN Women – COLEAD

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Agenda

Moderator: *Nina Desanlis-Perrin, External Consultant, COLEAD*

14:00-14:10 Introduction to the session

14:10-14:20 Welcoming remarks

- *Angela Davis, Program Specialist, UN Women MCO Caribbean*
- *Ines Bastos, Head of Networks and Alliances, COLEAD*

14:20-15:20 Panel

- *Lizra Fabien, Technical Advisor, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Dominica*
- *Jacqueline Joyreen Banda, Chief Visionnnary Officer, Jeyie Food Company, Malawi*
- *Keithlin Caroo-Afrifa, Founder and Executive Director, Helen's Daughter, St Lucia*
- *Marie Madeline Mendy, Founder, Dekachoka Enterprise, The Gambia*

15:20-15:40 Q&A

15:40-15:45 Way forward

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