



**BDS Donor Coordination
Group (BDCG)**

**Business Development Services (BDS) Donor Coordination Group (BDCG)
Inclusive Market Symposium
27th to 29th November 2024
Whitesands Hotel, Mombasa, Kenya**

Business Development Services (BDS) Donor Coordination Group (BDCG)
Inclusive Market Symposium 2024 proceedings
27th to 29th November 2024



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This symposium report can be downloaded for free at
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FtER2Ma92Mxen-p_WkxTjcqBUtZxjKi6

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- | | | |
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| 2. Agriculture Sector Network (ASNET) | Development Centre (IFDC) | 31. Private Veterinarian |
| 3. Bimas Kenya Limited | 18. Iviani Farm | 32. Professional Services |
| 4. Bio-Economy Coalition of Africa | 19. Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research | 33. Pwani University |
| 5. Bopinc | 20. Kenya Climate Ventures | 34. Retail Trade Association of Kenya |
| 6. Christian Aid | 21. Kenya Fisheries Services | 35. Ripple Effect (Kenya and Uganda) |
| 7. County Government of Kilifi | 22. Kickstart International | 36. Select Fresh Produce Kenya Ltd/Twende Sokoni Africa |
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Your engagement, insights, and commitment to fostering inclusive market systems made this symposium a success. MESPT is deeply appreciative of your partnership and looks forward to continued collaboration in addressing pressing development challenges and creating sustainable solutions.

Thank you for your unwavering support.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
BDCG	Business Development Services Donor Coordination Group
CASCOM	County Agricultural Steering Committees
CILOs	Community Integrated Lending Organizations
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EU	European Union
GES	Growth Enhancement Support
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
IGC	International Growth Centre
ILO	International Labor Organization
M4P	Making Markets Work for the Poor
MEDA	Mennonite Economic Development Associates
MESPT	Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust
MFI s	Microfinance Institutions
MSD	Market System Development
MSMEs	Micro, small, and medium enterprises
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
PMSD	Participatory Market Systems Development (PMSD)
PPP	Public-private partnerships
Q &A	Questions and Answers
RETRAK	Retail Trade Association of Kenya
SACCOs	Savings and Credit Cooperatives
TMA	TradeMark Africa
ToC	Theory of Change
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

The Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024, organized by the Business Development Services (BDS) Donor Coordination Group (BDCG) and hosted by the Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust (MESPT), was a transformative three-day event held from 27th to 29th November 2024. The symposium, titled “*The Role of Market Systems Development in Building Resilient and Inclusive Economies*”, brought together 104 participants from 51 organizations across Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Niger, and Switzerland.

The event provided a platform for development practitioners, academics, policymakers, private sector leaders, and innovators to exchange ideas, discuss solutions, and reimagine market systems. With the increasing global challenges of climate change, food insecurity, and economic inequality, this symposium aimed to address systemic barriers hindering inclusive market systems, particularly for marginalized groups like smallholder farmers, women, and youth.

The symposium served as an essential gathering for thought leaders and practitioners to delve into market systems development, explore opportunities for innovation, and share lessons learned. The event featured a range of sub-themes, including climate adaptation, resilience and regenerative agriculture, innovative financing models, sustainable food systems (circularity and regenerative, gender-transformative approaches, inclusive business practices and partnerships, digital transformation, youth inclusion, innovation and equity and evidence creation for policy influencing-validation research for development. These sub-themes underscored the urgent need for systemic change to promote resilient, inclusive economies.

In addition to thought-provoking discussions, the symposium also aimed to relaunch the BDCG Network’s strategy for 2025 and beyond, to expand its membership, foster partnerships, and advance the market systems agenda across Africa.

1.2 Symposium Objectives

The **Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024** was designed with several key objectives:

1. **Facilitate Knowledge Sharing:** To provide a platform for exchanging insights, best practices, and innovative strategies among stakeholders to foster resilient and inclusive market systems across Africa.

2. **Network and Build Partnerships:** To strengthen relationships among development practitioners, policymakers, the private sector, and academia, fostering collaborations that address systemic market challenges effectively.
3. **Relaunch the BDCG Strategy:** To align the network's renewed goals and vision with broader developments in market systems and set the stage for expanding membership and increasing impact.
4. **Encourage Innovation and Action:** To identify and showcase innovative strategies and solutions for market system challenges, with actionable recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and investors.
5. **Advance the Market Systems Agenda:** To solidify the BDCG Network's role as a leading convener of thought leaders, innovators, and organizations committed to advancing sustainable economic growth through inclusive market systems.

These objectives were achieved through interactive sessions, plenary discussions, panel debates, and breakout sessions, all aimed at ensuring that participants left with actionable insights, strengthened partnerships, and renewed inspiration to drive market systems development.

1.3 Access to Documents

For those interested in further exploring the symposium content, all relevant materials, including presentations, keynote speeches, photos and other documents, are available for download through the following resources:

- **Symposium Program:** Annex 1
- **List of Participants:** Annex 2
- **Keynote Speeches:** Annex 3
- **Presentations:** Available for download at the Google Drive link: Google Drive Folder

2 SYMPOSIUM PRELUDE

2.1 Opening Remarks

The opening session of the Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024 and the 15th official meeting of the BDS Donor Coordination Group (BDCG) network was hosted by **Rebecca Amukhoye**, Chair of the BDCG Secretariat and CEO of the Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust (MESPT). Serving as the host who inaugurated the event, Rebecca warmly welcomed all participants, setting the tone for a productive and engaging gathering. In her opening remarks, she highlighted MESPT's work in empowering micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by connecting them to resources, training, and market linkages essential for their growth. Rebecca noted that on this day, she was not only a host but also a cheerleader and co-creator in shaping a future of resilient and inclusive market systems. She expressed her honour in welcoming all participants and described the symposium as a celebration of perseverance and progress after a four-year hiatus due to global disruptions, including COVID-19. She emphasized that the participants' efforts in reflection and strategy during this period had made them stronger and more focused.

Rebecca urged participants to view this gathering as a grand re-entrance, marked by fresh strategies and ambitious goals. She explained that the BDCG network, established in early 2000, unites development agencies, donors, and stakeholders with a shared mission: maximizing the impact of donor-led initiatives in market development.



Rebecca proudly shared that the network now boasts over 30 active members, highlighting the power of collaboration, shared knowledge, and partnership.

As CEO of MESPT, Rebecca spoke about her leadership role in guiding an exceptional team that serves as the backbone of the BDCG network—the Secretariat. She outlined their key responsibilities, including organizing impactful events like the symposium, connecting members with new

opportunities, and ensuring that collective efforts align with the network's overarching vision. With a smile, she humorously noted that their success is driven by teamwork, late nights, and an endless supply of coffee.

Rebecca emphasized that the 15th BDCG meeting was not merely an event but a bold declaration of the network's commitment to driving change, forging partnerships, and creating market systems that empower communities and foster sustainable economic growth. She gave special recognition to the "rockstar" team responsible for organizing the symposium, including:

- **Leadership Team:** Winnie Mailu (*Chair BDCG, whose strategic brilliance ensures success*) and Clarice Kionge (*Vice Chair, whose energy and insights inspire*).
- **Executive Task Team:** Winnie Mailu, Clarice Kionge, Rebecca Amukhoye, Mathew Wanjala, Peter Mbiu, Molly Kwamah, Henry Kamande, Margaret Miano.
- **Secretariat Team:** Rebecca Amukhoye, Margaret Miano, Racheal Matayen, Eliud Wachira, Godfrey Nyangore, Charles Nyawade, Nephath Njoroge, and Asha Juma.
- **Facilitation Team:** Dr. Edith Wairimu, Dr. Robai Liambila, Patricia Guchu, and Mark Maasai.

Rebecca invited participants to give a resounding round of applause for the "rockstar" team, acknowledging that without their dedication, the symposium would still be in the planning stage. She then outlined the activities planned for the three-day symposium, which included discussions on key questions such as:

- How to build inclusive market systems.
- How to adapt to a changing climate.
- How to champion gender equity and embrace the digital age.

Rebecca emphasized that the symposium's conversations are key to shaping the future and encouraged active engagement. She noted that the true value lies in the connections made, both formal and informal, over coffee or on the beach. She thanked the participants for their presence and belief in partnership. Rebecca urged everyone to make the symposium memorable by staying inspired, creative, and committed to building an inclusive, sustainable future.

2.2 Chair's Opening Remarks and BDCG Overview

Following the Secretary Chair's opening remarks, **Winnie Mailu**, Chair of the BDCG Network, and a Head of Thematic Support at Ripple Effect expressed her pride and excitement in welcoming

participants to the Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024. She described the event as a unique opportunity for vibrant exchanges of ideas, innovations, and solutions over three days. Mailu emphasized that the BDCG Network is more than just a platform—it is a dynamic community of practitioners, experts, and organizations united by a shared mission: to build resilient, inclusive market systems that drive sustainable economic growth and empower communities across Africa.

She reflected on the network's origins in the early 2000s, established to enhance the impact of donor-led activities in market development and value chain interventions. Today, the BDCG Network represents over 30 active members, including development agencies, donor organizations, government bodies, private sector actors, and academia, serving as a dynamic hub for knowledge, innovation, and collaboration.



Mailu outlined the network's core functions, highlighting five key focus areas:

1. **Knowledge Sharing:** The BDCG facilitates sharing best practices, lessons, and innovative approaches in market systems development through research, webinars, workshops, and events like the symposium.
2. **Capacity Building:** The network supports its members by offering targeted training programs that build critical skills to navigate evolving market systems.
3. **Networking and Partnerships:** The BDCG connects diverse stakeholders to foster collaborations and address systemic challenges effectively.
4. **Advocacy and Policy Influence:** The network advocates for inclusive and sustainable policies while engaging policymakers to reflect its members' needs in national and regional strategies.
5. **Showcasing Innovation:** Events such as the symposium provide a platform for members to showcase their achievements and inspire others.

Mailu warmly welcomed new participants, encouraging them to engage actively, share insights, and connect with fellow members. She highlighted the network's strength in its diversity and invited non-

members to join the BDCG, offering access to a dynamic community, exclusive resources, and collaboration opportunities. Introducing the symposium theme, *“The Role of Market System Development in Building Resilient and Inclusive Economies,”* and its sub-themes like climate adaptation and gender-transformative approaches, she expressed hope that participants would leave inspired and with actionable insights. Concluding, she thanked everyone for their commitment and urged them to use the symposium as a platform for bold ideas, partnerships, and impactful outcomes to build an inclusive, resilient future.

2.3 Keynote Address by Chief Guest Hon. Flora Mbetsa Chibule

As the Chief Guest, Hon. Flora Mbetsa Chibule, Deputy Governor of Kilifi County, took the stage to deliver a compelling keynote address at the Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024. Expressing her deep gratitude and honor to be part of the event, she warmly thanked the BDS Donor Coordination Group (BDCG) for organizing such a significant gathering. Hon. Chibule also commended the dedication of various stakeholders working towards advancing market systems development and strengthening value chains across Africa.



Hon. Chibule emphasized the timeliness and relevance of the symposium's theme: *“The Role of Market System Development in Building Resilient and Inclusive Economies.”* She noted that the theme aligns closely with the priorities of African governments, particularly in fostering sustainable growth, empowering marginalized communities, and reducing inequalities.

She described Market Systems Development (MSD) as a transformative approach to achieving inclusive growth and resilience by addressing systemic barriers that prevent marginalized groups—such as smallholder farmers and women—from fully participating in markets. Highlighting inefficiencies in Africa’s agricultural market systems that lead to significant post-harvest losses, she pointed to the success of MSD interventions in boosting smallholder incomes, enhancing market access through cooperatives, and improving infrastructure.

The Deputy Governor further elaborated on the potential of MSD to transform economies through strategic interventions, including reducing market entry barriers and promoting climate adaptation practices. She advocated for integrating climate resilience into market systems to tackle the challenges posed by climate change.

She outlined the symposium's sub-themes, which align with policy priorities in Kenya and across Africa:

1. **Climate Adaptation and Resilience:** Resilient market systems are vital for coping with climate challenges, as highlighted in Kenya’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
2. **Innovative Financing Models:** Addressing financing barriers through tools like mobile money and agricultural credit schemes can empower smallholder farmers and SMEs.
3. **Digital Transformation:** Expanding digital innovations, such as mobile money, into agriculture and value chains can enhance market access and inclusivity.
4. **Food Systems and Regenerative Agriculture:** Promoting sustainable farming practices is key to building resilient food systems, as seen in Kenya’s Climate Smart Agriculture Project.
5. **Inclusive Business Practices:** Supporting marginalized groups through initiatives like the Women Enterprise Fund and Youth Fund can foster economic inclusion.
6. **Gender-Transformative Approaches:** Gender equality in market systems is essential for empowering women, especially in agriculture.
7. **Youth Empowerment:** Engaging youth as innovators and drivers of market growth can address unemployment and build equitable economies.
8. **Evidence-Based Policy:** Generating data and research to inform policies is crucial for fostering inclusive and resilient markets.

Hon. Chibule concluded her address with a call to action, encouraging stakeholders to engage actively in discussions, share insights, and build partnerships to drive the market systems agenda. She

outlined the symposium's expected outcomes, including strengthened networks, innovative solutions for market challenges, and actionable recommendations for policymakers.

In closing, she reiterated the need for collaboration, innovation, and investment to build economies that are resilient, inclusive, and sustainable. She urged participants to seize the opportunity to transform challenges into opportunities and thanked them for their commitment to this shared mission.

3 INCLUSIVE MARKETS SYMPOSIUM 2024 PROCEEDINGS DAY ONE

3.1 Session 1: The Role of Market Systems Development in Building Resilient and Inclusive Economies

3.1.1 Setting the Stage: Market Systems Development Overview

Mathews Wanjala kicked off the panel with a comprehensive presentation, introducing the concept of Market Systems Development (MSD) and its significance in driving inclusive and sustainable growth. He explained the concept of a market system, describing it as an interconnected network of actors, institutions, regulations, and cultural norms that collectively shape the market's behaviours and interactions. Wanjala emphasized that market systems are not static but dynamic and evolving, requiring continuous adaptation and development.

He further outlined MSD as an approach to development aimed at creating long-term, systemic change in markets, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, finance, health, water, and sanitation where it has been successfully implemented to address complex challenges and drive inclusive growth. By addressing systemic barriers, MSD promotes sustainability, scalability, and greater inclusivity across different sectors.

He introduced key terms central to understanding MSD:

- **Sustainability** pertains to ensuring that impacts or behavioral changes persist beyond the life of a project while using resources efficiently for current and future generations.
- **Market actors** include associations, businesses, governments, researchers, and consumers who interact within the market system.
- **Scale** relates to the proportion of the target population affected by market system activities.

- **Leverage points** are strategic opportunities for disproportionately influencing the system by collaborating with key entities.
- **Systemic change** involves deep shifts in a market system's structure and prevailing behaviors.
- **Facilitation** refers to collaborative problem-solving with market actors rather than directly addressing challenges through project resources.

Wanjala further discussed the three key pillars of an effective market system: resilience, inclusiveness, and competitiveness. He emphasized that MSD's mission is to enhance these qualities in market systems, ensuring they drive impact at scale while fostering competitiveness and inclusivity.

Lastly, he outlined several approaches to market systems development, including the Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) Approach (also known as the "Doughnut"), the Value Chain Approach Framework, and the Participatory Market Systems Development (PMSD) Roadmap.

This presentation set the pace for the ensuing discussion on how market systems can be leveraged for resilient economic development.

3.1.2 Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The session began with the moderator, Mathews Wanjala, Senior Programme Manager at TradeMark Africa (TMA), introducing each of the distinguished panelists. He highlighted their expertise and the unique perspectives they brought to the discussion on inclusive market systems development.

Panellists:



1. **Clarice Kionge** – Interim Country Director and Signature Program Lead at Heifer International, and Vice Chair of the BDS Donor Coordination Group. Clarice brings extensive experience in leading programs that focus on improving market access and empowering marginalized communities.
2. **Thomas Were** – Co-founder and Director of Agile Consulting. Thomas specializes in driving innovative solutions to address market development challenges in emerging economies.
3. **Victor Ndiege** – CEO of Kenya Climate Ventures. Victor is committed to promoting climate-smart investment strategies that foster sustainable market growth and resilience in East Africa.
4. **Winnie Mailu** – Head of Thematic Support at Ripple Effect, and Chair of the BDS Donor Coordination Group. Winnie has deep expertise in market systems development, gender equity, and smallholder farmer empowerment.
5. **Janet Ngombalu** – Country Director at Christian Aid. Janet works to integrate inclusive market systems into humanitarian and development efforts, with a strong focus on poverty alleviation and social justice.

Mathews then outlined the session's structure, informing the audience that the panel discussion would last for 45 minutes, followed by a feedback session and a questions and answers (Q&A)

segment. The moderator, Mark Masai, also expressed gratitude to Mathews for his insightful presentation and confirmed that the slides would be shared with attendees for further reflection.

The collective experience of the panellists set the stage for a dynamic and insightful discussion on building resilient, inclusive economies through effective market systems development.

3.1.3 Moderator-Led Panel Discussions

Mathews Wanjala began the panel discussion by asking Winnie Mailu, Head of Thematic Support at Ripple Effect, to share her thoughts on the key principles of Market Systems Development (MSD) that make it a suitable approach for fostering resilience, sustainability, and inclusive economies.

Winnie Mailu addressed the question by emphasizing the importance of key principles in Market Systems Development (MSD) that contribute to fostering resilient, sustainable, and inclusive economies. She highlighted four main principles:

1. **Systemic Thinking:** Winnie explained that systemic thinking is crucial for designing scalable projects. It avoids localized efforts that fail to drive broader systemic change and ensures that limited resources are used to create widespread impact.
2. **Facilitation:** She stressed that development practitioners should focus on enabling local structures and markets rather than directly providing goods and services. This approach prevents undermining local enterprises, such as agro-vet shops, and encourages long-term community-driven development.
3. **Sustainability:** Winnie pointed out that projects must be designed with exit strategies in mind, ensuring that local actors can sustain the changes after donor funding ends. This involves empowering communities through continued training, financing, and extension services, rather than relying on repetitive project extensions.
4. **Adaptability:** Lastly, she discussed the need for adaptability in market systems, using the disruptions caused by COVID-19 as an example. She emphasized that market systems must be flexible and resilient, capable of recovering from external shocks and continuing to function under challenging circumstances.

After Winnie Mailu's response, the moderator, Mathews Wanjala, summarized the key points discussed, emphasizing the importance of systemic thinking, facilitation, sustainability, and adaptability in market systems development. He highlighted Winnie's emphasis on the need for scalability in interventions, the role of development practitioners as facilitators rather than direct

providers, and the necessity for projects to be designed with an exit strategy to ensure long-term sustainability. Mathews also acknowledged the significance of adaptability, especially in the face of challenges like COVID-19, and how this resilience is key to creating lasting change. Mathews then thanked Winnie for her insightful contributions, noting how her points provided valuable guidance on the principles that drive successful market systems development.

Mathews Wanjala posed a follow-up question to **Thomas Were**, asking him to provide examples of successful market system development (MSD) interventions that have led to significant economic inclusion or sector transformation.

In response, Thomas shared several notable examples:

1. **Livestock Market Governance Project:** This initiative in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) regions aimed to address challenges in livestock markets, such as a long chain of middlemen that diminished producers' earnings. The project empowered local communities to manage livestock markets, resulting in improved governance and increased incomes. A particularly transformative aspect of this intervention was its inclusivity—women, who were traditionally excluded from livestock markets, began to actively participate. The model, which was started in 2005, has gone through several transformations. Counties that adopted this model doubled their income through cess collection, demonstrating the economic impact of the intervention. All services were integrated under cooperatives to streamline operations and enhance sustainability. The model initially focused on dairy farming but was later expanded to other sectors, including honey production, horticulture, and Community Integrated Lending Organizations (CILOs). The model's sustainability was ensured by incorporating private sector leadership, which helped maintain growth and development beyond the initial intervention phase.
2. **Integration of Interconnected Market Systems (The Dairy Hub):** Thomas highlighted the significance of identifying interconnected systems within broader value chains. For example, in dairy production, addressing the pasture market system was crucial for ensuring the overall sustainability of the dairy market. He stressed the need for a holistic approach, where sequencing, layering, and integrating interventions across the value chain allow for better addressing of critical issues and enhances the sustainability of market systems. Thomas emphasized the importance of a six-month window to evaluate and test the theory of change. This time frame allows for real-world observations of the intervention's effectiveness and

critical issues and enhancing market systems' sustainability provides an opportunity for adjustments.

3. **Maasai Market Project:** Initially launched by the EU in 1998 as a user-led innovation program, this project supported artisans in developing innovative crafts and accessing broader markets through organized exhibitions. The success of this initiative was rooted in its adaptability to user needs, helping artisans increase their market reach while fostering inclusivity in the craft sector.

Thomas concluded by emphasizing that these examples highlight the transformative potential of MSD when interventions are well-designed, inclusive, and scalable. They show how effectively addressing market system challenges can drive economic inclusion, empower marginalized groups, and create lasting impact.

After Thomas Were's response, Mathews Wanjala summarized the key points, emphasizing the importance of holistic, inclusive, and adaptable approaches in market systems development. He thanked Thomas for sharing valuable examples of successful interventions, highlighting their relevance for practitioners, policymakers, and development actors who seek to create lasting, scalable impacts in market systems.

The discussion then shifted to **Clarice Kionge**, who was asked about linking market system development to food systems, particularly in managing shocks such as climate change, pandemics, and supply chain disruptions. Clarice reiterated points raised by her fellow panellists while emphasizing the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global supply chains. She described the current world as a "burning world" — fragile, volatile, and unpredictable — necessitating adaptive strategies in market systems to navigate such challenges. "You can never be sure".

Clarice highlighted several key points in response to the question:

1. **Facilitation During Crises:** She emphasized the critical role of facilitation in ensuring sustainability during crises. Organizations that prioritize facilitation are better positioned to continue their operations even in times of disruption. This approach enables the system to remain functional and resilient when shocks occur. According to her, "*market systems must prioritize resilience and adaptability to manage future shocks effectively*". Clarice highlighted the critical role of facilitation in enabling sustainability during crises.

2. **Adaptability in Market Systems:** Clarice pointed out that market systems must prioritize resilience and adaptability to manage future shocks. She stressed that development programs should not simply "tick the box." Rather, they should allow enough time—about six months—to observe meaningful changes and adapt accordingly.
3. **Continuous Review of Theory of Change (ToC):** She further stressed the importance of a continuous review of the Theory of Change (ToC), advocating for a daily review process. Given the unpredictability of the world, she argued, constant adjustments are needed to ensure programs remain effective in dynamic environments.
4. **Leveraging Partnerships for Lasting Impact:** Clarice also discussed the value of partnerships in market systems. She emphasized that leveraging partnerships is essential for creating lasting impacts. Development organizations often try to take on too many roles—such as acting as market actors, trainers, or even substitutes for government—which can lead to inefficiencies. Instead, sustainable partnerships can enhance effectiveness and ensure long-term success.

Clarice concluded by reiterating that adaptability, continuous review, and strong partnerships are essential for building market systems that can withstand shocks and deliver lasting impact. She emphasized that the **permanence of impact** relies on sustainable partnerships, which are crucial for ensuring long-term success and resilience in market systems.

The moderator, Mathews Wanjala, thanked Clarice for her insightful contributions, highlighting the importance of adaptability, continuous review, and the role of sustainable partnerships in ensuring the permanence of impact. He acknowledged the significance of these points in fostering resilient and inclusive market systems.

The discussion then shifted to **Victor Ndiege**, who addressed the transformative impact of digital solutions on market systems. He highlighted several key areas where digital tools are revolutionizing market systems.

1. **Facilitating Market Access and Entrepreneurship:** Victor explained how digital solutions are making it easier for entrepreneurs to access markets and expand their businesses. By providing platforms for buyers and sellers to connect, digital tools are opening new avenues for trade. He emphasized that, unlike 20-25 years ago, digital tools now make it easier to

access resources and support decision-making instantly. This has simplified processes and made it possible for businesses to operate more efficiently.

2. **Increasing Productivity:** He emphasized that digital tools help increase productivity by enhancing resource planning. These tools assist farmers and enterprises in determining when and how to use resources like fertilizer, improving overall output. Additionally, these tools support small and medium enterprises along the supply chain, enhancing their operations and benefiting communities.
3. **Improving Data Management:** Victor spoke about the importance of digital tools in streamlining data collection, integration, and analysis. Previously, data on farmers and their incomes were scattered, making it difficult to connect initiatives with market changes. Now, digital solutions allow for better integration of data, improving decision-making and accountability. With real-time data, businesses can make more informed decisions and track the impact of market system development initiatives, ensuring value for money.
4. **Improving Supply Chain Efficiencies:** Victor also discussed the efficiencies brought to supply chains by digital platforms. For example, platforms like Helotractor and digital solutions for ordering inputs, such as fertilizers, are making supply chains more efficient. Digital tools reduce delays, errors, and costs that previously occurred due to traditional ordering and transportation methods.
5. **Digital Soil Solutions and Emerging E-Commerce:** He mentioned the role of digital soil solutions, which assist farmers in making better decisions about resource use, such as water and fertilizer application, thus improving agricultural productivity. Additionally, Victor highlighted the emerging e-commerce and digital business platforms, which have simplified business processes and created new opportunities across sectors.

However, Victor also cautioned that while digitalization brings numerous benefits, it also poses challenges, particularly regarding job displacement. He stressed that businesses need to carefully plan their growth, ensuring that the adoption of digital solutions aligns with job creation and workforce sustainability.

Victor concluded by underscoring the importance of business planning and the integration of digital solutions to create commercially viable and sustainable enterprises.

Moderator Matthew Wanjala thanked Victor for his insights, highlighting the transformative role of digital solutions in market systems. He emphasized how, just a few decades ago, businesses operated without the mobile phones, computers, internet, WhatsApp, or email that are now integral to our daily operations. Matthew reflected on how the digital revolution has ushered in new job opportunities, simplified processes, improved productivity, and enabled better decision-making. He also acknowledged the growing influence of e-commerce and e-business, which are simplifying business processes and creating a digital marketplace that is transforming multiple sectors. The session was concluded with gratitude for Victor's valuable contribution to the discussion.

In another segment, Moderator Matthew Wanjala introduced **Ngombalu** from Christian Aid, who was tasked with exploring gender-transformative approaches to addressing systemic inequalities in market systems. Matthew's question was focused on how gender inclusion and innovation could be leveraged to tackle these inequalities effectively. He set the stage for a deep dive into the issue, signalling the importance of understanding gender transformation beyond basic inclusion metrics.

Ngombalu took the floor and began by addressing a fundamental misunderstanding about gender, particularly in market systems.

1. **Beyond Counting Numbers:** Ngombalu emphasized that true gender transformation goes beyond counting women, youth, or people with disabilities in a project. She highlighted that it involves addressing and challenging the underlying cultural norms and structures that perpetuate inequality. This approach goes deeper than just adding numbers to a project but focuses on altering societal perceptions and practices.
2. **Challenging Gender Norms in Marketplaces:** Using the example of the label "*Mama Mboga*" (a woman selling vegetables), Ngombalu explained how such labels reinforce stereotypes about women's roles in the marketplace. She argued that by calling women traders "*Mama Mboga*," society defines them in a limited and stereotypical way, confining their business roles and perpetuating gender inequality. She called for a shift in how women in the marketplace are perceived and labelled.
3. **Political and Economic Analyses for Identifying Power Imbalances:** She stressed the importance of conducting political and economic analyses to uncover power imbalances and barriers that prevent inclusivity in market systems. These analyses help reveal who holds power, who gets to make decisions, and how market systems can be restructured to ensure fairness and inclusivity for all actors.

4. **Long-Lasting Change Through Transformation:** True gender transformation requires long-term, sustainable change in market systems. Ngombalu pointed out that transformation is not just about addressing visible numbers but about changing behaviors, norms, and power structures that reinforce gender inequality. A lasting transformation involves a comprehensive shift in how markets operate, addressing the cultural norms and structures that define roles and access in the marketplace.
5. **Challenging Market Structures and Gender Inequality:** Ngombalu highlighted how market structures, such as early morning market setups and the roles of middlemen, disadvantage women, and youth. These practices reinforce gender inequalities by normalizing certain gendered roles and responsibilities, creating barriers to equitable participation. Janet called for a deeper examination of these market structures and their role in perpetuating systemic gender imbalances.
6. **Re-evaluating Gender Transformation Indicators:** Ngombalu urged donors and stakeholders to reconsider how they define and measure gender transformation. She advocated for a shift away from simple numerical indicators and instead called for a focus on behavior change and systemic transformation. True gender equality in market systems can only be achieved when the cultural and structural barriers that perpetuate inequality are addressed and dismantled.

Moderator Matthew Wanjala thanked Dr Ngombalu for her insightful presentation on gender-transformative approaches, highlighting the critical need for deeper analysis of market systems. He then handed it over to Mark. In his words *“I’ll now turn it over to you to continue with the Q&A session.”*

Mark took over and thanked Mathew Wanjala and the panel for the time management and for sharing such valuable insights. Now, *“let’s shift gears and invite questions and comments from the audience. We still have time for interaction, so please feel free to raise your hands, and I’ll come to you. I see a couple of hands already”*.

Mark expressed his thanks to the audience for their participation, acknowledged the effective time management, and transitioned the discussion into the Q&A segment, welcoming further engagement.

3.1.4 Participant Q&A and Interactive Discussion

3.1.4.1 Questions

1. **Prof Thomas Rewe to Janet Ngombalu:** What mechanisms can shift women's participation in inclusive markets from mere involvement to ownership?
2. **Prof Thomas Rewe to Thomas Were:** How can inclusive market systems support the circular bioeconomy, and what are the sustainability concerns regarding the current direction?
3. **Eliud Nkuja from SNV:** How can we address the "elephant in the room"—making market systems just, in the face of corruption and political issues that prevent the market from functioning effectively?

Eliud pointed out significant injustices in the market systems, largely driven by corruption and political issues. He urged the room to address these systemic problems, such as farmers defaulting on loans without consequences and smallholder farmers struggling to compete with large-scale operations abroad.

4. **Francis Twesigye:** How can market revenue systems be improved to increase efficiency and benefit local communities, considering the high operational costs in revenue collection?

Francis discussed a flawed system where operational costs consume much of the revenue collected in local markets. He highlighted a successful initiative where committees worked with local government officials to streamline revenue collection, leading to increased efficiency and community benefits.

5. **George Okeyo to Thomas Were:** How effective are market system development programs in the ASAL (Arid and Semi-Arid Lands) regions, particularly in transitioning from humanitarian aid to sustainable market-based approaches? Have these programs successfully contributed to economic growth and poverty reduction?
6. **Dr. Harun Warui:** How can we ensure that local producers are not undervalued in market systems that prioritize external demand over local needs?

Dr. Harun Warui expressed concern over ongoing discussions, emphasizing that while much attention is placed on markets, the critical role and challenges of local producers are often overlooked. He emphasized the need to prioritize and strengthen local and territorial markets, which directly support grassroots producers. Highlighting disparities in agricultural

product distribution, Dr. Warui noted how premium produce is often directed to urban centers like Nairobi, leaving local communities without access to their own resources. He criticized the influence of external players, such as Brookside's operations, which he argued have disrupted local systems and created confusion within industries. Stressing the importance of shifting focus from macro-level market strategies to models that directly benefit local communities, particularly farmers, he advocated for practices that empower local and regional markets to ensure they effectively serve the producers. Using examples like carrot production, where urban consumers enjoy quality produce while local producers struggle to access the same markets, Dr. Warui called for greater resilience in market systems. By adopting equitable practices that prioritize local needs over external supply chains, he suggested it is possible to build more sustainable agricultural systems, concluding with a strong endorsement of territorial markets as a path to fair and sustainable development.

7. **Winnie Mailu:** In light of COVID-19, how can we strengthen local markets, revise local policies, and enhance food safety standards to ensure more resilient food systems?
8. **Winnie Mailu:** How can we balance the need for commercialization with the support for small-scale farmers, and how can market systems align with traditional community structures rather than introducing foreign models?
9. **Dr. Charles Ochodo from Private Veterinarian/farmer:** How can we create more certainty in market systems for agricultural economies, especially for crops and livestock outside of the historically organized sectors like coffee and tea?

Dr. Ochodo, emphasized the need for certainty in agricultural market systems, particularly in a country heavily reliant on agriculture. He observed that while colonial-era crops like coffee, tea, milk, and sugarcane benefit from organized market structures, most other crops and livestock products lack similar systems. Small-scale production dominates the agricultural landscape, yet many market systems remain informal and poorly organized.

Dr. Ochodo highlighted the prevalence of physical markets, such as those for livestock, vegetables, and fish, which are constructed without corresponding functional systems to ensure fair and predictable trade. He illustrated this point with examples from livestock markets, where pricing inconsistencies and middlemen's influence disrupt fair trade. In contrast, products like milk benefit from more structured markets, offering farmers certainty about prices and sales outcomes.

He raised concerns about the challenges faced by small-scale farmers, who often resort to informal roadside trading or rely on intermediaries, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. Dr. Ochodo called for the development of market systems that address the unique needs of small-scale farmers, who constitute 80% of the agricultural workforce. He stressed the importance of focusing on grassroots-level systems, rather than only addressing broader macroeconomic concerns, to ensure that local farmers can thrive within reliable and functional market structures.

10. **A speaker (name not mentioned):** How can market mapping for local commodities be improved to focus on short-term value chains that support food security, rather than solely commercializing agriculture?
11. **Participant (name not mentioned):** How can we focus inward to create short-term value changes that promote livelihood development, particularly by addressing market justice and challenges like cartels manipulating prices?
12. **Kenneth Kagai, a Senior Assistant Director of Agriculture, County Government of Trans Nzoia:** How can we tailor monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks to different regions and value chains, considering the political and cultural differences, instead of using generic models?
13. **Agatha Thuo , Chief Executive Officer (CEO), at the Agriculture Sector Network (ASNET):** How can we align agricultural production with market requirements—whether domestic or international—while ensuring smallholder farmers produce goods that meet necessary standards?

3.1.4.2 *Answers/Responses*

1. **Response to Prof. Thomas Rewe's question about shifting women's participation from involvement to ownership** by Janet Ngobalu: Janet discussed systemic issues women face in markets, such as power imbalances and lack of decision-making authority. She emphasized the need for policies that go beyond superficial participation and focus on providing women with tools for long-term success, addressing labor dynamics, and redistributing power within market systems.
2. **Response to Prof. Thomas Rewes' question about how inclusive market systems can support the circular bioeconomy by** Thomas Were: Thomas reflected on the concept of

circularity, using examples like Maasai women transitioning from traditional beads to using recycled gold. He stressed the role of donors in reducing risks associated with innovative ideas, citing organizations like IKEA and BOP. He also encouraged development partners to have clear exit strategies to ensure sustainable outcomes.

3. **Response to George Okeyo's question about market system development programs in ASAL regions** by Thomas Were: Thomas acknowledged the challenges faced in scaling up development programs, particularly when governments replicate initiatives without thorough analysis. He emphasized that market system development requires time and likened it to long-term public health campaigns, arguing that progress in ASAL regions is possible despite initial challenges.

4. **Response to Dr. Waruis comment on strengthening local markets:** A panelist emphasized the need to revitalize local markets, enact local policy changes, and enhance food safety standards. The panelist lamented the underutilization of infrastructure designed for local markets, suggesting that leveraging these resources could reduce supply chains and improve food access. The panelist also

emphasized the need to support traditional community structures instead of imposing foreign market paradigms.

5. **Response to Kenneth Kagai's comment about tailoring M&E frameworks to specific contexts** Kagai stressed that development organizations should avoid generic models like the hub system and tailor strategies to specific regional and political contexts to achieve meaningful and sustainable results.
6. **Agatha Thuo's comment about aligning agricultural production with market needs :** Agatha emphasized the need to prioritize value chains based on market demands—both domestic and international—and to ensure smallholder farmers produce goods that meet necessary standards. She highlighted the importance of supporting these farmers, who contribute a significant portion of agricultural output.
7. Wambui Mbarire, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at Retail-Trade Growth across Africa (RETRAK) commented by aligning her observations with earlier points made by Janet and Thomas Were. She expressed concern about the prevalent use of language aimed at satisfying donor expectations, cautioning against focusing excessively on meeting prescribed

frameworks, such as the "5-5-5," at the expense of achieving substantive market outcomes. Drawing inspiration from a LinkedIn post by Dr. Gitahi Githinji on inclusivity and diversity, she noted that while diversity might involve having representation—such as three women on a panel—inclusivity entails ensuring that voices from all levels, including those of grassroots participants like intermediaries and small-scale traders, are genuinely heard and considered.

Wambui emphasized the need to prioritize fulfilling mandates that deliver tangible benefits to local populations rather than merely "ticking boxes" for donor agencies. She highlighted the importance of moving beyond buzzwords such as "sustainability," "circularity," and "inclusiveness," which often dominate discussions but may lack real-world impact. Her call to action was for stakeholders to align donor mandates with the genuine needs and aspirations of citizens in each country, ensuring that interventions are meaningful, inclusive, and truly beneficial.

3.1.5 Conclusion

The session concluded with practical recommendations for advancing market systems development, emphasizing the following:

1. **Participatory Approaches for Sustainability:** Leveraging existing community structures to ensure long-term impact and ownership.
2. **Holistic Integration of Market Systems:** Addressing interconnected systems, such as integrating pasture markets into livestock initiatives, to drive comprehensive transformation.
3. **Adoption of Digital Tools:** Enhancing data-driven decision-making, reducing inefficiencies, and improving adaptability in market systems.

The panel discussion emphasized the need for integrated strategies that prioritize sustainability, adaptability, digital innovation, and inclusivity to create resilient and transformative market systems. Success stories included governance reforms in Samburu's livestock markets, where community-led management increased incomes and fostered greater participation by women, promoting equity and inclusivity. Another example was the success of Dairy Cooperatives, or Dairy Hubs, which integrated services such as input supply, veterinary care, and credit access. These hubs significantly boosted productivity and attracted private-sector partnerships, enhancing overall market efficiency and effectiveness.

3.2 Session 2: Donor Roundtable

The Donor Roundtable brought together distinguished guests, including **Charles Wasike**, Programme Officer for Climate and Resilience at the Royal Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and **Paul Mbole**, P4G National Platform Liaison. The session provided a platform for sharing insights on innovative initiatives and collaborative strategies to enhance resilience and sustainability in market systems.

3.2.1 Keynote Speech: The Power of Collective Action

Mr. Charles Wasike began his speech by reflecting on the origins of the *Giving Pledge Initiative*, emphasizing its growth from a handful of individuals to hundreds today. Drawing a parallel with Google's early days, he highlighted how impactful initiatives often gain momentum when people recognize the gravity of global challenges. Citing Oxfam studies (2010 and 2017), Charles revealed how a small number of individuals controlled more wealth than the poorest half of the global population, with the disparity worsening over time. He questioned, "*Is this the kind of world we want?*"

While proponents of free markets argue for their self-correcting mechanisms, Charles contended that unchecked markets risk fostering exclusivity. He stressed the importance of including marginalized groups in market systems, urging donors to identify sustainable ways to enable their participation.

Charles highlighted the challenges facing development efforts, noting that most financial resources are controlled by governments and private sectors, leaving minimal funds for development support. In this context, he described donors' roles as catalytic, setting the stage for sustainable interventions that governments and private sectors can scale up.



Reflecting on systemic development issues, Charles referenced examples of impactful initiatives such as Equity Bank in Kenya and Elkofa, which improved last-mile access for people with disabilities. He encouraged development practitioners to remain critical and solution-focused, despite the complexities they encounter.

Turning to food systems, Charles expressed concerns about the global focus on food sovereignty and the risks of over-reliance on external markets. He cited a recent experience with the National Food Security Committee, where regional barriers, like Tanzanian millers refusing service, underscored the need to empower local agricultural systems.

Charles then explained Denmark's approach to development cooperation, emphasizing its commitment to aligning with national priorities through bilateral consultations. Denmark's strategy, he said, focuses on climate innovation, financing, and agribusiness, providing hand-holding and commercial support for innovative solutions.

Charles concluded by expressing optimism about ongoing progress and the importance of sustained collaboration. He called for adaptation, critical thinking, and inclusive strategies to ensure that future development interventions are both sustainable and equitable.

This speech underscored the pressing need to transform market systems while empowering marginalized communities, advocating for a balanced approach to commercialization and local resilience.

3.2.2 Presentation: Leveraging Partnerships for Green Growth

Paul Mbole, the National Platform Liaison for P4G (Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030), took a moment to re-energize the participants with a light-hearted touch. “Good afternoon, everyone,” he began with a smile. “I know this is the Lala Salama session, so I hope you’re all ready to stay awake and engaged!” His humor helped to set a positive



tone for the session, drawing in the audience before he moved on to the core of his message.

Mbole then outlined P4G's pivotal role in advancing climate-focused initiatives across low- and middle-income countries. He emphasized how P4G supports early-stage climate businesses in becoming investment-ready and collaborates with national platforms to improve market systems

that enable climate transitions. This approach directly supports the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of each country under the Paris Agreement.

Mbole highlighted that P4G focuses on climate mitigation and adaptation, integrating poverty reduction and gender equity into sectors like food loss and waste, climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, zero-emission transportation, and water resilience. These efforts are key to addressing climate change and achieving broader sustainable development goals.

He differentiated between conventional small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and climate startups. While all startups are SMEs, not all SMEs qualify as climate startups. Conventional SMEs typically focus on established markets, rely on traditional financiers like banks, and exit through retirement or business sales (e.g., restaurants and grocery stores). In contrast, climate startups are innovative, scalable businesses targeting early adopters, seeking financing through private markets or public offerings, and often scaling through IPOs. Examples of climate startups include OpenAI, MPESA, and Solar PayGo.

Mbole emphasized the importance of P4G's national platforms in strengthening the operating environment for climate startups. These platforms create networks for both domestic and international climate innovation, offering grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$350,000, technical assistance, and support for investor readiness. Startups are required to partner with green nonprofits to ensure environmental and social benefits while addressing policy and regulatory issues and engaging target communities.

He shared two key examples of P4G's impact in Kenya:

1. **Circular Economy:** Following Kenya's 2017 ban on single-use plastics, P4G established the Kenya National Platform in 2018 and launched partnerships like the New Plastics Economy Partnership. This led to the formation of PETCO Kenya, the first producer responsibility organization in the country, and initiatives such as the PAKPRO and a Tetra Pak recycling plant. These efforts contributed to the creation of the Solid Waste Management Act (2020).
2. **Electric Transport:** P4G supported rural e-mobility initiatives involving Kenyan electric vehicle (EV) startups and the Siemens Foundation. By 2021, the Kenya National Platform had prioritized electric vehicles, leading to partnerships like PayGo E-Bikes and Charge Up. The \$25 million NAMA Facility supported policy reforms such as reduced import duties, EV charging tariff reductions, and gender-inclusive transport policies.

Between 2018 and 2022, P4G evaluated over 1,000 applications, awarded 75 partnerships, and supported more than 40 climate SMEs, leveraging \$90 million in investments. Despite these accomplishments, Mbole noted a significant \$2.5 trillion annual shortfall in climate finance required to achieve the SDGs and equitable climate transitions. He stressed that private sector investment is essential to bridge this gap, and P4G's role is to scale climate startups from micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) into larger, investable companies while strengthening the wider climate startup ecosystem.

Mbole elaborated on P4G's mission, emphasizing the importance of supporting climate-focused SMEs in critical sectors such as agriculture, energy, and water. These SMEs are crucial drivers of innovation in the green economy, but they face significant challenges. He stressed the importance of advocacy, partnerships, and creating a supportive environment to overcome these barriers. Not-for-profit organizations play a critical role in managing grants and advocating for policy changes that support these enterprises.

The Kenya National Platform, according to Mbole, plays a strategic role by bringing together key stakeholders from government and the private sector, convening partners for effective collaboration, and enabling the scaling of climate innovations. P4G provides grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$350,000, focusing on making enterprises investment-ready over an 18- to 24-month period.

Mbole also highlighted the importance of networking, collaboration, and scaling. P4G partners with universities and other stakeholders to create opportunities for climate startups. Successful projects like the circular economy and e-mobility initiatives in Kenya have led to significant policy changes, including the creation of the Sustainable Waste Management Act.

In conclusion, Mbole stressed the urgent need for increased funding to meet the SDGs and achieve equitable climate transitions. He noted that financial resources are insufficient, and bridging this gap requires leveraging investments through partnerships—from micro-enterprises to large-scale investors. By doing so, P4G aims to generate job opportunities and drive significant climate impact, contributing to a greener economy through collaboration and innovation.

3.2.3 Participant Q&A and Interactive Discussion

3.2.3.1 Questions

Walter Tinega: Market Systems and Business Development Specialist with MEDA

1. Can you explain the specifics of the youth involved in the 28 innovations you mentioned and their survival rates?
2. What is the survival rate of these innovations?
3. Are these youth-led innovations sustainable for the long term? particularly in creating employment opportunities for youth?
4. How are you ensuring that youth have opportunities to innovate and create employment?

Participant (name not mentioned)

1. How do you address job losses caused by innovations such as e-mobility and provide alternatives like charging stations for those affected?
2. What strategies are in place to manage the balance between job creation and innovation disruption?

Participant (name not mentioned)

1. How can funding be catalyzed to address post-harvest losses, especially in markets like fish and milk, where energy and storage issues are prevalent?
2. What interventions can support commercial viability for fishermen and others facing such challenges?

Eunice Mutua, Managing Director, Select Fresh Produce Kenya Limited

1. Can you include climate innovations, like technologies that extend the shelf life of produce for a year, in your agenda?
2. What are the possibilities and processes for engaging with your organization?
3. How long does it take to engage and see results (e.g., three months, five months, or one year)?
4. Is there a possibility to partner on climate innovations that require asset financing or machinery, even if not directly funded by P4G grants?

Participant (Name not mentioned)

3. Funding and Partnerships

- How does the application process for P4G grants work, and what is the timeline from application to funding disbursement?
 - Can partnerships like Danita Green Business Partnerships include commercial partners in the future?
 - How can innovative business models secure funding while meeting donor conditions?
4. Reflection on Partnership Alignment
- Are current partnerships and funding mechanisms addressing the real problems on the ground?
 - How do we balance donor agendas with local needs in partnerships?

Agatha Thuo

5. Agribusiness and Climate Disruptions
- How can agribusinesses across counties, especially small ones, be educated about climate change and its impact on their businesses?
 - What steps can be taken to mitigate disruptions like droughts and floods that affect agribusinesses?

Participant (name not mentioned)

1. How can partnerships engage with sector boards to ensure better understanding and momentum for key initiatives?
2. Why are regenerative agricultural practices not subsidized like fertilizers, and who should argue for such subsidies?
3. What strategies can small entities use to amplify their voices and bring critical agendas, like regenerative agriculture, to the table?
4. How do we ensure innovation in transitioning smallholder farmers to sustainable practices using affordable solutions?

Speaker 3

1. How can platform organizations, such as those focusing on warehouse receipting, contribute to broader agricultural solutions?

2. What are the steps needed to create momentum around specific initiatives, such as regenerative agriculture?

Speaker (Peter)

1. Why do many development interventions fail to achieve sustainable progress despite significant investments?
2. How can organizations remain committed to their missions while addressing donor agendas?
3. How can affordable and simple solutions be prioritized to empower smallholder farmers in transitioning to modern practices?
4. What role does innovation and organizational transformation play in adapting to funding constraints and achieving sustainability?

Charles

1. How can donors effectively encourage and support innovation through funding instruments?
2. What are the opportunities available for researchers and organizations in upcoming bilateral and business partnership programs?

3.2.3.2 Answers and Responses

Eunice's Questions: Consideration of specific innovations and engagement process:

1. **Innovation requests (e.g., extending produce shelf life using advanced storage):**
 - P4G doesn't fund machinery but collaborates through initiatives like KCIC, which supports proof-of-concept and results-based funding.
 - Entities like KCIC could assist startups with asset financing indirectly through programs that align with such technologies.
2. **Engagement timeline and process:**
 - The timeline varies depending on the type of engagement and partnerships. Collaboration with specific organizations like KCIC can streamline processes.
 - Detailed discussions with program representatives are necessary for clarity on timelines and opportunities.

On the P4G Application Process:

- P4G has a rolling call twice a year, with application deadlines in early March and early September.
- The process starts with submitting a concept note, followed by shortlisting, then a full proposal, and a pitch session.
- The evaluation takes three months, and contracting and budget negotiation take an additional three months, making the total process about six months.

On Funding and Partnerships:

- Applicants are expected to come with partners; P4G does not "broker marriages" but facilitates collaborations.
- Funding does not cover asset investments but focuses on grants for concepts and outcomes.
- Collaboration with initiatives like Danita Green Business Partnerships is encouraged, which supports commercial partners.

On Business Model Innovation:

- Success relies on presenting commercially viable solutions and demonstrating traction, viability, and scalability.
- Innovative business models are crucial for leveraging existing funding opportunities effectively.

On Challenges with Funding and Authenticity:

- Organizations often face challenges when funding requirements don't align with their agendas.
- The solution lies in negotiating and aligning organizational agendas with funders' goals.
- Organizations must avoid becoming mere "delivery boxes" and instead focus on delivering impactful outcomes.

On Agribusiness and Climate Resilience:

- Agribusinesses face disruptions from climate change, such as droughts and floods.

- To address these, there's a need to educate small agribusinesses on climate issues and mitigation strategies.
- Bringing together stakeholders for collective problem-solving and fast-tracking processes is essential.

General Remarks:

- Flexibility in redesigning programs based on feedback and ground realities is emphasized.
- Partnerships require innovation, and leveraging opportunities requires proactivity and strategic alignment with donor conditions.

On the Role of Umbrella Organizations (Agatha Thuo's Question):

- P4G collaborates with entities like KEPSA to unite private sector actors under a common platform.
- Engagement with sector boards is emphasized to secure understanding and alignment on key issues.
- Partnerships should focus on catalytic efforts that cascade and build momentum.

On Improving Agricultural Sector Applications:

- Recent calls have seen stronger agricultural applications, suggesting growing interest or capacity.
- Engagements with platform organizations like those handling warehouse receipting can foster sectoral growth.
- Presentations by partnerships can enhance awareness and understanding of models and initiatives.

On Climate Change and Transition Agendas:

- Transition agendas such as regenerative agriculture require strong advocacy and organized voices.
- Subsidy programs often focus on traditional methods (e.g., fertilizers), underscoring the need for better representation for sustainable practices.

- Collaboration among small entities is crucial to amplify their collective voice and push for systemic change.

On Donor Dependency and Mission Alignment (Peter's Remarks):

- Organizations should avoid chasing funding that diverts from their core mission and values.
- Emphasis should be on leveraging affordable and simple solutions to benefit smallholder farmers, rather than pursuing costly, impractical technologies.
- Sustainable and mission-driven practices are key to achieving long-term impact and avoiding inefficiencies seen in traditional development models.

On Innovations in Agricultural Technologies:

- Examples like KickStart highlight the need for innovation and reorganization to survive and scale.
- Moving from dependence on grants to commercialization and sustainability is essential for long-term success.
- Donors, including P4G, are eager for innovations and offer instruments to support transformative ideas.

On Upcoming Opportunities and Flexibility:

- Upcoming bilateral programs and calls, such as Danish fellowship programs, offer funding opportunities.
- Stakeholders are encouraged to stay updated through research and Google searches for specific calls and deadlines.
- Flexibility in program design and donor expectations can accommodate feedback and evolving needs.

Charles Wasike concluded the session by echoing Peter's remarks, emphasizing the urgent need for innovations in donor-funded programs. He highlighted the growing demand for creative, impactful solutions and the diverse range of funding instruments available to support them.

He encouraged participants, especially researchers, to actively seek opportunities and referenced the Danish Fellowship Center and its business partnerships program as valuable resources. The program,

typically advertised around April or May, offers substantial funding for research and development initiatives.

Charles urged attendees to "Google" these opportunities and remain proactive in tracking application windows. He reiterated his commitment to flexibility in addressing feedback and ensuring that donor mechanisms align with the needs of stakeholders. His closing remarks underscored the importance of continued engagement, innovation, and collaboration in achieving sustainable development goals.

3.2.4 Conclusion of the Donor Roundtable

In conclusion, the Donor Roundtable successfully highlighted the critical importance of aligning donor priorities and funding mechanisms with the goals of market system development. Through candid discussions, participants acknowledged the challenges posed by structural inequalities, limited resources, and the post-COVID-19 reduction in funding. However, the roundtable also emphasized the potential of innovative financing models, catalytic interventions, and collaborative partnerships to drive inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

Key outcomes included the recognition of the need for flexibility in funding mechanisms, the promotion of green jobs, and the scaling of successful interventions to achieve broader systemic change. Participants agreed that fostering stronger networks between donors, implementing partners, and local communities will be key to ensuring long-term impact and sustainability. The roundtable concluded with a commitment to leveraging innovation and evidence-based investments to guide future development initiatives, ensuring that donor support is both impactful and responsive to the evolving needs of communities.

3.3 Session 3: Climate Adaptation, Resilience and Regenerative Agriculture

3.3.1 Setting the Stage: The Imperative of Climate Adaptation and Regenerative Agriculture for Africa's Future Presentation

The session began with a presentation by Rebecca Amukhoye, CEO of MESPT, titled "*Climate Adaptation, Resilience, and Regenerative Agriculture: Driving Sustainable Food Systems Across Africa*." In her presentation, Rebecca emphasized the urgent need to address climate adaptation, resilience, and regenerative agriculture as core components of sustainable development in Africa. She explained that agriculture is one of the sectors most vulnerable to climate change, facing challenges such as extreme temperatures, erratic rainfall, and severe weather events. These disruptions threaten food

security, economic productivity, and livelihoods, particularly for smallholder farmers who rely heavily on agriculture.

Rebecca provided a global and regional context, noting that 2023 was one of the hottest years on record, marked by climate events such as droughts, floods, and cyclones that affected over 345 million people worldwide. Africa, which heavily relies on agriculture, bears a disproportionate share of these impacts, making it highly vulnerable to climate change. She highlighted the alarming statistics that over 12 million hectares of agricultural land are turning into desert each year, with projections suggesting that 90% of the world's soil could be degraded by 2050. This rapid land degradation will destabilize food systems globally and exacerbate poverty and hunger.

Rebecca shared specific examples from Kenya, where the National Drought Management Authority reported the loss of 2.6 million livestock, valued at \$1.95 billion, due to the severe drought of 2023. This crisis left pastoralists unable to sell their livestock, as they were too emaciated to be marketed. She also pointed to the floods that devastated traditionally dry counties in Kenya, causing massive crop losses for smallholder farmers. These examples highlighted the urgency of addressing the climate-induced challenges impacting agriculture across the continent.

Rebecca called for a collective, urgent response from development partners, emphasizing that climate adaptation and mitigation strategies need to be integrated into all development programs. She stressed the need to transition smallholder farmers from conventional farming practices to regenerative agriculture to build resilience and enhance sustainability. By focusing on soil regeneration, protecting land resources, and adopting more sustainable practices, smallholder farmers can better withstand the challenges posed by climate change.

Furthermore, she emphasized the critical role of education in building long-term resilience among farmers. Providing farmers with the tools and knowledge to adapt to climate change, including training in regenerative agricultural practices, is key to improving their ability to manage climate risks and increase productivity.

Rebecca concluded the session by reiterating the importance of adopting climate adaptation practices that safeguard the environment and support vulnerable populations. She called for continued collaboration between development partners to ensure that their interventions contribute to resilience and sustainable development across Africa. As she emphasized, all efforts in this space must align with the broader goal of addressing both the immediate and long-term impacts of climate change on agriculture and food security.

The presentation was followed by a video highlighting the devastating effects of floods in Nigeria and Uganda, showcasing the humanitarian and environmental challenges exacerbated by climate change. After the video, the panellists were welcomed for the discussion, where they elaborated on strategies for climate adaptation and mitigation.

3.3.2 Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The session on Climate Adaptation, Resilience, and Regenerative Agriculture began with the **moderator, Engineer Godfrey Marambe**, from Cusum Energy, introducing the panellists. Godfrey highlighted the diverse expertise and unique perspectives each panellist brought to the discussion on inclusive market systems development in the context of climate adaptation and resilience.

Panelists:

1. **Ernest Chitechi** – Corporate Services Manager, KCIC
2. **Dr. Harun Warui** – Program Lead Agroecology and Food Rights Program, Wilda Farm
3. **Joseline Nyaga** – Project Agronomist, IFDC
4. **Peter Juma** – President and Chief Operations Officer, Kickstart International



3.3.3 Moderator-Led Panel Discussions

The panel discussion session started with a question to **Ernest Chitechi** from the KCIC. The question asked him to address the key challenges in integrating resilience and climate adaptation into market systems, and how these barriers can be overcome through funding, policy, or capacity building. Ernest was also encouraged to draw from his experiences, particularly from the KCIC to illustrate how adaptation efforts are being carried out.

Ernest started by acknowledging the significant challenges in integrating resilience and climate adaptation into market systems, particularly for small and large enterprises. He identified the following key challenges:

1. **Climate Financing:** There is insufficient financing for adaptation projects, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) focused on adaptation. Many enterprises are unable to access the funds needed to implement climate resilience measures.
2. **Technical and Institutional Capacity:** Many farmers and enterprises lack the technical knowledge and institutional support to address climate challenges. He referred to the example of **droughts** and **climate change-related losses**, emphasizing how the **technical and institutional capacity** to predict and manage such challenges has diminished.
3. **Policy Gaps:** While policies often focus on mitigation, adaptation policies are still underdeveloped. He noted that many developing countries, including Kenya, struggle to integrate adaptation into national policies effectively.
4. **Market Failures:** Even when enterprises implement adaptation measures, they struggle with market access. There is a lack of awareness and insufficient infrastructure to support these innovations in reaching the market.
5. **Social and Cultural Norms:** Local social and cultural norms often resist change, which can hinder adaptation efforts, particularly when farmers are unfamiliar with new practices or innovations.

To address these barriers, Ernest emphasized the importance of awareness campaigns, policy reforms, and capacity-building programs that can help farmers and enterprises adopt more climate-

resilient practices. Additionally, he mentioned that technology innovation plays a critical role in enhancing market access and adaptation.

The moderator, **Engineer Godfrey Marambe**, shifted his focus to **Dr. Harun Warui**, asking him to elaborate on how market systems development and regenerative agriculture can foster resilience against climate shocks in vulnerable communities, and what policies or regulatory frameworks are needed to scale climate adaptation and regenerative practices.

Dr. Warui responded by emphasizing the critical role of **regenerative agriculture** in enhancing resilience against climate shocks. He shared the following key insights:

1. **Strengthening Local Market Systems:** Dr. Warui advocated for strengthening local market systems that can directly respond to the needs of both producers and consumers. By enhancing local market accessibility, farmers can avoid over-reliance on distant supply chains. This approach helps build resilience by ensuring that farmers can access markets for their produce and secure the resources they need without depending on external sources.
2. **Diversification of Livelihoods:** A core principle of regenerative agriculture is the diversification of income for farmers. Dr. Warui emphasized that by promoting diverse farming practices, farmers can become less dependent on a single crop or income stream. This makes them more adaptable and resilient to climate shocks, as they have multiple sources of income to fall back on during adverse weather events.
3. **Incentivizing Sustainable Practices:** Dr. Warui proposed the introduction of policies that incentivize sustainable farming practices, such as organic farming, crop rotation, and improved soil health management. These practices not only increase agricultural productivity but also help farmers adapt to climate challenges by fostering healthier soils and more robust farming systems that can withstand extreme weather patterns.
4. **Regulatory Frameworks:** He emphasized the need for regulatory frameworks that support low-input farming systems, which reduce dependency on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Dr. Warui argued that such frameworks should encourage the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices that minimize environmental impact and increase the resilience of agricultural systems.
5. **Soil Health and Carbon Sequestration:** Dr. Warui highlighted the importance of soil health as a key element in regenerative agriculture. He explained that healthy soils, managed

through practices like composting and carbon sequestration, play a vital role in improving farmers' ability to cope with climate shocks. These practices reduce environmental degradation and enhance the resilience of farming systems.

6. **Agroecology and Organic Farming:** Dr. Warui underscored the significance of agroecology and organic farming practices. He argued that promoting these methods not only fosters resilience but also builds more sustainable and adaptable food systems in the face of climate change. He called for incentives to support local markets and farmers who adopt these sustainable practices.

In conclusion, Dr. Warui noted the recent launch of the Agroecology Strategy by the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KARLO) on 28th November 2024. This strategy aims to promote sustainable



Dr. Harun Warui is under the hot seat, but still planting the seeds of regenerative agriculture with cool ideas!

agricultural practices, including the reduced use of synthetic fertilizers and the adoption of low-input farming methods. Dr. Warui concluded by stating that this initiative marks an important step in scaling regenerative agriculture not only in Kenya but also in other regions, reinforcing the role of local solutions in building long-term climate resilience.

The moderator posed a question to **Peter Juma**, asking him to elaborate on the strategies and incentives that market actors, including financial institutions and policymakers, can use to drive investment in climate adaptation measures and regenerative agricultural practices.

Peter Juma began by emphasizing the need to support smallholder farmers through practical strategies and incentives that foster resilience against climate change. He highlighted the following key points:

1. **Irrigation Transition:** Peter emphasized the importance of transitioning from rain-fed farming to irrigated farming. This shift would allow farmers to adapt to irregular weather patterns, such as droughts and floods. By implementing irrigation systems, farmers can improve crop yields and stabilize income despite changing climatic conditions. Irrigation serves as a critical adaptation tool that ensures reliable water availability, which is essential for consistent agricultural production.
2. **Smart Subsidies:** He proposed smart subsidies as an effective strategy to encourage farmers to adopt climate-resilient practices. Governments can provide subsidies for purchasing essential farming tools and technologies like irrigation systems or solar pumps. These subsidies would reduce the initial cost burden for farmers, making it easier for them to adopt climate-smart technologies that improve productivity and resilience.
3. **Financial Mechanisms:** Peter highlighted the need for guarantee funds to support smallholder farmers. These funds would reduce the risks perceived by financial institutions, making them more willing to lend to farmers. By providing loan guarantees, financial institutions would be encouraged to offer credit to farmers for investing in climate adaptation measures, allowing them to access the capital necessary for adopting sustainable agricultural practices.
4. **Government Support:** He also underscored the role of governments in facilitating the adoption of climate-resilient technologies. Peter advocated for tax breaks and the removal of duties on climate-smart technologies, such as solar pumps and irrigation equipment. By lowering the cost of these technologies, governments can make them more affordable for farmers, encouraging the widespread adoption of solutions that build resilience and increase agricultural productivity.

Peter mentioned successful subsidy programs in Rwanda and Uganda, where farmers have benefited from reduced prices on farming equipment. These programs have made climate-resilient farming more accessible to smallholders, enabling them to improve their agricultural practices and adapt to climate change.

Peter also shared insights into Kickstart's role in supporting smallholder farmers. Kickstart focuses on irrigation solutions and works closely with both producers and consumers. The organization aims to empower smallholder farmers by providing them with essential tools and promoting behavioral

change towards more sustainable farming practices. Kickstart's efforts are geared toward enabling farmers to improve their productivity and resilience to climate change.

In conclusion, Peter emphasized the need for government support, particularly through tax breaks for essential farming technologies. By making these technologies more affordable and supporting financial mechanisms like guarantee funds, smallholder farmers will be better equipped to implement climate-smart solutions, which will lead to improved resilience and sustainability in the face of climate change.

The moderator posed a thought-provoking question to **Joseline Nyaga**, asking her to elaborate on how youth empowerment and educational innovation can drive the adoption of sustainable farming practices, and what kind of partnerships and support systems are essential to amplify the impact of these efforts.

Joseline Nyaga from IFDC began by discussing the importance of public-private partnerships (PPP) in promoting climate-smart agriculture and empowering youth to adopt sustainable practices. She shared insights from a potato capacity building project she is working on, which utilizes a PPP model to engage various stakeholders in the agricultural value chain.

1. **Engaging Stakeholders:** Joseline emphasized the significance of collaboration between government institutions, county governments, and private sector actors. By bringing together these partners, they ensure that interventions are aligned with the needs of farmers and that resources are efficiently directed where they are most needed. The involvement of local governments, in particular, allows the project to tap into the local knowledge and understand the specific challenges faced by farmers in each region.



Joseline Nyaga IFDC, planting the seeds of innovation as she speaks on the future of sustainable agriculture.

2. **Focus on Integrated Soil Management:** Joseline highlighted the importance of integrated soil management practices, especially in the potato value chain. The project promotes the use of organic fertilizers and soil health practices, including soil testing, crop rotation, and applying fertilizers based on test results. These practices help maintain soil fertility and ensure that

farmers are applying inputs in the right quantities and at the right time, which not only improves productivity but also reduces costs by minimizing waste.

3. **Collaboration with Seed and Fertilizer Companies:** Another crucial aspect of the project is the partnership with seed and fertilizer companies, which provide high-quality inputs to farmers. This collaboration ensures that farmers have access to the best available seed varieties and fertilizers, which are essential for growing high-yield crops. Additionally, they support climate-smart farming practices by introducing sustainable inputs that enhance soil health and productivity.
4. **Youth Innovation and Education:** Joseline stressed the role of youth innovation in driving sustainable agricultural practices. By engaging young people in projects like the PPP model, IFDC helps foster a new generation of farmers who are equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement innovative, climate-resilient practices. Training and capacity-building efforts ensure that youth are well-prepared to face the challenges of modern farming, particularly in adapting to climate change.

Joseline concluded by emphasizing the need for continued public-private collaboration to scale up successful projects. She noted that by combining the expertise of government institutions, private companies, and youth, it is possible to create a sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural system that meets the needs of both farmers and consumers. Through partnerships like these, Joseline believes the agricultural sector can become more innovative, efficient, and adaptable to the challenges posed by climate change.

The moderator posed a follow-up question to **Ernest Chitechi**, asking him to elaborate on how financial mechanisms can best support climate-resilient farming and what knowledge gaps or collaborative challenges still need to be addressed to make real progress in this area.

1. **Challenges in Accessing Financial Support:** Ernest began by discussing the significant challenges smallholder farmers face when trying to access financial support for climate-resilient farming. He pointed out that high transaction costs associated with smallholder financing are a major barrier. These costs, he explained, often prevent farmers from securing loans and grants from traditional financial institutions, as they make it prohibitively expensive for smallholders to access the funds needed for climate adaptation.

2. **Grants and Repayable**

Grants: Ernest suggested that grants, such as proof-of-concept grants and repayable grants, could be highly effective in supporting smallholder farmers. Proof-of-concept grants allow farmers to test new climate adaptation practices and innovative



Ernest Chitechi: Bridging knowledge gaps and fostering collaboration for climate-resilient farming solutions.

technologies without the risk of high upfront costs. Additionally, repayable grants provide farmers with the flexibility to pay back funds over time, as they start to benefit from their investments in climate resilience.

3. **Collaborative Financing Models:** Ernest stressed the importance of collaborative financing models, where multiple stakeholders—including donors, governments, and financial institutions—come together to pool resources and share the risk. This collaborative approach, he noted, would ensure that smallholders have access to the necessary capital to invest in climate-resilient farming practices, while also spreading the financial risk among various actors.
4. **Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Enhancing Collaboration:** Ernest acknowledged the knowledge gaps in effectively structuring these collaborative financing models. He called for greater collaboration between financial institutions, development partners, and governments to share knowledge and develop innovative funding mechanisms. These mechanisms should be tailored to meet the unique needs of smallholder farmers, particularly in the context of climate change, and ensure that financial solutions are effective in driving sustainable, climate-resilient farming.

3.3.4 Participant Q&A and Interactive Discussion

The session shifted to an interactive Q&A segment, where the participants were invited to ask questions to the panellists. The questions were aimed at deepening the discussion around climate resilience, financial mechanisms, and sustainable agricultural practices.

Dennis Ogaso, Project Coordinator-Heifer Kenya question to Peter Juma

Dennis Ogaso's question: *Peter, you've mentioned that irrigation is key for smallholder farmers to adapt to climate change. Can you speak to the role of livestock in climate resilience, which often gets overlooked in discussions focused on crops?*

Peter Juma's Answer: Peter Juma acknowledged that the focus has typically been on crop farming, but emphasized that livestock plays a crucial role in climate resilience. He explained that livestock farmers face the same climate challenges, especially with water availability for their animals. For example, milk production declines significantly when animals do not have access to adequate water. He highlighted a project in Rwanda, where they have introduced ponds for water storage, ensuring that livestock have access to water even during droughts. This intervention has proven beneficial, not only supporting livestock production but also enhancing climate resilience in vulnerable farming communities.

Purity Osumba's question to Joseline Nyaga:

Purity Osumba: *Joseline, you've talked about the public-private partnership (PPP) model in your potato capacity building project. How have these partnerships empowered youth and contributed to the adoption of sustainable farming practices?*

Joseline Nyaga's Answer: Joseline Nyaga explained that the PPP model in the potato capacity building project has been pivotal in engaging youth in sustainable farming. The partnerships, which involve government institutions, private sector players, and farmers, have helped youth access training in integrated soil management and sustainable farming practices. Joseline emphasized that youth empowerment is crucial, as young farmers are more likely to adopt innovative technologies and climate-smart practices. The project has also provided them with hands-on experience, enabling them to improve soil health, crop productivity, and farm profitability.

Engineer Godfrey Marambe's question to Ernest Chitechi

Engineer Godfrey: *Ernest, you've discussed smallholder farmers' access to finance for climate resilience. What financial mechanisms would you recommend to make these resources more accessible?*

Ernest Chitechi's Answer: Ernest addressed the significant barrier that high transaction costs pose for smallholder farmers. He suggested that grants, particularly proof-of-concept grants and repayable grants, could be effective in providing farmers with the initial capital to trial new climate adaptation practices. Ernest also emphasized the importance of collaborative financing models, where governments, financial institutions, and donors pool resources to support smallholder farmers. He noted that this approach would help mitigate the risks associated with lending to smallholders and ensure that climate-resilient technologies can be adopted on a larger scale.

Engineer Godfrey Marambe's question to Dr. Harun Warui

Engineer Godfrey: *Dr. Warui, you spoke about the need for regenerative agriculture in building climate resilience. Can you elaborate on the policies or frameworks needed to scale these practices, particularly for smallholder farmers?*

Dr. Warui's Answer: Dr. Warui emphasized the importance of policy support in scaling regenerative agriculture. He stressed that low-input farming systems, which prioritize sustainable practices like crop rotation, organic farming, and soil health management, need more policy incentives. Governments should provide financial incentives to encourage farmers to adopt these practices, while also creating market access for climate-smart products. Dr. Warui also discussed the role of education and capacity building in ensuring that smallholder farmers have the knowledge and skills to implement regenerative agricultural practices successfully. He concluded that policies should also focus on enhancing local market systems, allowing smallholders to sell their products within their communities without relying on distant supply chains.

The **moderator (Engineer Godfrey Marambe's)** wrapped up the Q&A session by thanking the panelists for their insights and the participants for their thoughtful questions. He highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts, innovative financing models, and youth empowerment in achieving climate resilience in agriculture. The session ended with a call for continued dialogue and action to support smallholder farmers and promote sustainable farming practices in the face of climate change.

3.3.5 Conclusion

The panel discussion on climate adaptation, resilience, and regenerative agriculture provided valuable insights into essential strategies for strengthening smallholder farmers' resilience against climate shocks and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. The session highlighted the critical importance of collaboration, innovative financing models, and integrating climate adaptation practices into agriculture for sustainable development across Africa.

Key points from the discussion underscored the need to reduce duplication of efforts and enhance collaboration among stakeholders, including financial institutions, development partners, governments, and local market players. Strengthening local market systems, supporting local distributors, and leveraging existing infrastructure were identified as key strategies to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth in agriculture.

The panel emphasized the adoption of irrigation systems for smallholder farmers, stressing the need for increased investment in scalable, low-cost irrigation solutions to address water access challenges caused by climate change. This is seen as critical in tackling the erratic weather patterns that hinder agricultural productivity. Additionally, the integration of regenerative agriculture, combining livestock and crop farming, was highlighted as an effective approach to enhance farm resilience, improve soil health, and reduce environmental degradation.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) were recognized as a powerful tool for scaling climate-resilient technologies. The session discussed how government subsidies, community engagement, and trust-building at the local level are crucial for successfully implementing innovative farming practices. Smart subsidies, credit models, and guarantees for microfinance institutions were also identified as key solutions to close the financing gap for smallholder farmers.

The importance of village-based advisors in educating farmers about regenerative practices was emphasized, along with the need for enhanced education and awareness campaigns to ensure long-term success and improved productivity.

The Q&A session expanded on these themes, offering an opportunity to dive deeper into the practical aspects of the issues discussed:

- **Integration of Local Market Systems:** Participants emphasized the importance of direct market access for farmers, allowing them to bypass the challenges posed by long and unreliable supply chains. By integrating local market systems, farmers can more easily sell

their produce, especially in climate-resilient farming, helping to maintain stability and profitability.

- **Youth Empowerment and Innovation:** The role of youth as agents of change in agricultural innovation was acknowledged. Through education and capacity-building initiatives, youth are empowered with the skills needed to lead in climate-smart farming. This will enable the next generation of farmers to implement sustainable practices and adopt innovative technologies that enhance productivity and resilience.
- **Financial Access for Smallholders:** Discussions around financial access illuminated the urgent need for flexible funding models like grants and guarantee funds to reduce financial barriers. The panel stressed the importance of collaboration among governments, financial institutions, and development partners to provide comprehensive financial support, enabling farmers to implement climate adaptation measures.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations:

1. **For Policymakers and Development Partners:** Foster collaboration, invest in local suppliers, and incentivize irrigation adoption through subsidies and financing mechanisms.
2. **For Financial Institutions:** Develop financing models with guarantees and subsidies to improve access to climate-resilient technologies for smallholder farmers.
3. **For Farmers:** Adopt integrated farming systems, diversify farming operations, and implement sustainable practices to enhance resilience.
4. **For the Private Sector:** Collaborate with governments and development organizations to scale affordable climate-resilient technologies, particularly in irrigation and livestock management.

In conclusion, the session reinforced the need for coordinated efforts across all sectors to support smallholder farmers in adapting to climate change. By integrating regenerative agriculture, strengthening local markets, and improving access to financing, Africa's agricultural systems can become more resilient and sustainable, ensuring food security and improved livelihoods for vulnerable communities. The active participation of youth, public-private partnerships, and local communities will be crucial in building a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural future for all.

3.4 Session 4: Council Meeting /Strategy Presentation/elections (Member Organizations Roadmap)

3.4.1 Presentation of the Strategy Presentation

The BDCG Council Meeting, held during the Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024, marked a pivotal session in advancing the group's mission. With a focus on evaluating the network's history, achievements, and strategic goals, the meeting underscored BDCG's commitment to fostering inclusive market systems across Africa. Led by Clarice Kionge, Mathew Wanjala and Margaret Miano, the session brought together key stakeholders to align on a vision for a dynamic, collaborative future.

3.4.1.1 Opening Presentation: A Retrospective on BDCG's Journey and Mandate

The BDS Donor Group (BDCG) Council Meeting, convened during the Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024, provided a vital platform for reflecting on the network's origins, addressing its challenges, and planning its strategy for 2024–2025. Led by Clarice Kionge, the session was enriched by in-depth discussions, historical insights, and contributions from key stakeholders.

Clarice began by revisiting the history of the BDCG, highlighting its foundation and evolution. The network's origins date back to a 2000 Springfield Centre training in Glasgow, which emphasized the importance of strengthening Business Development Services (BDS) capacity in Kenya. In 2003, the "Blue Book" by the Donor Committee on Small Enterprise Development and the International Labour Organizations (ILO) provided critical guidance for BDS implementation, solidifying its principles and becoming a key resource for early members. By 2005, the BDCG was formally established with financial support from Danida, and MESPT took on the role of the network's secretariat, ensuring operational continuity.

One of the recurring themes in the discussion was the challenge of frequent turnover among members and organizational representatives, which often disrupted continuity and institutional memory. Clarice pointed out that organizations like TechnoServe, once key contributors, lost engagement due to staff transitions, leading to network inactivity and questions about its relevance. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges, significantly reducing in-person participation and increasing funding constraints. With diminished donor support from entities like Danida, the financial and logistical burden of sustaining the network fell disproportionately on MESPT. Despite these challenges, Clarice emphasized the continued importance of BDCG as a platform for fostering collaboration, sharing insights and avoiding duplicated efforts.

The mandate of the BDCG remains focused on its role as a hub for collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Its objectives include capacity building through training programs, networking to strengthen market systems, and coordinating efforts to prevent resource duplication. While initial membership included organizations such as Danida, the European Union (EU), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), SNV, German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), Aga Khan Foundation, and other key partners in Kenya, shifting donor priorities and personnel changes have posed challenges to active engagement. Over time, international organizations began including regional staff in the network, but evolving dynamics have impacted sustained participation.

To address these challenges and ensure the network's sustainability and relevance, Clarice outlined a revitalized strategy for 2024–2025. The strategy is built around key pillars. Governance and membership efforts will focus on developing clear participation criteria and revisiting governance structures to better distribute responsibilities across member organizations. Capacity development initiatives will include modular training programs tailored to emerging challenges in Market Systems Development (MSD), with training sessions separated from conferences to enhance accessibility. Knowledge management will involve the creation of a digital repository to consolidate resources like case studies and research papers, alongside the organization of webinars and peer-learning sessions for continuous engagement. To ensure sustainability, the network aims to diversify funding sources through membership fees, grants, and partnerships, while reducing reliance on individual organizations for financial and logistical support.

The vision of the BDCG is to foster resilient, inclusive market systems for Africa, with a mission to strengthen these systems through collaboration, capacity-building, and the dissemination of best practices.

In 2024, the BDCG will prioritize finalizing strategic plans and initiating member outreach in the first quarter. By the second quarter, membership drives will be relaunched alongside the development of an online knowledge-sharing platform. The third quarter will focus on hosting webinars, thematic working group sessions, and peer-learning events, culminating in the Annual BDCG Conference and the launch of the MSD Awards Ceremony in the fourth quarter. Looking ahead to 2025, the network plans to deliver targeted MSD training programs and expand its publication efforts, including the introduction of a monthly newsletter.

3.4.1.2 Evaluation of the BDCG Network: Progress, Challenges, and the Way Forward

Matthew Wanjala took over seamlessly, building on Clarence's introduction, and guided us through a thorough evaluation of the BDCG Network. This evaluation, commissioned to reflect on the past 16 years, aimed to assess the progress, identify challenges, and explore opportunities for improving the network's impact and sustainability. Matthew highlighted that the findings, compiled by Peter and his team, offer both a reflective lens on our history and a roadmap for the future.

The evaluation underscored several critical areas. While the combination of three-day training sessions and two-day conferences proved effective, questions arose about whether this format is the optimal use of time. A major strength identified was the network's role in fostering knowledge sharing, with 65% of respondents rating this aspect as highly effective. However, the evaluation also revealed significant gaps, particularly in the lack of continuity between annual events. Members expressed a need for year-round engagement through consistent communication and resource sharing.

Matthew elaborated on how the network has served as a vital hub for partnerships and collaboration among donors, private sector stakeholders, and other actors. Despite these successes, the diversity and inclusiveness of these partnerships require attention. Additionally, the lack of a centralized repository for knowledge and resources has limited the network's ability to sustain momentum beyond its flagship events.

To address these challenges and capitalize on existing strengths, the evaluation recommended several actionable steps. For capacity building, it suggested developing a deeper, thematic training curriculum on areas like climate change, food systems, and inclusive business models. Separating training sessions from conferences was also proposed to enhance learning outcomes and create specialized skill development opportunities. In terms of knowledge management, establishing a centralized digital platform to store and share resources year-round was emphasized, alongside structured follow-up processes to refine future programs.

For membership and governance, the evaluation recommended the establishment of a clear framework with defined roles and responsibilities to improve accountability. Governance structures should also be strengthened to ensure consistent quality and enhance the network's operational capacity. On the financial front, the development of a sustainable business model with diversified income streams is critical. Matthew highlighted the importance of re-engaging founding members

and donors like USAID while fostering partnerships with the private sector to ensure long-term stability.

Matthew concluded by introducing three strategic pillars to guide the network's next steps: **Impact**, focusing on enhanced training and tailored solutions for emerging challenges; **Partnership**, emphasizing dynamic member engagement and collaboration; and **Governance and Operations**, aiming to institutionalize effective communication and strengthen organizational structures. These pillars, he explained, will anchor the network's revitalization efforts and ensure its relevance in the years ahead.

As Matthew wrapped up, he reiterated that this evaluation is not just a reflective exercise but a call to action. It provides an opportunity to learn from the past, innovate, and chart a sustainable course forward for the BDCG Network. The next step, he noted, is translating these insights into tangible actions, starting with the immediate implementation of the recommendations.

3.4.1.3 Strategic Vision for 2024–2025: Building a Resilient Future for BDCG

Winnie Mailu outlined a comprehensive and revitalized strategy for BDCG, emphasizing sustainability and relevance in the evolving landscape of market systems development. Her presentation built on insights from the recent evaluation and aligned with the network's renewed mission and vision, setting the stage for a dynamic period of growth and impact.

Winnie began by reaffirming the network's commitment to fostering resilient and inclusive market systems for Africa, encapsulated in the updated vision and mission:

- **Vision:** Resilient, inclusive market systems for Africa.
- **Mission:** Strengthen systems through collaboration, capacity-building, and best-practice dissemination.

The strategy is anchored by four key pillars designed to ensure effective governance, enhanced capacity development, innovative knowledge management, and long-term sustainability.

Strategic Pillars

1. Governance and Membership

To strengthen the network's foundation, the strategy prioritizes the establishment of clear participation criteria and a more distributed governance structure:

- Develop explicit criteria to enhance member commitment and engagement.

- Revisit governance frameworks to distribute responsibilities across member organizations effectively.

2. **Capacity Development**

Recognizing the need for more targeted and accessible learning opportunities, the strategy proposes:

- Launching modular training programs tailored to address emerging challenges in market systems development (MSD).
- Decoupling training sessions from conferences to allow for greater accessibility and a deeper focus on specialized topics.

3. **Knowledge Management**

A cornerstone of the strategy is the creation of a robust knowledge-sharing infrastructure:

- Develop a digital repository to consolidate resources, including case studies, research papers, and best practices.
- Facilitate ongoing engagement through webinars, thematic peer-learning sessions, and collaborative workshops.

4. **Sustainability**

Ensuring financial and operational longevity is a critical focus:

- Diversify funding streams through membership fees, grants, and partnerships.
- Reduce dependency on individual organizations for financial and logistical support.

Winnie outlined a clear timeline (Roadmap 2024-2025) of activities to guide the network's transformation over the next two years:

2024 Priorities:

- Q1: Finalize strategic plans and initiate member outreach.
- Q2: Relaunch membership drives and develop an online knowledge-sharing platform.
- Q3: Host webinars, thematic working group sessions, and peer-learning events.
- Q4: Convene the Annual BDCG Conference and introduce the MSD Awards Ceremony.

2025 Focus Areas:

- Deliver targeted MSD training programs with practical applications.
- Expand publication efforts, including a monthly newsletter featuring insights, member contributions, and success stories.
- Secure funding through new partnerships and diversified member contributions.

Winnie emphasized that this strategic vision is not merely a framework but a rallying call for collective action. By implementing these initiatives, BDCG aims to establish itself as a leader in advancing knowledge-driven market systems development while staying true to its values of resilience and inclusivity.

She concluded with a call for active member engagement and collaboration, urging participants to view the strategy as a shared responsibility to ensure that BDCG continues to thrive and deliver value to its members and the broader development community. She ended with a reminder that the time to act is now, and the success of the strategy will depend on the commitment and contributions of all stakeholders involved.

3.4.2 Membership Structure and Sustainability Presentation

Margaret Miano concluded the session with an insightful presentation on the membership framework of the BDS Donor Group (BDCG). She highlighted how the structure is designed to foster inclusivity, collaboration, and financial sustainability, ensuring the network delivers significant value to its members while advancing its mission. The membership is divided into Corporate Members, which include organizations such as development partners, donors, academic institutions, private businesses, foundations, and government entities, and Individual Members, comprising professionals, trainers, consultants, and thought leaders who contribute expertise and insights.

Margaret emphasized the importance of membership fees as a cornerstone of the network's financial sustainability. Corporate members pay \$500 annually, while individual members contribute \$100. These fees, supplemented by additional revenue streams such as grants, fee-based services, and sponsorships, ensure the network can sustain its operations and continue to provide meaningful benefits.

She outlined the extensive benefits for paid-up members, which include discounted access to training, workshops, and conferences, with dedicated slots at key events. Members also gain priority

for speaking opportunities at conferences, exclusive access to a repository of knowledge resources, and the right to participate in decision-making processes, including voting during the AGM. Margaret stressed the collaborative nature of the network, noting that members are not only beneficiaries but also contributors, with responsibilities to uphold the values of inclusivity, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. Members are also encouraged to actively engage in network activities, maintain timely fee payments, and champion the network's mission within their sectors.

Transitioning to the sustainability strategy, Margaret highlighted how the network leverages its membership fees, alongside grants from development agencies and foundations, fee-based services such as training programs and consulting, and partnerships with private sector stakeholders. These diversified revenue streams ensure financial resilience while allowing the network to expand its impact.

Margaret closed her presentation by emphasizing the importance of viewing membership as a shared investment in building resilient and inclusive market systems. She encouraged members to maximize their participation and use the network as a platform to drive meaningful change.

3.4.3 Q&A Session Highlights: Reflections, Insights, and Proposals

The Q&A session was a dynamic platform for participants to share their perspectives, raise critical questions, and offer constructive feedback on the strategy and way forward for the BDCG Network.

1. Clarifications and Appreciation

- **Participant 1** noted that many of their questions were addressed during the presentation, appreciating the depth of the strategic direction outlined.
- **Participant 2** commended the focus on sustainability, highlighting the platform's potential to document successful projects and scale them. They stressed the need for an inclusive platform and raised a fundamental question: *Is this a donor-driven initiative, or is it truly owned by us?* Suggestions included rebranding the network to reflect its independent identity.

2. Purpose and Value of the Network

- **Participant 3, George**, posed a thought-provoking question: *Is there still a need for the network?* While acknowledging the value of the M4P training sessions, he recommended extending their duration to two weeks for better outcomes. He also suggested branding the training programs and revisiting their cost structure to ensure sustainability.

3. Governance and Structure

- **Participant 4, H&H**, expressed gratitude for the work done so far and asked how the network plans to manage the transition to the new team for 2023–2027. They emphasized the importance of clear structures to actualize the strategy.
- **Participant 5** echoed this sentiment, stressing the need for strong structures to support market collaboration and ensure the strategy's implementation.

4. Vision and Mission

- **Participant 6, Nyamota (IDE)**, shared their experience as a direct beneficiary of the network, urging a bolder approach to elevate its impact. They suggested refining the vision and mission to provide clearer guidance and inspiration.

5. Partnerships and Funding

- **Participant 7, Bridgette Okumu (IFDC)**, emphasized the need for new partnerships to strengthen the network.
- **Professor Rowe** proposed positioning the network as a grant's management hub, capable of attracting and managing funds for collaborative projects.
- **Professor Matofari** stressed addressing the turnover of membership and transitioning from a donor-dependent model to a more self-sustaining approach, integrating realistic, forward-thinking strategies.

6. Rebranding and Leadership

- **Molly Kwamah (MEDA)** supported the idea of rebranding to reflect the network's evolving identity and goals.
- **Winnie (Chair)** and others reaffirmed the need for a cohesive plan to bring together diverse ideas, ensuring alignment with the vision for the network's future.

The session concluded with **Rebecca Amukhoye**, who commended the participants for their thoughtful contributions and emphasized the importance of collaboration in shaping the network's trajectory. With the Q&A bringing diverse perspectives to the table, the meeting ended on a high note, setting a strong foundation for actionable next steps.

3.4.4 Conclusion

The discussions during the session illuminated the critical role of the BDCG in fostering knowledge sharing, building partnerships, and addressing market system challenges across Africa. Since its inception in 2005, the BDCG has demonstrated significant success in foundational training programs and creating collaborative networks. However, challenges such as fragmented membership, funding dependency, and governance gaps have hindered its full potential.

Looking ahead, the BDCG is poised to redefine its mission to align with the pressing needs of resilient and inclusive market systems. This vision includes the introduction of thematic working groups, a centralized knowledge repository, and annual M4P training programs to address evolving market demands. Strengthening governance structures, enhancing communication, and diversifying funding sources are pivotal to ensuring sustainable growth and impact.

By leveraging its historical achievements and addressing identified gaps, the BDCG can continue to serve as a critical platform for innovation, collaboration, and capacity building. Emphasizing inclusivity, resilience, and strategic partnerships will position the BDCG as a leader in supporting Africa's market systems to adapt to emerging global challenges and opportunities.

4 INCLUSIVE MARKETS SYMPOSIUM 2024 PROCEEDINGS DAY TWO

4.1 Session 5: Innovation Financing Models

4.1.1 Setting the Stage: Exploring Innovative Finance in Market Systems Development

The session on innovative finance in the market systems development space was expertly moderated by Molly Kwamah from Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), who immediately set an engaging and interactive tone for the discussion. Molly encouraged attendees from various sectors—including the private sector, academic, development, and donor communities—to share their perspectives on innovative finance. She warmly welcomed participants, setting the stage for a dynamic exchange of ideas. To kick off the discussion, she asked the room, “What is innovative finance?” prompting participants to think critically about the term and its relevance to their work.



Molly then passed the "microphone of power" around the room, signaling the start of an interactive conversation. George, a participant, candidly admitted he wasn't familiar with the term but interpreted innovative finance as "financial access for the less privileged," which resonated with many panellists and the audience.

Dio expanded on George's insight by explaining that innovative finance involves alternative strategies for both requesting and providing loans. He gave the example of warehouse receipts, which allow individuals or businesses without traditional collateral to use stored goods as security for loans. Dio highlighted how these financial solutions are tailored to meet the needs of underserved markets, like farmers and small businesses. He also spoke about simplifying loan application processes for those who may not have the time or resources to visit a bank, making it easier for them to access loans.

Molly continued to encourage participation, noting that there were no right or wrong answers. The conversation evolved, with one participant describing innovative finance as the strategic use of

"available resources and methods to address financial gaps," and creating customized financial products to meet beneficiaries' needs. Another participant connected the term to blended financing, which combines grants, venture capital, debt, and equity to help micro-enterprises address their growth challenges.

Molly, summarizing the contributions, added her perspective as the Business Development Lead at MEDA. She defined innovative finance as "*funding alternative*, creative, and bespoke models that ensure sustainable financial flow into economies." She emphasized the importance of a triple-impact approach, integrating social, environmental, and economic factors, and mentioned examples like blended finance, impact investing, and risk investments. These various insights painted a broad picture of the multifaceted nature of innovative finance and underscored its critical role in designing inclusive, adaptable financial solutions for underserved communities and sectors.

4.1.2 Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The session on **Innovative Finance in the Market Systems Development** space was dynamically moderated by **Molly Kwamah** from **MEDA**, who immediately set an engaging and interactive tone. With a wealth of experience in the development sector, Molly introduced the session's overarching theme: how innovative financial mechanisms can be leveraged to enhance resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability in underserved markets, particularly in agriculture and SMEs.

She welcomed the diverse panellists, each bringing a unique perspective from their respective sectors:

1. **Joseph Murambula** from **KCIC**, who would shed light on the financial innovations driving climate-smart agriculture and green technologies.
2. **Wangui Muna** from **Heifer International**, offers insights on how financial solutions can support sustainable agricultural practices and empower smallholder farmers.
3. **Eliud Wachira** from **MESPT**, whose expertise in financing models for smallholder enterprises would provide a practical view of how financing can support market systems.
4. **Aichatou Maikoudi** from **IFDC**, whose work in facilitating partnerships between the private sector and development agencies aimed at fostering inclusive finance was essential to the conversation.

The panel featured diverse voices from different sectors, with each expert offering their perspective on how innovative finance can drive systemic change.

1. **Joseph Murambula from KCIC** shared his insights on financial innovations driving climate-smart agriculture and green technologies. He explained that innovative finance involves addressing specific problems faced by beneficiaries by leveraging available resources and creating customized financial products. Joseph also stressed the importance of collaboration among all stakeholders—not just financial institutions—to build long-term, sustainable financial models that effectively support small enterprises.
2. **Wangui Muna from Heifer International** offered her perspective on how financial solutions can support sustainable agricultural practices and empower smallholder farmers. She discussed the shift from transactional partnerships to participatory, ecosystem-focused collaborations, where all ecosystem players' voices are amplified. This approach, she explained, helps reduce perceived risks in sectors like agriculture and fosters better-designed financial solutions.
3. **Eliud Wachira from MESPT** expanded on the role of **blended finance**, describing it as a critical component of innovative finance. He explained that blended finance—combining grants, equity, and debt capital—can help businesses at various stages of growth. This approach allows enterprises to manage risks effectively and provides sustainable financial solutions. Eliud also emphasized that financial institutions must develop products that cater to the cyclical nature of agriculture while incorporating gender perspectives to be more inclusive.
4. **Aichatou Maikoudi from IFDC** emphasized the role of **public-private partnerships** in fostering inclusive finance and supporting market systems development. She shared her work in facilitating collaborations between the private sector, development agencies, and financial institutions to tailor financial solutions to the unique needs of the agricultural sector. Aichatou stressed that partnerships are essential in driving inclusive and sustainable market systems.

4.1.3 Moderator-Led Panel Discussions

The session on innovative finance in market systems development was invigorating, with moderator Molly Kwamah from MEDA leading the discussion with a warm and engaging approach. With a light-hearted tone, she joked, “Charity begins at home,” as she turned her focus to **Eliud Wachira** from MESPT, the first panelist seated beside her. She posed the question: “*What innovative financing mechanisms have successfully supported sustainable market systems, particularly in underserved sectors like agriculture and SMEs?*” Eliud responded enthusiastically, detailing MESPT’s patient capital approach and its tailored financial products for agriculture’s cyclical nature. His key points included:

1. **Flexible Repayment Plans:** Introducing grace periods and restructuring loans to accommodate seasonal cash flow challenges.
2. **Syndicated Financing:** Collaborating with other financial institutions to pool resources and extend outreach to more beneficiaries.
3. **Robust Credit Policies:** Developing internal processes that promote inclusivity while effectively managing risks.

Eliud emphasized that innovative financing should go beyond credit provision; it must also encompass capacity-building initiatives for beneficiaries, ensuring long-term economic resilience.

Next, Molly directed the conversation to Wangui Muna from Heifer International: “*What are the existing barriers to innovative finance, and how can these barriers be overcome sustainably?*” Wangui identified several critical barriers to innovative finance, including:

- **High Perceived Risk:** Financial institutions often hesitate to invest in agriculture due to its unpredictable returns.
- **Fragmented Ecosystems:** Limited collaboration among stakeholders leads to inefficiencies and redundant efforts.
- **Lack of Tailored Products:** Many financial instruments fail to meet the specific needs of underserved markets.

To overcome these barriers, Wangui proposed actionable solutions:

- **Strengthening Participatory Ecosystems:** Engaging all stakeholders—farmers, cooperatives, and governments—in the design of financial products.

- **Designing Sector-Specific Products:** Developing revolving funds for agriculture and technology-driven credit solutions tailored to unique market demands.

Continuing the dialogue, Molly turned to Joseph Murabula from KCIC with the question: “*How can digital payment systems and technology-driven financial solutions improve financial inclusion and market resilience?*” Joseph enthusiastically shared his perspective on the transformative potential of digital finance. His insights included:

- **Reduced Transaction Costs:** Digital platforms minimize overheads associated with traditional banking, making finance more accessible.
- **Real-Time Access to Credit:** Farmers can secure loans quickly using digital tools, which helps them avoid production delays.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Technology enables financial institutions to assess creditworthiness using alternative data sources, such as farming history and mobile usage.

Joseph also noted the importance of digital literacy and education in ensuring that beneficiaries can effectively utilize these digital solutions.

The discussion then shifted to Aichatou Maikoudi from IFDC, who was asked, “How can blended finance and impact investments mobilize capital for inclusive market system development?” Aichatou elaborated on the concept of blended finance, emphasizing its role in bridging gaps between public and private funding. Key points included:

- **Risk Mitigation:** Grants can reduce initial risks for investors, encouraging small businesses to grow before seeking additional funding.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** These collaborations can create pipelines for scaling innovations, especially in climate-resilient agricultural practices.
- **Triple-Bottom-Line Approach:** Impact investments ensure a balance of economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

In response to a participant's query about the need for clearer definitions and frameworks in innovative finance, Aichatou agreed, suggesting that standardized terminology could enhance communication among stakeholders.

As the conversation progressed into the second round of questions, Eliud was again in the spotlight when asked, “What role do microfinance and SACCOs play in building resilient market systems, and

how can they be scaled effectively?” Eliud emphasized that microfinance institutions (MFIs) and Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs) are vital for promoting financial inclusion in rural areas. He suggested several strategies for scaling their impact:

- **Integrating Capacity-Building Programs:** Enhancing financial literacy among borrowers to empower them.
- **Employing Aggregation Models:** Allowing SACCOs to syndicate loans for financing larger projects collectively.
- **Prioritizing Digital Transformation:** Improving operational efficiency and outreach through technology.

Molly then posed a question to Joseph about incentivizing private investment: “What incentives can governments offer to encourage private investment in sustainable business practices?” Joseph highlighted several potential incentives:

- **Tax Benefits:** Offering deductions for investments in green infrastructure and renewable energy initiatives.
- **Guarantee Schemes:** Establishing government-backed guarantees to mitigate risks associated with private investments.
- **Policy Alignment:** Creating a regulatory environment that fosters innovation while ensuring inclusivity and sustainability.

The dialogue continued with Wangui addressing the question, “How can partnerships unlock scalable opportunities for inclusive economic growth?” She underscored the importance of multisectoral partnerships, emphasizing:

- **Collaborative Efforts:** Engaging financial institutions, NGOs, and governments to design scalable interventions.
- **Co-Investment Models:** Pooling resources from diverse stakeholders to fund large-scale projects effectively.
- **Shared Accountability Frameworks:** Ensuring that all partners contribute meaningfully to achieve desired outcomes.

Finally, Joseph tackled the question: “How do we measure the success of innovative financing mechanisms in building resilient market systems?” He stressed the significance of data-driven impact measurement, highlighting best practices such as:

- **Establishing Clear Metrics:** Aligning measurements with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure relevance and accountability.
- **Regular Monitoring:** Tracking economic, social, and environmental outcomes to assess the impact of financing initiatives.
- **Transparent Reporting:** Demonstrating accountability through published reports to attract further investments.

The session concluded with a rich exchange of ideas that underscored the vital role of innovative finance in developing sustainable market systems. Participants left feeling inspired and equipped with actionable insights, ready to tackle the challenges and opportunities ahead in their respective fields.



Panellist: From right; Molly Kwamah, Eliud Wachira, Joseph Murambual, Aichatou Maikoudi and Wanqui Muna

4.1.4 Conclusion

The session on innovative financing models, held on Day 2 of the conference, underscored the transformative role of market systems in driving sustainable economic growth and inclusivity. Key discussions centered around alternative financing models, such as warehouse receipt systems, blended financing, and syndicated funding partnerships, which are designed to address the financial needs of marginalized groups, particularly in agriculture and SMEs.

Panelists shared valuable examples of innovation, including warehouse receipt systems that enable smallholders to use stored produce as collateral for loans, and blended financing mechanisms that combine grants, venture capital, and loans to support diverse enterprises. Additionally, the collaborative approach of syndicated investments demonstrated how pooling resources can reduce risks and amplify impact.

Despite the progress, several systemic challenges remain. These include access barriers, where financial institutions are hesitant to invest in agriculture due to perceived risks and cyclical nature, market focus issues that prioritize export over local markets, and gender and youth gaps that limit access to financing and resources for these groups.

The session emphasized the importance of transitioning from transactional to participatory partnerships, integrating the voices of all ecosystem players. The establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms to co-design sustainable and inclusive market solutions was identified as a critical next step.

Success stories, such as syndicated investments and impact funds targeting agriculture value chains across Africa, highlighted the potential of innovative financing in fostering resilience. Flexible credit policies, including grace periods and adaptive repayment plans, were showcased as effective solutions to accommodate smallholders' needs.

In conclusion, the session reinforced the need for enhanced policy support to encourage private sector investment in agriculture, the promotion of blended financing models that address social, environmental, and economic goals, and a balanced approach that strengthens both local and export markets for smallholders. Prioritizing gender and youth inclusion in financial access and decision-making was also stressed.

Outcomes from the session include increased awareness of innovative financing mechanisms, stronger collaboration between development partners, the private sector, and government

stakeholders, and clear pathways for scaling sustainable market systems across Africa. These discussions set the stage for continued collaboration and action to create inclusive, resilient, and sustainable market systems in the region.

4.2 Session 6: Sustainable Food Systems (Circularity, regenerative)

4.2.1 Setting the Stage: Sustainable Food Systems

The session was expertly moderated by Donnah Macharia, who set the tone for the discussion by emphasizing the critical importance of sustainable food systems. Donnah defined sustainable food systems as those that are environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable, highlighting the interconnectedness of these three dimensions. She explained that achieving sustainability requires a delicate balance between ecological preservation, economic viability, and social equity.

Donnah also explored consumer behaviour and future trends, noting the growing shift towards healthier and more environmentally friendly food choices. She pointed out how these changing preferences are significantly influencing the market, driving demand for sustainable food products. Furthermore, she addressed the role of innovations in production, stressing the need for creative and efficient solutions to meet the increasing demand for sustainable food while minimizing environmental impact.

This introduction set the stage for the panel discussion and Q&A session, where experts shared insights on how to build and sustain food systems that meet both current and future needs while maintaining ecological and social balance.

4.2.2 Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

Donnah Macharia, the session's moderator, opened the floor with a warm welcome and an introduction to the topic at hand: sustainable food systems. She emphasized the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, and social sustainability and the importance of balancing these dimensions. Her introduction set the stage for an engaging panel discussion, where experts would delve into the innovations and challenges surrounding sustainable food systems.

Panellists

1. Walter Tinega: Market Systems and Business Development Specialist with MEDA Kenya
2. Wambui Mabire : CEO, RETRAK
3. Doreen Kinoti : Programme Manger GEAP, MESPT

4. Dr. Charles Ochodo – Private Veterinarian
5. Mikayla Hug: Agricultural Professional, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) in Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) Project

With all panellists introduced, Donnah expressed her excitement for the discussion, confident that the diverse perspectives represented would provide a comprehensive and insightful look into sustainable food systems. The stage was set for a productive conversation about the challenges, opportunities, and innovations that will shape the future of food.



4.2.3 Moderator-Led Panel Discussions

The session, expertly moderated by Donnah Macharia, provided a platform for the panellists to share their diverse expertise on regenerative agriculture, market systems, and sustainable food production practices. Each expert brought a unique perspective, sparking a rich discussion on how to achieve sustainability in agriculture and food systems.

1. **Dr. Charles Ochodo**

Dr. Charles Ochodo, a facilitator at MESPT and expert in regenerative agriculture, kicked off the discussion by providing valuable insights into how regenerative farming practices are already being embraced by livestock communities. He explained that many of these communities in the highlands are using the rainy season to focus on plant regeneration and improving soil health. Dr. Ochodo highlighted key regenerative practices, such as agroforestry and integrating livestock into farming systems. He emphasized how these practices improve soil moisture retention, prevent erosion, and make plants more resilient to diseases and pests. Regenerative agriculture, he noted, reduces the need for chemical inputs, increases yield consistency, and enhances environmental adaptability. Dr. Ochodo also discussed the role of livestock management, including rotational grazing and manure recycling, in improving soil health and overall productivity.

2. **Doreen Kinoti**

Doreen Kinoti, from MESPT, continued the discussion by addressing the role of market systems in shaping farming practices. She shared that farmers often adjust their production based on market demands, which are influenced by factors like weather and consumer preferences. Doreen described MESPT's contract model, which links farmers to formal and informal markets through crops like vegetables, mangoes, and avocados. She also emphasized the importance of circular business models, where value addition and labor-friendly practices are integrated. By promoting these models, MESPT helps farmers meet market demands while ensuring sustainable practices. Doreen stressed the need to improve the capacity of farmer groups and focus on food safety to address market challenges effectively.

3. **Walter Tinega**

Walter Tinega from MEDA spoke about increasing small-scale farmers' productivity through regenerative agriculture. He highlighted key regenerative practices such as intercropping and soil erosion prevention. Walter discussed MEDA's work with lead farmers and environmental experts to train others in adopting these practices, particularly in areas where agriculture is vulnerable to climate change. He underscored the significance of integrated market assessments, which help identify both constraints and opportunities for smallholder farmers, enabling them to maximize productivity while adhering to sustainable practices.

4. **Mikayla Hug**

Mikayla Hug, representing the NICE Project, presented the critical role of regenerative agriculture in food systems. She explained that aligning food production with ecological sustainability is essential for long-term success. Mikayla identified four key pillars for success in regenerative agriculture: supply, sustainability, consumer demand, and policy. She discussed how institutional support and policy frameworks play a crucial role in driving sustainability efforts, particularly in creating an environment where regenerative practices can thrive. Mikayla emphasized that strong policy support is needed to push sustainability across the food production system.

5. **Wambui Mbarire**

Wambui Mbarire concluded the panel discussions by reflecting on the challenges facing food production, particularly in terms of food safety and market demand. She pointed out that 45% of agricultural production is influenced by these factors, with significant food losses contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Wambui discussed the need to address food wastage, which is responsible for 30-40% of produce loss, and emphasized the importance of improving food security through enhanced capacity building for farmer groups. She also highlighted the need for better market access and quality control to reduce losses and ensure a sustainable food supply.

This panel discussion provided a comprehensive exploration of regenerative agriculture, market systems, and sustainable food production. The insights shared by each expert underscored the importance of collaboration, innovation, and long-term planning to create resilient and sustainable food systems.

4.2.4 Participant Q&A and Interactive Discussion

In response to challenges faced by farmers, questions were raised about the quality, quantity, and consistency of agricultural products. The conversation also touched on the need for practical training in regenerative agriculture, such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and the role of cooperatives in supporting farmers. Discussions also included the potential for shifting pastoralist practices to more sustainable approaches, such as better herd management and land use in regions with high rates of overgrazing.

The role of universities in revising curricula to include regenerative agriculture and related fields was also discussed. Njeri Muhia mentioned that universities, such as Egerton University, are already incorporating regenerative agriculture training into their curricula. The involvement of stakeholders in curriculum revision was emphasized as crucial for aligning academic programs with the needs of the agricultural sector.

In summary, the discussions highlighted the need for sustainable farming practices, the challenges of food security, the role of market systems, and the importance of education and policy in advancing regenerative agriculture.

4.2.5 Conclusion

The session on Sustainable Food Systems, focusing on Circularity and Regenerative Agriculture, provided invaluable insights into how these practices can help create resilient, efficient, and inclusive food systems. Experts from various sectors highlighted the transformative potential of regenerative agriculture to improve soil health, increase biodiversity, and reduce dependency on chemical inputs. Practical examples, such as paddock grazing and manure recycling, demonstrated how smallholder farmers could improve productivity while maintaining environmental sustainability.

The discussion on circularity emphasized the importance of eliminating waste and optimizing resource use through recycling and reuse. From water purification systems to energy audits, these innovations are pivotal in enhancing the efficiency of food production and reducing environmental footprints. The growing consumer demand for bio-products and sustainable practices is shaping market systems, which offer new opportunities for smallholder farmers to connect with consumers through contract models and cooperative efforts.

Despite the promising opportunities, several challenges remain. Smallholder farmers often face barriers in meeting quality and quantity demands due to limited access to training, technology, and resources. Pastoralists also encounter difficulties in adopting sustainable grazing practices and navigating communal land-use issues. Addressing these challenges requires strong policy support, especially in promoting land tenure reforms and advocating for circular business models through government incentives.

The **success stories** presented in the session, including livestock and soil health improvements, circular economy innovations, and market system development, showcased the positive impact of these approaches. Practical examples of controlled grazing, digital interventions in dairy farming, and

food waste reduction at aggregation centers demonstrated the effectiveness of regenerative and circular practices in creating sustainable food systems.

To ensure long-term success, stakeholders—including policymakers, businesses, communities, and development partners—must work together to promote regenerative agriculture and circularity. Policymakers are encouraged to support circular business models and regenerative practices through incentives and policy frameworks. Businesses should invest in training programs for farmers and promote market incentives for bio-products. Communities must adopt cooperative models and address land-use practices to prevent overgrazing. Furthermore, cross-sector collaboration, the use of technology, and data-driven approaches are critical for tracking and measuring the impact of these sustainable initiatives.

In conclusion, this session reinforced the importance of collaboration, innovation, and policy support in building sustainable food systems. By focusing on regenerative agriculture, circular economy practices, and market system development, stakeholders can collectively create a more resilient and inclusive agricultural sector, benefiting smallholder farmers and vulnerable communities across the globe.

4.3 Session 7: Gender Transformative Approaches in Market Systems

4.3.1 Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The session on Gender Transformative Approaches in Market Systems was expertly moderated by George Okeyo, who opened the discussion by emphasizing the importance of gender integration in agricultural market systems. He stressed that achieving inclusivity and equality in market systems is not only a moral imperative but also an essential component for sustainable economic growth. George welcomed the distinguished panelists, each of whom brings a wealth of expertise in gender, market systems, and agricultural development.

Panellists:

1. Margaret Komen:CEO Mace Foods
2. Eunice Mutua: Managing Director, Select Fresh Produce Kenya Ltd
3. Eliud Nkunja: Project Manager, SNV
4. Bernadette Muyomi: Gender Exper, Taniger

After introducing the panel, George handed over to Bernadette Muyomi, inviting her to kick off the session with her presentation on the significance of gender-transformative approaches in market systems.

4.3.2 Setting the Stage: Gender-Transformative Approaches in Agricultural Market Systems Presentation

The session began with a compelling presentation by Bernadette Muyomi from Taniger, who laid the foundation for the panel discussion by delving into the significance of gender-transformative approaches in agricultural market systems. Muyomi emphasized that gender and social inclusion are far from mere buzzwords; they are integral components in shaping equitable and sustainable systems. She clarified that gender refers to the roles, behaviours, and expectations shaped by cultural and social contexts, rather than biological differences, and highlighted that addressing gender issues is a multi-faceted challenge, deeply interwoven with culture, policy, and societal consciousness.

Muyomi stressed that gender transformation is a professional field requiring both qualitative and quantitative research. It is a process that evolves rather than a one-time event, demanding continuous analysis and adaptation. She outlined the essential actions needed to foster gender inclusion, which include:

1. Macro and Micro-Level Engagement – Approaching gender transformation from both overarching structural changes and grassroots-level interventions.
2. Context-Specific Gender Analyses – Conducting detailed assessments to understand gender dynamics in various agricultural settings.
3. Policy Review and Advocacy – Analyzing and advocating for policies that support gender equity, while identifying opportunities for transformation.
4. Training and Capacity Building – Empowering individuals and organizations with the skills and knowledge necessary to integrate gender considerations into their work.
5. Gender-Responsive Budgets – Ensuring that financial planning and resource allocation reflect gender priorities.
6. Social and Behavioral Change Programs – Running community-level programs to shift perceptions and promote gender equity.

In her presentation, Muyomi also introduced the IGNITE+ program, a five-year initiative funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and implemented by Taniger. The program is designed to increase the capacity of organizations to implement gender and nutrition programs in the agricultural sector. IGNITE+ operates in several African countries, including Kenya, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, offering technical assistance to local service providers. The program helps these providers enhance their support in areas such as gender, nutrition, and monitoring and evaluation, with support periods ranging from six to twenty-four months.

Muyomi emphasized the pivotal role of organizations like Taniger in building the capacity of local partners to implement effective gender and nutrition interventions, ultimately transforming agricultural markets into more inclusive and sustainable systems.

Following the presentation, the panel discussion provided deeper insights into how these principles can be applied in practice, with panelists sharing their experiences in integrating gender-transformative approaches into market systems, followed by a lively Q&A session with the audience. The discussion underscored the necessity of continued dialogue, research, and collaboration across sectors to achieve meaningful gender transformation in agricultural and market systems.

4.3.3 Moderator-Led Panel Discussions

The session on Gender Transformative Approaches in Market Systems brought together a panel of experts to explore how market systems development can effectively address structural barriers to gender equality. The moderator George posed a question to Eliud. *“How can market systems development address structural barriers to gender equality and promote equitable access to resources and opportunities for women?”*

Eliud Nkuja from SNV opened the discussion answering the question while emphasising the critical need for comprehensive strategies that dismantle the systemic barriers women face. Key points from his insights included:

- **Identifying Structural Barriers:** Understanding the specific obstacles women encounter in accessing resources, such as credit, land, and market information.
- **Capacity Building:** Implementing programs that enhance women's skills and confidence, enabling them to engage effectively in market systems.
- **Inclusive Policies:** Advocating for policies that promote gender equity and encourage equal participation in economic activities.

Eliud's call for adaptive management and long-term strategies resonated throughout the session, laying a solid foundation for further discussions.

Next, Margaret Komen from Mace Foods addressed the question: ***“How can businesses and value chain actors actively promote women's leadership and ensure their participation in decision-making roles?”*** Margaret Komen from Mace Foods outlined several effective strategies that can be implemented across industries. These strategies not only promote women's leadership but also enhance their overall participation in decision-making processes.

1. **Mentorship Programs:** One of the cornerstone strategies highlighted by Margaret is the establishment of mentorship initiatives that connect aspiring women leaders with experienced mentors within the industry. These programs are crucial for providing guidance, building confidence, and fostering professional development. By pairing young female professionals with seasoned leaders, businesses can create pathways for growth and empower women to take on leadership roles.
2. **Creating Supportive Networks:** Margaret emphasized the importance of fostering supportive environments where women can share their experiences, challenges, and resources. Establishing networks allows women to enhance their visibility and influence within value chains. These networks can serve as platforms for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and mutual support, helping women navigate their careers more effectively and connect with potential allies in their fields.
3. **Integrating Gender Equity in Business Strategies:** Another critical strategy discussed by Margaret is the need for businesses to integrate gender equity into their overarching business strategies. This involves adopting gender-responsive policies that prioritize women's leadership at all organizational levels. By embedding gender equity into the fabric of organizational culture, businesses can create a more inclusive environment that not only benefits women but also enhances overall organizational performance.

Margaret Komen's insights underline the importance of proactive measures that businesses and value chain actors can take to elevate women's leadership. By investing in mentorship, creating supportive networks, and integrating gender equity into business strategies, organizations can make significant strides towards achieving greater gender equality in leadership roles. These efforts not only benefit individual women but also contribute to more innovative, resilient, and successful business practices overall.

The conversation then shifted to Eunice Mutua from Select Fresh Produce Kenya Ltd, who responded to the question: ***“What partnerships between public, private, and community sectors are essential to advancing gender equity in market systems?”*** Eunice emphasized the necessity of collaboration across sectors to drive meaningful change, highlighting several key strategies:

1. **Multi-Stakeholder Engagement:** Eunice stressed the importance of building robust partnerships that encompass government agencies, private companies, NGOs, and community organizations. She noted that *“if there’s not particular partnerships, there’s only a certain level of growth you’re going to achieve.”* This collaborative approach allows for the pooling of diverse expertise and resources, which is essential for creating comprehensive strategies that address the unique challenges women face in market systems. Eunice pointed out that effective engagement among stakeholders can lead to the development of initiatives that not only promote gender equity but also enhance overall business performance and sustainability.
2. **Shared Resources and Knowledge:** Eunice highlighted the necessity of leveraging the strengths and resources of each sector to implement effective programs that support women’s economic empowerment. She illustrated this by sharing her experience with the Elgeyo Marakwet founders, who faced challenges with the overproduction of sweet potatoes. By collaborating and finding buyers, they created a sustainable market, demonstrating how shared knowledge and resources can lead to innovative solutions. She emphasized that when different sectors come together, they can combine their capabilities to address systemic barriers and foster a more inclusive economic environment.
3. **Collective Accountability:** Eunice also underscored the need for establishing frameworks for accountability that ensure all partners remain committed to advancing gender equity. She mentioned that partnerships should include clear expectations and performance indicators that hold each stakeholder accountable for their role in promoting gender equity. This collective accountability not only fosters trust among partners but also ensures that the initiatives aimed at empowering women are sustained over time. Eunice believes that ***“when you put together the private sector, public sector, and the development sector, accountability then does happen,”*** reinforcing the idea that structured collaboration can drive meaningful progress.

Eunice's insights illuminate the critical role of cross-sector partnerships in advancing gender equity within market systems. By fostering multi-stakeholder engagement, sharing resources and knowledge, and establishing frameworks for collective accountability, stakeholders can create an environment where women are empowered to participate fully in economic activities, ultimately driving sustainable growth for all.

Lastly, Bernadette Muyumi from Taniger tackled the question: *"What role do cultural norms and societal attitudes play in shaping gender dynamics within market systems, and how can these be challenged to create more inclusive systems?"* Bernadette shed light on the significant influence of cultural norms and emphasized several strategies to address these challenges:

1. **Challenging Stereotypes:** Bernadette highlighted the critical need to address and deconstruct harmful stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality within market systems. She noted that cultural perceptions often dictate the roles men and women are expected to play in both the household and the marketplace. By actively challenging these stereotypes, society can begin to shift the narrative around women's capabilities and contributions to economic activities. Bernadette stressed the importance of changing mindsets, explaining that *"cultural norms often limit women's participation in the market"* and that breaking these barriers is essential for fostering equality.
2. **Community Education:** Emphasizing the power of knowledge, Bernadette advocated for implementing community-based programs that raise awareness about the importance of gender equity. She discussed how these programs can educate both men and women about the benefits of women's full participation in economic activities. By engaging communities in conversations about gender equity, they can collectively understand and value the contributions that women make to the economy. Bernadette noted that *"educating communities is key to changing attitudes and behaviors"*, thereby creating a more supportive environment for women entrepreneurs and workers.
3. **Advocating for Inclusive Practices:** Bernadette also underscored the need for organizations to adopt practices that actively promote gender inclusivity. She encouraged the implementation of gender-sensitive training and awareness campaigns within companies and institutions. These initiatives can help to foster a workplace culture that values diversity and inclusion, ensuring that women have equal access to opportunities for advancement.

Bernadette pointed out that “organizations must be proactive in promoting inclusivity” to ensure that gender dynamics are positively transformed within market systems.

Bernadette's insights highlight the profound impact of cultural norms and societal attitudes on gender dynamics. By challenging stereotypes, educating communities, and advocating for inclusive practices, stakeholders can work towards dismantling the barriers that hinder women's participation in economic activities. Ultimately, her call to action emphasizes the need for a collective effort to create more inclusive systems where both men and women can thrive equally.

Throughout the discussion, speakers underscored the importance of assessing women's empowerment in three key areas: inclusion in boardrooms, participation in elections, and their ability to engage freely in both speaking out and decision-making. They stressed the importance of identifying and addressing any gaps in these areas through partnerships with relevant stakeholders—government agencies, private sector players, and civil society groups.

The session concluded with a consensus on the need for adaptive management and long-term strategies to ensure that women can participate equally in market systems alongside men. By focusing on systemic issues and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders, the panelists agreed that significant strides could be made toward achieving gender equity in market systems.



4.3.4 Participant Q&A and Interactive Discussion

The interactive discussion segment provided a platform for participants to engage with the speakers, posing insightful questions that deepened the conversation around gender transformative approaches in market systems. The Q&A highlighted diverse perspectives and generated valuable insights from both panellists and participants.

Key Exchanges:

1. **Adoption Rates of Women in Projects (Participant 1, Nigeria):** Eliud Nkuja was asked about the rate at which women are being integrated into the projects he oversees. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that resources flow to all members of a family, not just to the male head of the household. This inclusive approach ensures that women's participation is meaningful and that families benefit holistically. He also highlighted the need for programs to actively promote gender equity within households and communities.

Muti added to this point by discussing the importance of initiatives like *He for She*, which engage men in supporting women's empowerment, highlighting that gender equity is a shared responsibility.

2. **Gender Indicators in Market Systems (Participant 3):** A participant sought clarification on specific gender indicators used to measure progress in projects. Muyomi responded by stressing the need to track metrics such as women-led leadership, the creation of decent employment opportunities for women, and the allocation of budgets for reasonable accommodations, such as childcare facilities, transport allowances, and workplace modifications to support women's active engagement.
3. **The Importance of Age in Donor-Focused Initiatives:** Another participant asked why donors often emphasize age in their gender-focused initiatives, raising concerns about potential ageism. The response highlighted those age-related considerations stem from the need to address the unique vulnerabilities and needs of specific age groups. For example, young women often face different barriers than older women, particularly in accessing leadership roles or resources. This focus ensures inclusivity across generations.
4. **Inclusion and Ownership (Prof. Rowe):** Muyomi elaborated on how inclusion and ownership are pivotal to achieving sustainable gender transformation. Inclusion involves giving all voices—especially those of women and marginalized groups—a platform in decision-making processes. Ownership, on the other hand, ensures that women not only participate but also

feel a sense of responsibility and benefit from the outcomes of projects. These concepts are foundational to creating a sense of empowerment and agency for women in market systems.

5. **Who is the Enemy—Women or Men?** In a provocative question, a participant asked whether women or men are the biggest obstacle to gender equity. Muyomi responded thoughtfully, reframing the question to focus on societal structures and cultural norms rather than attributing blame to a particular gender. She emphasized that both women and men often internalize and perpetuate stereotypes, making it essential to challenge these norms collectively. The real "enemy," she explained, is inequality itself, and overcoming it requires collaboration and shared understanding.

The Q&A session reinforced the importance of engaging diverse perspectives to address gender inequalities comprehensively. Speakers emphasized the need for inclusive policies, gender-sensitive indicators, and collaboration between men and women. They also highlighted the importance of addressing intersectional challenges such as age and cultural norms to ensure that no one is left behind in the pursuit of gender equality. This interactive segment enriched the dialogue and provided practical insights for participants to apply in their contexts.

4.3.5 Conclusion

The breakout session on Gender Transformative Approaches in Market Systems underscored the importance of adopting a systematic and collaborative approach to achieving gender equality. By addressing structural barriers, challenging cultural norms, and fostering multi-sector partnerships, the session highlighted actionable pathways to empower women and promote inclusive market systems.

Key insights emerged on the significance of creating intentional policies to include women in leadership roles, especially within small businesses, which have the potential to be powerful agents of transformation. Success stories, such as those from Mace Foods and chili farming initiatives, demonstrated that empowering women through capacity-building, formalized gender initiatives, and innovative practices leads to measurable improvements in productivity and decision-making.

Participants also emphasized the importance of engaging men and communities to challenge stereotypes and cultural barriers, fostering environments that support women's active participation in economic activities. The role of partnerships—spanning public, private, and community sectors—

was deemed crucial for driving accountability and ensuring the sustainability of gender equity initiatives.

The session concluded with a resounding call to action for stakeholders across all sectors. Governments must establish equitable frameworks, businesses should develop inclusive and innovative practices, and communities must engage in open dialogue to challenge traditional norms. Together, these efforts can create transformative change and pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive society.

4.4 Session 8: Digital Transformation

4.4.1 Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The session commenced with Bridgette Okumu, who not only moderated the discussion but also set the tone for the day with her introductory remarks. Before delving into her presentation, Bridgette introduced a diverse and dynamic panel of experts, each representing key sectors driving digital transformation and market access:

1. **Agatha Thuo** (ASNET): A passionate advocate for SME digitization, Agatha emphasized the role of technology in unlocking market opportunities for small-scale enterprises across Africa.
2. **Josphene Ngethe** (Leowa Associates): With her expertise in business advisory and capacity building, Josphene brought a wealth of knowledge about leveraging digital tools to support entrepreneurs and marginalized communities.
3. **Agnes Kavatha** (Heifer International): Known for her work in empowering smallholder farmers, Agnes shared insights on how digital solutions are bridging gaps in value chains to enhance productivity and market access.
4. **Harold Mate** (SNV): Harold provided a global perspective, drawing from his experience in sustainable development and emphasizing the importance of inclusive digital ecosystems.
5. **Emmanuel Omala** (ASGMA): Representing agribusiness, Emmanuel shared practical strategies for integrating digital tools into agricultural systems to boost efficiency and profitability.

Bridgette skillfully highlighted the unique contributions of each panellist, creating a sense of anticipation for their insights. She noted that the panel was curated to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of digital transformation, ensuring a holistic and impactful dialogue.

The introductions set the stage for a robust discussion on leveraging digital technologies to create resilient and inclusive economies, with Bridgette seamlessly transitioning into her presentation which provided the foundation for the panel's deliberations.

4.4.2 Setting the Stage: Digital Transformation Presentation

The session began with an impactful one-slide presentation by Bridgette Okumu titled Digital Transformation and Market Access: Enabling Resilient and Inclusive Economies. Speaking extensively, she highlighted how digital technologies are transforming market systems to promote equity, inclusivity, and resilience for farmers, youth entrepreneurs, and underserved communities.

Key Highlights:

Empowering Farmers: Digital tools like smartphones allow farmers to access real-time market prices, bypass intermediaries, negotiate better deals, and increase income.

Enabling Youth Entrepreneurs: Digital platforms help youth in rural areas efficiently manage businesses, reach wider markets, accept digital payments, and improve financial stability.

Bridgette's presentation underscored the necessity of embracing digital transformation as an evolving process, critical for building resilient economies and achieving equitable market access.

4.4.3 Moderator-Led Panel Discussions

Bridgette Okumu set the pace for the session by posing thought-provoking questions to each panellist, initiating a dynamic discussion on the vital role of digital transformation in enhancing market access and inclusivity in agriculture. The panellists, representing diverse organizations, shared their insights on how digitization can empower small-scale producers, improve efficiency, and create more equitable market systems.

Harold Mate (SNV) emphasized that market access remains a significant challenge for small-scale producers, largely due to limited access to information and inadequate traceability systems. He underscored the critical role of digital platforms in bridging these gaps, enabling farmers to make informed decisions and secure fair pricing. By advocating for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to invest in digitization, Harold highlighted how digital technologies, such as mobile

applications and online marketplaces, have effectively reduced intermediaries, transaction costs, and inefficiencies within the agricultural value chain. He called for enhanced collaboration between the government and the private sector to improve infrastructure and data accessibility, ensuring that farmers and SMEs fully benefit from digital transformation.

Agnes Kavatha (Heifer International) discussed the transformative potential of digitization in engaging marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, in agriculture. She noted that agriculture often appears unattractive to young people due to a lack of integration with modern tools and technologies. Sharing examples of successful e-commerce platforms and mobile applications, Agnes illustrated how these innovations have connected rural farmers to urban markets, improving their access to real-time data and facilitating efficient supply chains. She emphasized that digital tools promote inclusivity by lowering barriers to entry, providing essential resources and training, and enabling meaningful participation of women and youth in agricultural value chains.

Emanuel Omara (Asigma) underscored the importance of digital literacy in ensuring equitable access to market opportunities for underserved populations. He proposed the implementation of community-led digital training programs to build confidence and skills among these groups. Recognizing the risks associated with digital transformation, such as data privacy concerns and infrastructure gaps, Emanuel recommended capacity-building initiatives and stronger cybersecurity policies to address these issues. He emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that all stakeholders can benefit from the advancements in technology.

Josephine Ngethe (Leowa Associates) highlighted the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in enhancing market systems through improved efficiency, transparency, and accountability. She explained how AI-powered tools can analyze market trends, automate transactions, and provide predictive insights, thereby improving decision-making for farmers and businesses alike. Additionally, she elaborated on the role of blockchain technology in reducing information asymmetry and fostering trust through secure and traceable transactions. Josephine advocated for supportive policies that encourage private e-services and incorporate regulatory components in the new national extension policy, ensuring the authentication of information and the creation of a secure digital environment for market participants.

Agatha Thuo (ASNET) stressed the necessity of digitizing extension services to enhance farmers' access to real-time data, quality inputs, and market linkages. She called for closer collaboration between government and the private sector to develop inclusive and sustainable market systems.

Highlighting the significance of public-private partnerships, Agatha noted their role in expanding the reach of digital market tools and fostering an environment conducive to digital innovation. She also emphasized the importance of policy in enabling data accessibility and regulating the digital ecosystem to protect user rights while promoting investment in digitization.

The session provided valuable insights into how digital transformation can reshape agricultural markets, making them more inclusive and accessible. The panellists' discussions underscored the need for collaborative efforts among stakeholders to overcome existing challenges and leverage technology for the benefit of small-scale producers. By fostering an environment that prioritizes digital literacy, innovation, and effective policy frameworks, the agricultural sector can enhance market access and improve livelihoods for marginalized groups, particularly women and youth. As the conversation concluded, it was clear that embracing digital solutions is not just a necessity but a transformative opportunity for the agricultural landscape.

4.4.4 Participant Q&A and Interactive Discussion

Audience Question 1: What are the key cybersecurity risks that farmers and SMEs should be aware of as they adopt digital technologies?

Emanuel Omara (Asigma): Farmers and SMEs should be aware of several cybersecurity risks, including data breaches, phishing attacks, and unauthorized access to sensitive information. As more agricultural data is stored and shared online, the risk of cyber threats increases. Farmers must understand these risks and take proactive measures, such as using strong passwords and keeping their software up to date. Community-led digital training programs can also empower them with the skills to recognize and mitigate these risks.

Audience Question 2: How can smallholder farmers ensure the privacy of their data when using digital platforms?

Josephine Ngethe (Leowa Associates): Ensuring data privacy starts with choosing digital platforms that prioritize cybersecurity. Farmers should look for services that offer end-to-end encryption and robust privacy policies. Additionally, they must be educated about their rights regarding data usage and consent. Implementing blockchain technology can also enhance data security, as it provides transparent and traceable transactions that reduce the risk of data manipulation.

Audience Question 3: What specific policies should governments implement to protect digital data in agriculture?

Agatha Thuo (ASNET): Governments should develop comprehensive data protection policies that establish clear guidelines for data collection, storage, and sharing. This includes implementing regulations that mandate consent from data subjects and ensuring that all agricultural technology providers comply with these regulations. Policies should also support public-private partnerships to enhance cybersecurity infrastructure and promote best practices in data protection across the agricultural sector.

Audience Question 4: How can agricultural organizations ensure compliance with digital data protection regulations?

Harold Mate (SNV): Compliance with digital data protection regulations can be ensured by establishing clear protocols for data management and by training staff on these regulations. Organizations should regularly audit their data practices and work with legal experts to understand the evolving landscape of data protection laws. Furthermore, fostering a culture of data privacy within the organization is essential, where every member understands the importance of protecting sensitive information.

Bridgette Okumu concluded the Q&A session by emphasizing the importance of integrating cybersecurity measures into the digital transformation journey of the agricultural sector. She encouraged all stakeholders to work collaboratively to develop robust policies and practices that protect the data of farmers and SMEs, thereby fostering a secure digital environment that supports innovation and growth in agriculture.

4.4.5 Conclusion

The session on **Digital Transformation and Market Access** underscored the transformative potential of digital tools and technologies in creating inclusive, resilient, and transparent market systems. By leveraging digital platforms, marginalized groups—particularly small-scale producers, women, youth, and underserved communities—can overcome structural barriers to accessing broader markets and economic opportunities.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Market Access and Inclusivity:** Digital platforms have significantly empowered small-scale producers and entrepreneurs by connecting them directly to buyers, providing real-time market information, and fostering equitable participation in value chains. However,

challenges such as digital literacy and access to infrastructure must be addressed to ensure inclusivity.

2. **Building Transparency and Resilience:** Technologies like blockchain and IoT have emerged as pivotal tools in enhancing supply chain traceability, ensuring transparency, and building trust among stakeholders. These innovations are particularly critical for promoting fair practices and reducing exploitation.
3. **Collaboration for Success:** Partnerships among governments, businesses, development partners, and technology providers are essential for expanding digital access, scaling innovations, and building sustainable market systems that adapt to local needs.
4. **Overcoming Barriers:** To bridge the digital divide, significant investments in infrastructure, digital literacy, and equitable access to technologies are required, particularly in rural and underserved regions.
5. **Ensuring Sustainability:** The session highlighted the importance of robust legal and regulatory frameworks to address cybersecurity risks, protect user data, and create a secure environment for digital market systems.

4.5 Session 9: Youth Inclusion, Innovation, and Equity in Market Systems

4.5.1 Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The session, moderated by **Francis Twesigye**, brought together a dynamic group of experts who each offered unique perspectives on empowering youth within agricultural market systems. The panellists included:

1. **Deogratius Egeru** (*Ripple Effect*): Advocate for transforming youth perceptions of agriculture and addressing systemic barriers such as land access and security.
2. **Njeri Muhia** (*Temeo Institute*): Champion of youth-focused vocational training and policies that embrace diverse aspirations and opportunities in agriculture.
3. **Geoffrey Nyamote** (*IDE*): Storyteller of youth-driven success in relatable agricultural ventures like organic fertilizer and seedling nurseries.
4. **Irene Gathinji** (*KCDF*): A living example of how community support and innovation can transform the lives of young agricultural entrepreneurs.

Francis introduced the panel with a note of optimism, setting the tone for a discussion aimed at breaking stereotypes, fostering innovation, and inspiring action.

4.5.2 Setting the Stage: Presentation by Francis Twesigye

The session commenced with an engaging and thought-provoking presentation by Francis Twesigye, who skillfully illustrated the immense potential of youth in the agricultural sector through the framework of the Youth Inclusive Dairy Market Systems Project (YIDaMS).

Key Highlights of the Presentation:

Scope and Vision:

- **Geographic Reach:** YIDaMS is actively implemented across nine districts in southwestern Uganda, including Kamwenge, Ibanda, and Mbarara.
- **Participants:** The project aims to engage 63,400 individuals, with a specific goal of empowering 50,000 young people to secure meaningful employment opportunities in the dairy sector.

Objectives:

- To enhance the socio-economic well-being of youth involved in the dairy value chain by the year 2027.
- To foster equity, inclusion, and innovation as foundational elements for creating a resilient agricultural future.

Outcomes:

1. Increased access to high-quality skills and their practical application within the dairy value chain.
2. Development of vibrant, youth-led businesses that play a pivotal role in transforming the dairy sector.

In his presentation, Francis underscored a critical shift in perspective: agriculture must no longer be viewed as "*business as usual*." Instead, it should be recognized as a dynamic, youth-driven ecosystem where technology, innovation, and equity converge to cultivate sustainable livelihoods. Through this lens, he inspired the audience to envision a more inclusive and prosperous future for the agricultural landscape.

4.5.3 Moderator-Led Panel Discussions

The session commenced with the moderator posing thought-provoking questions to each panellist, inviting them to share their insights on youth engagement in agriculture.



Deogratius Egeru pointed out that young people often do not engage meaningfully in market systems due to negative perceptions of agriculture. Many view farming as high-risk and associate it with low social status. Despite these perceptions, Egeru emphasized the immense contributions youth can make, particularly through innovation. Barriers such as limited access to land, especially for girls, and a lack of tenure security exacerbate the issue. He shared examples like Irene Gathinji, who transformed her life with half an acre of land allocated by her father for passion fruit farming. Her success underscores the importance of community support in providing youth access to resources. Egeru suggested strategies to overcome these barriers, including enhancing access to skills, technology, and extension services. He also advocated for promoting the benefits and opportunities within agriculture, using peer success stories as inspiration. Programs such as integrating farming into school curriculums, as seen in Zambia, and leveraging rural infrastructure and digital tools can help

engage youth. Financial inclusion was also emphasized, with calls for tailored financial products, microfinance opportunities, and hands-on curricula linked to market needs.

Njeri Muhia highlighted that youth are not a homogeneous group, with varying levels of education, social media exposure, and vocational training. She underscored the importance of addressing their diverse needs and aspirations, including basic, social, and professional needs. Muhia shared examples of vocational training programs that now offer diverse courses beyond traditional skills, such as hairdressing or masonry, to include agricultural education. She emphasized the role of schools in creating opportunities for youth, such as tree-planting competitions to encourage climate awareness.

On policy, Muhia stressed the need for responsive curricula in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and partnerships with universities and agricultural institutions to promote innovation. She cited examples such as poultry programs in Nakuru and Uasin Gishu counties and incubation technologies integrated through government policies. However, she noted barriers like a lack of guidelines for seed distribution and the misuse of internships, which demotivate youth.



Geoffrey Nyamote, an industry expert, emphasized the need for relatable agricultural ventures. He shared success stories of youth venturing into organic fertilizer sales, tree seedling nurseries, and maize marketing, highlighting those relatable examples inspire other young people.

Dr. Dennis Ogaso identified financial and technical information gaps as significant challenges. Youth often lack access to loans due to insufficient collateral and documentation. He advocated for building social capital through youth cooperatives, promoting technology-driven extension services, and enhancing financial literacy.

Wambeti, managing director at Nuru Kenya, called for a more flexible approach to youth engagement. He noted the trend among youth toward a "soft life" mindset and suggested that programs should align with their aspirations, reducing pressure and offering opportunities for peer learning and exchange visits.

4.5.4 Participant Q&A and Interactive Discussion

The lively Q&A session saw participants delve deeper into practical strategies for youth engagement:

- **Financial Inclusion:** Youth-friendly financial products and simplified access to loans.
- **Policy Needs:** Clear guidelines for resource distribution and equity-driven frameworks.
- **Inspirational Stories:** Scaling peer-led mentorship and success narratives to inspire broader participation.

The session concluded with a call for a shift in the perception of agriculture. Speakers emphasized treating agriculture as a professional, business-oriented sector. Examples included Egerton University's partnership with Israel to provide short courses that equip youth with the skills to manage land and enterprises. This approach, supported by legislative and financial incentives, could attract more youth to agriculture, aligning their dreams with market realities.

In summary, the discussions reinforced the need for a multifaceted approach that includes access to resources, innovative policies, vocational training, and relatable success stories to engage youth effectively in agriculture.

4.5.5 Conclusion

The session on **Youth Inclusion, Innovation, and Equity in Market Systems** highlighted the critical role of young people in transforming agricultural markets and fostering sustainable economic growth. Despite facing significant barriers—such as negative perceptions of farming, limited access to resources, and structural challenges—there are numerous strategies and opportunities for promoting their inclusion. Education and vocational training that align with market needs, integration of technology, and innovative financial models are essential to empowering youth and equipping them for success in agriculture.

Success stories showcased during the session demonstrate the potential for youth-led initiatives to drive change and inspire peers. By revising policies, enhancing mentorship, and leveraging digital platforms, stakeholders can create an enabling environment that fosters collaboration and

innovation. This multi-faceted approach is vital for addressing the diverse needs of youth and ensuring their active participation in market systems.

Collectively, it is essential for policymakers, businesses, communities, development agencies, and all stakeholders to work together towards a shared vision of an equitable agricultural sector that recognizes and harnesses the capabilities of young people. By prioritizing their development and addressing systemic barriers, we can cultivate a vibrant future where youth are not only participants but also leaders in the agricultural landscape, driving innovation, and contributing to resilient economies.



Panellist; from right to left, Deogratius Egeru, Njeri Muhia, Geoffrey Nyamote, Irene Gathinji, Dr. Denis Oqaso and Francis Twesiaye

4.6 Session 10: Inclusive Business Practices and Partnerships

4.6.1 Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The session began with an engaging introduction by **Alex Bagora** from Ripple Effect Uganda, who moderated the discussion. With enthusiasm and depth, Alex set the stage for a thought-provoking

dialogue, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, inclusivity, and innovative solutions for sustainable growth in agriculture and beyond.

The distinguished panelists included:

1. George Okeyo, Migingo Fish Suppliers
2. Kelvin Mwangi, MEDA
3. Emmanuel Omala, ASIGMA
4. Patrick Boro, International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)

Each panellist brought a unique perspective, showcasing practical experiences and innovative models that have addressed real-world challenges in their respective fields.

The session unfolded with a dynamic exchange of ideas, as the panellists brought their experiences to life with compelling anecdotes and practical advice. Questions from the audience fueled a lively Q&A, ensuring every voice was part of the conversation. This was not just a panel; it was a masterclass in inclusive business synergy.

4.6.2 Moderator-Led Panel Discussions

The panel discussions illuminated the need for collaboration, inclusivity, and technology's role in driving sustainable growth in agriculture, featuring distinct insights from each panelist.

Patrick Boro emphasized the importance of collaboration with all stakeholders in the agricultural value chain. He outlined the organization's focus on four key aspects: ownership, voice, risk, and rewards. Boro highlighted that IFDC's efforts go beyond profits, stressing that positive outcomes such as employment along the value chain are equally important. He pointed out that farmers benefit meaningfully from these interventions, particularly by addressing risks such as financial exclusion. IFDC works to derisk services for farmers, emphasizing the role of brokers in representing various actors in the value chain. Boro underscored the importance of leveraging relationships between smallholder farmers, encouraging their involvement through small producer organizations like Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). He also stressed the role of innovation and technology, particularly in engaging youth and facilitating both on-farm and off-farm activities. Additionally, he discussed successful locally initiated interventions like Village Savings and Loans (VSL) schemes, which help foster a culture of corrective investment and inclusivity.

George Okeyo shared insights into public-private partnerships and the challenges faced in regions like Lake Turkana. He pointed out the issue of donor dependency, citing the example of Lake Turkana where fish resources exist, but poor infrastructure limits economic growth. Okeyo emphasized the importance of business investments and working closely with local and national partners, including government bodies, church leaders, and cooperatives. He noted that while cooperation with existing cooperatives is challenging, engaging local actors in planning and building trust is essential. Okeyo highlighted the lack of cold storage facilities in the region, but also presented a successful Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model, where two cold storage facilities were set up to reduce post-harvest losses. The model is designed to hand over these facilities to local ownership after five years, demonstrating a sustainable approach.

Alice Kimani discussed the significance of knowledge sharing and addressing information asymmetry in the agricultural sector. She noted that farmers often lack access to market information, leading to exploitation by brokers. Kimani emphasized the importance of building multistakeholder dialogues to ensure that policies are informed by the actual problems faced by farmers. She also discussed the role of emerging technologies, such as AI and GMOs, in improving agricultural practices and addressing challenges like market access. Alice shared her personal experience as a former onion farmer, underscoring the problem of market access for agricultural products. She stressed the importance of addressing information gaps in the agricultural sector to improve farmers' access to markets and ensure they are not left with unsold produce after harvest. She further highlighted several critical issues affecting the agricultural sector, particularly in relation to onion farming. She pointed out that although Kenya is known as an agricultural country, its farmers continue to face numerous challenges, primarily due to the dominance of brokers who control the market prices, leaving farmers at their mercy. Kimani emphasized that farmers often lack access to information on potential buyers, making them vulnerable to exploitation by intermediaries. She further shared her experiences while working with tea farmers in Murang'a County, where high loan repayments consumed the farmers' earnings, perpetuating a cycle of debt. Kimani stressed the need for inclusive representation in policy development and the importance of adopting new technologies to avoid falling behind in the digital revolution.

Kelvin Mwangi highlighted four emerging trends in their work: co-creation and participatory design, gender inclusion, integrated market mapping, and tracking impact. He explained that MEDA's approach focuses on sustainability and inclusivity by ensuring that MSEs are integrated into value chains. MEDA also emphasizes tracking market system changes and adapting business practices to

expand impact. Additionally, the organization uses a lead farmer approach, where matching grants are provided to farmers to ensure the sustainability of market systems.

4.6.3 Participant Q&A and Interactive Discussion

Gender and Cultural Norms

During the question-and-answer session (Q&A), several questions were raised regarding gender inclusion, particularly in male-dominated sectors like fishing. Purity Osumba asked George Okeyo how he ensures the inclusion and protection of women in the fish industry,



Purity Osumba asking a question

considering the exploitation of women through the "Jaboya" system. Okeyo responded that while men are often engaged in activities like playing games, women are still integral to the fish business.

He noted that at Migingo Fish Suppliers, most employees are women, and the business focuses on less volatile areas to ensure sustainability. Okeyo also discussed how the company aggregates fish and sells it to women who then sell it in local markets. He acknowledged the challenge of cultural norms, particularly in Turkana, where women are typically the primary labor force. Despite these challenges, Okeyo has worked to empower women in his workforce, with about half of his employees being female.

Post-Harvest Losses and Infrastructure

Another participant asked about addressing post-harvest losses and whether traders are given credit to purchase cooling equipment. Okeyo explained that most customers come from refugee camps and to reduce transportation costs and preserve the fish, they provide them with deep freezers. This model ensures sustainable purchasing and helps mitigate post-harvest losses by providing consistent access to frozen fish.

Knowledge Gaps and Information Asymmetry

Alice Kimani also addressed the challenge of market access and the critical role of information. She shared her experience as an onion farmer, noting that farmers often face market exploitation due to a lack of information on potential buyers. She advocated for using digital tools, such as Sigma's production tracking system, which helps farmers connect directly with buyers, bypassing intermediaries. This technology, she argued, could be applied to various value chains to ensure better market access for farmers.

The panel discussion concluded with a focus on the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, addressing cultural challenges, and empowering women in agriculture. The speakers agreed that continuous engagement, trust-building, and embracing innovation are essential for driving sustainable development in agriculture. They emphasized the need for inclusive policies that reflect the realities faced by farmers and businesses, and for harnessing technological opportunities to unlock new pathways for growth.

4.6.4 Conclusion

The panel discussions provided a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and opportunities in promoting inclusivity and sustainability within agricultural market systems. The insights shared by each panelist underscored the vital role of collaboration among stakeholders—government, private sector, and local communities—in addressing the barriers faced by marginalized groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

Key takeaways from the discussions emphasized the importance of innovative approaches, such as leveraging technology and knowledge-sharing platforms, to improve market access and empower smallholder farmers. By integrating marginalized groups into value chains and fostering public-private partnerships, stakeholders can create a more equitable agricultural landscape that benefits all participants.

Moreover, the emphasis on co-creation and participatory design highlighted the necessity of tailoring solutions to the specific needs of local communities. This approach not only enhances the relevance of interventions but also builds trust and ownership among stakeholders.

The session concluded with a strong call to action for policymakers, businesses, development partners, and communities to prioritize inclusivity in their strategies. By revising educational curricula, promoting gender inclusion, and investing in digital tools, all parties can contribute to a more resilient agricultural sector that supports sustainable development.

5 INCLUSIVE MARKETS SYMPOSIUM 2024 PROCEEDINGS DAY THREE

5.1 Session 11: Evidence Creation for Policy Influencing-Validation Research for Development

5.1.1 Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The moderator Prof. Joseph Matofari - Egerton University set the stage for the panel discussion by emphasizing the critical role of evidence-based research in shaping effective policies that can drive sustainable development. He introduced the panellists, each bringing unique insights and expertise to the discussion surrounding validation research and its importance in informing policy decisions.

Panellists:

1. Professor Dr. Thomas Rewe- Assoiat Profssor of Intgrat Agro-Systems and Co-Chair of the Green Bio-Economy Coalition of Africa, Pwani University
2. Prof. Suhaila Hashim- Pwani University
3. Lucas Mosenda-County Executive Committee (CEC) Member for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Blue Economy, Migori County
4. Mohammed Salasi Idris Salasi-HortiNigeria Program irtor, IFDC
5. Wambui Mbarire-CEO, RETRAK
6. Rosaline Daisy Muriuki- Director Fish Quality, Safety and Trade- Kenya Fisheries Services (KeFS)
7. Faith Mumo- Chief Executive Officer, Iviani Farm
8. Ruth Saleh Ardzard - Knowledge Transfer Country Manager, East-West Seed Knowledge Transfer Foundation Nigeria

5.1.2 Setting the Stage: Session Objectives and Presentation

5.1.2.1 Session Objectives

Prof. Joseph Matofari, the session moderator outlined the main objectives of the talk, emphasizing the importance of conceptualizing five key themes. The themes included understanding the evidence-based approach to policy development, evidence-based policymaking research, the factors influencing policy creation, evidence-based practice in policy, and research methods for policy. The

speaker invited participants to seek clarification on these topics, stating that addressing them would ensure a comprehensive discussion.

Prof. Matofari highlighted the session's focus on evidence creation and its role in policy influence and validation research. It was announced that Professor Dr. Thomas Rewe would present on the theme, supported by various examples and insights related to bioeconomy research.

5.1.2.2 Prof. Dr. Rewes Presentation

Prof. Rewe's presentation delved into the challenges of addressing "wicked problems" in policy-making, characterized by the involvement of numerous stakeholders with varying opinions. The importance of multidisciplinary approaches to evidence creation, the integration of academia with industry and government, and the role of research in informing incremental versus large-scale policy decisions were emphasized. Prof. Rewe also discussed the role of academia in empowering activists with evidence to transition them into effective advocates.

Key highlights from the Agrova project were shared, showcasing innovative bioeconomy applications such as the development of biocomposites, biodigester efficiency improvements, and novel enzyme identification for agricultural waste management. The project involved collaborative efforts from students and researchers across various African countries, focusing on sustainability assessments and the conversion of agricultural biomass into valuable resources.

5.1.3 Moderator-Led Panel Discussion

The session also addressed the importance of transforming knowledge into actionable policy. A government representative acknowledged the gap between research evidence and policymaking, emphasizing the need for mechanisms to bridge this divide. The role of academia in knowledge creation, packaging, and dissemination to policymakers was stressed as crucial for evidence-based policy decisions.

Panelists, including experts from academia, industry, and government, further elaborated on the interplay between research, policy, and sustainable development. Discussions highlighted the significance of shifting towards renewable resources and the bioeconomy as a means of achieving economic and environmental sustainability.

Prof. Matofari emphasized the importance of involving farmers in the discussion, describing them as the "real clients" and a crucial part of the cycle of research and validation. He posed several key questions to the group, encouraging reflection on the purpose and outcomes of their activities:

1. What are we doing?
2. Why are we doing it?
3. How are we implementing it?
4. For whom is this work intended?

Prof. Matofari underscored that validation is an essential step in the research process, requiring both field trials and tangible results. He highlighted that farmers are central to this validation process and emphasized the need for the outcomes to demonstrate clear and transformative impacts on production. He invited farmers to share their perspectives on whether the research had yielded substantial or practical benefits in their work.



The discussion then transitioned to the role of academia in the research cycle, with Prof. Matofari elaborating on its critical contributions: generating knowledge, validating it through fieldwork, and disseminating findings through extension services. He reiterated the importance of aligning these efforts with the session's theme, a focus for the past three years.

Prof. Suhaila highlighted the pivotal role academic institutions play in shaping policy and influencing societal outcomes. He stated that the primary mandate of these institutions is to conduct training and research, emphasizing the need for collaboration with key stakeholders. This, he explained, ensures meaningful training and research that addresses the needs of society. Prof. Herzog stressed the importance of identifying and addressing knowledge and technological gaps in collaboration with stakeholders and then disseminating the research findings effectively. He concluded by underlining the responsibility of academia to equip future researchers with the skills necessary to address pressing regional issues.

Adding to the discussion, **Dr. Flora Asinabat** provided an example from her experience at an international biogas conference, where a participant questioned the practicality and economic viability of using biogas compared to other energy sources. This scenario, she noted, reflects the essence of research: addressing socio-economic and environmental challenges while ensuring outcomes are relevant and sustainable. Dr. Asinabat shared a BioInnovate project as an example, which integrated biomass waste into mushroom production across Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. This collaboration involved industrial partners and demonstrated the ability of research to generate market-ready, sustainable innovations.

Idris Salasi emphasized the critical role of engaging the right stakeholders throughout the research process. They pointed out that involving the intended beneficiaries, such as farmers, ensures contextual relevance and reduces errors. The speaker emphasized that research must bridge the gap between academia, industry, and policymakers, integrating the diverse needs of all stakeholders to produce holistic solutions.

A participant from the agricultural sector in Kenya shared a successful case of the Agri-Fi program in Nyeri County. The program revitalized a farmer training center, showing how simple, practical demonstrations can prompt government action and investment. This example illustrated the importance of presenting actionable and relevant research to influence policy and practice effectively.

Finally, **Idris Salasi** provided insight into the challenges and opportunities in policy influence within the agricultural sector. They described how past government control over fertilizer distribution often failed to meet farmers' needs due to mismanagement and inefficiencies. Drawing from their role in a Dutch-funded vegetable program, **Idris** emphasized the value of creating enabling policies, attracting investment, and engaging multiple stakeholders to transform agricultural systems.

Throughout the session, participants agreed on the need for academia to collaborate with industry, policymakers, and communities to ensure research is practical, inclusive, and capable of informing transformative policies.

He explained that in Nigeria, the process of managing fertilizer subsidies underwent significant changes over the years. Initially, the supply chain—from procurement and transportation from Ukraine to distribution across Nigeria—worked traditionally. However, in 2001, the International Growth Centre (IGC) became involved in addressing inefficiencies in the system. Fertilizer subsidies had become an issue of concern, likened to a "drug business," as many individuals leveraged the system for personal gain.

The IGC introduced paper vouchers in select Nigerian states to target subsidies directly to farmers. These vouchers included farmer details such as land size and contact information. The program expanded with the guidance of experts, such as Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, who later became the president of the African Development Bank. When Dr. Adesina became Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture, the system transitioned from paper vouchers to a digital Growth Enhancement Support (GES) program, where farmers were notified through mobile phones and received subsidies for fertilizers.

Idris noted that despite initial success in registering millions of farmers, the program faced challenges such as poor network coverage and technology barriers. This led to further innovations like offline "touch-and-ping" technology funded by international organizations. The project was piloted successfully in several states, covering hundreds of thousands of farmers.

The policy landscape changed with new governments, as priorities shifted. For instance, the Nigerian government partnered with Morocco to produce and subsidize fertilizer locally rather than relying on direct farmer subsidies. This helped reduce prices but introduced new challenges. The speaker emphasized the importance of flexibility in policy-making, given the disruptions caused by violence and political changes in Nigeria.

The speaker also highlighted agricultural innovations, such as linear de-pressuring technology (urea briquettes), which reduced fertilizer waste and emissions. They recounted influencing Dr. Adesina to integrate this technology into Nigeria's subsidy programs. Although pilot projects were successful, national implementation faced hurdles, including logistical challenges and political changes.

Finally, they underscored the importance of platforms like Nigeria's National Council on Agriculture for pushing nationwide policies. They also highlighted how devolved structures like Kenya's County Agricultural Steering Committees (CASCOT) allow for stakeholder engagement at the local level. The speaker advocated for the use of public-private partnerships and evidence-based approaches to influence agricultural policies and bridge gaps in implementation.

In conclusion, they expressed hope for future improvements and the need to de-politicize policy-making for sustained agricultural development.

Daisy Muriuki, speaking on behalf of the Kenya Fisheries Service and representing the government, explained that their initiative guarantees farmers access to a dependable market for their fresh produce. She noted that farmers could deliver their products using local means of transport like wheelbarrows, oxcarts, and water boats. Muriuki added, "We purchase these fruits and vegetables at prices up to four times higher than what brokers and other buyers offer, ensuring higher income for farmers. This additional income allows them to meet both basic and secondary needs."

She elaborated on the processing hub's operations, stating, "Fresh fruits are ripened, grated, peeled, and sliced for drying, creating jobs and supporting community growth. We use a village industrial power machine that converts biomass into electricity to dry the fruit slices, extending their shelf life from five days to three to four months." This approach, she emphasized, makes fruit slices available year-round while preserving their nutritional value, taste, and flavor.

A speaker raised concerns about the challenges women face in waste management. They pointed out that women often work in hazardous dump sites and heaps of waste, which pose significant health risks. They also highlighted the importance of policy implementation in this area, mentioning how evidence is being gathered and technologies, such as the Marshall technology, are already being utilized on a small scale. The speaker questioned the involvement of community-based entrepreneurs in the bio-economy and agricultural production sectors, noting that a project had been launched to mobilize over 10,000 young people and women in coastal areas to engage in waste management. However, they emphasized that the waste involved was unsegregated and posed risks, particularly to women.

A policy expert responded, emphasizing that waste separation is essential to reduce risks for community-based waste managers. They highlighted Rwanda's strict waste disposal laws as a model, noting the importance of both control and separation in waste management practices. They also stressed that the success of large-scale projects like the one mentioned requires capacity building

and support from institutions like universities. In particular, they urged those local governments and regulator play their part in ensuring the project's success.

Another expert contributed by discussing the challenges of implementing waste management policies. They pointed out that many Kenyans are unaware of the legal requirement to separate household waste and suggested that the issue lies not in policy but in behavior change. They argued that people are capable of adhering to such practices but need political and societal encouragement to do so. The speaker emphasized the importance of recapturing this behavior, referencing how cultural habits once included waste segregation without formal enforcement.

The conversation then turned to the broader challenges in policy-making, with an expert noting that there are significant gaps in data collection, particularly in sectors like agriculture, livestock, and fisheries. This lack of data complicates policy creation and implementation. They called for a more organized approach to stakeholder engagement, pointing out that disorganization among stakeholders leads to ineffective policies and solutions.

In closing, the experts agreed that the key to successful waste management and policy implementation is not only creating and enforcing laws but also fostering awareness, organization, and data collection. They encouraged continued collaboration and support for both academic institutions and local communities to drive progress in waste management and related sectors.

5.1.4 Success Stories

1. Success story: BioInnovate - Pwani University

A project by Pwani University lecturers under BioInnovate demonstrated the successful collaboration of academic research, industry partnerships, and policy advocacy to develop innovative solutions using agricultural biomass. This initiative connected mushroom production with biomass generation, creating a sustainable cycle that added value to agricultural waste. In Kenya, biomass from sesame waste was used to produce mushrooms, and the spent substrate was repurposed to generate additional biomass. Collaborations with industrial partners, such as Kilifi Plantations in Kenya and enterprises in Tanzania and Ethiopia, enabled market readiness and scalability, resulting in facilities capable of producing one ton of edible oyster mushrooms per month with quality certification. The project's success, replicated across the region, underscored the role of academic institutions in equipping researchers with skills to address societal needs, engaging stakeholders, and advocating data-driven policies to integrate innovations into national frameworks. Best practices included

involving the right beneficiaries, using current data, building sustainable models, and addressing funding challenges through increased government financing to reduce dependency on foreign donors. This approach not only showcased effective waste management and circular economy principles but also highlighted the economic and policy impact of translating research into tangible, scalable solutions.

A notable success story in evidence-based policy making comes from the Agri-Fi program in Kenya. The initiative, which focused on agricultural training and planning, was a straightforward yet impactful demonstration of a concept that attracted significant attention from the county government. The program's success lay not in elaborate research but in showcasing the potential for local training and agricultural development. As a result, the county government allocated substantial funding to the initiative. This example highlights how simple, well-demonstrated concepts, rather than complex research, can capture the interest of policymakers and lead to tangible support for agricultural programs. The collaboration between various stakeholders, including local governments and agricultural experts, ensured that the initiative met the specific needs of the county's farmers, creating a model for effective policy-driven agricultural development.

A successful example of evidence-driven policy implementation comes from Nigeria's fertilizer subsidy program, which saw significant improvements in farmer access to subsidized fertilizers. Initially, a pilot project registered 500,000 farmers across two states with a 99% success rate, ensuring they received the subsidies without complaints. However, the change in government brought new challenges, including a shift in the subsidy model. The Nigerian government partnered with Morocco to target subsidies more effectively, lowering fertilizer prices by supporting the local fertilizer industry. Additionally, the introduction of linear de-pressuring technology, tested successfully in Bangladesh and Nigeria, showed a 30% reduction in fertilizer waste when used by farmers. After demonstrating the effectiveness of this technology to the Minister of Agriculture, it was quickly integrated into the subsidy program. Within a month, the technology reached 308,000 farmers, marking a significant step forward in improving fertilizer use and reducing waste across Nigeria. This success story highlights the power of collaboration between government, private sector, and international partners, as well as the importance of aligning policies with farmer needs.

A key success story in Nigeria's agricultural policy came from the National Council on Agriculture, a platform that brought together all agricultural stakeholders, including federal and state governments. After years of advocating for two specific policies, a breakthrough occurred when the platform

enabled engagement with both national and state governments. This collaboration led to the approval of the proposed policies, which are now set to be implemented. The success of this initiative highlights the importance of leveraging national platforms for policy advocacy and the power of aligning state-level interventions with national priorities.

Another success involved navigating Nigeria's border restrictions on soil and fertilizer imports. Despite these challenges, the agricultural sector worked closely with the private sector, specifically within free trade zones, to identify ways to produce key inputs domestically. This collaboration with entrepreneurs and farmers demonstrated that even with closed borders, Nigeria could develop the capacity to meet its agricultural needs. The initiative is now poised to show the government that local production can effectively replace imports, with hopes for full implementation before the next elections.

These stories underscore the importance of policy platforms like the National Council on Agriculture and the strategic use of the private sector in overcoming challenges, showing how effective advocacy and collaboration can lead to positive change in the agricultural sector.

2. Success Story: Empowering Smallholder Farmers and Revolutionizing the Fruit Industry

In a bid to combat the significant post-harvest losses, which can reach up to 50% of fruits and vegetables, and address the challenges posed by seasonal production, we established a CRTBN farm, complete with a fruit value addition factory located within smallholder farms. This initiative has transformed the way farmers access markets, ensuring they can sell their fresh produce directly from the farm.

Our farm provides a reliable market by purchasing fruits and vegetables at up to four times the price offered by other buyers. This has enabled farmers to earn higher incomes, making it possible for them to meet their basic needs and reinvest in their businesses. The introduction of our processing hub, where fruits are ripened, peeled, grated, sliced, and dried, has also created long-term job opportunities in the community.

Using an innovative village industrial power machine, we convert biomass such as mango prunes and seeds into electricity, which powers a drying process that extends the shelf life of fruits from five days to three to four months. This not only makes fruit available year-round but also maintains its nutritional value, taste, and flavor.

We market our products locally through supermarkets, schools, and the hospitality industry, and we also export to the USA and Europe. Currently, our processing factory supports over 1,000 smallholder farmers, providing them with an accessible premium market. This reduces post-harvest losses from 50% to below 5%, and has helped mitigate the challenges of seasonality, ensuring a stable supply of fruits and vegetables.

Looking ahead, we plan to expand by setting up five more factories within the next two years, further supporting over 20,000 smallholder farmers, improving food security, and reducing waste. Additionally, our biomass-powered electricity generation helps combat the impacts of climate change.

This success story highlights the profound impact of connecting smallholder farmers with stable markets, improving production processes, and fostering innovation to create sustainable solutions for food security.

3. Success Story: Advancing Agricultural Competitiveness through Collaboration and Policy Reform

One of the key success stories shared in the discussions was the importance of coordinated policy development for the agricultural sector in Africa. Stakeholders, including farmers, researchers, and government representatives, have increasingly worked together to address issues affecting agricultural competitiveness.

A major example is the development of the Food Safety Coordination Bill, where stakeholders were actively involved in its formulation. This collaborative approach ensured that the bill addressed the diverse needs of the sector, particularly in relation to the export market. During events such as Valentine's Day, when flower exports peak, issues arose due to local counties imposing restrictive policies on products designed for export. These policies were threatening to undermine competitiveness by increasing costs and reducing access to international markets. However, stakeholders voiced concerns, which sparked action toward policy refinement to ensure that the country could maintain its competitive edge in the global market.

Moreover, the emphasis on involving the private sector in policy discussions has helped align the interests of various actors, reducing the risk of misaligned policies and excessive taxation. By creating a policy framework that supports specific value chains, the government has been able to create more cohesive and supportive regulations, which, in turn, strengthen the agriculture sector.

This collaboration has also extended to community-based waste management projects, where over 10,000 young people and women in coastal regions, Nairobi, and Kisumu are being mobilized. These initiatives are focused on making waste management not only an environmental issue but also an entrepreneurial opportunity, with a particular focus on the bio-economy and agricultural production. The successful implementation of such projects is rooted in effective capacity building and collaborative networks between institutions, universities, and local governments.

Through these efforts, we can see that inclusive policy-making and collaborative practices have not only fostered agricultural competitiveness but have also created new opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship in the region. This is a perfect example of how policies, when developed with input from all relevant stakeholders, can lead to tangible success in both local and global markets.

5.1.5 Conclusion

The discussions held during Session 11 emphasized the paramount importance of evidence-based policymaking to foster resilient and inclusive market systems. Central to achieving this goal is the enhancement of the generation, validation, and utilization of market systems research through collaborative efforts among researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders. This collaborative approach is vital for translating research into actionable data, practical recommendations, and effective interventions that address the complexities of agricultural and environmental challenges.

Key insights from the session highlighted the following critical points:

1. **Collaboration for Real-World Solutions:** Successful solutions to societal challenges require the active involvement of key stakeholders, including farmers, industry players, and policymakers. Engaging these parties throughout the research process ensures that the outcomes are relevant, practical, and tailored to meet the diverse needs of the community.
2. **Validation and Impact Measurement:** The validation of research outputs is crucial, particularly through field testing with end-users such as farmers. Tangible impacts, like increased agricultural productivity, serve as benchmarks for measuring success and demonstrate the potential of research innovations in real-world applications.
3. **Bridging the Gap Between Academia and Policy:** The disconnect between research institutions and industry or policy implementation often leads to underutilization of research findings. To effectively inform policy and practice, there is a need for sustainable funding, alignment of stakeholder interests, and the dissemination of holistic data.

4. **Importance of Stakeholder Inclusion:** Inclusive problem-solving that actively engages primary beneficiaries, like farmers, leads to more effective and sustainable solutions. The collective insights of diverse stakeholders ensure that policies are practical and directly address the needs of those impacted.
5. **Demonstration-Based Policy Adoption:** Simple, demonstrable innovations, such as the successful Agri-Fi program in Nguri County, can effectively influence policy by showcasing clear benefits and scalability potential. Such practical examples resonate with decision-makers and facilitate the adoption of supportive policies.
6. **Harnessing Digital Innovations:** The transition to digital systems, exemplified by Nigeria's Growth Enhancement Support (GES) program, showcases the advantages of technology in enhancing transparency and efficiency in agricultural policy. The implementation of adaptive technologies, like the GES Touch and Ping system, addresses logistical challenges and promotes better access to agricultural subsidies.
7. **Navigating Policy Continuity and Changes:** The session underscored the importance of consistent policy frameworks, especially in the face of administrative transitions. Maintaining continuity while adapting to sector-specific challenges is vital for sustaining effective programs and ensuring the long-term viability of agricultural initiatives.
8. **Addressing Market Access Challenges:** The establishment of accessible premium markets for farm produce is crucial in alleviating poverty among smallholder farmers. Innovative approaches, such as local processing facilities, can significantly enhance farmers' income and reduce post-harvest losses, thus improving food security.
9. **Opportunities in Waste Management:** The discussions identified waste management as a sector with significant potential for community-based entrepreneurship, particularly for women and youth. Strategies must be developed to address the current challenges, such as waste segregation and health risks, to promote innovation in this area.
10. **Fostering Behavior Change for Policy Adoption:** Bridging the gap between policy enactment and practical implementation requires active community engagement and education. Stakeholders must work to drive behavioral change, ensuring that policies resonate with local populations and are effectively adopted.

11. **Data-Driven Decision Making:** The lack of reliable data remains a barrier to effective policy formulation. Collaborative efforts among researchers, governments, and communities are essential to address these data gaps, ensuring that policies are evidence-based and reflect the diverse perspectives of stakeholders.

5.1.5.1 *Call to Action*

The session concluded with a unified call to action emphasizing the need for:

- **Active Stakeholder Engagement:** All relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, researchers, and government representatives, must be involved in formulating policies that impact key industries. This collaborative advocacy will enhance competitive value chains and promote coherent policy development.
- **De-Politicization of Agriculture:** Policymakers are urged to separate political agendas from essential functions affecting smallholder farmers, ensuring stable, supportive policies that prioritize market access and fair pricing.
- **Private Sector Investment:** The private sector should collaborate with governments and agricultural organizations to scale innovative solutions that support farmers and reduce environmental impact.
- **Continuous Evidence-Based Advocacy:** Stakeholders must prioritize evidence-based approaches in policy advocacy, utilizing data-driven solutions and pilot programs to promote sustainable resource management and food safety.
- **Strengthened Academia-Policy Linkages:** There is an urgent need to strengthen the connection between academia, industry, and policymakers to ensure research findings are effectively translated into actionable practices and policies.

In conclusion, the insights gathered from this session reflect a collective commitment to fostering collaborative, evidence-based approaches that address the complexities of agricultural and environmental challenges. By engaging all relevant stakeholders and promoting inclusive policy development, we can create a sustainable agricultural future that benefits all involved.

5.2 Session 12: Closing Remarks

5.2.1 Closing Remarks by Rebecca Amukhoye, CEO, MESPT & BDS Coordination Group Secretariat Chair

Rebecca concluded her remarks by reflecting on the evolution of market system development since the adoption of BDS approaches in 2000, emphasizing the need for adaptation to current realities. She highlighted the progress made during the donor roundtable and expressed deep gratitude to Danida for their active participation, despite the limited attendance from other invitees. Rebecca emphasized that donor funding should strategically balance immediate needs with long-term sustainable outcomes and stressed the importance of transitioning from donor dependence toward sustainable, inclusive economic solutions.

She noted key insights, such as the necessity for community-driven funding to bridge existing gaps and the importance of exploring innovative financing, including blended finance, private sector involvement, and vulnerable investment models. She also underscored the relevance of regenerative agriculture, advocating for climate-positive practices to enhance food security sustainably and calling for collaboration among stakeholders.

Rebecca pointed to the role of digitalization within market systems, citing lessons from COVID-19 about the transformative potential of digital technologies in delivering essential services. She also addressed the need for gender-transformative approaches, urging sensitivity and inclusiveness across the value chain, alongside strategies to empower women and youth through education, mentorship, and resource mobilization.

She called upon policymakers to develop supportive policies for digital literacy, climate resilience, and effective financing models, while encouraging businesses to invest in inclusive supply chains, adopt corporate social responsibility with impactful solutions, and leverage digital platforms to connect market players. Rebecca urged development partners to continue driving conversations and advocating for voiceless communities, ensuring their participation in policymaking processes.

Concluding her speech, Rebecca reiterated the significance of collaboration, as highlighted during the Inclusive Market Symposium. She encouraged ongoing engagement within the network to amplify collective voice and agency, expressing gratitude to all participants and acknowledging the chair and host for their roles.

5.2.2 Closing remarks by Winnie Mailu- Head of Thematic Support, Ripple Effect and BDS Donor Coordination Group Chair

Winnie summarized the key outcomes of the Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024, emphasizing the theme, "The Role of Market Systems Development in Building Resilient and Inclusive Economies." The symposium convened over 40 organizations and stakeholders across Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Niger, Switzerland, and beyond, fostering discussions on market inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability.

5.2.2.1 Key Highlights and Takeaways

The discussions emphasized the critical need for participatory approaches in Market Systems Development, leveraging community structures and digital tools to enhance decision-making and minimize inefficiencies. A key takeaway was the prioritization of local ownership, adaptability, and sustainability to ensure resilient and inclusive systems. During the Donor Roundtable, the shift from handouts to sustainable solutions was highlighted, emphasizing catalytic funding, blended financing, and public-private partnerships to bridge resource gaps and drive systemic changes. Climate adaptation and regenerative agriculture were identified as vital for resilience, with practices like integrated livestock-crop farming and scalable irrigation technologies taking center stage. Innovative financing models, including warehouse receipt systems and blended finance, were recognized for their potential to support smallholders if designed to be inclusive and gender-sensitive. Digital transformation emerged as a game-changer for market access, empowering underserved groups and reducing broker dependency, with expanded digital literacy and infrastructure seen as crucial. Gender-transformative approaches highlighted the need for women-focused credit systems and participatory dialogues, while youth inclusion was linked to vocational training, mentorship, and equitable access to finance, unlocking their potential to innovate within market systems. Lastly, evidence creation for policy influence underscored the importance of actionable data and inclusive policymaking, ensuring stakeholders, especially farmers, guide research and funding toward impactful change.

5.2.2.2 Calls to Action

1. Policymakers:

- Encourage digital literacy, climate resilience, and inclusive financing through supportive policies.
- Incentivize private sector partnerships for infrastructure development.

2. Businesses:

- Invest in inclusive supply chains and digital platforms to connect marginalized groups.
- Promote gender and youth inclusion through CSR initiatives.

3. Development Partners:

- Facilitate partnerships that embed climate-smart practices and financing models in community interventions.

4. Communities:

- Strengthen local networks to embrace circular economy practices and adopt sustainable market systems.

In her conclusion, Winnie stressed the importance of cross-sector collaboration in transforming markets into drivers of equitable growth and resilience. She challenged stakeholders to translate the symposium's insights and partnerships into tangible actions, ensuring markets remain inclusive, innovative, and sustainable. She concluded with the phrase *Asante sana!* as a call for collective commitment to meaningful change.

5.2.3 Closing Remarks by Noah Meely, MESPT Board of Trustees Chair during the Inclusive Market

In the closing report of the Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024 and the 16th Annual Regional BDS Conference, Noah Meely, the MESPT Board of Trustees Chair, highlighted the critical importance of the participants' contributions. In his address, Mr. Meely extended heartfelt gratitude to attendees for their energy, insights, and unwavering commitment to transforming markets into drivers of resilience and inclusivity. He described the symposium, which brought together participants from Nigeria, Niger, Uganda, Switzerland, and Kenya, as a vibrant melting pot of ideas, demonstrating a shared dedication to impactful change.

Mr. Meely reflected on the opening discussions, which focused on the role of market systems development in strengthening economies. He emphasized the need for inclusive approaches to bridge economic disparities and tackle both global and local challenges, likening the collaborative effort to the balancing act of a circus performer.

Key themes from the symposium included climate adaptation, resilience, and regenerative agriculture, where participants acknowledged agriculture's vulnerability to climate change and

discussed solutions such as climate-resilient systems and regenerative practices. Partnerships with the private sector were identified as critical in transforming challenges into opportunities.

In addressing innovative financing models, Mr. Meely highlighted the importance of bold approaches, such as cost-sharing and impact investments, to empower entrepreneurs while ensuring accountability. He urged stakeholders to replicate these models across various sectors.



Noah Meely, MESPT Board of Trustees Chair giving his closing remarks

The emphasis on sustainable food systems and circularity underlined the need to reduce waste and inefficiencies in supply chains. Strategies such as agroforestry, sustainable crop practices, and circular economy principles were proposed as pathways to ecological resilience and productivity. Integrating smallholder farmers into market systems was also stressed as a crucial component.

On gender-transformative approaches, Mr. Meely acknowledged the persistent exclusion of women in certain sectors and called for actionable solutions, including safe credit systems, participatory dialogues, and targeted training. Similarly, discussions on youth inclusion explored barriers such as limited access to resources and proposed solutions, including youth-friendly financial products, vocational training, and the integration of agriculture into school curricula.

The potential of digital transformation was also a focal point, with participants discussing tools like traceability platforms to improve transparency and market access. Mr. Meely emphasized the necessity of leveraging technology for resource efficiency and data-driven decision-making.

A session on evidence creation for policy influencing underscored the power of data to drive inclusive and sustainable policies. Mr. Meely encouraged participants to ensure their findings influence decision-makers effectively.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Meely issued a call to action, urging participants to implement lessons learned, advocate for inclusive policy changes, build impactful partnerships, and professionalize agriculture to attract youth and ensure sustainability. He expressed gratitude to the BDCG, speakers, facilitators, sponsors, and participants for their invaluable contributions to the event's success.

Mr. Meely concluded with an optimistic outlook for continued collaboration, expressing a commitment to reconvene next year with more stories of transformation and progress. He ended with the heartfelt Swahili phrase *Asante sana*, meaning "thank you very much" in English, and wished all participants safe travels.

6 POST-EVENT EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK REPORT

6.1 Introduction

Feedback from participants during the symposium was collected using Mentimeter.com, an interactive tool that facilitates live polls, quizzes, word clouds, questions and answers sessions, and surveys. This platform allowed participants to provide their responses through a joining code shared during the event. The collected feedback offered valuable insights into participants' experiences and suggestions for improvement. This report summarizes their responses, highlights key themes, and presents actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of future symposiums.

The following questions were presented to participants:

1. Indicate the name of your organization.
2. Can you share your experiences and thoughts about how day one went?
3. What recommendations do you have for improving the delivery of future symposiums?
4. As an organization/individual, would you join the BDCG?
5. How do you envisage the BDCG contributing to your career development?
6. Any other comments?

6.1.1 Organizations Represented in The Symposium

The symposium brought together 104 participants from 45 organizations, including development organizations, NGOs, national and county government representatives, retail traders' associations, donor organizations, and academic institutions. The distribution of organizations and the number of participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of participants by organization

No	Name of organization	Number of participants
1.	SolarGen Technologies Ltd	1
2.	ASNET	1
3.	Heifer International	7
4.	Ripple Effect (Uganda and Kenya)	6
5.	ASIGMA	2
6.	Bimas Kenya Limited	1

7.	Self Help Africa	3
8.	Tanager	1
9.	Bopinc	1
10.	International Fertilizer Development	8
11.	Hand in Hand Eastern Africa	2
12.	MESPT	29
13.	Private Veterinarian	1
14.	Kenya Climate Innovation Centre	6
15.	County Government of Kilifi	1
16.	SNV	3
17.	TradeMark Africa	3
18.	Empowering Farmers Foundation	1
19.	Iviani Farm	1
20.	IIDE	1
21.	Nuru International Kenya	2
22.	Migingo Fish Suppliers Ltd	1
23.	Cusum Energy Limited	1
24.	Ura Seedlings	1
25.	Henrich Boell Foundation Nairobi	1
26.	Christina Aid	2
27.	Leowa Associates	1
28.	Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA)	3
29.	County Government of Trans Nzoia	1
30.	Migori County Government	1
31.	Professional Services	1
32.	Affiliate of TradeMark Africa (NICE Project) with Swiss TPH	1
33.	Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research	1
34.	P4G/WRI	1
35.	Kickstart International	1
36.	Egerton University	1

37.	Pwani University	1
38.	Egerton University-Tegemeo Institute	1
39.	FineResults Research Services	2
40.	Bopinc	1
41.	Kenya Fisheries Services	1
42.	Sustainable Agriculture Foundation	1
43.	Kenya Climate Ventures	2
44.	Retail Trade Association of Kenya	1
45.	Suluhu	3

6.2 Participant's Experiences and Thoughts from Day One

Participants overwhelmingly found the first day of the symposium to be a positive and enriching experience. The feedback highlighted key themes, showcasing the value and impact of the sessions.

6.2.1 Informative and Relevant Content

Many participants described the sessions as not only "informative" and "relevant" but also highly aligned with current industry trends and challenges. Attendees noted that the sessions provided actionable insights, offering a well-rounded mix of theoretical knowledge and practical applications.

Key highlights included:

- **Diverse Perspectives:** Participants appreciated the breadth of topics covered and the inclusion of diverse perspectives from seasoned experts and innovative thinkers. This diversity made the sessions particularly relevant to professionals across various fields.
- **Timeliness of Topics:** Several participants remarked that the topics addressed pressing issues and emerging trends, equipping them with fresh perspectives and strategies to navigate complexities in their respective domains.
- **Collaborative Learning:** The dynamic exchanges between panellists and the audience were widely commended, with participants finding the Q&A segments particularly enlightening. These interactions fostered a sense of shared learning and allowed for deeper dives into topics of interest.

6.2.2 Engaging and Inspiring

Participants found the symposium's format and delivery style to be highly engaging "inspiring" and "motivating". The blend of real-life scenarios, interactive discussions, and practical sessions created a dynamic and immersive experience.

Highlights of this theme included:

- **Storytelling and Case Studies:** Real-life scenarios shared by speakers resonated deeply with attendees, making abstract concepts tangible and easier to grasp. These stories were described as not only relatable but also motivational, inspiring participants to think creatively and adopt new approaches in their work.
- **Interactive Sessions:** Workshops and breakout discussions were praised for their ability to engage participants actively. Attendees valued the opportunity to contribute their ideas and learn from peers, enhancing the overall richness of the experience.
- **Motivational Impact:** Beyond the technical knowledge, participants found the event to be a source of inspiration, reigniting their passion for their work. For many, the discussions reinforced their commitment to personal growth and professional excellence.

6.2.3 Opportunities for Learning

The symposium created a fertile ground for learning and exchange, with participants highlighting several key opportunities that contributed to their growth and networking.

- **Diverse Agribusiness Ideas:** The rich variety of agribusiness concepts presented, especially those from East Africa, was a standout feature. These ideas showcased innovative practices, successful business models, and region-specific solutions that sparked interest and dialogue among attendees. Participants expressed appreciation for the exposure to different approaches that could be adapted to their own contexts.
- **Valuable Networking Opportunities:** The symposium facilitated numerous opportunities for meaningful connections. Attendees noted that the interactive sessions, informal meet-ups, and structured networking events allowed them to build relationships with like-minded professionals, industry leaders, and potential collaborators. Many shared that they had already initiated conversations that could lead to partnerships or knowledge-sharing beyond the event.

6.2.4 Challenges

While the symposium was largely well-received, participants noted some challenges that could be addressed to enhance future events.

- **Technical Issues:** Audiovisual glitches during some sessions were reported as minor setbacks. These disruptions, though brief, occasionally hampered the flow of discussions and participant engagement.
- **Time Management:** A recurring suggestion was the need for better time management. Some participants felt the sessions extended longer than anticipated, leading to fatigue. An earlier conclusion to daily activities was recommended to maintain energy levels and focus.

6.2.5 Recommendations for Future Symposiums

Participants provided valuable feedback aimed at enhancing the quality and impact of future symposiums. Their recommendations focused on four key areas: organization, scope, participation, and content delivery.

6.2.5.1 Improved Organization

Efficient planning and execution were highlighted as critical to the success of future symposiums. Participants recommended the following:

- **Timely Communication:** Sharing the agenda, session details, and panel questions well in advance to allow attendees and speakers adequate time for preparation.
- **Skilled Moderators:** Engaging experienced and dynamic moderators to guide discussions, keep sessions focused, and encourage interaction.
- **Proactive Planning:** Developing contingency plans to address potential challenges, such as technical issues, ensuring seamless session delivery.

6.2.5.2 Expanded Scope and Duration

Participants advocated for broadening the event's scope and extending its timeline to deepen discussions and explore a wider range of topics:

- **Extended Duration:** Lengthening the symposium from three to five days to provide more time for in-depth exploration of subjects and networking opportunities.

- **Focused Themes:** Introducing dedicated sessions on critical topics like renewable energy, climate resilience, inclusivity in market systems, and technological innovation in agriculture.
- **Cross-Sectoral Representation:** Including diverse sectors and grassroots stakeholders, such as community organizations and small-scale innovators, to foster holistic and inclusive discussions.
- **Innovative Practices:** Encouraging the sharing of success stories and best practices from various regions and industries to inspire new approaches.

6.2.5.3 *Enhanced Participation*

To maximize engagement and inclusivity, participants recommended strategies to involve a broader and more diverse audience:

- **Stakeholder Inclusion:** Ensuring participation from key groups, including governments, policymakers, private sector leaders, donor communities, and grassroots representatives.
- **Interactive Formats:** Incorporating engaging formats such as work cafes, live debates, and collaborative workshops to facilitate active dialogue and idea exchange.
- **Inclusivity Measures:** Addressing accessibility by providing language interpreters, increasing representation from underrepresented regions, and involving farmers and end beneficiaries to create an equitable platform for dialogue and decision-making.
- **Digital Tools:** Leveraging technology and online platforms to broaden participation and maintain discussions beyond the event.

6.2.5.4 *Content and Delivery*

Participants emphasized the importance of high-quality content and effective delivery to ensure the symposium's relevance and impact:

- **Comprehensive Subject Coverage:** Including a wider variety of topics while allocating sufficient time for panellists to delve into their insights and expertise.
- **Actionable Outputs:** Developing tangible deliverables such as detailed action plans, summary documents, and visual materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides) to facilitate post-event follow-up and application.

- **Continuous Engagement:** Hosting periodic webinars, virtual forums, and interim events between symposiums to sustain momentum, encourage networking, and provide updates on key initiatives.

6.3 Interest in Joining the BDCG

The symposium successfully sparked interest in the Business Development and Coordination Group (BDCG). The feedback showed:

There was a strong willingness among participants to join the network, with most responding positively. Many expressed a desire for clarity on the tangible benefits and activities of the BDCG. Additionally, participants called for the BDCG to strengthen justice systems, expand outreach through the Council of Governors, and organize more frequent events to engage members further.

6.4 Envisioned Contributions of BDCG to Participants' Careers

Participants identified several ways in which the BDCG could catalyze their professional growth. These contributions are grouped into four key areas: networking and partnerships, capacity building, knowledge and insights, and career growth.

6.4.1 Networking and Partnerships

Participants recognized the BDCG as an invaluable platform for building meaningful connections and fostering collaborative efforts:

- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** The group was seen as a hub for creating networks across diverse sectors, encouraging partnerships that drive innovation and shared goals.
- **Strategic Alliances:** Opportunities to engage with like-minded professionals, industry leaders, and grassroots organizations were noted as critical benefits, enabling members to pursue joint initiatives and projects.

6.4.2 Capacity Building

The BDCG's potential to enhance members' skills and competencies was highly valued:

- **Professional Training:** Participants expressed interest in receiving tailored training on themes such as Market Systems Development (MSD), sustainability, and innovation.
- **Learning Resources:** Suggestions included developing online and in-person courses, thematic write-ups, and hosting knowledge-sharing events like webinars and workshops.

- **Interactive Engagements:** Regular forums and peer-learning opportunities were highlighted as key mechanisms to ensure active participation and continuous growth.

6.4.3 Knowledge and Insights

Participants viewed the BDCG as a trusted source of cutting-edge knowledge and actionable insights:

- **Best Practices:** Access to case studies, success stories, and evidence-based strategies was noted as a valuable resource for driving sustainable development.
- **Thematic Insights:** Regular updates on emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities in critical areas such as renewable energy, market inclusivity, and climate resilience were seen as essential for staying informed and proactive.
- **Resource Sharing:** A repository of tools, publications, and guidelines to support practical applications and decision-making was highly recommended.

6.4.4 Career Growth

Participants believed the BDCG could play a transformative role in advancing their careers:

- **Employment Opportunities:** The group was seen as a potential avenue for accessing job postings, consultancy roles, and career development services.
- **Skill Development:** Career-aligned workshops, leadership training, and mentorship programs were highlighted as ways to build expertise and confidence.
- **Industry Access:** Facilitating connections with industry players, policymakers, and thought leaders was considered a key advantage, offering participants the chance to influence and learn from the broader development ecosystem.
- **Strategic Tools:** Access to strategic frameworks and insights tailored to individual career paths was noted as an additional benefit, equipping members with resources to achieve their goals.

6.5 Additional Comments

Participants provided general feedback, praising the symposium for its impact and expressing optimism for the BDCG's future:

Comments such as "Great event," "*Kazi safi*" (a Swahili phrase that translates to "Good job" or "Well done" in English), and "Great interactions!" reflected participants' satisfaction with the symposium,

while suggestions for sustained efforts in market systems training and increased brand visibility were also noted.

6.6 Conclusion and Recommendations

The symposium received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with participants valuing its content, networking opportunities, and overall impact. However, several areas for enhancement were identified to maximize the event's effectiveness and inclusivity. Based on participants' input, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Extend Duration:** Lengthen the symposium to five days to allow for deeper exploration of topics, extended discussions, and meaningful networking, while incorporating structured sessions and sufficient breaks to avoid fatigue.
2. **Enhance Inclusivity:** Broaden participation by engaging diverse stakeholders, including grassroots actors, policymakers, private sector representatives, and beneficiaries. Ensure accessibility through the provision of language interpretation services and regional representation.
3. **Diversify Formats:** Introduce interactive and innovative methods such as debates, work cafes, exhibitions, and hands-on workshops. These formats can increase engagement and foster dynamic knowledge exchange.
4. **Continuous Engagement:** Maintain the momentum of the symposium by organizing regular follow-up webinars, virtual forums, and interim events. These activities will ensure ongoing collaboration, information sharing, and community building.
5. **Focus on Delivery:** Address technical challenges to ensure seamless sessions. Enhance preparation for panel discussions by providing clear agendas, guiding questions, and effective moderation to maintain focus and energy throughout the event.

APPENDICES

Annex 1: Symposium Program



Business Development Services (BDS) Donor Coordination Group (BDCG) Inclusive Markets Symposium 2024

27th-29th November 2024

Whitesands Hotel, Mombasa, Kenya.

Symposium Programme

Day 1- Wednesday 27 th November 2024			
Time	Activity	Notes	Moderator
8.00am -8.30am	Registration	Participant registration	<i>Secretariat</i>
8.30am – 10.30am	Opening Plenary session	National Anthem- East Africa Africa Anthem Rebecca Amukhoye - BDCG Secretariat chair Winnie Mailu - BDCG Chair Flora Mbetsa Chibule, Deputy Governor Kilifi County– Chief Guest	<i>Mark Masai</i>
10.30am – 11.00 am	<i>Tea Break</i>		

11.00 – 1.00pm	Introduction - The role of market systems development in building resilient and inclusive economies	Speaker: Mathew Wanjala - TMA Panelists: 1. Clarice Kionge - Heifer International 2. Lucas Mosenda – Migori County CEC 3. Thomas Were - Agile Consulting 4. Victor Ndiege - KCV 5. Winnie Mailu - Ripple Effect 6. Janet Ngumbalu - Christian Aid Q & A	Mathew Wanjala -TMA
1.00pm- 2.00pm	<i>Lunch Break</i>		
2.00pm- 3.00pm	<i>Plenary session</i> Donor Roundtable	Panelists: 1. Charles Wasike - DANIDA 2. Paul Mbole - P4G 3. Q & A	Mark Masai
3.00pm – 4.45pm	<i>Plenary session</i> Climate Adaptation, Resilience and Regenerative Agriculture <i>Plenary session</i>	Panelists: 1. Ernest Chitechi - KCIC 2. Dr. Harun Warui - Wilda Farm 3. Joseline Nyaga - IFDC 4. Peter Juma - KickStart 5. Rebecca Amukhoye - MESPT Q & A	Geoffrey Marambe - Cusum Energy
5.00pm – 6.30pm	Beach Sport Activity	All	
	Council meeting/strategy presentation/elections (for member organizations) /roadmap	Council members (Organization executives)	<i>Mark Masai</i>

Day 2- Thursday 28 th November 2024			
8.00a.m-8.30a.m	Arriving		
8.30am – 10.00am	Opening plenary session + Recap on day 1) Innovative Financing Models	Facilitator – Dr. Edith Wairimu & Mark Masai Panelists: 1. Joseph Murambula - KCIC 2. Wangui Muna - Heifer International 3. Eliud Wachira – MESPT 4. Aichatou Maikoudi – IFDC Q & A	Molly Kwamah - MEDA
10.00am – 10.30am	Tea Break		
10.30 – 1.00pm	Breakout Sessions 1. Sustainable Food Systems (circularity, regenerative)-	Facilitator Dr Edith Wairimu Panelists: 1. Walter Tinaga - MEDA 2. Wambui Mbarire - RETRAK 3. Doreen Kinoti - MESPT 4. Charles Ochodo – Veterinarian 5. Mikayla Hug – NICE Project Q & A	Donnah Macharia - Ripple Effect
	2. Gender Transformative Approaches in Market Systems	Facilitator Mark Masai Panelists: 1. Margaret Komen - Mace Foods 2. Eunice Mutua - Select Fresh Produce Kenya LTD 3. Eliud Nkunjia - SNV 4. Bernadette Muyumi - Tanager Q & A	George Okeyo - Misingo Fish Supplies Ltd

1.00pm- 2.00pm	Lunch Break		
2.00pm- 3.30pm	Plenary session Inclusive Business Practices and Partnerships	Panelists: - George Okeyo - Migingo Fish - Kelvin Mwangi - MEDA - Lucas Mosenda - CEC Migori - Emmanuel Omala - ASIGMA - Patrick Boro - IFDC Q & A	Alex Bagora - Ripple Effect Uganda
Breakout session			
3.30pm- 5.00pm	Digital Transformation	Facilitator Mark Masai Panelists: - Agatha Thuo - ASNET - Josephine Ngethe - LEOWA Associates - Agnes Kavatha - Heifer International - Harold Mate - SNV - Alice Kimani - ASIGMA Q & A	Bridget Okumu - IFDC
	Youth inclusion, innovation, and Equity	Facilitator Dr Edith Wairimu Panelists: - Deogratius Egeru - Ripple Effect - Heifer International – Dr. Dennis Ogaso - Njeri Muhia - Tegemeo Institute - Geoffrey Nyamota - IDE - Irene Gathinji - KCDF Q & A	Akiiki Roselyn Emuna -Ripple Effect
6.00pm – 7.30pm	Evening cocktail		
Day 3 – Friday 29 th November 2024			
8.00-8.30a.m	Arrival and registration		

8.30am – 10.30am	Plenary session Evidence Creation for Policy Influencing – Validation Research for Development	Panelists: 1. Prof. Dr. Thomas Rewe - Pwani University 2. Lucas Mosenda – CEC Migori County 3. Idris Salasi - IFDC 4. Wambui Mbarire - RETRAK 5. Daisy Muriuki - Kenya Fisheries Q & A	Prof Joseph Matofari – Egerton University
10.30am – 11.00 am	Tea Break		
11.00 – 1.00pm	Symposium highlights BDCG Network Roadmap Closing Ceremony Closing Remarks - Noah Meely – MESPT BOT Chair		
1.00pm- 2.00pm	Lunch Break		
2.00pm-5.00pm	Beach Activity		

Annex 2: Keynote Speeches

See at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FtER2Ma92Mxen-p_WkxTjcqBUtZxjKi6