



**BDS Donor Coordination
Group (BDCG)**

Business Development Services (BDS) Donor Coordination Group (BDCG) Inclusive Market Symposium 2025



Ciala Resort, Kisumu, Kenya

26th To 28th November 2025

***Theme: Transforming Market Systems for Resilience,
Inclusion, and Sustainability: Reimagining the Future Amid
a Shifting Donor Landscape.***

**Business Development Services (BDS) Donor
Coordination Group (BDCG) Inclusive Market
Symposium 2025 proceedings**
26th to 28th November 2025



Compiled by:

Dr. Edith W. Wairimu¹ and Dr. Robai Liambila¹

This symposium report can be downloaded at

<https://mespt.github.io/bdcgnetwork/documents.html>

¹ Consultant at FineResults Research Services Limited



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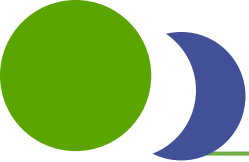


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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BDS	Business Development Services (BDS) Donor Coordination Group
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GESI	Gender Equality, Social Inclusion
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
LREB	Lake Region Economic Bloc
MEDA	Mennonite Economic Development Associates
MESPT	Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust
MSD	Market Systems Development
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust (MESPT), serving as the Secretariat of the Business Development Services (BDS) Donor Coordination Group (BDCG), extends its heartfelt gratitude to all individuals and organizations that contributed to the success of the Inclusive Market Symposium 2025, held from 26th to 28th November 2025 at CIALA Resort, Kisumu.

We offer special appreciation to the consultants from FineResults Research Services, whose expertise, dedication, and professionalism were pivotal in ensuring the symposium's smooth execution and meaningful outcomes.

We further acknowledge and deeply value the active participation and invaluable contributions of representatives from 35 organizations, whose collective insights and engagement enriched the discussions and reinforced the symposium's vision of resilience, inclusion, and sustainability.

Participating Organizations

Sector/Category	Organizations
Development Partners & NGOs	Heifer International, International Development Enterprise (iDE), Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust (MESPT), Practical Action, Ripple Effect (Kenya), TradeMark Africa, World Vision International Kenya
Private Sector, Agribusiness & SMEs	Agriculture Sector Network (ASNET), Digicow Africa, Garithe Mangrove Conservation, KTL Farming Ltd, Migingo Fish, Onja Uone, Rongai Acacia, Soldier Diverse, TATABA, Ushindi Youth, Vert Limited, Ziada Solutions Ltd
Government & Public Sector	County Governments: Kisumu, Kwale, Nyandarua, Siaya, Uasin Gishu, Kisii Agencies: Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO)
Finance & Investment Institutions	African Guarantee Fund, ECLOF Kenya Limited, Kenya Climate Ventures Limited, Micro-Cap Holdings Ltd, Tower SACCO
Consultancy, Research & Academia	Agile Consultants, FineResults Research Services, Pwani University

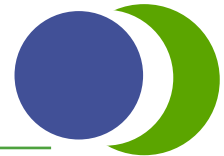


We sincerely appreciate the seven exhibitors: Soldier Diverse, Ziada Solutions, Ushindi Youth, Garithe, Rongai Acacia, KTL Farming Limited, and Onja Uone, whose displays provided practical insights and innovative solutions that greatly enriched the symposium experience. Their contributions highlighted creativity, resilience, and forward-thinking approaches, adding immense value to the event.

We extend our sincere gratitude to M-TAKA, Victoria Eco Farm, and Peaknest for hosting insightful field visits. Participants gained valuable lessons from M-TAKA's tech-enabled waste management, Victoria Eco Farm's solar-powered and climate-smart poultry practices with contract farming, and Peaknest's youth-led agribusiness models. These visits provided practical demonstrations of resilience, inclusion, and sustainability, reinforcing the symposium's theme: *"Transforming Market Systems for Resilience, Inclusion, and Sustainability: Reimagining the Future Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape."*

Your collective efforts and contributions were instrumental to the success of the event. MESPT looks forward to continued collaboration in advancing sustainable and inclusive development solutions.

Thank you for your steadfast support.



PART ONE: INTRODUCTION



Group photo of participants at the Inclusive Markets Symposium 2025, held at CIALA Resort, Kisumu.

1.1. Background

The Inclusive Markets Symposium 2025, organized by the BDS Donor Coordination Group (BDCG) and hosted by the Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust (MESPT), was held from 26–28 November 2025 at CIALA Resort in Kisumu, Kenya, and brought together 74 participants from 36 organizations. The symposium centered on the theme, *“Transforming Market Systems for Resilience, Inclusion, and Sustainability: Reimagining the Future Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape.”*

The event addressed pressing global challenges, including climate change, inequality, and shrinking donor resources, by convening practitioners, policymakers, researchers, private-sector actors, and innovators to co-create solutions for inclusive and adaptive market systems. Through this collaborative approach, participants explored strategies to strengthen resilience and sustainability in diverse market contexts.

The symposium employed a blended model of engagement, combining in-person dialogues, partner field visits, and an innovation marketplace exhibition. Eight organizations showcased agribusiness and market system innovations, highlighting



the continent's need for resilient economies aligned with evolving donor priorities, including sustainability, blended finance, and measurable systemic change.

Over three days, the symposium explored the theme through participatory formats, including keynote speeches, panel discussions, knowledge roundtable sessions, field visits, exhibitions, and a networking gala, fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration among attendees.

The discussions were organized around six subthemes:

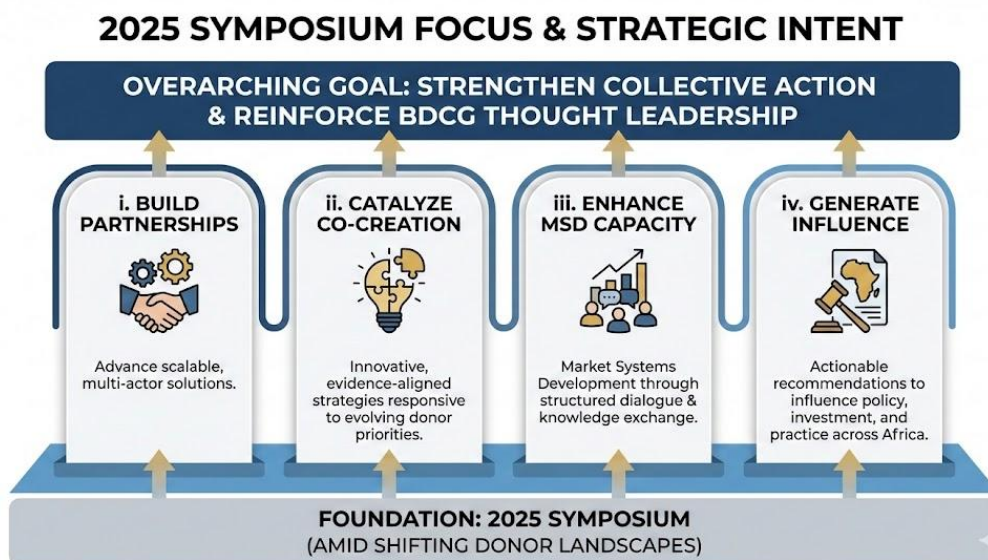


These thematic areas provided a comprehensive framework for participants to share insights, co-design solutions, and advance inclusive market systems that are resilient, sustainable, and responsive to shifting development priorities.



1.2. Symposium Focus and Strategic Intent

Amid shifting donor landscapes, the 2025 symposium aimed to strengthen collective action and reinforce BDCG's role as a thought leader. Specifically, it sought to:



1.3. Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the symposium were:

- Strengthened collaboration among development actors, the private sector, and policymakers.
- Enhanced visibility and ownership of the BDCG network.
- Demonstration of scalable solutions in agri-finance, climate resilience, trade, and social inclusion.
- Improved alignment between donor priorities and Market Systems Development (MSD) practice.
- Member-led thematic coordination and stronger network cohesion.
- Partnerships and investment opportunities emerging from exhibitions.
- Clear policy and investment recommendations shaping government and donor agendas.

1.4. Access to Documents

All symposium materials; including the program, presentations, keynote speeches, photos, and other documents, are available for download at: <https://mespt.github.io/bdcgnetwork/documents.html>



PART TWO: SYMPOSIUM PRELUDE

2.1. Opening Remarks

The Symposium was officially opened with remarks from invited guests and the BDCG leadership.

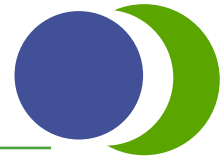
2.1.1. *Rebecca Amukhoye, Chair of the BDCG Secretariat and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust (MESPT).*

The 2025 Market Systems Development (MSD) Symposium commenced with opening remarks delivered by Rebecca Amukhoye, Chair of the BDCG Secretariat and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of MESPT. In her address, Rebecca warmly welcomed distinguished guests, partners, colleagues, and participants, expressing her honour in convening the symposium under the Business Development Services (BDS) Donor Coordination Group (BDCG) Network. She emphasized the significance of hosting this year's event in Kisumu, a dynamic regional economic hub reflective of the symposium's broader focus on resilience, inclusion, and locally grounded development.



Rebecca Amukhoye-CEO- MESPT

Rebecca opened by reaffirming the identity and purpose of the BDCG Network. She emphasized that for more than two decades, the Network has served as the region's primary convener of practitioners, donors, private sector actors, government institutions, and development organisations dedicated to building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable market systems. She reiterated that the BDCG was established to reduce duplication, strengthen coherence, enhance learning, and create a shared platform for advancing market systems development across Africa. She further highlighted that the Network's renewed strategy has strengthened governance, expanded membership, deepened collaborative learning, and positioned BDCG as a



central community of practice shaping the continent's Market System Development (MSD) agenda.

In her remarks, Rebecca extended heartfelt appreciation to the BDCG's anchor partners including Ripple Effect, MESPT, Heifer International, Kenya Climate Ventures (KCV), iDE, International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), MEDA, and Christian Aid. She commended these organisations for their sustained commitment, technical leadership, and active role in co-creating the 2025 symposium. She acknowledged their contributions in strengthening the Network's relevance, visibility, and collective learning mandate.

Reflecting on the 2024 symposium held in Mombasa, Rebecca recalled the powerful insights that emerged from engaging 104 participants representing 51 organisations across multiple countries. She noted that last year's discussions reinforced the reality that market systems transformation does not occur through isolated interventions but through deliberate, context-aware collaboration. She further highlighted that practitioners strongly emphasized the importance of localized approaches, gender equity, youth inclusion, and the removal of structural barriers that hinder meaningful participation. Climate resilience, innovation, and digital transformation were also cited as central themes, alongside the need for supportive governance, strong partnerships, and community ownership.

Rebecca noted that the 2024 convening also served as a moment of introspection for the BDCG Network. It allowed members to reflect on governance, sustainability, engagement, and the long-term positioning of the Network. These reflections, she noted, have shaped the design and priorities of the 2025 symposium. She went on to explain the deliberate decision to transition the symposium venue from Mombasa to Kisumu. Rebecca explained that this shift aligns with evolving donor priorities that increasingly emphasize localization, decentralization, regional inclusion, climate resilience, and diversified economic geographies. She described Kisumu as a vibrant economic center at the heart of the Lake Region situated at strategic intersections of agriculture, trade, the blue economy, and cross-border integration with neighboring countries. Hosting the symposium here, she explained, symbolizes a commitment to context-responsive development approaches and to anchoring the network's conversations in regions that represent the future of Africa's economic transformation.

Rebecca then turned to the 2025 symposium theme, *"Transforming Market Systems for Resilience, Inclusion, and Sustainability: Reimagining the Future Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape."* She highlighted that the global donor environment is undergoing significant change, marked by shifts in traditional funding models, greater emphasis on blended finance, increased private sector engagement, and heightened expectations for evidence generation, sustainability, and value for money. She highlighted the need for development actors to rethink how interventions are



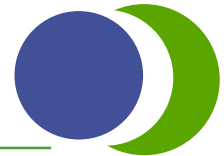
designed, financed, and sustained, stressing that these changes require collective repositioning across governments, the private sector, and the development community.

She explained that over the next three days, participants would explore avenues for strengthening market systems through more market-driven models, deeper public–private collaboration, inclusive and scalable innovations, evidence that can directly influence policy and investment, and approaches that centre women, youth, and persons living with disabilities. She stressed that the symposium should be viewed not just as an annual gathering but as a call to action, an invitation to adapt, innovate, and build market systems capable of withstanding the evolving dynamics of global development financing.

In closing, Rebecca encouraged participants to engage actively, collaborate openly, and build on the lessons from 2024 while responding to the new realities of 2025. She urged everyone to work together toward a future in which market systems deliver resilience, inclusion, and sustainability for all. She formally welcomed participants to Kisumu and to the 2025 Market Systems Development Symposium, expressing gratitude for their continued commitment and partnership.

2.1.2. Keynote Address by Victor Nyagaya, Chief Executive Officer, Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB)





The Chief Guest, **Mr. Victor Nyagaya**, expressed his appreciation to the organisers for inviting him to the symposium and extended a warm welcome to participants on behalf of the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB). He explained that LREB comprises fourteen counties: Siaya, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Migori, Busia, Kisii, Nyamira, Kakamega, Vihiga, Bungoma, Bomet, Kericho, Nandi, and Trans Nzoia, representing approximately fourteen million people, making it Kenya's largest regional economic bloc. He noted that its development blueprint is closely aligned with national government priorities and emphasized that the bloc is highly diversified and connected through the shared ecosystems of Lake Victoria.

Mr. Nyagaya acknowledged that while he initially felt unsure about the relevance of market systems development to his role, the presentations and panel discussions during the introductory session on *“Reimagining Market Systems amid a Shifting Donor Landscape”* had offered valuable insights and affirmed the significance of the forum to regional economic advancement.

He highlighted that LREB has been implementing programmes focused on strengthening farmer organization, enhancing private-sector engagement, and promoting climate-resilient and market-oriented value chains. He reported that a major proposal covering six priority value chains had secured a **USD 50 million grant** intended to support farmer training, cooperative strengthening, and improved coordination between producers and private investors. He also noted that the bloc is expanding its blue-economy initiatives, including large-scale fingerling production, investment in rice processing, and proposals to revitalise a major oxbow lake to create sustainable livelihoods and boost regional productivity.

Emphasising the importance of structured farmer groups, strong institutional linkages, and well-functioning market systems, Mr. Nyagaya observed that these are essential for ensuring agricultural produce reaches the right markets and increases household incomes. In conclusion, he noted that Kenya possesses sufficient research capacity and county-level expertise to drive meaningful economic transformation. He expressed his gratitude for the invitation and affirmed that the symposium's objectives aligned closely with LREB's development agenda.



PART THREE: INCLUSIVE MARKETS SYMPOSIUM 2025 PROCEEDINGS DAY ONE

This part of the report covers the experts' presentations. The topics were presented, followed by plenary discussions. A total of eleven papers were presented on diverse issues of intergovernmental relations. This part of the report highlights the expert presentations delivered during the symposium, each followed by plenary discussions that enriched the dialogue. The sessions reflected the symposium's overarching theme of *"Transforming Market Systems for Resilience, Inclusion, and Sustainability: Reimagining the Future Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape."*

The presentations were organised around the following thematic areas:

- **Reimagining Market Systems Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape** Keynote and panel discussions explored how evolving donor priorities are reshaping market systems, with insights from practitioners, policymakers, and academia.
- **Climate Change Adaptation, Green Transition, and the Bioeconomy** Experts examined pathways for climate-resilient agriculture, green innovation, and bioeconomy opportunities.
- **Innovative Agri-Finance and Investment for Resilient Food Systems** Presentations focused on blended finance, inclusive investment models, and mechanisms to strengthen farmer access to capital.
- **Inclusive Leadership and Social Equity** Discussions highlighted youth empowerment, gender equality, disability inclusion, and leadership for systemic change.
- **Trade and Regional Integration for Scaled Partnerships** Papers addressed cross-border trade, regional collaboration, and strategies for scaling inclusive partnerships.
- **Innovation, Scale, and New Delivery Models** Presenters showcased digital solutions, agritech innovations, and scalable approaches to market systems transformation.
- **Systemic Change Measurement and Policy Guidance** Evidence-based presentations demonstrated how measurement frameworks can inform policy and investment decisions.

Each presentation was followed by interactive plenary discussions, allowing participants to interrogate the evidence, share experiences, and co-create actionable recommendations.



3.1. Session 1: Reimagining Market Systems Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape

3.1.1. *Setting the stage: Reimagining market systems in a shifting donor landscape – overview*

The session began with a PowerPoint presentation by Mathews Wanjala on *Reimagining Market Systems Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape*.

He highlighted major transitions in global development financing, noting that as traditional donor resources stagnate, new philanthropic and impact-investment actors are reshaping funding patterns. He pointed out that developing economies, particularly in Africa, are facing compounded shocks, including climate risks, geopolitical instability, food system vulnerabilities, and rising youth

These trends, he explained, are compelling organizations engaged in trade, economic development, and market systems strengthening to rethink their operating models and adopt approaches that emphasize sustainability, private-sector engagement, and long-term systemic change.

Mathews further emphasized that reimagining market systems has become imperative in light of the shift toward blended finance, localization, investment-driven programming, and the demand for measurable, transformative results. He explained that future market systems work must position Market System Development (MSD) as a catalyst for private investment, embed climate resilience and digitalization, and promote regional integration across value chains. The presentation emphasized the importance of transitioning from grant-led interventions to strategic partnerships, co-investment models, and strengthening the capabilities of local institutions.

In conclusion, he noted that while the donor landscape is changing, substantial opportunities remain particularly in food security, green and digital trade, impact-linked investments, and regional market integration. These developments make it essential for market systems to evolve into platforms that deliver inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economic transformation.



Mathews Wanjala, Senior Programme Manager-Market Systems, TradeMark Africa



Panellists discussing Market System Development amid a shifting donor

3.1.2. Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The session was moderated by **Mark Masai**, a Strategic Communications Consultant currently practicing public relations, with extensive experience as a professional moderator and master of ceremonies across diverse stakeholder engagements. He introduced the panelists and highlighted their expertise and unique perspectives on inclusive market systems development.

Panellists:

1. **Prof. Thomas Rewe** – Associate Professor of Integrated Agro-Systems at Pwani University and Co-Chair of the Green Bio-Economy Coalition of Africa Working Group. He leads initiatives in bioeconomy education and policy, advises international organizations on agri-food systems, and focuses his research on agriculture, climate change, and the circular bioeconomy.
2. **Daniel Owino Wamunga** – County Agrinutrition Officer in Kisumu County's Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, Livestock, Fisheries, and Blue Economy. He is the departmental focal person for the Youth in Agribusiness Project and a member of the technical working group developing the Kisumu County Agriculture Extension Policy.
3. **George Okeyo** – Founder of Migingo Fish Supplies Limited and an experienced Quality Assurance and Business Development professional. He has successfully grown his business while managing development programs



across Kenya, strengthening sectors such as dairy, horticulture, and fisheries, and previously served as Chairman of the BDS Donor Coordination Group.

Mark outlined the session's structure, noting that the panel discussion would last for 45 minutes, followed by a feedback session and a Q&A segment. He also expressed gratitude to **Mathews Wanjala** for his insightful presentation, which set the stage for the panel.

3.1.3. Moderator-led Panel Discussions

3.1.3.1. Moderator's Reflections

Mark Masai, the session moderator, opened the panel discussion with reflections drawn from **Mathews Wanjala's** introductory presentation. He noted that while the donor landscape is shifting, the opportunities are not shrinking. This underscored the rapidly changing global context and emphasized that emerging uncertainties do not diminish opportunities but instead call for a collective re-imagination of market systems. His remarks set the tone for a session focused on cross-sector collaboration, evidence-based transformation, and the need to adapt to evolving economic and environmental realities.

3.1.3.2. County Government Perspective



Daniel Owino Wamunga, Kisumu County's Agri-Nutrition Officer, formally welcomed delegates and emphasized the county's shift toward holistic food system approaches. He stressed that sustainable policy must balance environmental stewardship, social inclusion, and economic viability. Kisumu's food system, youth agri-food, and agri-nutrition strategies collectively aim to ensure that women, youth, and marginalized groups are meaningfully included in economic opportunities. He also noted that Kenya's high agrarian dependency ratio demands policies that enhance both resilience and productivity.

3.1.3.3. Academic Perspective

Prof. Thomas Rewe elaborated on the role of research in supporting inclusive market transformation. He argued that siloed approaches limit impact, and that transdisciplinary research integrating public and private sector collaboration is essential for lowering market barriers faced by smallholder producers. He highlighted



successful PPP models such as the East African Dairy Development Project and TwoScale, which demonstrated how structured aggregation and cooperative business models can enable small-scale farmers to engage more equitably with formal markets. He stressed that intentional research investment, including increased national funding, is critical to sustaining these gains.



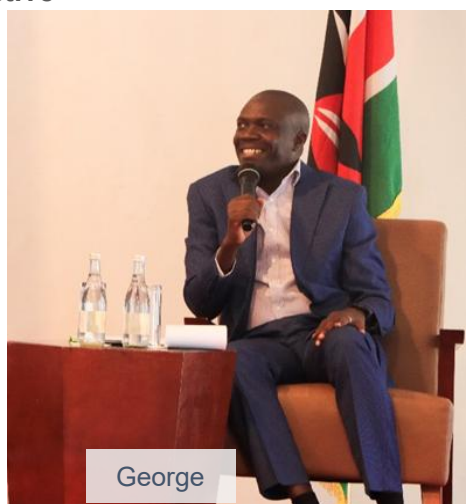
Prof. Rewe further emphasized that translating research into practical value for the private sector is crucial. He proposed the development of a comprehensive Business Development Services (BDS) Framework to organize market actors, standardize technical assessments, and ensure interventions are evidence-based. He also

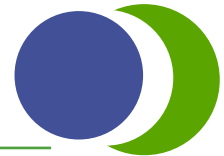
recommended institutionalizing Public–Private Dialogues (PPDs), with outputs feeding into policy briefs and budget reviews to inform high-level decision-making.

3.1.3.4. Private Sector Perspective

George Okeyo, founder of Mikingo Fish Supplies Limited, emphasized that meaningful business engagement hinges on clear value propositions and profitability. He noted that donor-supported interventions such as skills development, credit access, quality assurance, and value chain organization can significantly lower risks associated with sourcing from dispersed smallholder groups.

He identified a persistent gap between academic research and private sector realities, explaining that research institutions rarely present market-ready insights to businesses. Drawing from fisheries and horticulture, he argued that the private sector is ready to invest where reliable data, organized supply chains, and risk-sharing arrangements exist. He also highlighted the scarcity of accredited laboratories in





Kenya, which forces firms to rely on international certification bodies. He urged universities to focus on applied research and laboratory accreditation to provide actionable insights that attract private sector collaboration.

Together, the panelists conveyed a consistent message: transforming market systems in a shifting global landscape requires coordinated action across government, academia, development actors, and the private sector. Effective collaboration must prioritize inclusion, respond to economic incentives, and leverage research that is both rigorous and directly applicable to real-world market needs. Strengthening these linkages will ensure that emerging opportunities are not only seized but shared equitably across the value chain.

During the panel discussion, **Prof. Thomas Rewe** emphasized that translating research into practical value for the private sector is crucial for inclusive market systems. He noted that mere participation does not guarantee inclusion and stressed the need for clear frameworks that guide both public and private actors. In response to the moderator's query about forward-looking strategies, he proposed the development of a comprehensive Business Development Services (BDS) Framework to organize market actors, standardize technical assessments, and ensure that interventions are evidence-based. He further argued that structured Public–Private Dialogues (PPDs) should be institutionalized, with outputs feeding into policy briefs and budget reviews to inform high-level decision-making, thereby linking dialogue to actionable policy.

Building on this, **Daniel Owino** highlighted the steps Kisumu County had taken to strengthen coordination across sectors. He described the establishment of multi-sector platforms, scorecards, and a County Joint Financial Tracking Tool, which align investments and measure cross-sectoral impacts—for example, assessing how agricultural interventions influence health outcomes such as micronutrient deficiencies. He stressed that these tools promote genuine collaboration by enabling actors to “talk to each other” rather than merely reporting independently, thus enhancing accountability and evidence-based planning.

The role of research and academia in supporting market systems was emphasized again by Prof. Rewe, who explained that universities often act as the de facto Research and Development (R&D) arm for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that lack capacity for independent product testing, standards compliance, or field trials. He cited examples of partnerships where universities conducted trials for organic and bio-fertilizers, generating data that could be used both for marketing and independent verification. He noted that well-structured PPPs could provide the financial resources necessary to support such applied research, ensuring that small producers gain access to quality evidence for market entry.



Addressing **private sector perspectives**, **George Okeyo** explained that businesses engage when clear value exists, emphasizing that many academic studies focus on publication rather than practical solutions. He highlighted the scarcity of accredited laboratories in Kenya, which forces firms to rely on international certification bodies. George argued that universities should focus on applied research and laboratory accreditation to provide actionable insights that attract private sector collaboration. This aligned with Prof. Rewe's point that research must be oriented toward market needs rather than purely academic outputs.

3.1.4. Participant Questions, Answers, and Interactive Discussion

The interactive discussion provided participants with an opportunity to interrogate the panelists' insights and connect them to practical realities in market systems development.



Philip Kubende (Practical Action) raised concerns about the often rushed and tokenistic nature of public participation, particularly in Public–Private Partnership (PPP) processes. In response, **Daniel Owino** acknowledged that public participation frequently turns into a “tick-box exercise” and emphasized the need for more

genuine dialogue. He noted that Kisumu County is exploring longer engagement periods and the use of digital platforms such as webinars, alongside physical forums, to make participation more inclusive. These approaches are expected to be implemented next year. Owino added that strengthening public participation within PPP discussions would help ensure that citizen input meaningfully informs policy formulation and budget decisions.

Mwalimu Menza raised a question on sustainability, asking whether smallholder farmers are enabled to continue independently after programs end, or whether they remain dependent on external funding. He cautioned against “hit-and-run” projects that last only two years and fail to build lasting impact. He emphasized the need to strengthen





stakeholder capacity to use limited resources to scale, particularly for smallholder farmers who cannot market their produce on their own.

Godfrey Nyango'ori observed that significant research has been conducted and asked whether the private sector has benefited from it. This prompted a discussion on sustainability and beneficiary selection. Prof. Thomas Rewe emphasized that projects must identify participants who already demonstrate commitment to the value chain, rather than simply targeting numbers for reporting purposes. George Okeyo reinforced this point, arguing that weak selection criteria often undermine post-project sustainability. He explained that guiding donors toward specific beneficiaries, rather than using transparent criteria, limits the long-term impact of interventions.



Finally, the question of private sector research hubs was raised. George Okeyo argued that such hubs are unnecessary because private sector actors invest in research only when it demonstrates clear value. Instead, he emphasized that universities should focus on applied, market-relevant research and ensure laboratory accreditation to reduce reliance on foreign certification bodies.

The moderator, Mark Masai, concluded by thanking all panelists for their contributions, noting that their insights on research, policy alignment, private sector engagement, and sustainability would continue to inform discussions throughout the symposium.

3.1.5. Conclusion

Strengthening market systems requires transitioning from grant-led interventions to blended finance, co-investment, and strategic partnerships that attract private-sector participation. This shift should be complemented by integrating climate resilience, digitalization, and regional value-chain integration to enhance sustainability and competitiveness.

Institutionalizing structured Public–Private Dialogues (PPDs) and developing a comprehensive BDS Framework will help align market actors, standardize assessments, and support evidence-based policy and investment decisions. Increased investment in applied, market-oriented research, together with accredited local laboratories and stronger university–industry partnerships, will further ensure that enterprises have access to reliable data and innovation support.

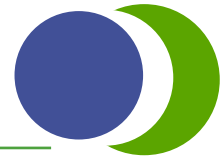


Improving coordination across government departments with joint platforms, scorecards, and financial tracking tools strengthens accountability and cross-sector impact measurement. Public participation in PPPs should be more inclusive and hybrid, ensuring meaningful citizen input. Sustainability should prioritize beneficiaries' commitment and capacity, helping smallholder farmers remain viable post-project. Bridging gaps between academia and the private sector by aligning research with market needs will drive innovation, investment, and long-term economic growth.



Panellists and Moderator at the Close of Session One

From left: Mathews Wanjala, George Okeyo, Daniel Owino Wamunga, Prof. Thomas Rewe, and Moderator Mark Masai pictured after the conclusion of the panel discussion on “Opportunities and Challenges in Market Systems Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape” during Session One of the Inclusive Markets Symposium 2025 at Ciala Resort, Kisumu.



3.2. Session 2: Climate Change Adaptation, Green Transition and the Bioeconomy

3.2.1. Climate Change adaptation, green transition and bioeconomy-Overview



Rebecca Amukhoye-CEO- MESPT

The session opened with a presentation by Rebecca Amukhoye, followed by a panel discussion. Rebecca underscored Africa's acute vulnerability to climate change, noting that the continent is warming faster than the global average and remains heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture. This

dependence intensifies exposure to climate shocks, which

currently cost an estimated USD 70 billion each year. She pointed out that 2024 recorded the highest global temperatures to date and highlighted that Africa accounted for 35% of global climate-related fatalities between 1970 and 2021, while only 40% of its population has access to early warning systems.

Given these challenges, Rebecca emphasized the urgent need for increased climate-adaptation investment and introduced emerging models—including the green economy, circular economy, and bioeconomy—as pathways to reduce emissions, enhance resource efficiency, and promote sustainable livelihoods. These approaches, she explained, support regenerative resource use, foster innovation within biomass-based value chains, and create green jobs that can help address the continent's youth unemployment crisis.

Rebecca noted that governments, development partners, and civil society are already driving these efforts across Africa, with Kenya standing out as a regional leader. She referenced government initiatives such as the 15-billion-tree programme, national restoration strategies, green-economy policies, and pollution-reduction measures as key contributors to building climate resilience.



She further highlighted the important role of non-state actors in expanding renewable energy, e-mobility, cold-chain solutions, bioeconomy opportunities, and climate-policy advocacy. MESPT's work was presented as an example of integrated action, including the promotion of solar-powered irrigation, water harvesting, circular agro-processing, and bioeconomy value chains built around indigenous crops and nature-based solutions. These combined interventions, she emphasized, are essential for advancing climate resilience, sustainable growth, and a just green transition.

In closing, Rebecca called for a deeper shift toward green, circular, and bioeconomic models that restore ecosystems while generating inclusive economic opportunities. She showcased practical innovations such as turning agricultural waste into fertilizer, developing new bio-based products, and promoting regenerative agriculture through digital climate tools and organic certification. She also highlighted the leadership of Kenyan institutions and universities, noting their innovation hubs, community co-creation platforms, agri-food training programmes, and the EU-funded BioKB project, which is developing Kenya's first national bioeconomy curriculum and policy framework.

3.2.2. *Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives*

The second session was moderated by **Prof. Thomas Rewe**, Associate Professor of Integrated Agro Systems at Pwani University and Co-Chair of the Green Bio Economy Coalition of Africa Working Group. With his deep expertise in agriculture, climate change, and the circular bioeconomy, Prof. Rewe guided the discussion with a strong focus on inclusive market systems development and the role of sustainable practices in shaping resilient agri-food systems.

Panellists:

1. **Doreen Kinoti:** Programme Manager, GEAP at MESPT, with over 15 years of experience in rural development, agriculture, and social impact across sub-Saharan Africa. She has worked in fragile and post-conflict contexts, bringing expertise in smallholder commercialization, innovative finance, enterprise development, food safety, and the circular economy.
2. **Isaac Ogutu:** Farm Systems and Sustainability Officer at Ripple Effect Kenya, coordinating the Sustainable Food and Environment Improvement Project in Western Kenya. He specializes in sustainable organic farming, vegetable crop production, forage production, soil management, and plant propagation, with a strong emphasis on farmer-led innovation.
3. **Noel Barasa:** Field and Extension Officer at Onja Uone Ltd, a macadamia processing company in Bungoma County. She supports farmers through training, field supervision, and promoting best practices to improve macadamia production and quality. Her work strengthens supply chains,



enhances productivity, and empowers grower communities in advancing the macadamia value chain.

4. **Mr. Bonventure Obeka:** Lecturer and researcher at Pwani University, with over a decade of experience in food and livelihood security, sustainable land use, cultural and biodiversity conservation, and peacebuilding. He applies sociological and participatory approaches to community challenges, with a strong interest in food access and social policy. His academic background supports critical analysis and adaptation of frameworks contributing to global food-security discourse.



Panel Session: Prof. Rewe (far left) moderates a dynamic discussion on **Climate Adaptation and the Green Transition**. Panelists Obeka, Isaac, Noel, and Doreen explored the bioeconomy subtheme, examining partnership models, market dynamics, and strategies for ensuring farmer inclusion in policy implementation.

3.2.3. Moderator-led panel discussions

The panel discussion, moderated by Prof. Rewe, expanded on the climate change adaptation, green transition and the bioeconomy subtheme by examining partnership models, market dynamics, farmer inclusion, and policy implementation.



Doreen Kinoti, MESPT

Doreen Kinoti – Public–Private Partnerships, Community Inclusion, and Climate Solutions

Doreen highlighted the critical role of public–private partnerships, county climate change units, cost-sharing approaches, and youth- and women-led enterprise models in advancing climate

adaptation and green transition initiatives. She emphasized that community involvement in designing climate and green-transition solutions is fundamental, noting that failing to include communities “is designing failure.”

She outlined how MESPT has successfully leveraged PPPs in collaboration with partners such as Calgary, Brown University, and the Kenya Institute, enabling climate solutions that are practical, scalable, and grounded in local realities. At the county level, MESPT works directly with climate change units to deliver hands-on training programmes that enhance local capacity.

Doreen emphasized the synergy created by partnering with development organizations that share similar objectives, which amplifies reach and impact. This collaborative model ensures that solutions remain locally relevant, sustainable, and community-driven, supporting long-term resilience.

She also described a suite of MESPT models that promote environmental sustainability and community empowerment. A notable example is the Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) model in Taita Taveta County, which balances economic gain with social benefit. Through RBC, MESPT has partnered with communities in cost-sharing initiatives such as the Mangrove Initiative, which has led to the planting of more than 300,000 mangrove trees, strengthening coastal resilience.

In addition, the Business Service Provider model engages youth and women in entrepreneurial activities, creating employment while supporting local development. MESPT’s partnerships with academic institutions such as Bukura ATC have also strengthened food safety training through accredited curricula and equipment support, ensuring sustainability in capacity development.

Doreen explained that MESPT prioritizes community capacity development from the moment it enters a community. Many initiatives focus on nature-based solutions and regenerative agriculture, which are supported by farmer capacity-building embedded



within programme design. Farmers are organized into cooperatives, where capacity development is delivered and sustained.

She added that MESPT invests in green infrastructure, recognizing the critical link between water resources and climate change. These investments include water pans, water plants, ponds, and other nature-based solutions showcased in cooperatives such as **Keshav and Nwai**. She also noted MESPT's role in financing green and agricultural initiatives through partnerships with SACCOs, MFIs, and deposit-taking institutions, enabling lending to smallholder farmers.

Doreen further highlighted the importance of democracy and circular economic dialogues with SMEs. She explained that private-sector investment in circularity requires attention to three pillars:

1. Societal good – contributions to community wellbeing
2. Environmental good – improved environmental stewardship
3. Economic good – financial viability for the private sector

She concluded by noting MESPT's work in water and waste management, its collaborations with technology companies, and the promotion of green technologies in education and bio-circular innovations such as Black Soldier Fly (BSF) and Azolla.

Isaac Ogutu – Farmer Support, Policy Implementation, and Market Challenges

Representing Ripple Effect, Isaac discussed the importance of supporting farmers and improving livelihoods using locally available resources. He shared insights from the organization's work in Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Zambia, and Ethiopia, noting its relevance to the green economy and climate adaptation.

Isaac acknowledged Kenya's progress in policy development, such as climate change action plans and agroecology policies, but stressed that policy implementation at community level remains weak. While farmers often receive training, many still lack full awareness of the benefits of sustainable practices.

He observed that farmers frequently engage in green practices, such as using organic manure and applying circularity principles, without understanding their broader environmental or economic impacts. Ripple Effect promotes farmer-to-farmer extension models, enabling lead farmers to disseminate knowledge and encourage sustainable agriculture.

Isaac also underscored the need to teach farmers how to maximize farm resources, including creating liquid manure and value-added by-products from waste, which improves productivity and sustainability.



Addressing market-system challenges for organic and bio-based products, Isaac highlighted persistent barriers such as consumer price sensitivity, which often leads buyers to prioritize cheaper, conventionally produced food over high-quality organic produce. He also noted that many farmers seek markets only after harvesting, resulting in low prices due to oversupply or perishability.

He emphasized the importance of market-oriented production, better aggregation, cooperative selling, and policy support that includes organic inputs in government subsidy programmes. These steps would strengthen the market for sustainable products and support smallholder inclusion in the green economy.



Noel Barasa – Nature-Based Solutions, Inclusivity, and Green Skills

Speaking for Onja Uone, Noel Barasa emphasized the role of nature-based solutions and the need to ensure women and youth meaningfully participate in the green economy. She described how working with farmers at the grassroots level, using locally available inputs such as

organic manure, has significantly improved soil health and productivity, achieving increases of up to 90% between 2021 and 2023.

By training farmers to make their own organic manure from cattle and poultry waste, Onja Uone has improved product quality while empowering communities to adopt sustainable practices that enhance both productivity and business viability.

Noel stressed that women's traditional household roles can be leveraged to improve agricultural outcomes, while youth benefit from hands-on opportunities in climate-positive sectors such as macadamia farming.

She also identified key challenges and opportunities in scaling green businesses in Kenya. Enabling institutions, such as certification agencies and financial partners like KCB play a pivotal role in improving market access, particularly for export. However, gaps persist in organic certification, grassroots training, and storage infrastructure, all of which affect market participation for smallholders.



Noel called for greater inclusion of smallholder farmers in policy processes, noting that their grievances and needs must be considered when crafting regulations that shape the green economy.

Regarding business expansion, she emphasized the difficulty of finding staff with adequate green skills, noting that the sector lacks workers trained in sustainable agricultural practices. She urged increased investment in training to develop local expertise and support the continued growth of the green economy.



Bonventure Mwanzi

Bonventure Mwanzi Foto – Youth Integration, Research Innovation, and University Roles

Bonventure began by responding to Prof. Rewe's question, noting that a central concern across discussions was how to effectively integrate youth into the green and bioeconomy sectors. He highlighted that universities,

whose mandates include teaching, research, and community engagement, are uniquely positioned to lead this transformation because they host the largest concentration of young people.

With nearly 600,000 graduates entering the market annually, 60,000 from universities, Bonventure argued that equipping these graduates with green skills, green economy principles, and bioeconomy knowledge would be transformative. This shift would counter the perception of agriculture as a "retirement profession" and instead position it as an innovative, youth-driven field.

He explained that while universities are active in research, many efforts remain siloed and discipline-bound, limiting impact. He advocated for coordinated, interdisciplinary, problem-oriented research environments to produce meaningful innovations and ensure that postgraduate work results in tangible solutions rather than compliance-driven outputs.

Bonventure emphasized the importance of knowledge co-creation with communities, noting that research should be done *with* communities rather than *for* them. Innovation labs and hubs where students, staff, and community members collaboratively develop ideas can strengthen the overall research–innovation ecosystem.



Responding to Prof. Rewe's request for specific examples, Bonventure described his university's open-door partnership policy and commitment to innovation. He highlighted two flagship initiatives:

1. **A consortium supporting coastal agro- and food-system value chains**, offering training on smart agricultural technologies to farmers.
2. The **EU-funded BioKB project**, which addresses national bioeconomy needs through education and policy development.

He added that, with the support of the Commission for University Education, they are developing Kenya's first national bioeconomy curriculum framework, alongside a pioneering policy framework shaped by national science and technology bodies to guide Kenya's emerging bioeconomy system.

3.2.4. Participant Questions, Answers and Interactive Discussion

During the interactive session, participants raised a series of questions that deepened the conversation on the green transition, cooperative models, and farmer inclusion in policy processes.

Emmanuel Mwiti (MESPT) highlighted the high cost of transitioning to green technologies, querying why green products remain expensive and noting that there is still a significant knowledge gap among actors regarding what qualifies as "green." His contribution underscored the need for clearer definitions and capacity-building across the value chain.



Jane Ngigi (ASNET) asked about the **evolving role of cooperatives** and how farmers can better participate in policy processes. She emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperative structures to ensure farmers have a voice in shaping regulations and reforms within the green and bioeconomy sectors.

Additional questions from a **technical-desk participant**, a **county official**, and a **female attendee** echoed similar concerns, focusing on:



- the **high cost** of adopting green technologies,
- the **changing mandate of cooperatives** in climate-resilient systems,
- and the **extent of farmer engagement** in policy making and implementation.

3.1.3.1. Panel Responses

Responding to the questions, **Daniel Owino** (*Panelist -session 1*) provided practical examples from Kisumu County. He explained that the county has implemented subsidy reforms aimed at lowering production costs and strengthening access to sustainable inputs. These reforms are supported by cooperative-led service delivery models designed to streamline farmer support systems.

Daniel also highlighted continuing challenges, such as pest pressure in organic systems, which increases production risks for farmers adopting organic or ecological methods.

He outlined several ongoing initiatives in Kisumu County, including:

- An **MoU with Equity Bank** to improve access to finance for farmers and cooperatives.
- A **Kisumu County Extension Policy** that redefines extension services around farmer service centers, improving last-mile delivery of information, inputs, and technical support.
- A **bio-fertilizer production initiative** implemented in collaboration with GIZ and an additional partner, which is integrated into the county's e-voucher programme to enhance affordability and uptake among smallholder farmers.

3.1.3.2. Synthesis of the Interactive Session

Collectively, the questions and responses reinforced the session's central message: advancing an inclusive and resilient green transition requires **coordinated action** among:

- government entities,
- research and academic institutions,
- the private sector,
- cooperatives,
- and farming communities.

The discussion highlighted that while policies and solutions are emerging, cost barriers, knowledge gaps, and implementation challenges must be addressed through collaboration, innovation, and targeted support mechanisms.



3.2.5. Conclusion

The session highlighted the urgent need for climate adaptation, green transition initiatives, and bioeconomy development to address Africa's high vulnerability to climate change. With much of the continent dependent on rain-fed agriculture, transformative models that strengthen resilience, lower emissions, and support sustainable growth are essential.

A central takeaway was the critical role of public–private partnerships (PPPs) in accelerating the green transition. Presentations showed how collaboration among government, private sector, development partners, academia, and communities enables scalable solutions—from green infrastructure and bio-fertilizer production to sustainable agri-processing and climate-smart technologies. Successful examples included Kenya's green-economy reforms, the 15-billion-tree programme, county climate units, and MESPT's circular agro-processing and green financing initiatives.

The session also emphasized the potential of biomass-based and bioeconomy value chains to drive innovation, job creation, and regenerative resource use. Examples included converting agricultural waste into fertilizer, promoting indigenous crops, advancing BSF and Azolla technologies, and expanding training through innovation hubs—positioning the bioeconomy as both an environmental and economic opportunity, especially for youth and women.

Key challenges persist, including high costs of green technologies, gaps in policy implementation, limited farmer involvement in policy processes, weak certification and market systems, and shortages in green skills. Many farmers already practice sustainability without realising it, highlighting the need for continuous capacity building and improved knowledge exchange.

County perspectives, such as from Kisumu, showed the value of decentralized systems, extension services, e-vouchers, bio-fertilizers, and financial partnerships, in delivering climate solutions at the grassroots.

Lastly, the discussions underscored that a just and inclusive green transition relies on strong multi-stakeholder collaboration. Governments must create enabling policies, research institutions must build green skills and innovation ecosystems, the private sector must adopt circular models, and communities must co-create practical solutions.

Overall, the session called for a systemic shift toward regenerative, circular, and bioeconomic models that restore ecosystems, strengthen food systems, and expand equitable economic opportunities across Africa.



Championing the Green Transition "Concluding Session 2, the panel emphasised the critical intersection of the bioeconomy and climate change adaptation. The speakers agreed that integrating green innovations is essential for future-proofing market systems and driving sustainable, inclusive growth."

Pictured: The Session 2 panel, including from left Doreen Kinoti (MESPT), Noel Barasa (Onja Uone Isaac Ogutu (Ripple Effect)), Rebecca Amukhoye (MESPT), Bonventure Mwanzi (Pwani University), and Prof. Thomas Rewe (Pwani University),

3.3. Session 3: Exhibitors

Seven exhibitors showcased their innovations during the Symposium, reflecting the diversity and growth of Kenya's green transition, bioeconomy, and climate-smart entrepreneurship landscape. The exhibitors included Soldier Fly Diverse Limited (SFD), Ziada Solutions, Ushindi Youth, Garithe Mangrove Conservation and Nuts Value Addition (GMCNVA), Rongai Acacia, KTL Farming Limited, and Onja Uone. Details of each organization are outlined below.



3.3.1. Exhibitor Organizations' Profiles

3.3.1.1. Soldier Diverse

Soldier Fly Diverse Limited (SFD) is a pioneering agritech enterprise in Kenya that advances circular-economy innovation, sustainable protein technologies, and decentralized waste-to-value systems. Established in 2023 and operating along the Kakamega–Webuye Road, SFD responds to rising feed costs, organic waste accumulation, and youth unemployment by leveraging Black Soldier Fly (BSF) farming as a scalable climate-smart solution.

With a mission to become Africa's largest protein technology marketing agency, SFD supports smallholder farmers through:

- Standardized BSF rearing systems
- Modular starter kits
- Contract farming models
- AI-powered farmer support

The company has trained over 600 farmers, distributed 1,200 BSF kits, and now operates across 16 counties.

SFD's product line includes Kimbiza All-Purpose Feed, derived from pure BSF protein, and BSF Balm, an innovative organic skincare product gaining strong market traction. Their work also covers solar-powered hybrid dryers, turnkey BSF farm retrofits, and farmer market-linkage strengthening. Through renewable energy, innovation, and youth-focused partnerships, SFD is transforming agribusiness, creating jobs, and contributing to a protein-secure, waste-resilient future.

3.3.1.2. ZIADA Solutions

Ziada Solutions is a climate-smart, circular agri-processing enterprise revolutionizing the banana value chain in Kenya. The organization upcycles banana stems and other farm waste into:

- Natural fibres
- Biochar
- Eco-paper
- Sustainable lifestyle products (rugs, baskets, furniture)

Their model enhances environmental conservation while boosting rural livelihoods.



Working with the Taita-Taveta Banana Cooperative Society, which represents more than 1,500 smallholder farmers, Ziada purchases raw materials at above-market prices and converts them into high-value products. The enterprise processes up to 120 tonnes of banana waste monthly and employs 45 staff members.

Ziada Solutions exhibited at the Symposium to showcase their circular innovations and engage potential partners, investors, technology innovators, and farmer groups, to support the scaling of their portable fibre-extraction technology to additional communities.

3.3.1.3. Ushindi Youth

The Ushindi Youth Marketing Cooperative, located in Nabiswa Ward, Kiminini Sub-County, promotes climate-smart agriculture and provides cost-effective solutions for farmers. Under the leadership of Chairperson Benard Wanjala, the cooperative focuses on innovations that lower production costs while expanding economic opportunities for youth and women.

Their flagship innovation, the Fireless Brooder, is:

- Eco-friendly
- Made from recycled plastics and local materials
- Designed to raise day-old chicks up to one month old without charcoal or electricity

The brooder is compact, hygienic, energy-saving, and biosecure, with integrated drinkers and feeders to enhance efficiency and reduce mortality.

Through this innovation, Ushindi Youth support sustainable poultry farming and broadens employment opportunities. Adoption continues to rise as more farmers experience its benefits.

3.3.1.4. Garithe Mangrove Conservation and Nuts Value Addition (GMCNVA)

GMCNVA, a community-based organization in Garithe Village, Kilifi County, represents one of Kenya's most successful coastal green enterprises. Founded in 2009 by coconut farmers, the organization has expanded into a key model of sustainable community-driven development.

Its work spans:

- Mangrove conservation and shoreline protection
- Coconut value addition
- Apiculture (honey production)



Signature products include Lainisha Coconut Oil, Ubora Animal Feeds, and Eco Gold Honey.

With support from MESPT and the Kilifi County Government, GMCNVA has empowered more than 120 members, 60% of whom are women, while advancing gender equality, inclusive growth, and innovation. Through ecosystem restoration and value-addition initiatives, the organization strengthens climate resilience and generates green jobs for coastal communities.

3.3.1.5. Rongai Acacia

Rongai Acacia Dairies is a cooperative society established in 2019 to promote sustainable income generation for dairy farmers in Rongai Sub-County, Nakuru County. The cooperative has grown from 58 founding members to 852 registered farmers across Visoi, Soin, Mosop, and Menengai West.

Their operations include:

- Milk aggregation and marketing
- Value addition (pasteurized milk, yoghurt, mursik)
- Farmer training and advisory services
- Linkages to input and service providers

In partnership with the County Government of Nakuru and other stakeholders, Rongai Acacia achieved an annual turnover of KES 66.7 million in 2024, facilitated by climate-resilient fodder systems, improved governance, and circular dairy farming practices.

3.3.1.6. Judy Okumu – KTL Farming Limited

KTL Farming PLC, founded in 2014 and incorporated in 2019, is a leading agribusiness specializing in high-quality avocado production, processing, and export. The company exports to European markets and supports more than **6,000 contracted farmers** across eight counties.

KTL provides:

- Certified avocado seedlings
- Farm advisory services
- Mentorship and training on green transformation
- Avocado oil extraction and value addition



Its partnership with MESPT has enabled expansion into the NOREB region, improved farmer group cohesion, enhanced access to finance, and facilitated the installation of a **solar-powered avocado oil extraction plant**.

KTL has supported the planting of **over 650,000 avocado trees** and continues to advance food safety, traceability, IPM adoption, and climate-smart farming. The business also prioritizes youth and women employment through its expanding value-chain opportunities.

3.3.1.7. David Situma – Onja Uone

Onja Uone Ltd, based on the slopes of Mt. Elgon, is an agricultural enterprise that creates sustainable value for rural communities through macadamia processing, farmer training, and environmental restoration.

The company:

- Provides a reliable market for raw macadamia nuts
- Trains farmers on high productivity and sustainable practices
- Offers field extension services
- Propagates grafted macadamia seedlings to increase forest cover

Onja Uone is committed to women's economic empowerment by creating job opportunities that promote income stability and independence. By encouraging macadamia tree planting, the company contributes to Kenya's national **10% forest cover goal** and strengthens climate resilience in the region.

3.3.2. Exhibitors' Elevator Pitch

A dynamic one-minute **“elevator pitch” session** allowed exhibitors to present their innovations to potential private-sector investors. Each exhibitor was introduced and invited to the stage, where a countdown timer created an energetic and interactive environment.

The pitches showcased a wide range of green and circular solutions, including:

- **Insect-based animal feeds and organic oils** (Soldier Diverse)
- **Recycled-plastic fireless brooders** for poultry farmers (Ushindi Youth)
- **Coconut-based value-added products** (GMCNVA and Nala Foods)
- **Avocado value-chain innovations** (KTL Farming Ltd.)
- **Macadamia processing and market expansion** (Onja Uone)

Exhibitors highlighted their business models, environmental contributions, community impact, job creation efforts, and funding requirements. They encouraged attendees

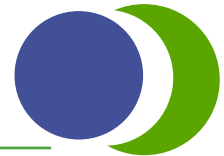


to visit their exhibition booths during the break to explore their products and potential collaboration opportunities.

The session concluded with applause and an invitation for participants to engage further with exhibitors in the designated exhibition area.



Exhibitors in Action: One-minute elevator pitches brought to life, showcasing insect-based feeds, recycled-plastic brooders, coconut and avocado innovations, and macadamia processing solutions. The dynamic session highlighted green and circular enterprises driving community impact, job creation, and sustainable agri-business growth.



3.3.3. *Exhibition Booth*

The exhibition booth area provided a vibrant and interactive marketplace where exhibitors showcased a wide range of nature-based solutions, climate-smart technologies, and value-added products aligned with the themes of the Symposium. This space served not only as a display arena but also as a practical demonstration of the commercial viability, scalability, and community-level impact of regenerative agriculture and circular economy models discussed throughout the plenary and panel sessions.

Across the booths, participants explored innovations spanning insect-based protein technologies, organic oils, recycled-material brooders, bio-circular products, and high-value tree crops. Exhibitors such as Soldier Diverse demonstrated climate-smart waste-to-value systems through Black Soldier Fly farming, while Ziada Solutions showcased the potential of transforming banana waste into eco-friendly fibres and artisanal products. Ushindi Youth displayed their recycled-plastic fireless brooders, highlighting how low-cost innovations can reduce energy consumption and improve poultry productivity for smallholder farmers.

GMCNVA presented coconut-derived oils, animal feed, and honey products that link mangrove conservation to sustainable income generation, while KTL Farming Limited exhibited avocado-based products that represent climate-smart value addition and export readiness. Onja Uone, with its macadamia seedlings and processed products, demonstrated how agroforestry can support both environmental restoration and rural enterprise growth.

The exhibition space created opportunities for:

- **Business-to-business connections**, enabling exhibitors to link with investors, processors, and technology partners.
- **Knowledge exchange**, where farmers and extension officers learned about new technologies, practices, and market opportunities.
- **Showcasing youth- and women-led enterprises**, reinforcing the role of inclusive innovation in the green transition.
- **Demonstrating regenerative and circular economic models**, making the concepts from the plenary sessions' tangible and relatable.

Participants engaged directly with prototypes, sample products, demonstration kits, and marketing materials, enabling them to appreciate how community enterprises are applying circularity, bioeconomy principles, and clean technology to solve real-world challenges. Many attendees expressed interest in adopting the showcased solutions within their counties or value chains, while others sought partnerships for scaling up production or distribution.



Overall, the exhibition booth area played a pivotal role in bridging dialogue with practice, illustrating how green transition strategies are already generating livelihoods, reducing waste, restoring ecosystems, and creating market-ready products across Kenya's agri-food and bioeconomy sectors.



Exhibitors Photo Collage: Innovating for a Greener Future Showcasing climate-smart enterprises and circular solutions driving sustainable growth and community resilience.



3.4. Session 4: Innovative Agri-Finance and Investment for Resilient Food Systems

This session featured a keynote address followed by a panel discussion.

3.4.1. Keynote Speech on Innovative Agri-Finance and Investment



In his keynote address, **Victor Ndiege, Chief Executive Officer of Kenya Climate Ventures (KCV)**, introduced the organisation as a specialised climate-focused fund manager and impact investor. Established in 2016, KCV has

recently become Kenya's first licensed private climate fund manager. Since its inception, it has deployed capital and technical assistance across a growing portfolio of climate-smart enterprises, with agribusiness representing the majority of its investments, underscoring the sector's pivotal role in driving inclusive and resilient growth.

Victor framed innovative agri-finance as a critical ecosystem enabler, extending beyond the provision of capital to encompass capacity building, technical support, and tailored financial structures. He highlighted the diverse blended instruments employed—grants, loans, guarantees, equity, convertible debt, and other concessional forms, designed to de-risk early-stage agribusinesses and attract further investment. Institutions such as MESPT, KCV, MEDA, and the Africa Guarantee Fund were noted as catalytic actors, particularly in supporting women, youth, and underserved entrepreneurs to gain market traction and strengthen value-chain competitiveness.

He emphasized that effective deployment of agri-finance must be aligned with production and market cycles across diverse value chains, from fisheries to horticulture and staple crops. Financing models, he argued, should be integrated into supply-chain and value-chain structures to enhance efficiency, reduce risk, and build resilience. Importantly, he cautioned against one-size-fits-all approaches, stressing



the need for responsive, context-specific structuring that meets the actual needs of farmers, processors, and market actors.

Victor concluded by underscoring that resilient food systems depend on collective action. Market systems thrive only when all stakeholders, the public sector, private investors, development partners, and farming communities, work collaboratively to create shared value. He noted that these themes would be explored further in the subsequent panel discussion, which would examine how collaborative financing models can accelerate Africa's agricultural transformation.

3.4.2. Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

Moderator **Mark Masai** opened the session on *Innovative Agri-Finance and Investment for Resilient Food Systems* by introducing the distinguished panelists and highlighting their expertise before inviting them to share insights from their professional experiences.

The panelists included:

1. **Patrick Lumumba – Group Director of Capacity Development, Africa Guarantee Fund** A development finance specialist with over 20 years of experience working with financial institutions and international development organizations across Africa. His expertise lies in impact and capacity enhancement within Africa's development finance value chains.
2. **Esther Moyi – CEO, ECLOF Kenya** With more than 20 years of leadership in microfinance, she has championed financial inclusion and community empowerment. As CEO of ECLOF Kenya, she is committed to delivering inclusive financial services that improve livelihoods.
3. **Monicah Asuna – Director of Planning, National Treasury** An economist with 22 years of experience in resource mobilization, policy formulation, and strategic planning. She heads the UN Agencies Division and the Development Effectiveness Secretariat, bringing deep expertise in government-led financial reforms.
4. **Janet Mumassabba – Senior Regional Operations Manager, MEDA** A development specialist with over a decade of experience in SME growth and market systems strengthening. She leads innovative agri-finance strategies aimed at building resilient food systems across regions.



3.4.3. Moderator-Led Panel Discussions

The panel brought together experts from finance, development, and government to explore solutions to the financial challenges facing smallholder farmers and the wider agricultural sector. Moderator Mark Masai guided the discussion, encouraging panelists to draw on their professional expertise and lived experiences.



Patrick Lumumba (Africa Guarantee Fund) opened by stressing that investors assess agricultural ventures not only for commercial viability but also for their social impact, including inclusivity, gender equity, and environmental sustainability. He

underscored the importance of credit guarantees and technical assistance in de-risking investments, particularly for women, youth, and climate-resilient projects. Patrick highlighted the effectiveness of blended finance models, combining concessional debt, risk-sharing mechanisms, and technical support, in reaching high-risk regions. Through such models, more than 32,000 smallholder farmers have accessed microfinance and value-chain financing, demonstrating scalable and sustainable impact.

Esther Moyi (ECLOF Kenya) emphasized the need for cash-flow-based financial products tailored to smallholder farmers. These products reduce reliance on collateral and align financing with farmers' income cycles. Through partnerships with cooperatives and technical support from MESPT, ECLOF has developed value-chain financing solutions, particularly in the dairy sector. These innovations provide visibility into farmers' cash flows, enabling reduced collateral requirements and addressing the core challenge of agricultural finance: designing products that reflect farmers' realities rather than traditional collateral-based lending.



Janet Mumassabba (MEDA) offered the donor perspective, stressing the importance of stronger coordination among development partners to avoid fragmented interventions and to support scalable solutions. Drawing



on MEDA's experience across multiple regions, she highlighted the value of joint planning, shared learning, and complementary investments, such as collaborations with the Canadian government, in addressing systemic challenges and reducing duplication. Janet argued that sustainable change in agri-finance requires multi-sector collaboration, aligning donors, governments, private investors, and communities to drive long-term, impactful financing solutions.



Monicah Asuna (National Treasury) highlighted the government's role in creating an enabling environment for agricultural finance. She pointed to macroeconomic stability, clear regulatory frameworks, and robust credit information systems as essential for reducing

lending risks. Monicah outlined ongoing government reforms, including the national credit guarantee scheme, designed to strengthen credit-sharing systems and reduce default risks. By reinforcing these foundational systems, governments can foster a more transparent and supportive ecosystem for agricultural investment.



Across all contributions, a recurring theme emerged: **multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential to building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems**. Panellists agreed that effective agri-finance solutions must integrate:

- Commercial incentives
- Technical support
- Enabling policies
- Well-targeted interventions

Such an approach ensures that financial instruments, whether blended finance or value-chain financing, are not only sustainable but also equitable, particularly for marginalized groups such as women and youth.

3.4.4. Participant Questions, Answers and Interactive Discussion

During the interactive session, participants raised thought-provoking questions that prompted detailed responses from the panel.

3.3.1.8. Participant Questions



Mathews Wanjala, TradeMark Africa

Mathews Wanjala began by asking whether access to finance should be driven by ideas or money first. He raised this question by referencing recent initiatives in Uganda and Kenya, where large numbers of young people are given financial support to start businesses, often with minimal focus on building business skills. In Uganda, for example, the

president launched a program offering 100,000 Uganda shillings funding to youth, while in Kenya, a similar initiative aimed to support youth with Kenya shillings 50,000.00. Mathews argued that simply providing money without first developing business capacity and identifying market needs is not an effective strategy. He emphasized that financial support should act as a catalyst after entrepreneurs have acquired the necessary skills and understanding to run a business. He asked the panelists to consider how governments could make such programs more sustainable by focusing on business training and capacity building alongside financial assistance.



Prof. Rewe's question focused on the challenges faced by consumers in supporting the products created by producers. He pointed out the issue of consumer behavior, where consumers often choose cheaper, lower-quality products, undermining the efforts of producers who invest in quality and healthy goods. He asked whether the panelists were also supporting consumer education to help producers access niche markets. His concern was that without consumer buy-in, even well-financed, quality products could fail in the market. He was particularly interested in how financial institutions or organizations were addressing consumer awareness in the broader context of supporting producers.

Dr. Ndung'u expanded on the sociocultural factors influencing the success of agricultural businesses, particularly for women. He noted that the economy often limits women's involvement, especially when it comes to scaling businesses beyond subsistence levels. He argued that while laws may not explicitly hinder women's economic participation, societal norms and roles often limit their capacity to scale businesses. He also discussed the risks of framing small-scale farmers solely as entrepreneurs, as it may push them into unfamiliar and unsustainable business practices. He cautioned against overly broad affirmative action programs, suggesting that such interventions might disrupt established market systems and potentially harm small businesses. His concern was that indiscriminate support could lead to dependency and the collapse of well-established models. He emphasized the need for more targeted, thoughtful interventions that complement existing efforts.

3.3.1.9. Panel Responses

Patrick responded by explaining that his microfinance institution places a significant emphasis on financial literacy through a four-week training program for entrepreneurs. While the primary focus is on improving business management skills, they also incorporate elements of consumer awareness and safe product use through partnerships with external consultants. He noted that, although microfinance institutions often do not directly educate end-users, NGOs may be better positioned to address consumer education. He acknowledged that understanding market dynamics, including consumer behavior, is crucial for small businesses and requires continuous investment in both business development and market access training.

Janet (MEDA) and Esther Moyi (ECLOF) on Mathews Wanjala and Prof. Thomas Were's Questions:

In response to Mathews Wanjala and Prof. Thomas Were's questions, both Janet and Esther emphasized the importance of understanding market needs and developing sustainable business models, alongside providing financial support.



Janet from MEDA shared how their organization tailor's financial products to meet the specific needs of their partners. She highlighted a partnership with IRIHA, where they introduced cash flow models to enhance the agricultural value chain. The main challenge, however, was identifying a reliable consumer base and ensuring sufficient demand for the product. Janet noted that understanding market preferences is crucial for business success, citing examples in both agriculture and aquaculture, where issues such as the quality and size of products often don't meet market requirements. She also mentioned that retail challenges, particularly with delayed payments from supermarkets, have hindered business growth despite consumer demand.

Esther from ECLOF emphasized that their organization focuses on training entrepreneurs through a four-week financial literacy program, which helps increase business awareness and improve management skills. Although ECLOF doesn't directly provide consumer product safety training, Esther noted that such topics are often discussed in their training sessions, with support from external consultants. She stressed the importance of building business capacity, including integrating climate resilience and market access strategies, before providing financial support. Esther agreed that more investment is needed to make these initiatives sustainable, acknowledging that NGOs may be better suited to educate end-users, while microfinance institutions like ECLOF focus on empowering entrepreneurs with business skills.

Together, both panelists underscored the need for a holistic approach—one that includes market understanding, capacity building, and targeted support—to ensure that financial initiatives for young entrepreneurs are not just about providing money, but also about preparing them for long-term business success.

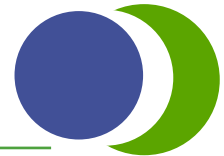
3.4.5. Conclusion

The session on innovative agri-finance and investment underscored the central role of multi-stakeholder collaboration in addressing the financial challenges facing agriculture. Panelists emphasized the need for financial instruments that reflect farmers' realities, such as cash-flow-based products and blended finance models, combined with technical assistance and capacity-building to reduce risks and expand access, particularly for women, youth, and smallholder farmers in climate-resilient sectors.

The discussion reinforced the importance of government and development partners in creating an enabling ecosystem through effective regulatory frameworks, improved credit-sharing systems, and coordinated donor support. The session concluded with a call for sustained collaboration across public, private, and development actors to scale inclusive financing models that strengthen resilience and sustainability in Africa's food systems.



Session Close: Agri-Finance and Investment for Resilient Food Systems *Panelists and moderator gather for a group photo following a dynamic session on inclusive agri-finance. From left: Victor Ndiege (Speaker), Monicah Asuna, Esther Moyi, Dr. Janet Mumassabba, Patrick Lumumba (Panellists), and Mark Masai (Moderator). The session emphasized multi-stakeholder collaboration, tailored financial instruments, and sustainable investment strategies for resilient food systems.*



PART FOUR: BREAK-AWAY SESSION

4.1. Session 5: Inclusive Leadership, Empowering Youth, Promoting Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion, and Social Equity

4.1.1. *Introduction*

This break-away session was designed to spark dialogue on how inclusive leadership can transform market systems and community development. Building on earlier discussions around resilience and agri-finance, the session emphasized that empowering youth, advancing gender equality, promoting disability inclusion, and strengthening social equity are not peripheral issues but central drivers of sustainable growth. Participants were invited to reflect on structural barriers, share practical solutions, and explore how diverse voices can shape decision-making spaces.

With this framing, the moderator introduced the panel of distinguished speakers whose expertise spans international development, entrepreneurship, program management, and market systems resilience.

4.1.2. *Speaker Introduction*

Wairimu Munyinyi-Wahome is the Country Director of Heifer International Kenya, bringing over 20 years of leadership experience in international development across Africa and the Middle East. She has held senior roles with organizations such as Cuso International, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam, Progressio UK, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and the Coalition on Violence Against Women.

Her career has focused on advancing inclusive, accountable, and sustainable development, with a strong emphasis on community-driven change, women's empowerment, and good governance. She holds:

- A Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Political Science
- An Honours degree in Development Studies
- Advanced training in public policy and management

She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Human Resource Management and recently completed the Global Executive Leadership Initiative's Women Leaders Programme

4.1.3. Introduction to inclusive leadership, empowering youth, promoting gender equality, disability inclusion, and social equity

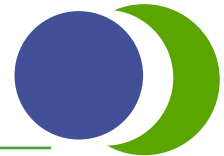


The presentation by Wairimu Wahome, Country Director of Heifer International Kenya, highlighted the central role of inclusive leadership, youth empowerment, gender equality, disability inclusion, and social equity in strengthening Africa's agricultural and market systems. She emphasized that true

inclusion goes beyond token representation and requires intentional structures that position women, youth, and persons with disabilities as active decision-makers. Drawing on her extensive development experience, she underscored that social capital, relationships, networks, trust, and collective agency are as critical as financial capital in creating resilient, sustainable systems where all individuals are valued participants in their communities.

Wairimu began by reflecting on Heifer International's longstanding legacy, tracing it back to its founding in 1944 and the transformative "passing on the gift" model. Families received livestock not as charity but as a pathway to sustainable nutrition and income, with each household expected to pass on the first female calf to another family, embedding dignity, empowerment, and multiplication of impact. Today, Heifer Africa frames its mission around "powering potential," centering people as the most essential form of capital. She cautioned that when development initiatives overlook social capital, interventions may appear sound on paper but remain disconnected from community realities, especially for youth and women.

Wairimu noted that many systems still operate between exclusion and segregation, far from the genuine integration needed for equitable markets. True inclusion means creating systems in which women, men, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups actively participate and influence core decision-making rather than being accommodated on the periphery. She illustrated this through an example from dairy cooperatives that established Women's and Youth Councils. While well-intentioned, such structures can inadvertently isolate these groups if they do not have voice and influence in the main governance bodies.



She highlighted the complexity of gender equality, shaped by cultural norms, policies, and social expectations, and emphasized that gender and social inclusion require continuous, evidence-based analysis rather than one-off efforts. Persistent gender dynamics within agricultural value chains, such as poultry, show that women often manage enterprises during early stages, only for men to assume control once ventures become profitable. This pattern reflects systemic undervaluation of unpaid labour contributed by women and youth, labour that sustains entire value chains yet remains largely invisible.

To move toward meaningful inclusion, Wairimu outlined practical, actionable strategies:

- **Community mapping and stakeholder analysis:** Identify who participates, who is excluded, and why, to ground interventions in lived realities.
- **Universal design and reasonable accommodations:** Integrate accessibility into product development, packaging, communication, and service delivery so people of different abilities, genders, ages, and backgrounds can benefit.
- **Eliminating stigma and challenging entrenched norms:** Address socio-cultural biases, recognize unpaid labour, and shift organizational attitudes to value diverse contributions.
- **Deliberate engagement in governance:** Ensure women and youth are embedded in core decision-making structures across corporations and value chains, not relegated to parallel councils.
- **Continuous review and adaptation:** Revisit processes, governance arrangements, and delivery models to embed inclusion as a sustained practice, backed by qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Focusing on youth, Wairimu noted their paradoxical position: while young people constitute a significant share of both the global and Kenyan population, they face high unemployment, limited labour force participation, and underrepresentation in leadership. She stressed that meaningful youth participation, not tokenism, is essential for equitable market systems, reinforcing the idea that “who leads the market defines who benefits from it.”

As a practical example of youth inclusion, she presented the AYuTe Africa NextGen Initiative, which identifies and scales youth-led agritech enterprises through financing, mentorship, and market linkages. Since 2021, the program has supported over 19 startups, invested more than USD 1.5 million, and reached millions across eight African countries. Wairimu urged stakeholders to champion the initiative by offering mentorship and market opportunities, noting that Africa’s socio-economic transformation depends on empowering its young population to become co-creators of market solutions rather than beneficiaries.



Overall, Wairimu's presentation reinforced that inclusion is not an add-on to market development; it is its foundation. By valuing social capital, challenging structural inequities, and elevating women and youth into leadership roles, development actors can build food systems that are both resilient and just.

4.1.4. Session Delivery Approach

The **Knowledge Café Roundtable** convened a diverse group of stakeholders for an engaging and dynamic discussion on key issues of inclusive leadership, youth empowerment, gender equality, disability inclusion, and social equity.



Breakout Group Activity: *Small groups dive into participatory exercises, mapping structural barriers and proposing actionable strategies for youth, women, and persons with disabilities.*



The central focus was on how market systems could be restructured to elevate women, youth, and persons with disabilities from being mere beneficiaries to active leaders and decision-makers.

Participants explored innovative cross-sector partnerships involving government, the private sector, civil society, and donors, identifying models with potential for scaling inclusive leadership and ensuring equitable access to markets. A major theme of the discussion was the structural barriers that currently prevent youth from having a meaningful influence in market governance, as well as practical solutions to dismantle these barriers.

The conversation also centred around the development of inclusive business models that promote fair participation in the market, and strategies to move institutions from token efforts at inclusion to genuine leadership roles for women and persons with disabilities. The role of men as allies in advancing gender equality and disability inclusion was stressed as crucial for driving systemic change within market systems.

The session unfolded through a combination of a PowerPoint presentation, a knowledge café roundtable discussion, and a panel. During the roundtable, each of the three subthemes, gender equality, youth empowerment, and inclusive leadership, was allocated 15 minutes for discussion, allowing all participants to contribute.

4.1.5. Knowledge Café Roundtable Discussion

This was an **action-oriented segment** where participants worked in groups to address guided questions. The moderator steered the process, ensuring that each question was tackled systematically. Teams worked on one question at a time, dedicating approximately five minutes per question.



Photo *Participants engage in vibrant roundtable discussions during the “Building Opportunities for Kenya’s Youth in Agriculture and Agribusiness” workshop—co-creating inclusive strategies for youth-led transformation in market systems.*



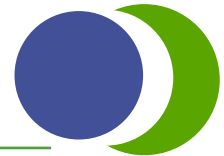
- **Group Reflections:** Each team captured their reflections on flipcharts and pinned them on the wall for collective visibility.
- **Theme Leaders' Role:** The theme leaders moved around the room, reviewing the flipcharts and gathering key insights from each group.
- **Synthesis and Presentation:** These reflections were then consolidated, with theme leaders preparing to present the highlights during the subsequent panel discussion session.



Photo Caption: Theme leaders scan through flipcharts pinned on the wall, gathering reflections from each group during the Knowledge Café roundtable. These insights were later synthesized and presented in the panel discussion, highlighting actionable “quick wins” on inclusive leadership, youth empowerment, gender equality, and disability inclusion.

The roundtable discussions focused on:

- Inclusive leadership and system transformation
- Youth empowerment and intergenerational leadership
- Gender equality and disability inclusion



This participatory approach ensured that every attendee contributed to shaping the dialogue, moving the session beyond passive listening to shared ownership of the inclusion agenda.

The roundtable ended with theme leaders noting down the key reflections from each group on flipcharts, which were pinned on the wall for collective visibility. These insights were not presented immediately; instead, they were carried forward into the panel discussion.

4.1.6. Transition to Panel Discussion and Panellist Introductions

Following the synthesis of insights from the roundtable discussions, the session transitioned into a panel discussion. This provided an opportunity for the theme leaders and experts to expand on the key points, debate practical solutions, and highlight pathways for embedding inclusive leadership, youth empowerment, gender equality, and disability inclusion into market systems.

Mark Masai introduced the panel moderator, **Thomas Were**, who then in turn introduced the panelists:

- 1. Thomas Were – Moderator, Board of Trustees Member & Development Consultant** Thomas Were is a development and strategic management professional with extensive experience in agriculture, agribusiness, value chains, and market systems resilience. He has worked with FAO, SNV, USAID, IFAD, AfDB, GIZ, and Mastercard Foundation on development programmes across the region. He has served on boards supporting enterprise development and is Co-Founder and Director of Agile Consulting. As moderator, he guided the panel discussion, ensuring that reflections from the roundtable were expanded into actionable insights.
- 2. Subira Zingizi – Entrepreneur & Founder, Nala Foods** Subira Zingizi is an entrepreneur and business coach, and the founder of Nala Foods, an agro-processing enterprise empowering women and youth in Kwale. She leads entrepreneurship and digital skills programmes including *Digital Cubs* and *Empowerment*. She supports micro-entrepreneurs to grow their income and market presence. Her work focuses on youth inclusion, gender equality, and local economic empowerment.
- 3. Irene Nduta Gathinji – Program Management & Change Leadership Specialist** Irene Nduta Gathinji is a specialist in program management, change leadership, and inclusive development. She has led major USAID and



foundation-funded initiatives such as *Ubora Mashinani* and the *Yetu Initiative*, strengthening civil society organisations and supporting grassroots resource mobilisation. She holds a postgraduate diploma in Women's Studies and extensive training in gender and inclusion. As Vice Chair of MESPT, she promotes financial inclusion, strong agri-food value chains, and green, inclusive growth.

4. **Wairimu Wahome– Country Director, Heifer International Kenya (Speaker)** - Wairimu Wahome was also invited to sit in the panel, bringing her extensive experience in inclusive leadership, women's empowerment, and governance, and building on her keynote reflections earlier in the session.

4.1.7. Discussion Outcomes

Moderated by Thomas, this session examined how market systems can evolve to become more inclusive by intentionally positioning women, youth, and persons with disabilities as leaders and decision-makers rather than passive beneficiaries. Building on earlier table conversations, the dialogue sought to highlight practical pathways for system transformation through inclusive leadership.

Thomas opened the session by framing the forthcoming discussion as an exploration of diverse perspectives on inclusion, leadership, and systemic change. He emphasized that the conversation would move beyond abstract principles to consider actionable strategies for embedding equity within market systems.

To deepen the exchange, Thomas then invited the panellists to share reflections from the roundtable exercises, each addressing one thematic area. These contributions drew on both group insights and the panellists' professional expertise, creating a bridge between participant voices and expert analysis.

4.1.8. Thematic Group Reflections

4.1.8.1. Inclusive Leadership & Market System Transformation

Wairimu began her reflections by summarizing the extensive contributions made during the group discussions. She highlighted that the central question guiding the conversation was:

“How can market systems be intentionally designed to position women, youth, and persons with disabilities as leaders and decision-makers rather than beneficiaries?”



She emphasized that the most consistent message across the contributions was the importance of understanding context. Effective market research and analysis must deliberately examine how women, youth, and persons with disabilities can be positioned at the center of market systems. This intentional lens should be applied



from the very beginning so that all subsequent interventions are informed by the realities, strengths, and barriers experienced by these groups.

Wairimu stressed that beyond designing actions, institutions must also be willing to invest in them—financially, structurally, and politically. Women, youth, and persons with disabilities must be recognized not merely as participants in the system, but as drivers and owners of productive resources, shaping and benefiting from market opportunities.

She noted that several specific recommendations emerged from the dialogue. These included the need for affirmative finance action—not just general affirmative action—

ensuring that marginalized groups have equitable access to financial resources. One proposal suggested establishing a Chamber of Commerce dedicated to representing and supporting women, youth, and persons with disabilities. While participants acknowledged that such an idea may attract differing views, it was nonetheless identified as an innovative means of strengthening inclusive leadership advocacy.

On the question of cross-sector partnerships—involving government, private sector, civil society, and workers—Wairimu reported that participants cited numerous examples of promising models. Foundations were highlighted for their ongoing efforts to integrate inclusion into market programs. A human rights campaign was referenced as a strong reminder that inclusion is fundamentally a human rights issue. Participants also pointed to collective finance models as effective mechanisms for pooling and managing wealth among marginalized groups.

Government initiatives aimed at including women, youth, and persons with disabilities were also discussed. Wairimu noted that while these programs show significant potential, their success is highly dependent on accountable implementation.



Participants emphasized that accountability, transparency, and political will are critical to achieving meaningful results.

Access to finance was identified as a major barrier, especially for persons with disabilities, who require both financial resources and supportive accommodations. Wairimu recalled one contribution that challenged the assumption that women and persons with disabilities must “prove” their competence before receiving support. She noted that such expectations are rarely imposed on men. Requiring women or persons with disabilities to meet additional tests of competence undermines their confidence and perpetuates structural inequality.

She concluded by underscoring a powerful insight: *“Women and persons with disabilities are not underrepresented because they lack competence; they are underrepresented because they have not been given fair and equitable opportunities to participate in leadership”*.

Wairimu’s reflections reaffirmed that inclusive leadership must be rooted in deliberate design, systemic investment, and the dismantling of biases that restrict access and agency.

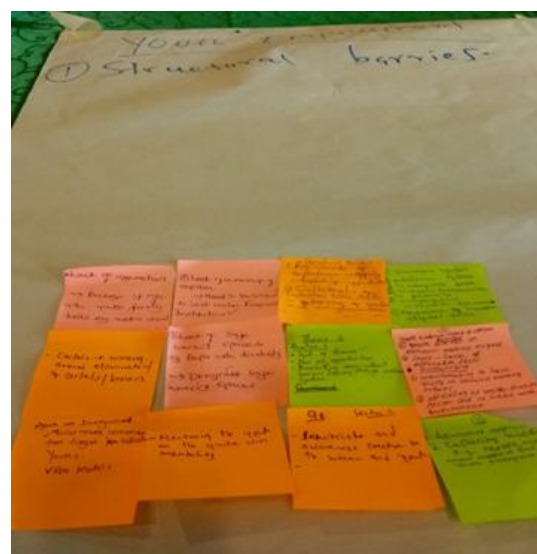
4.1.8.2. Youth Empowerment & Intergenerational Leadership

Subira began by reaffirming the demographic reality that youth make up nearly 75% of the population, underscoring their centrality to market systems and leadership spaces. She then addressed the guiding question:

“What structural barriers prevent young people from meaningfully influencing market governance, and how can they be smarter in navigating these systems?”

Drawing from the group discussions, Subira highlighted several key barriers. First, youth often lack ownership and access to finance, with capital and credit requirements, such as collateral, structured in ways that exclude them. She also noted that information shared by stakeholders is frequently not youth-friendly, especially when it is overly text-heavy or not adapted to formats youth actually use.

Subira emphasized that many existing market systems embed hidden barriers, including stringent experience requirements and procedural norms that young people cannot meet. She added that youth frequently struggle with the “quick wins” mentality, a



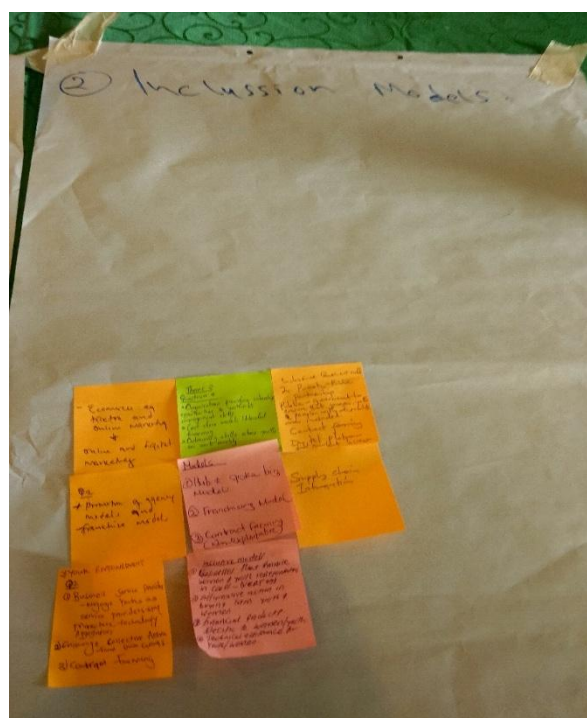


mindset shaped by social pressures or expectations of rapid success, which can hinder long-term strategic engagement.

Another major barrier she identified is youth exclusion from decision-making processes. Despite being the majority, youth rarely sit at tables where market governance decisions are made. This is compounded by a shortage of mentorship and role models, leaving young people without the support systems needed to enter and influence economic spaces. She also noted that many initiatives claim to target youth, yet youth are only used as implementers rather than leaders or co-creators. Finally, sociocultural norms continue to affect how youth perceive themselves and how they are perceived in broader ecosystems, influencing their participation and confidence.

Turning to the second discussion question, inclusive models that can strengthen youth participation, Subira highlighted a number of promising approaches raised by participants. These include building youth skills through internships, promoting agency and franchise models, and supporting youth to explore online platforms and digital spaces. She cited examples such as TikTok and digital marketing, noting their growing relevance and suggesting humorously that the next symposium may well be hosted on TikTok.

Participants also emphasized engaging youth as service providers within value chains, such as in utilities, marketing, extension services, and aggregation. Strengthening collective action was another strong recommendation, encouraging youth to form groups or cooperatives to build influence and access shared opportunities.



The discussion further highlighted the importance of creating products and services specifically tailored for youth and women, strengthening supportive business models, offering expanded technical assistance, and deepening supply chain integration to ensure youth are not confined to end-stage roles but incorporated throughout the value chain.

Subira closed by noting that these reflections captured the full spectrum of participant contributions to the three guiding questions, offering a comprehensive picture of both the structural barriers facing youth and the practical models that can drive meaningful intergenerational leadership.



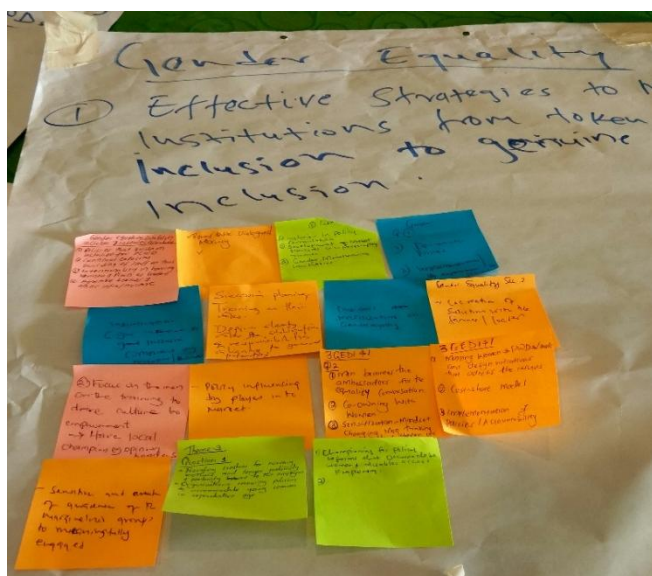
4.1.8.3. Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion & Intersectionality

Irene began by expressing appreciation for the audience's attentiveness and engagement, noting that the vibrancy of the discussion reflected the importance of the topic. She focused her reflections on the two guiding questions:

1. What strategies effectively move institutions from talking about inclusion to enabling genuine agency and leadership for women and persons with disabilities?

2. What role should men play as allies in advancing gender equality and disability inclusion within market systems?

Irene explained that the foundation of effective inclusion is understanding context. Participants highlighted the importance of conducting thorough mapping exercises and situational analyses to identify who is excluded, why exclusion persists, and what systemic barriers need to be addressed. Interventions must then be deliberately designed to respond to the findings from these assessments.



A recurring theme in the contributions was the centrality of inclusive policies. Institutions must develop and adopt policies that explicitly guide the inclusion of women and persons with disabilities. This includes gender-responsive policies, disability inclusion guidelines, and frameworks aimed at dismantling institutional barriers. However, Irene emphasized that policies alone are insufficient—what matters most is

intentionality in implementation.

She stressed that organizations must commit to:

- Implementing inclusion policies with clear accountability mechanisms,
- Designing infrastructure and systems that are accessible for persons with disabilities, and
- Providing incentives that encourage teams and leaders to prioritize inclusion.

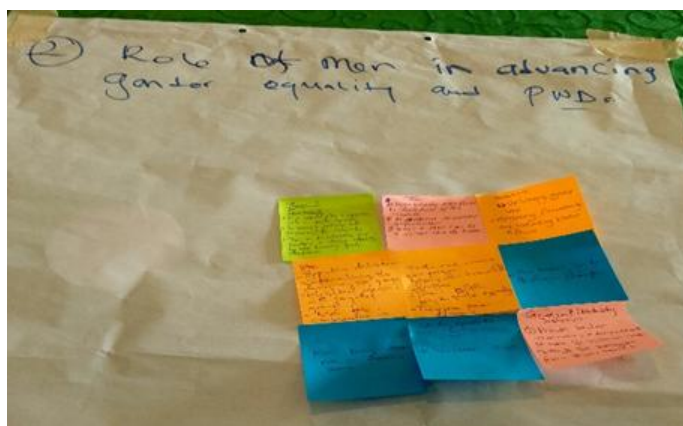


Irene highlighted the widely known principle **“Nothing for us without us,”** noting that effective inclusion requires co-creation with those directly affected, women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Participants also underscored the importance of capacity development, which can take many forms: mentoring, internships, specialized training, and targeted support for persons with disabilities so they can fully participate and advance within market systems.

She also noted that intersectionality must be considered carefully. People experience exclusion in overlapping ways, for example, a young woman who also lives with a disability encounters multiple layers of disadvantage. Although intersectionality did not appear prominently in the group contributions, Irene emphasized its relevance and encouraged participants to engage more deeply with it in future discussions.

Another critical point raised was the cost of inclusion. Participants observed that inclusive policies, particularly around disability inclusion, often require budget allocations, for infrastructure, accommodation, or specialized support. Institutions must therefore intentionally integrate inclusion into their budgets to ensure that policies translate into meaningful practice. Without financial commitment, inclusion remains aspirational rather than actionable.

Turning to the second discussion question, Irene emphasized that men play an essential role in advancing gender equality and disability inclusion within market systems. She framed men not as spectators or peripheral actors but as partners and supporters who must undergo a deliberate mindset shift.



Participants identified several critical roles for men:

- Co-creating policies and programs that embed inclusion at all levels;
- Advocating for gender equality and disability rights within institutions and communities;
- Acting as champions and advisers, particularly in challenging harmful norms and practices;
- Speaking out against gender-based violence (GBV) and supporting survivors;

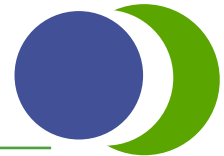
- Encouraging policy change and improved economic measurements that capture the benefits of women's and persons with disabilities' contributions;
- Coordinating and collaborating with women, especially in community sensitization efforts.

Irene reiterated that inclusion is not solely the responsibility of women or persons with disabilities. Men must participate actively in shaping fair and equitable systems. True transformation requires everyone, including those who traditionally hold power, working together to challenge biases, reshape norms, and sustain inclusive

Irene concluded by reminding participants that women and persons with disabilities are not excluded because of a lack of competence, but because they have historically been denied equitable opportunities to lead. Achieving genuine inclusion requires structural commitment, financial investment, intentional implementation, and collective action grounded in empathy, respect, and accountability.



Panelists Thomas, Wairimu, Subira, and Irene engage in a dynamic discussion on inclusive market systems during the BDS Donor Coordination Network forum in Kenya—highlighting pathways for youth, women, and persons with disabilities to lead transformative change.



4.1.9. *Moderator-Led Panel Discussion*

The second round began with Thomas giving the panellists three minutes to respond to his question **“In your opinion, what are some of the big ways we can strengthen gender equality, employment, and inclusive leadership?”**

Wairimu Wahome began by thanking participants for their contributions and acknowledged the challenges posed by limited time for table discussions. She then addressed the moderator’s question on strengthening gender equality, inclusive employment, and leadership.

She noted that the first step is for individuals and organizations to make personal and institutional commitments. This means taking responsibility for reviewing existing policies, practices, and organizational cultures to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. Wairimu emphasized that change begins internally—within teams, within organizations, and within the relationships individuals form with peers and partners. She encouraged participants to collaborate with colleagues and peer organizations present at the symposium to jointly catalyze change within broader ecosystems.

Next, she highlighted the importance of focused action aligned with one’s mandate, expertise, or professional strengths. No single organization can address every issue, she noted, but each can choose a specific area where it is best positioned to contribute meaningfully. Over time, these targeted efforts collectively support transformational change.

Wairimu stressed that strengthening gender equality and inclusive leadership requires long-term investment, not one-off interventions. Transformational change demands sustained work on shifting attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. It also requires recognizing that the journey toward equality is neither quick nor easy. Therefore, organizations must be willing to “pay the price” by allocating budgets that reflect their commitments. Without adequate funding, inclusion remains aspirational rather than actionable.

She also pointed to the challenge of attitudes and behaviors, observing that even well-designed policies fail without genuine internal alignment. Inclusive leadership requires people to examine and adjust their biases, assumptions, and institutional norms.

As she concluded, Wairimu highlighted an issue that she felt had not been sufficiently addressed in earlier discussions—the critical relationship between gender-based violence (GBV) and productivity. She reminded participants that GBV significantly affects women’s ability to participate in workplaces and markets. Many women miss work for days or weeks due to violence, and some even lose their lives. The consequences ripple beyond the individual, affecting families, communities, and



economic systems. She emphasized that strengthening inclusion must therefore involve addressing GBV as a core barrier to women's economic participation and leadership.

Wairimu ended by reinforcing that meaningful progress requires intentional action, adequate resourcing, and a commitment to transforming both structures and mindsets.



Subira Zingizi began by expressing her gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. She emphasized that her presentation carried a message she hoped everyone in the room would take seriously: participation is not inclusion. Throughout the day's sessions, she

observed a recurring pattern in which youth were invited to participate but not meaningfully included in decision-making processes.

She highlighted a powerful statistic: in a room full of professionals discussing youth and women in market systems, fewer than ten participants identified as youth. This, she noted, raises an important question: *How can young people influence decisions when they are barely represented at the tables where those decisions are made?*

Subira stressed that as stakeholders plan programs and policies targeting youth and women, they must intentionally include these groups in leadership and design processes. The individuals seated at decision-making tables often do not reflect the demographics of those the programs are meant to serve, thereby weakening the relevance and impact of the interventions.

Drawing from her own experience, Subira described how being included in decision-making from a young age transformed her trajectory. She explained that she has been able to offer BDS (Business Development Services) not simply because she is an entrepreneur, but because she is a youth whose language and platforms resonate with other young people. She shared that effective communication with youth often requires meeting them where they are—whether on TikTok, Zoho, or other digital platforms they actively use. When youth are engaged by someone who understands their communication style, “half the work is done.”



She acknowledged that young people, like any group, have inefficiencies or gaps. However, she emphasized that with proper guidance, mentorship, and meaningful inclusion, youth can bring forward exceptional skills, creativity, and positive disruption to employment creation and leadership spaces. Her concern is that without intentional inclusion today, the cycle of exclusion will simply repeat itself: In ten years, the same youth who were excluded will grow up and risk designing policies that continue excluding the next generation.

Subira urged participants not to wait for the “future” to empower youth, because by the time the future arrives, today’s youth will no longer be youth. Instead, she argued that they must be empowered now, so they can create platforms for those who will follow after them.

She concluded with a call to action: **“We live not tomorrow, but today.”**

Her message reinforced the urgency of embedding youth leadership into policies, programs, and institutions now, rather than postponing their involvement to a distant future.



Irene Githinji began by acknowledging the advantage of speaking last and promised to keep her remarks concise. She emphasized the importance of being intentional about participation in the symposium, noting that many attendees had personally invested time and resources to be

present. This, she argued, should motivate everyone to maximize the value of the experience.

She highlighted that the quickest wins are often achieved by utilizing the expertise already in the room. Referring to the earlier speaker, she pointed out the powerful example of the young entrepreneur who had shared practical, implementable approaches—insights that participants could immediately take back to their organizations and communities. She reminded the audience that the post-it notes and discussions shared throughout the sessions demonstrated that participants possess real, lived experiences and workable solutions. The challenge, therefore, is to identify what new knowledge or inspiration each person can adopt and implement.



Irene stressed the importance of intentionality, urging attendees to reflect on how they use the time spent at the symposium. The goal, she said, is not simply to attend sessions, but to leave transformed. It would be a missed opportunity, she warned, to spend three days engaging in rich dialogue only to return home unchanged. She encouraged participants to identify two concrete actions—not more—that they could realistically implement after the event. These small but deliberate steps would accumulate into meaningful progress over time.

To reinforce her point, Irene referenced several case studies showcased on LinkedIn and Facebook, highlighting inspiring examples of women leaders and innovators. She invited the audience to connect with individuals such as Faith from Makueni, an engineer designing her own incubators, whose story is featured online. She also recognized another woman entrepreneur from Mango Machakos, encouraging participants to speak with her directly to learn from her journey. Irene further highlighted a community leader from Garite, who has pioneered a unique coconut value-addition model that, in her view, offers greater potential than traditional crops like coffee due to its lower labor intensity and higher value.

These examples, she explained, demonstrate that transformational change is already happening within communities. The task, therefore, is to learn from these innovators and carry forward their insights with deliberate action.

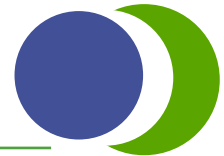
Irene closed with a powerful metaphor: **“You can step into a river and come out unchanged, or you can step into a river and come out transformed.”**

She urged participants to treat the symposium as such a river—an opportunity to cleanse old habits, challenge familiar assumptions, and adopt new perspectives. By identifying and implementing at least two actionable steps, participants would not only shift their personal practice but would also be able to return to future gatherings sharing stories of real change.

She concluded by reminding the group that while it is common to speak about shifting communities, the journey begins with shifting ourselves.

4.1.10. *Participant Questions, Answers and Interactive Discussion*

During the plenary Q&A session, **Prof. Rewe** offered a pointed challenge to the panel, noting that the symposium’s overarching theme was *inclusion*, yet the panel representation did not fully reflect those who are often barriers to inclusive systems. He emphasized that while women were prominently leading the conversation, men—who in many cases control decision-making spaces—must also be part of gender and inclusion dialogues. Excluding men from these discussions, he argued, risks reinforcing the very inequalities the symposium aims to dismantle. His observation



underscored a critical reality: those who shape systems must be included in conversations about transforming them.

Another participant, **Dr. Ndung'u from Nyandarua**, who works closely with FIDA, raised a different but equally important perspective. He reflected on cases where youth had been given opportunities but had not always delivered, noting concerns about a perceived reluctance among some young people to endure hardship or sustained effort. He questioned: **“Where do we go next when youth do not rise to the opportunity?”**

He urged young people to step into leadership roles with greater responsibility, to “wear our shoes,” and to build upon—not be limited by—the challenges they faced growing up. His remarks captured a common sentiment from practitioners working directly with youth: empowerment must go hand in hand with accountability, commitment, and resilience.

4.1.8.4. Panel Responses

Wairimu acknowledged the validity of Prof. Rewe’s contribution. It was noted that such reflections are equally necessary in sessions where men dominate the stage. True inclusion requires deliberate representation and shared accountability across genders

Subira approached Dr. Ndungu’s question with a mixture of realism and humour, beginning by acknowledging, **“This is a mindset shift”**, and laughing in agreement that youth often *do not want to get tired*. She explained that the issue is not unwillingness but the need for comfortable, enabling environments that match youth realities, motivations, and skillsets.

She illustrated this with a practical example from her own restaurant business, where they restructured roles by allowing youth to work in digital operations, while others with different strengths took on kitchen responsibilities. This, she explained, demonstrates that youth thrive when their work is aligned with their competencies, and that effective inclusion requires shared effort, differentiated roles, and recognition of diverse strengths.

She stressed the importance of understanding youth at their level, designing job roles that leverage their digital fluency, and being open to new forms of contribution. Youth engagement, she argued, is not about forcing them into outdated models of labour, but about creating spaces that allow them to excel.

Irene supported Subira’s reflections and expanded on the theme of intentionality. She cautioned against criticizing youth prematurely, emphasizing that what is often interpreted as failure may instead signal a lack of trust, insufficient support, or unclear pathways. She reminded participants that youth engagement is not a quick fix but a process—one that requires patience, consistent presence, and relationship-building.



Irene underscored that young people sometimes do not trust older generations or institutions because they have experienced exclusion or have never been meaningfully included before. Trust must be earned through **intentional mentorship**, openness, and creating environments where youth can experiment, lead, fail safely, and grow.

She emphasized:

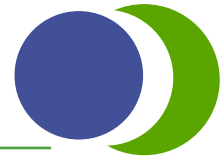
- Youth must be given space without immediate judgment,
- They must be allowed to demonstrate their abilities—even raise resources independently—before being labelled as uncommitted,
- Mentorship should be a supportive, not punitive, process.

Irene concluded by affirming that inclusive leadership is cultivated through opportunity, trust, guidance, and intentional investment, not criticism.

4.1.11. Conclusion

The discussions emphasized that inclusive leadership and equitable market systems require intentional structural transformation that elevates women, youth, and persons with disabilities from passive beneficiaries to active decision-makers. Participants emphasized dismantling systemic barriers such as limited access to finance, exclusion from governance, and restrictive socio-cultural norms while promoting innovative business models, accountable policies, and cross-sector partnerships that embed inclusion in market structures. The session highlighted that true inclusion depends on shifting organizational mindsets, strengthening representation in leadership, and ensuring that policies translate into meaningful participation rather than symbolic gestures.

The session also reaffirmed that advancing gender equality, disability inclusion, and youth empowerment demands continuous evidence-based analysis, co-creation of solutions with affected groups, and deliberate investment in capacity building. Panelists stressed that inclusion is both a human rights obligation and a driver of socio-economic transformation, improving entrepreneurship, productivity, and market resilience. The call to action centered on adopting practical “quick wins,” fostering mentorship and intergenerational leadership, leveraging successful youth-led initiatives, and institutionalizing accountability to ensure sustained, measurable progress toward equitable and inclusive market systems.



PART FIVE: INCLUSIVE MARKETS SYMPOSIUM 2025 PROCEEDINGS DAY TWO

5.1. Session 6: Day 1 recap

The session involved Dr. Edith Wairimu presenting Day One key highlights, with participants responding to a question on Mentimeter.

5.1.1. *Key highlights for day one*

Dr. Edith Wairimu opened with a recap of Day 1, emphasizing that while the donor landscape is rapidly evolving, it presents abundant opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and evidence-driven reforms in food and market systems. She highlighted that counties like Kisumu are demonstrating practical, youth- and women-centered solutions, and stressed that inclusion must be structural, ensuring that marginalized groups are not only participants but leaders and innovators. Strategic engagement through public–private–academia partnerships, cooperative models, and data-driven tools was emphasized as critical to driving sustainable development and market transformation.

The session on *Reimagining Market Systems Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape* reinforced these insights, focusing on collective action, sustainability-oriented policies, and the integration of youth and women at all levels. Key takeaways included the importance of transdisciplinary research, stronger research–policy–private sector linkages, and universities serving as R&D hubs for SMEs. Participants emphasized that meaningful inclusion requires structural integration, outcome-driven interventions, de-risking production for organized producer groups, and transparency to address weak participation systems.

In the *LREB Keynote*, CEO Victor Nyagaya highlighted regional alignment of development plans across 14 counties, announcing a USD 50 million climate-smart agriculture initiative targeting dairy, poultry, horticulture, coffee, and tea. The initiative prioritizes organized producer groups and traceable farmer support. Investments in the blue economy—fingerling production, lake restocking, and rice processing expansion—demonstrated the need for integrated systems across research institutions, county governments, and the private sector to drive sustainable regional transformation.

The *Climate Change Adaptation, Green Transition, and Bioeconomy* session emphasized the urgency of addressing Africa’s annual USD 70 billion climate-related losses by scaling irrigation, promoting regenerative agriculture, strengthening cooperatives, and investing in water infrastructure. Priorities included expanding green financing through SACCOs and MFIs, fostering responsible SME practices, leveraging digital tools, and building partnerships with green technology firms.



Challenges noted included gaps between policy and implementation, weak organic markets, limited farmer capacity, and insufficient green workforce skills. County initiatives, university-led innovation, and showcased agritech solutions highlighted practical strategies to improve market access, certification, and adoption of sustainable practices.

The *Innovative Agrifinance and Investment for Resilient Food Systems* session highlighted that effective agri-finance requires aligning capital, capacity building, and markets, supported by blended finance instruments tailored to production cycles. Participants highlighted inclusive finance for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, legal and credit frameworks, financial literacy, and climate-smart practices as essential enablers. Models presented included youth-focused agri-tech initiatives, cooperative-linked value-chain finance, cross-sector partnerships, and affirmative inclusion strategies, demonstrating that social capital and institutional change are central to building resilient and equitable food systems.

Finally, the *Inclusive Leadership and Youth Empowerment* session, led by Wairimu Wahome, reinforced that genuine inclusion is intentional and continuous, not tokenistic. Practical approaches included community mapping, bias reduction, universal design, professionalized inclusion programs, and scaling initiatives such as Ayute to support youth-led agri-tech enterprises. Structural barriers—limited ownership, access to finance, mentorship, and sociocultural constraints—were addressed through targeted programs, digital engagement, collective action, and cross-sector partnerships. The session emphasized co-creation, accountability, and men's allyship as vital to transforming market systems, organizations, and societal culture, unlocking the potential of women and youth to drive Africa's development.

5.1.2. Key Insights from Day One: Mentimeter Participant Responses

Participants reported that their biggest insight from Day 1 was the critical distinction between participation and inclusion, emphasizing that merely involving stakeholders does not ensure their meaningful engagement or influence in decision-making. They noted that strategic inclusion of youth, women, and marginalized groups is essential for effective market system development and sustainable interventions. Many highlighted that the future of work, products, and economies is green, bio-based, and circular, and that achieving this transformation requires innovative financing, public-private partnerships, and value-driven investments. Participants also observed that while the donor landscape is shifting, opportunities remain abundant, particularly when interventions are intentional, inclusive, and contextually tailored. The importance of research, integrated planning, and leveraging collective strengths to drive sustainable change was repeatedly emphasized, alongside the need to address



systemic barriers, ensure profitability, and create value for all stakeholders in the market system.



Figure 1: Mentimeter word cloud capturing participant impressions from Day One—highlighting overwhelmingly positive feedback such as “insightful,” “excellent,” and “informative,” alongside reflections on organization, venue quality, and accessibility.

5.2. Session 7: Introduction to Trade and regional integration for scaled partnerships

The session was delivered through a keynote speech by Geoffrey Nyamote of IDE, followed by a panel discussion.

5.2.1. *Speech Trade and regional integration for scaled partnerships*



Geoffrey Nyamote gave a speech on trade and regional integration, emphasizing that the donor and regional trade landscape is interconnected and that actions in one country have direct effects on others. He highlighted the challenges posed by political cycles, border obstructions, and market inefficiencies, noting that these disruptions often result in



financial losses for producers and traders. He stressed the importance of understanding the broader regional context when developing partnerships and conducting trade, particularly for small and medium enterprises in sectors like agriculture and manufacturing. He also highlighted that strategic trade and integration require careful planning, market awareness, and collaboration among private sector actors, governments, and non-governmental organizations.

Nyamote further reported that effective regional integration depends on public-private partnerships and shared accountability, with a focus on creating value, access to finance, and structured support for cross-border trade. He cited examples of successful initiatives where small investments led to significant returns, demonstrating the potential of collaborative approaches. He noted the need to leverage opportunities for regional cooperation, facilitate dialogue across countries, and address logistical and regulatory barriers. He concluded that enhancing visibility, cooperation, and strategic engagement among stakeholders is essential to strengthen trade, improve market systems, and maximize regional economic benefits.

5.2.2. Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

Mathews Wanjala, the session moderator, introduced the panellists, each bringing deep expertise and practical insights into inclusive market systems:

1. **Dr. Teresia Ndungu** – Director of Livestock Production, Nyandarua County. A seasoned dairy technologist with over 21 years of experience in Kenya's dairy industry, Dr. Ndungu specializes in milk quality, ISO 22000 and HACCP systems, and Quality-Based Milk Payment Systems (QBMPs). Her work focuses on food safety, capacity building, policy development, and strengthening dairy systems.
2. **George Okeyo** – Founder of Migingo Fish. A Quality Assurance and Business Development expert, George has extensive experience in market system projects. He has scaled Migingo Fish from \$46,000 to over \$2.6 million and managed programs valued at more than €35.6 million. His expertise spans fisheries, dairy, and horticulture, with strong capabilities in marketing strategy, financial systems, and sector competitiveness.
3. **Jane Maina** – Managing Director of Vert Ltd. Jane leads one of Kenya's prominent agro-processing companies specializing in dried fruits, purees, and vegetables. She collaborates with over 5,000 smallholder farmers, championing sustainable agriculture, traceability, inclusive growth, climate-smart practices, and women's empowerment—driving rural transformation and value addition in both local and international markets.



5.2.3. Moderator-Led Panel Discussion



On policy and investment frameworks, Dr. Teresia Ndung'u emphasized that national objectives, including safety and mobility, are fundamentally tied to protecting the rights of the nation. She highlighted the importance of strengthening contract enforcement and creating an environment that supports public-private

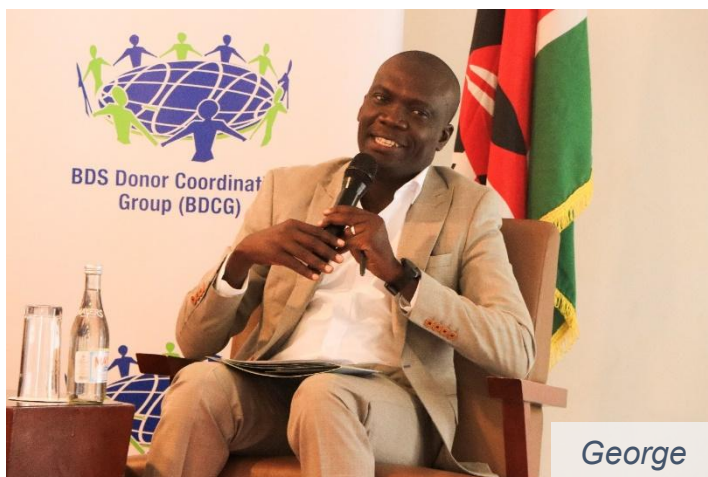
partnerships, with investment-friendly policies and simplified regulatory requirements. Dr. Ndung'u also noted that land management and human rights frameworks play a critical role in agricultural production, suggesting that reforms in land use regulations and rights protection could enhance productivity and ensure compliance with national standards. She advocated for collaborative initiatives to promote sustainable development and effective governance in both rural and urban markets.



In his presentation, George Okeyo highlighted the significant supply-demand gap in Kenya's fish sector. Despite producing 140,000 metric tons annually, only 60,000 metric tons are available for domestic consumption, while the demand stands at 500,000 metric tons. He emphasized

the importance of expanding company ownership and equity across borders, building robust distribution networks, and leveraging regional integration to facilitate trade, citing examples from Uganda, Tanzania, and China. George also highlighted the crucial role of research and development in understanding market behavior and shaping effective distribution strategies. To address these challenges, he advocated for structured business models, including the establishment of cold storage facilities in strategic locations, to preserve product value, improve supply chain efficiency, and foster sustainable sector growth.

Additionally, George discussed the practical challenges of trade in East Africa, using fisheries as a case study. He pointed out that inconsistent regulations, high tariffs, and inadequate infrastructure often create barriers for small-scale producers. He highlighted the importance of regional standards and institutional support, such as the efforts of Beach Management Units (BMUs) and EU-funded landing sites, in harmonizing trade practices and ensuring product safety. George also addressed trade barriers, quotas, and the need to protect local farmers while ensuring competitive exports. He stressed the necessity of advocacy and government-to-government engagement to correct misperceptions about product safety and strengthen the voice of local industries in regional trade negotiations.





Jane emphasized that regional integration is key to overcoming infrastructural, regulatory, and market barriers in rural and cross-border trade. Using the horticultural sector as an example, she explained that sourcing raw materials from neighboring countries like Uganda helps address seasonality issues, optimize capacity, and take

advantage of harmonized customs and phytosanitary standards. This integration opens expanded markets, improving profitability and sustainability for rural businesses. Jane also highlighted that engaging in regional integration fosters private sector growth, ecosystem sensitivity, and market diversification globally.

On private sector strategies and digital trade, Jane discussed the importance of harmonizing fragmented markets and ensuring inclusive participation of smallholder farmers, youth, and women. She emphasized the need for compliance with standards, flexible logistics, and digitalization of payments, customs, and marketing systems to navigate infrastructural challenges. Jane stressed that resilience in digital trade requires coordinated efforts between governments, the private sector, and local businesses to improve trade networks, market efficiency, and sustainable growth in rural communities.

In her final remarks, Jane pointed out the critical role of regulatory frameworks, standardization, and digitalization in facilitating cross-border trade. Businesses that proactively comply with regulations gain a competitive edge and access new markets. She further emphasized the need for logistics flexibility, local hubs, and the inclusion of smallholder farmers, youth, and women in creating inclusive trade systems. Digital solutions, such as simplified payment systems and digital marketing, are vital for overcoming operational barriers in regional trade, with collaboration between the private sector, government, and local businesses being essential for building resilience in cross-border trade.



5.2.4. *Participant Questions, Answers and Interactive Discussion*

During the interactive session, participants raised a series of questions that sparked lively debate and expert responses.

4.1.8.5. **Participant Questions**

Mathews Wanjala asked whether access to finance is driven by money first or ideas first. He also questioned inconsistencies in international food-safety standards, particularly regarding fish exports. He noted that when the EU declares fish from East Africa or the North Atlantic unfit for consumption, it remains unclear where that fish is channelled. He observed that European visitors in Kenya often consume the same fish deemed unsuitable in their own countries, arguing this reflects inequities in global trade practices. He emphasized the need for Africa to strengthen its own trade systems rather than relying on Western frameworks.



Mathews Wanjala, TradeMark Africa



Dr. Ndung'u John

Dr. John Ndung'u raised concerns about agricultural losses linked to the misuse or overuse of inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides, which have led to significant interceptions of crops and flowers at export points. He highlighted increased surveillance in European markets, including Amsterdam,

which has raised compliance costs for farmers. He cautioned that removing non-trade barriers must be approached carefully, since such barriers sometimes serve essential functions, such as quota systems to balance local production, demand, and imports. He further noted that some countries, such as Tanzania, impose restrictions to protect



their farmers, while Kenya does not, exposing its farmers to unfair competition. Dr. Ndung'u also warned of emerging issues related to currency controls, explaining that fluctuations in dollar circulation and mopping-up measures have disrupted sectors such as tea. He stressed the need for strong sanitary and phytosanitary surveillance systems to safeguard public health and economic stability, recalling that weak import controls had previously contributed to a livestock tuberculosis outbreak with long-term GDP impacts.

Jane Ngige asked whether the horticultural industry has a sufficiently strong and united voice to confront its challenges. She expressed concern that, despite significant expertise and interest, industry actors may not be collectively equipped to influence decisions or address emerging issues with coherence and strength.



Dr. Ndung'u John

Philip Kubende asked George to clarify statistics on fish consumption in Kenya.

4.1.8.6. Panel Responses

Jane Maina responded to Jane Ngige's question, acknowledging that while the private sector does have a collective voice, it is not strong enough. She explained that measures such as the 10% inspection requirement for Kenyan produce entering EU ports stem from doubts about Kenya's surveillance and monitoring systems. At times, she noted, these measures are based on limited scientific evidence, leading authorities to adopt stricter controls. Jane emphasized the importance of advocacy opportunities, particularly at major international trade fairs held annually in February, where government-to-government engagement is critical. She stressed that some challenges cannot be resolved by the private sector alone and require direct involvement of competent authorities. She added that such platforms should be used to counter perceptions that Kenyan produce is unsafe—an impression not always supported by data. She acknowledged Kenya's progress in strengthening compliance through national standards such as KS 1758, which align with global requirements at



lower cost. However, she noted that these standards are not universally recognized, meaning exporters must still meet additional certifications such as BRCGS and FSSC 22000. She concluded that while the private sector has a voice, it is not yet strong enough to influence outcomes effectively.

George responded to Philip Kubende's question on fish consumption. He explained that Kenya's low per-capita fish intake is due to limited domestic supply. The country produces about 140,000 metric tonnes annually, of which 80,000 tonnes are exported, leaving approximately 60,000 tonnes for local consumption. This translates to 4 kg per person per year, compared to the African average of 10 kg and the global average of 20 kg. He noted that this shortage contributes to the perception that Kenyan lakes have no fish and explains the need for imports. George recalled that the government under President Mwai Kibaki, through the 2009 ESP initiative, helped expand fish production and encouraged consumption among communities that had not traditionally eaten fish. He emphasized that ensuring adequate supply requires deliberate government action, including strengthening aquaculture, improving resource management, and prioritizing food security. He concluded that Kenya must better understand its fish stocks, increase production capacity, and align policy priorities to meet market needs and support economic growth.

4.1.8.7. Synthesis of the Interactive Session

The interactive discussion revealed several recurring themes:

- **Trade inequities and compliance costs:** Participants highlighted inconsistencies in international food-safety standards and the rising costs of compliance for Kenyan farmers.
- **Surveillance and safeguards:** Stronger sanitary and phytosanitary systems were identified as critical to protecting both public health and economic stability.
- **Collective advocacy:** The horticultural industry's voice was recognized as present but not yet strong enough to influence international trade outcomes, underscoring the need for coordinated government and private-sector engagement.
- **Food security and resource management:** Fish consumption statistics underscored the importance of deliberate government action to expand supply, strengthen aquaculture, and align policies with market needs.

Overall, the session emphasized that **multi-stakeholder collaboration, stronger regulatory frameworks, and proactive advocacy** are essential to overcoming systemic challenges in agri-finance, trade, and food systems resilience.



4.2.4 Conclusion

The session on trade and regional integration emphasized the interconnectedness of regional trade and its broader impact on neighboring countries. Key challenges such as political cycles, border obstructions, and market inefficiencies were highlighted, which disrupt trade and cause financial losses. Successful trade partnerships were identified as requiring strategic planning, market awareness, and collaboration among private sector actors, governments, and NGOs. Overcoming regulatory and logistical barriers through public-private partnerships and shared accountability is essential for driving economic growth and regional integration.

The discussion also focused on addressing key trade challenges in East Africa. Strengthening contract enforcement and simplifying regulations were identified as crucial for supporting public-private partnerships. Strategies to bridge the supply-demand gap in key sectors, such as fisheries, were highlighted, along with the importance of cross-border equity and better infrastructure. The role of regional integration, digital trade, and inclusive policies in ensuring smallholder farmers, youth, and women are integrated into cross-border trade was emphasized.



Closing photo of the session: From left—George Okeyo (Founder, Migingo Fish), Jane Maina (Managing Director, Vert Ltd), Geoffrey Nyamota (iDE Global), Dr. Teresia Ndungu (Director of Livestock Production, Nyandarua County), and Moderator Mathews Wanjala (TradeMark Africa)—capturing the end of a powerful dialogue on inclusive market systems, leadership, and transformative collaboration.



5.3.Session 8: Incubating Innovation: Faith Kitata's Entrepreneurial Pitch”

Transforming poultry farming through local solutions, inclusive training, and community empowerment in Makueni County



Faith Kitata, CEO and co-founder of **PAFA Poultry Breeders** in Makueni County, delivered her elevator pitch highlighting the company's innovative work. She explained that their products include prefabricated incubators and feeds, while emphasizing the company's commitment to providing practical training for farmers. Faith noted that their incubators achieve higher efficiency compared to imported alternatives and are designed for easy repair and maintenance without reliance on external technicians. She further described how the company trains farmers on incubator operation and group management, enabling them to reduce feed costs and increase profitability.

Faith also underscored the company's social impact, stressing their mission to support youth and women by transforming talents into viable business opportunities. She highlighted the financial needs required to expand operations and enhance services for young people and women, particularly in regions where 70% of these groups face limited opportunities. Through these initiatives, Faith conveyed that PAFA Poultry Breeders is not only focused on business growth but also on empowering communities and creating sustainable livelihoods.



5.4. Session 9: Innovation, Scale and New Delivery Models

The session was delivered through a PowerPoint presentation and a panel discussion.

5.4.1. *Innovation, Scale and New Delivery Models Overview*



Francis Nasyomba -CFA

Francis presented on innovation and scale in Africa, emphasizing the transformative potential of market systems for resilience and inclusion. He noted the rapid growth of innovation ecosystems across the continent, driven by expanding startups, digital hubs, and research institutions. Key sectors gaining momentum include

agriculture, health, energy, and financial services. Francis highlighted youth demographics, digital penetration, innovation infrastructure, and investment in deep tech as primary growth drivers, pointing out that over 60% of Africa's population is under 25, internet users in Sub-Saharan Africa grew by 115% between 2016 and 2021, and fintech startups raised US\$2.7 billion between 2021 and 2023. He cited scalable examples of innovation such as e-Soko, DigiFarm, M-Pesa, Paga, M-KOPA, and Bboxx, illustrating the role of digital technologies in driving inclusion and economic transformation.

Francis further discussed the barriers to scaling African innovations, including fragmented funding, slow policy and certification processes, poor adaptation to local contexts, limited business support, skills gaps, and market access constraints, particularly in rural areas. He explained how digital innovations are transforming agriculture, health, finance, and energy sectors, using examples such as e-vouchers in Zambia, telemedicine in Rwanda, mobile micro-lending via M-Pesa, and PAYGo solar solutions. According to Francis, these innovations leverage Africa's young, digital-first population and mobile-first ecosystems, creating opportunities for scalable and inclusive growth while addressing market inefficiencies and accessibility challenges.

He also presented Capital Connect Africa (CCA) as a case study of innovation in finance and delivery models. Francis reported that CCA accelerates access to capital for SMEs, which make up over 90% of African businesses and employ 60% of the



workforce, but face a USD 250 billion annual funding gap. He explained that CCA's digital platform guides businesses through investor readiness, verification, and matching, while offering AI-powered advisory services, subscription-based services, and Pay-As-You-Go support. Francis highlighted the platform's reach, supporting over 1,500 businesses across 16 African countries and connecting them to a database of more than 5,200 investors, while also noting its strategic partnerships with institutions such as the Mastercard Foundation Africa Growth Fund and MEDA. He concluded that CCA exemplifies how innovation, digital scale, and tailored delivery models can bridge financing gaps, enhance SME resilience, and strengthen inclusive economic growth across Africa.

5.4.2. Panel Introduction and Expert Perspectives

The session was introduced by **Eric Njoroge**, who served as the moderator. Eric is the Head of Fundraising and Partnerships at the Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust (MESPT) and brings over 17 years of experience in international development. His expertise spans financial inclusion, green growth, and youth empowerment, having successfully led resource mobilization efforts at organizations such as the Northern Rangelands Trust and the United Nations Foundation.

The distinguished panellists for this session, alongside the moderator, were:

1. **Jemimah Wanjiku** – *Operations and Business Development Manager, DigiCow Africa Ltd.* With four years of experience in agritech, Jemimah specializes in operational efficiency, business growth, and market expansion. She is highly skilled in business development strategy, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision-making, driving innovation and scale within the agritech sector.
2. **John Waweru** – *MERL Manager, iDE-Kenya* A seasoned market systems expert, John has worked extensively across Sub-Saharan Africa with agricultural enterprises and development partners. He leads the design of MERL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning) strategies and provides technical oversight to program teams, ensuring evidence-based impact and sustainable growth.
3. **Francis Nasyomba, CFA** – *Founder & CEO, Raisin Capital* Francis is the visionary behind Raisin Capital, a firm dedicated to capital raising for businesses, and the founder of CapitalConnect.africa, a platform linking SMEs with investors. With over 18 years of experience in corporate finance and private equity, Francis is recognized as a leader in capital markets development in Africa, championing access to finance for growing enterprises.



4. **Philip K. Kisabit** – *Founder & CEO, Micro-Cap Holdings Ltd.* Philip leads Micro-Cap Holdings Ltd, a company specializing in fintech-driven credit, micro-franchising, and agri-value chain financing across East Africa. He pioneered the Micro-Credit Franchising Model, an innovative approach designed to empower small businesses, youth, women, and farmers, fostering inclusive economic growth and resilience.

5.4.3. Moderator-led panel discussions

In his introductory remarks, Eric Njoroge set the stage for the final session by emphasizing the importance of structured discussions, interactive participation, and practical takeaways. He introduced Francis, outlining his extensive experience as the founder and CEO of Capito and Capito Connect Africa, a digital platform supporting SMEs and startups in accessing investment opportunities. Eric highlighted key challenges faced by businesses, particularly the difficulty many enterprises encounter in accessing capital due to weak internal systems and lack of control. He stressed the need for strong business environments, improved financial practices, and enhanced understanding of innovation and value addition. Eric also connected the conversation to broader development goals, noting Africa's demographic pressures, the urgency of preparing for a rapidly growing youth population, and the need for sustainable solutions aligned with Agenda 2063.



Panelists Francis Nasyomba, John Waweru, Jemima Wanjiku, Philip Kisabit, and Eric Njoroge prepare to open the discussion during the Market Systems Symposium session on Innovation, Scale, and New Delivery Models.



Jemima Wanjiku- HR Director and Co-Founder DigiCow

Jemimah explained that effective support systems require aligning one's mindset with a clear vision and using the right tools to guide decision-making. She emphasized that achieving meaningful progress does not depend on long hours of training but on understanding the purpose of the

journey and recognizing where real change begins. Jemimah noted that simple, correct practices such as proper cleaning and handling procedures help prevent losses, reinforce learning, and build confidence among users, particularly farmers who are adopting new methods. Jemima added that sustainable results come from ensuring users experience consistent, practical learning, especially when applying digital and business solutions. She stressed that technology alone is not a game changer; rather, solutions must be designed around the real problems and contexts of the users. Jemima explained that developers must know who the user is, what challenges they face, and how they engage with digital tools. She shared that her team began building their digital platform by working directly with ten farmers who provided continuous feedback, allowing the system to be shaped by real agricultural experiences and needs.

Francis explained that Africa's rapidly expanding market, strong culture of innovation, and increasing digital access present major opportunities for growth—yet significant barriers remain. He highlighted challenges such as policy delays, identification bottlenecks, limited use of digital systems, and the growing gap between technological adoption and contextual relevance. Francis emphasized that while sectors such as finance, health, agriculture, and energy are evolving quickly across the continent, many businesses still struggle with foundational issues, especially access to capital. He noted that although African SMEs require more than \$250 billion annually, only a fraction of this funding reaches them because many enterprises are unprepared for investment, lack proper financial systems, or misunderstand investor expectations.



Francis further outlined how his organization is addressing these challenges by creating a digital platform that connects businesses with more than 5,200 investors, offers tailored resources through an extensive library, and supports companies with valuation tools and advisory services. He described the goal of strengthening business models, improving investment readiness, and helping SMEs



accelerate growth while avoiding costly mistakes. Francis emphasized that sustainable impact requires collaboration, co-creation, and policy shifts that allow innovators, investors, and support organizations to work more effectively together. He concluded by emphasizing the urgency for Africa's business ecosystem to adapt—leveraging technology, strengthening enterprise fundamentals, and building models that can scale to meet the continent's rapidly growing population and development needs.

During the session, Francis, co-host and lead speaker, delivered an inspiring overview of his groundbreaking work in digital microfinance and inclusive entrepreneurship. As the founder and Group CEO of Micrograph, Francis explained how his AI-driven ecosystem spanning digital microfinance, agritech, BPO services, and insurance—now supports more than 800,000 households across the region. He emphasized the need for Africa to harness its rapidly growing digital access, youthful population, and innovation capacity while confronting barriers such as policy delays, limited identification systems, and fragmented business-support structures. Francis highlighted that access to capital remains the single greatest constraint for African SMEs, noting that although SMEs need over \$250 billion annually, only a fraction of businesses are adequately prepared for investment. His message emphasized that technology must be paired with practical business readiness, strong models, and partnerships that enable enterprises to scale sustainably.



Philio Kisabit -Micro-Cap Holdings Ltd

Philio Kisabit; Micro-Cap Holdings Ltd concluded by highlighting the importance of partnerships in developing effective digital and business models. He noted that their digital extension work began in 2019 and was strengthened through collaborations with organizations such as the resource company

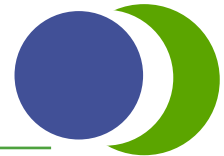
team in Nandi and technical experts, including a Microsoft-affiliated specialist. These partnerships allowed the team to refine their training approach, improve system functionality, and ensure that the digital platform remained practical and relevant. Francis emphasized that meaningful innovation is achieved through collaboration and shared learning rather than working in isolation.



John Waweru, iDE

John Waweru reflected on the persistent limitations in how development actors approach innovation and enterprise support, noting that despite years of investment, most interventions continue to operate at a very small scale. He emphasized that development programs still rely heavily

on traditional farmer training models which, although valuable, have been used for more than 15 years without delivering the level of transformation that would make such repeated training unnecessary. He observed that most donor funding continues to target micro-level grants for small village enterprises, which does little to prepare businesses to attract substantial investment. Citing recent data, he noted that while Africa attracted USD 2.2 billion in investment last year—33 percent of which went to East Africa—less than 30 percent of this capital originated from African investors, reflecting a gap in local investment readiness. John argued that development projects



are not sufficiently equipping African enterprises to absorb larger funding early enough, keeping them stuck at foundational levels rather than supporting their growth into investment-ready ventures. He called for a shift toward a private sector–led approach that brings investors such as Francis into enterprise development conversations from the outset, and urged development partners to move beyond relying solely on grants as the principal means of scaling businesses. According to John, meaningful transformation will require redesigning programs to elevate outputs, strengthen enterprise capacity for real investment, and build ecosystems that enable innovators to access serious capital and achieve sustainable scale.

In the panel discussion, the panellists expanded on how innovation, adaptive business models, and inclusive design can drive systemic transformation. Jemima stressed that effective solutions must be built *with* users, not *for* them, sharing how her team codesigned digital advisory tools with farmers to ensure adoption, relevance, and behavioral change. John highlighted the persistent gap between development-driven innovation and real private-sector needs, arguing that many enterprises remain unprepared to absorb funding because development support still focuses on low-level training rather than building investment-ready systems. Eric added that scalable business models require diversified revenue streams, strong customer experience, and strategic partnerships that integrate technology without excluding farmers or small enterprises. Together, the speakers emphasized that Africa’s innovation landscape is evolving rapidly, but sustainable impact will rely on aligned policy, accessible capital, and models that put people not technology at the center.

5.4.4. Conclusion

Africa's innovation ecosystem is experiencing significant growth, driven by digital solutions that are transforming sectors like agriculture, health, finance, and energy. The rapid expansion of digital hubs, the rise of startups, and the continent's young, mobile-first population are key factors in fostering innovation and inclusive economic growth. However, challenges remain, including fragmented funding, slow policy responses, and a lack of investment readiness among SMEs. Initiatives like Capital Connect Africa are helping address these issues by improving access to capital, while emphasizing the need for business models that are both technology-driven and contextually relevant. To unlock Africa's full potential, collaboration, strong enterprise foundations, and policy reforms are essential. By aligning innovation with real market needs and ensuring investor readiness, Africa can bridge the gap between technological advancements and practical solutions, paving the way for sustainable growth.



PART SIX: FIELD VISITS

6.1. session 10: Field visits

Three organizations, **M-Taka**, **Victoria Eco Farm**, and **Peaknest Beekeeping Farm**, were visited, each offering a complementary perspective on sustainability and community-centred enterprise in Kisumu and the wider Western Kenya region.

6.1.1. *Profiles of the Organizations Visited*

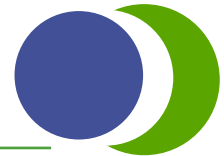
6.1.1.1. **M-taka Kisumu County**

M-taka Kisumu, established in 2020, is a tech-integrated waste management and recycling social enterprise dedicated to building a sustainable, zero-waste circular economy in Kisumu County and across Africa.



Headquartered at Kisumu's Manyatta Estate, near the Manyatta Social Hall, the organization operates across major urban and peri-urban areas within Kisumu Central, Kisumu East, and Kisumu West sub-counties. Created to address persistent challenges such as poor waste handling, low recycling rates, and limited data-driven solutions, M-taka blends community engagement with technological innovation to transform waste practices. Guided by its mission to improve the recycling culture of communities and uplift the livelihoods of waste workers, M-taka works closely with households, businesses, youth groups, county authorities, and informal waste collectors. With a dedicated team of 18 staff members, the organization champions environmental stewardship, green innovation, and inclusive economic growth.

Anchored in digital efficiency, M-taka provides an end-to-end, tech-enabled waste management solution through its mobile app and ERP platform, offering data analytics, real-time waste tracking, predictive insights, and a digital marketplace that enhances value creation within the recycling ecosystem. This integrated system connects households, informal waste actors, and large recyclers into one seamless circular ecosystem, enabling transparency, coordination, and accountability across the waste value chain. Through ongoing environmental education, community programs, and strategic partnerships, M-taka continues to advance Kisumu's transition toward a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future while contributing significantly to the growth of Africa's circular economy.



6.1.1.2. Victoria Eco Farm- Nicholas Omondi



Victoria Eco-Farm Limited is a Kisumu-based agribusiness enterprise advancing sustainable agriculture, community empowerment, and agroecological innovation across Western Kenya. They champion a contract farming model that provides chicks, poultry feeds, training, extension services, and reliable markets to over 4,332 farmers organized into 272 groups, predominantly women and youth across eight counties.

Their work integrates circular practices and the 13 principles of agroecology to strengthen food systems, eliminate waste, and promote environmentally responsible production. They operate a modern hatchery with a 36,000-chick capacity, support apiculture enterprises, and mentor young agripreneurs through partnerships with organizations such as SHONA Capital, Neycha Fund, GIZ, MEDA, USADF, and Practical Action.

Victoria Eco-Farm Limited has trained and onboarded more than 1,500 farmers, facilitated inclusive aggregator agreements, and participated in the AfriFOODlinks Circularity & Inclusivity Coaching Program, demonstrating their commitment to climate resilience and community-driven food systems.

They continue to expand their impact by creating income opportunities, strengthening food security, and promoting regenerative agriculture. Their vision is to become a fully circular, inclusive agribusiness model that empowers communities and inspires future generations of sustainable producers.

6.1.1.3. Peaknest Beekeeping Farm - Robert Ouko, Kisumu West

Peaknest Beekeeping Farm, established in 2018 in Kisumu County, Kisumu West Constituency, Kisumu North, is dedicated to cultivating healthy, productive bee colonies through natural and sustainable farming methods. The farm, comprising 10 members managing at least 20 colonies each, focuses on producing high-quality raw honey, promoting ecological stewardship, and creating employment opportunities for youth and women. Its vision is to become a leading model of environmentally responsible apiculture, integrating honeybee health with thriving agricultural biodiversity.

Peaknest offers a range of products and services, including pollination services, humane honeybee relocation from urban and rural areas, production of affordable, high-quality beehives for local farmers, and aggregation of honey and propolis. The farm also provides training, mentorship, and awareness programs on pollinator-friendly agriculture. Guided by the values of sustainability, integrity, and



environmental stewardship, Peaknest continues to support both community livelihoods and the health of Kisumu's agricultural ecosystems.

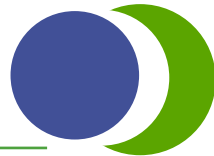
6.1.2. *Insights from field visits*

Three organizations, M-Taka, Victoria Eco Farm, and Peaknest Beekeeping Farm, offered complementary perspectives on sustainability and community-centered **enterprise in Kisumu and the wider Western Kenya region.**

M-Taka demonstrated how digital innovation can transform waste management by using tech-enabled systems and community engagement to drive a circular economy and turn waste into valuable resources.



Victoria Eco Farm extended this theme of circularity into agriculture, showcasing a contract farming model, modern hatchery operations, and apiculture support that empower farmers, especially women and youth, while strengthening local food systems.



Peaknest added another dimension by illustrating the ecological and economic benefits of sustainable apiculture through natural beekeeping, pollination services, and locally produced beehives that support biodiversity and diversified livelihoods.





Together, the three organizations demonstrated how technology, ecological practices, and community empowerment can converge to build resilient and inclusive agribusiness ecosystems. Their approaches highlighted the transformative role of innovation in enhancing efficiency, sustainability, and community livelihoods.

- **M-Taka** showcased the power of digital innovation in waste management, leveraging real-time data analytics, tablet-based entry systems, and waste-tracking platforms to ensure traceability and optimize resource use within a circular economy model.
- **Victoria Eco Farm** illustrated how green technologies can drive productivity and sustainability, employing solar-powered hatcheries, automated drinkers, feed production systems, and black soldier fly protein to reduce costs and strengthen climate-smart farming practices.
- **Peaknest Beekeeping Farm** reinforced the importance of ecological enterprise, using apiculture to support biodiversity, generate alternative income streams, and empower rural communities through honey production and value addition. Peaknest combined Langstroth and locally manufactured hives with hive monitoring and honey processing equipment, while also integrating bee-friendly horticulture and poultry to further sustain biodiversity.

Collectively, these technological and ecological innovations reduced waste, promoted renewable energy use, and reinforced the resilience of each farming system—underscoring that technology and ecological innovation, when rooted in community empowerment, are not just tools for efficiency but catalysts for systemic transformation in agribusiness.

6.1.3. Challenges Faced by Organizations Visited

M-Taka stood out for its strong technological backbone and its deliberate efforts to dignify waste workers through digital innovation and community engagement. However, the enterprise faced significant hurdles, including fluctuating plastic prices that undermine profitability, stiff competition from established players, and cost disadvantages when compared to virgin materials. These challenges highlight the broader tension between sustainability-driven enterprises and conventional market forces, underscoring the need for supportive policies and incentives to level the playing field.

Victoria Eco Farm excelled in building farmer support networks and advancing its circular poultry model, which integrates climate-smart practices and resource efficiency. Yet, the farm grappled with practical constraints such as difficulties in accessing sick birds for timely treatment, fragile egg transport systems that risk product losses, and rising feed costs that erode margins. These challenges illustrate



the vulnerability of smallholder-focused enterprises to logistical and input-related pressures, pointing to the importance of infrastructure investment and affordable feed innovations.

Peaknest Beekeeping Farm demonstrated strong community engagement and diversified revenue streams through apiculture, honey processing, and complementary horticulture. Nonetheless, it contended with seasonal nectar shortages that affect production cycles, predation risks that threaten hive stability, limited market access for value-added products, and vulnerability to prolonged dry periods. These challenges reveal the delicate balance between ecological dependence and market viability, emphasizing the need for climate adaptation strategies and stronger market linkages.

Despite these obstacles, all three organizations shared a clear commitment to **innovation, sustainability, circularity, and community empowerment**. Their collective vision reflects how grassroots enterprises can pioneer resilient and environmentally responsible agribusiness models, even while navigating systemic and market-level constraints.



Collage of innovation and sustainability in action: Top left—PAFA Poultry Breeders' prefabricated incubator showcasing efficient, locally repairable hatchery technology; Bottom left—a hatchery technician monitors egg trays, reflecting hands-on farmer training; Right—Peaknest Beekeeping Farm's green hives nestled in agroecological surroundings, integrating apiculture with biodiversity-friendly horticulture and poultry.



PART SEVEN: INCLUSIVE MARKETS SYMPOSIUM 2025 PROCEEDINGS DAY THREE

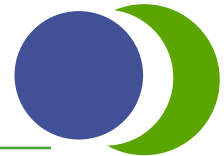
7.1. Session 11: Feedback from the field



Dr Edith Wairimu highlighted several key insights during the field visit to M-Taka, Victoria Eco Farm, and Peaknest Beekeeping Farm. At **M-Taka**, the focus on tech-enabled waste management and a circular economy approach was emphasized, with innovative practices such as a digital waste tracking system and

real-time data analytics to ensure traceability and efficient resource management. The business model is built around a public-private partnership with county governments, aiming to transform waste into valuable resources while reducing landfill dependency. Dr. Wairimu pointed out the challenges of price fluctuations in recycled plastics and competition, which can create cost disadvantages compared to virgin plastics. However, the strong technological backbone and successful collaborations, such as with GIZ and Practical Action, remain a key strength.

Turning to Victoria Eco Farm, Dr. Wairimu discussed the farm's emphasis on sustainable poultry farming through contract farming and integration of solar energy. The farm supports over 4,300 farmers with technical assistance, providing a model of circularity in agriculture. Notably, the farm uses solar-powered hatcheries and has integrated biogas systems to process poultry droppings, contributing to its sustainability. Despite its successes, challenges such as rising input costs for fishmeal and soybean, as well as issues with fragile egg transport, were noted. In contrast, Peaknest Beekeeping is centered around sustainable apiculture, with an integrated model that combines beekeeping, poultry, and horticulture to create diversified income streams. The community-based approach fosters inclusivity, although challenges like seasonal nectar shortages and vulnerability to dry seasons were recognized. The synergy between innovation, sustainability, and community empowerment was evident across all three organizations.



7.2. Session 12: Systemic Change Measurement Evidence as a Guide to Policy

7.2.1. *Introduction on Systemic Change Measurement Evidence as a Guide to Policy*

The session, moderated by **Godfrey Nyangori**, explored the subtheme *Systemic Change Measurement Evidence as a Guide to Policy*, offering a deep dive into how data-driven insights can shape more effective and responsive policy frameworks.

It opened with a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation that underscored the critical role of systemic change measurement in informing policy decisions. The presentation laid the foundation for understanding how evidence can be used not only to assess impact but also to guide strategic interventions.

Strathmore University followed with a live demonstration of their innovative digital platform, showcasing its capabilities in measuring and tracking systemic changes across sectors. The platform illustrated how real-time data and analytical tools can support decision-makers in identifying trends, gaps, and opportunities for policy refinement.

The session culminated in a dynamic panel discussion, where experts engaged in thoughtful dialogue on the role of evidence-based measurement in policy formulation. Discussions emphasized the importance of aligning measurement frameworks with local realities, ensuring that data collection and analysis are inclusive, and translating insights into actionable policy shifts.

Overall, the session provided a unique opportunity to explore the intersection of data, policy, and social transformation, reinforcing the value of systemic change measurement as a catalyst for meaningful and sustainable development.

7.2.2. *Systemic Change Measurement Evidence as a Guide to Policy Overview*

During his presentation under the subtheme Systemic Change Measurement: Evidence as a Guide to Policy, **Eraste Bizimana**, a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at African Guaranteed Fund, emphasized that data becomes truly powerful when beneficiaries actively participate in generating, validating, and using it, noting that embedding community voices not only improves evidence quality but also strengthens systemic change outcomes. He highlighted persistent gaps in national and county data systems and urged that beneficiaries be engaged as co-validators through citizen-generated data and community-led monitoring tools. Eraste stressed that evidence is more likely to influence policy when communities understand and support the findings, advocating for co-designed recommendations with farmers, traders, and cooperatives, supported by community reflection sessions.



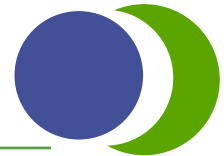
He explained that measuring systemic change requires attention to inclusion, agency, and power shifts, calling for participatory methods such as outcome harvesting and sensemaking to be embedded in routine government M&E. He further urged harmonization of M&E across counties and regional blocs like COMESA and AfCFTA, ensuring community-level data flows are integrated into unified frameworks. Eraste also stressed the need to strengthen feedback loops by returning data transparently to communities, using real-time dashboards and local review forums, and enabling adaptive management based on community input. In addition, he called for greater integration of private-sector and community data, leveraging institutions such as KEBS and KEPHIS, incorporating grassroots innovations, and improving certification, compliance, and levy reduction. Concluding, he encouraged the formation of evidence coalitions across government, academia, civil society, and the private sector, arguing that measurement systems must evolve to support co-investment and blended finance models, ultimately challenging participants to imagine an M&E system where beneficiaries serve as both validators and decision makers.

7.2.3. Showcase of Strathmore Agri-Food Innovation Centre (SAFIC) by Alfred Gathogo



Alfred Gathogo of Strathmore University demonstrated the capabilities of the Strathmore Agri-Food Innovation Centre (SAFIC) platform, showcasing how it leveraged AI to aggregate agricultural data. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, SAFIC integrated crop and

market data from Strathmore and various counties, enabling evidence-based decision-making. This AI-driven platform empowered counties to harmonize inter-county levies, enhance certification systems, and improve standards, which in turn fostered better market integration and reduced trade barriers. By transforming scattered datasets into actionable insights, SAFIC supported farmers, policymakers,



and markets in making informed decisions, ultimately boosting the competitiveness of agricultural trade across Kenya.

During the session, Gathogo presented two versions of the SAFIC platform: one that was publicly accessible and another designed specifically for development partners. Both versions provided real-time insights and integrated multi-source datasets, further advancing the platform's goal of improving agricultural decision-making. He emphasized how AI-enabled systems were shifting data collection and analysis from expert-driven models to participatory, community-driven approaches. In this new model, farmers and local actors were involved in designing research tools, collecting data, validating findings, and using the evidence generated. This shift enhanced the relevance, accuracy, and ownership of the data, ensuring that policymakers had access to grounded, actionable evidence to guide decisions on technology adoption, farming practices, and local innovations.

Alfred, a key contributor to this transition, highlighted the importance of real-time, accessible data in informing decisions throughout agricultural value chains. By integrating datasets from national statistics, ministries, and research institutions, AI-enabled platforms provided timely insights to drive better decision-making. She also stressed that evidence-based systems, strong partnerships, and the adoption of AI were crucial for strengthening policy reforms, improving accountability, and fostering long-term, systemic change.

7.2.4. Panel Introduction and Expert Perspective

The panelists were introduced by **Godfrey Nyang'ori** from MESPT, a development practitioner with 13 years of experience in agricultural value chain development, rural livelihoods, and economic empowerment. His expertise lies in capacity building to increase productivity, enhance food safety, and foster sustainable development. With extensive fieldwork in rural communities and academic credentials including a Bachelor's in Business Management, an MSc, and ongoing PhD studies in Project Management at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Godfrey embodies a strong commitment to research and rural transformation.

The panelists included:

1. **Francis Miringuh** – County Executive Committee Member for Agriculture, Agribusiness, Livestock, and Fisheries in Nyandarua County. With over 30 years of senior management experience in Kenya and abroad, Francis is an Agricultural Economist holding an MA in Project Planning and Management (University of Nairobi) and a BSc in Agricultural Economics (Egerton University). He leads Nyandarua's agricultural transformation agenda, championing a shift from seasonal to perennial crop production and spearheading the revival of key institutions such as the OI Joro Orok and



Njambini Agricultural Training Centers, Agricultural Mechanization Services, and the Seed Multiplication Unit. He also collaborates with development partners to draft bills, policies, strategies, and action plans that modernize and strengthen the county's agricultural sector.

2. **Jane Ngige** – A seasoned Food Science Technologist and Food & Agriculture Biotechnologist with extensive experience in strengthening agricultural value chains, food quality, and post-harvest management across East Africa. Jane combines technical expertise with practical engagement, working with farmers, producer organizations, private sector actors, and development partners to enhance productivity, safety, and market compliance. Her contributions span agri-food research, biotechnology applications, value chain development, and program design, with impact across sectors such as flowers, horticulture, cereals, and pulses. Skilled in stakeholder engagement and translating scientific evidence into actionable solutions, she is committed to leveraging science, innovation, and strategic partnerships to build resilient and inclusive food systems.
3. **Dr. John Ndung'u** – Chief Research Scientist at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), Dr. Ndung'u brings over 25 years of experience in agricultural research, project design, and implementation. He holds a Master's in Rural Sociology and Community Development (University of Nairobi) and a PhD in Agricultural Economics (University of Bonn's Centre for Development Research). His work has supported national programs such as the NAVCDP and the Food Systems Resilience Project, alongside initiatives funded by GIZ, MESPT's DMDP Banana Project, KAFACI, and the Mercator Foundation. From 2014 to 2021, he served as Assistant Coordinator for the Productivity, Profitability, and Sustainability of Conventional and Organic Farming Project in Murang'a, Kirinyaga, and Machakos counties.

7.2.5. *Moderator-led Panel discussion*



In his panel discussion opening remarks, Godfrey Nyang'ori highlighted that sustainable development depends on the interplay between evidence, data quality, and systemic change, noting that policy effectiveness requires reliable evidence generated through strong partnerships across government, private sector, and research institutions. He argued that



translating evidence into policy is only possible when actors collaborate across levels bottom-up and top-down and when communities are fully engaged to avoid data gaps and ensure decisions reflect real constraints. Introducing his panel of government, private sector, and research experts, he emphasized that multi-sector collaboration is the bridge that transforms research into actionable policy, enabling environments where systemic change can take root and creating policies that genuinely respond to the needs of farmers, practitioners, and markets.



Responding to the moderator's question, **Francis Miringuh** explained that systemic change is an evolving agenda that demands deeper, more meaningful participation of all actors' government, private sector, academia, and community-level practitioners. He emphasized that public

participation remains underutilized despite being constitutionally mandated, noting that many stakeholders still operate in silos, perfecting their individual roles rather than contributing to a unified system. Francis argued that innovative participatory indicators must capture shifts in inclusion, power dynamics, and sustainability by tracing not only end results but also the changes that occur along the journey changes that should inform policy refinement and course correction. Drawing from Nyandarua County, he stressed that sustained engagement, trust-building, and joint decision-making are crucial, as government systems move slowly and are difficult to reverse once a policy direction is set.



Building on Francis's remarks, Dr. John Ndung'u highlighted the growing importance of adaptive research and technology-driven tools such as qualitative participatory data, theories of change, and big-data innovations to validate information and ensure farmers and consumers



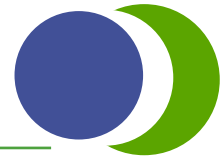
understand and act on evidence. He noted that emerging Internet-of-Things technologies and climate-responsive research, including new crop varieties, demonstrate how continuous learning can shape stronger policies and more resilient communities. In her contribution, Jen emphasized that development programs must rethink engagement frameworks in a volatile global context marked by climate shocks, economic uncertainty, and shifting funding landscapes. She argued that effective feedback loops require deeper collaboration, stronger private-sector involvement, and early engagement long before policies reach government desks, stressing that program responsiveness improves only when evidence flows continuously between communities, practitioners, and decision makers.

In response to the moderator's question on persistent data quality gaps, Dr. Ndung'u explained that the most common challenges in monitored systems include incomplete, inaccurate, and poorly validated datasets—often caused by human error, low technical capacity, and fragmented data ownership. He emphasized that although large volumes of data exist across universities, research institutions, and government archives, they remain scattered and uncoordinated, limiting their usefulness for decision-making. To strengthen evidence-based policymaking, he highlighted the need for clearer role definition among data actors, stronger trust and governance structures, improved interoperability, and enhanced capacity building for those responsible for M&E indicators. Dr. Ndung'u added that data governance, especially for digital platforms, must be agreed upon up front to safeguard quality, build ownership, and ensure responsible use.

Speaking to broader issues around data availability and trust, Jane noted that private-sector reluctance to share information often stems from confidentiality concerns, regulatory pressures, and risks of misuse especially when data has previously been weaponized by civil society or external actors. However, she observed

that sector-level platforms are gradually improving transparency, with exporters now using consolidated datasets to negotiate fairly and counter misinformation.





Francis added that counties face structural gaps in data collection because digitization is still new in government, but investments through donor-supported programs are beginning to yield more refined, farmer-level datasets. He stressed that sustainable data systems require clear engagement frameworks, political trust, culturally sensitive alignment with government processes, and upfront mechanisms for selecting beneficiaries and ensuring long-term continuity of projects. Both speakers agreed that with better protocols and strengthened collaboration across actors, counties will eventually generate reliable, high-quality data that can drive policy and development decisions.

7.2.6. *Participant Questions, Answers and Interactive Discussion*

During the interactive discussion, a participant raised a critical challenge in tracking agribusinesses, noting that many enterprises begin informally and remain in that status for extended periods. This informality complicates accurate data collection on sales, operations, and overall performance. He further observed that national government programs often communicate indirectly with counties, creating silos that weaken data flow and reduce the effectiveness of program coordination. To address these gaps, he emphasized the need to strengthen statistical capacities at the county level—including investment in data collection centers, enhanced analysis capabilities, and the establishment of networks similar to the former provincial coordination structures. Such measures, he argued, would help integrate data systems and improve understanding of local dynamics.

Comment and Response by Francis and the Moderator, Francis Miringuh responded by underscoring that data should be treated as a public good. He argued that since both government and researchers invest substantial resources in generating data, it must be accessible to support broader decision-making. While acknowledging the importance of data protection and confidentiality, he emphasized that clear protocols can safeguard responsible access without unnecessarily restricting usability.

The moderator, Godfrey Nyang'ori, added that compliance requirements are indeed necessary to maintain credibility and authenticity. However, he stressed that properly managed data remains available for decision-makers and should not be locked away. Both Francis and the moderator highlighted the importance of balancing accessibility, trust, and governance, ensuring that data fulfills its purpose in driving effective policy and programmatic actions.

Together, their responses reinforced the idea that inclusive, well-governed data systems are essential for systemic change measurement, enabling counties and national programs to align more effectively and deliver meaningful impact.



7.2.7. Conclusion

The session on systemic change measurement as a guide to policy provided valuable insights into the crucial role of data-driven evidence in shaping effective policies. It began with an introduction on the significance of measuring systemic change and featured a demonstration of Strathmore University's SAFIC platform, which uses AI to aggregate agricultural data and facilitate evidence-based decision-making across counties. The session highlighted the importance of community participation in data generation and validation to enhance the quality and relevance of evidence. During the panel discussion, the role of multi-sector collaboration in turning research into actionable policy was explored, with a focus on the need for participatory methods, adaptive technologies, and stronger data governance. Experts emphasized the importance of addressing systemic challenges such as data gaps and mistrust, while advocating for integrated, transparent, and inclusive data systems. The session concluded with a call for continuous feedback loops between communities, policymakers, and the private sector, ensuring that policies are grounded in real local needs and can drive long-term, meaningful change.

7.3. Session 13: Post Symposium Evaluation

As part of the symposium delivery evaluation, five interactive questions were prepared in **Mentimeter** for participants to respond to. These questions explored:

- The usefulness of the symposium sessions in enhancing the understanding of market system transformation.
- A specific practical idea from the field visits that participants planned to implement.
- One word to describe their overall experience with the symposium venues.
- Their rating of the quality of the content prepared and the effectiveness of the speakers.
- The new ideas or practices from the symposium they intended to apply in their work.

7.3.1. Usefulness of the Symposium Sessions in Enhancing Understanding of Market System Transformation

In response to the evaluation question, *“How useful were the symposium sessions in enhancing your understanding of market system transformation?”* a total of **41 participants** provided feedback. Of these, 20 respondents indicated the sessions were extremely useful, while 14 described them as useful. Fewer than five participants reported that the sessions were *not useful, less useful, or were unsure*.



This feedback highlights that the majority of participants found the symposium sessions highly valuable in deepening their understanding of market system transformation, reinforcing the relevance and impact of the content delivered.

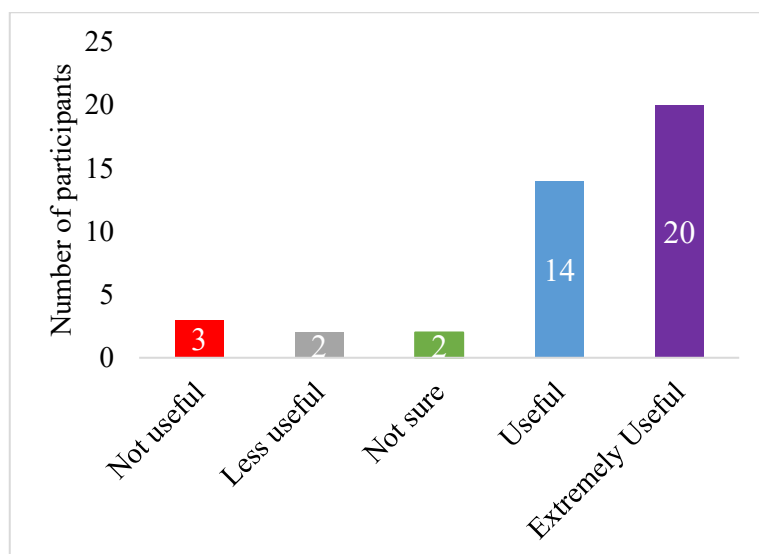


Figure 7.3.1: Participant Ratings on Usefulness of Symposium Sessions This chart illustrates participant responses to the question, “How useful were the symposium sessions in enhancing your understanding of market system transformation?” Out of 41 respondents, 20 rated the sessions as **Extremely Useful**, 14 as **Useful**, while fewer than 5 participants selected **Not Useful**, **Less Useful**, or **Not Sure**, indicating a strong overall endorsement of the symposium’s relevance and impact.

7.3.2. *Practical Ideas from Field Visits: Participants Plan to Implement*

Participants identified a diverse range of practical ideas inspired by the field visits, reflecting strong interest in circular economy models, sustainable agriculture, inclusive market systems, and digital innovation.

Many expressed intentions to adopt circular economy practices, such as:

- Waste separation and recycling
- Repurposing coconut waste
- Expanding waste management initiatives in both rural and urban settings
- Integrating renewable energy solutions, particularly solar power, into agribusiness operations

Others highlighted plans to replicate successful agribusiness models observed during the visits, including:

- Beekeeping in natural environments



- Poultry breeding innovations
- Use of Black Soldier Fly (BSF) larvae in poultry feed
- Climate-smart agriculture techniques tailored to local conditions

Several participants emphasized the importance of public–private partnerships, improved collaboration, and engaging all market actors to strengthen inclusion and amplify program impact.

Digital solutions such as M-Taka and the MKopa model also stood out, with participants recognizing their potential for enhancing traceability, expanding energy access, and supporting circularity interventions.

Overall, participants appreciated the practical, high-impact examples showcased during the field visits. However, they also noted the need for better coordination and facilitation during such visits to maximize learning outcomes and support the effective application of innovations in their respective contexts.

7.3.3. One Word to Describe Overall Experience with Symposium Venues

Participants captured their impressions of the symposium venues in single-word responses, offering a snapshot of their overall experience. The most frequently mentioned terms were “**Insightful**” and “**Excellent**,” each cited five times, suggesting that attendees found the venues to be high-quality, well-organized, and conducive to meaningful engagement, learning, and reflection.

Other descriptors such as “**Informative**,” “**Great**,” “**Well-coordinated**,” and “**Awesome**” further reinforced the positive sentiment, highlighting the venues as spaces that supported both professional exchange and personal inspiration.

Overall, the responses reflect **strong participant satisfaction**, pointing to an environment that effectively facilitated an engaging and enriching symposium experience. This feedback is visually represented in the **word cloud (Figure 7.3.3)**, which illustrates the diversity and positivity of participant perceptions.

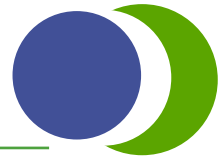


Figure 7.3.3: Word Cloud of Participant Impressions of Symposium Venues

This word cloud visualizes participant responses to the prompt, *“Use one word to describe your overall experience with the symposium venues.”* Prominent terms such as **“Insightful,” “Excellent,” “Informative,”** and **“Good”** reflect high levels of satisfaction, while other descriptors like **“Awesome,” “Well-coordinated,” “Fulfilling,”** and **“Practical”** highlight the venues’ effectiveness in supporting learning, engagement, and comfort. The diversity of responses underscores a broadly positive reception, with occasional suggestions

7.3.4. Quality of Content and Effectiveness of Speakers

In response to the evaluation question, *“How would you rate the quality of the content prepared and effectiveness of speakers?”* a total of 20 participants rated the sessions as good or excellent, while 12 participants rated them as fair. A smaller group, 3 participants each, rated the sessions as poor or very poor.

This feedback indicates that the majority of participants found the content and speakers to be of high quality, with strong appreciation for the relevance, clarity, and delivery of the sessions. The smaller proportion of lower ratings suggests areas for improvement in future symposiums, particularly in tailoring content to diverse participant expectations and enhancing speaker engagement strategies.

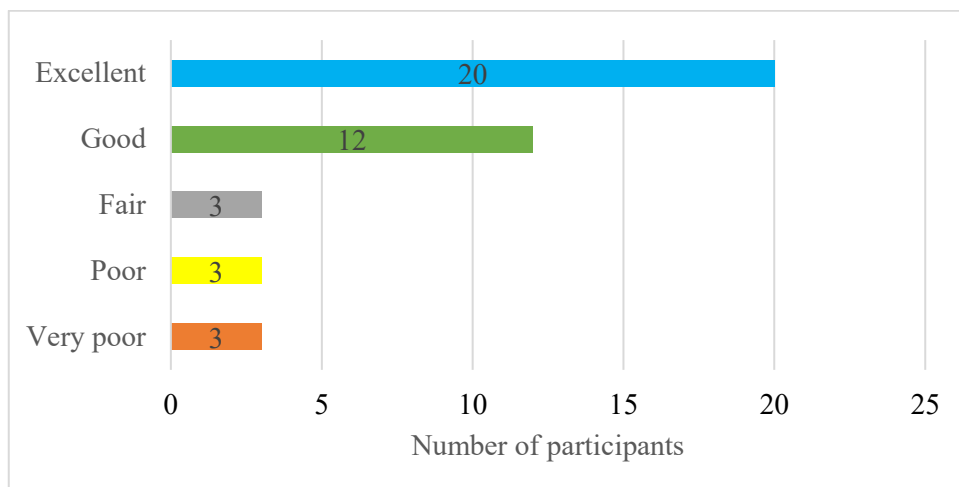


Figure 7.3.4: Participant Ratings on Content Quality and Speaker Effectiveness

This chart presents participant responses to the question, *“How would you rate the quality of the content prepared and effectiveness of speakers?”* A total of **20 participants** rated the sessions as **Excellent**, **12 as Good**, while **3 each** rated them as **Fair**, **Poor**, or **Very Poor**. The results indicate that the majority found the sessions to be of high quality, with a smaller group suggesting areas for improvement.

7.3.5. New Ideas or Practices Participants Will Apply in Their Work

Participants shared a wide range of new ideas and practices inspired by the symposium, reflecting a strong commitment to translating learning into action.

Key themes included:

- **Intentional Program Design & Inclusion** Many emphasized the importance of embedding community voices from the outset, ensuring that participation leads to genuine inclusion and ownership.
- **Leveraging Digital Innovations** Participants highlighted the potential of digital tools for marketing, networking, accessing investor information, and improving traceability. M-Taka and MKopa were cited as practical models for integrating technology into circular economy and energy access initiatives.
- **Integrated Approaches & Strategic Partnerships** There was strong interest in adopting integrated program designs that promote youth and women participation, maximize partnerships, and align with concepts such as blended finance and green technologies.



- **Evidence-Based Decision Making** Several participants noted the value of using research from both public and private sectors to inform business decisions and strengthen market system interventions.
- **Action-Oriented Collaboration** Plans were shared to pursue practical partnerships, address market system challenges holistically, and apply insights on value creation for all stakeholders to enhance inclusivity and effectiveness.

Overall, the symposium catalyzed innovation, equipping participants with tools, models, and strategies to strengthen their work in agribusiness, policy, and community development.

7.4. Session 14: Understanding BDCG's Work"

7.4.1. Presentation on BDCG by Margaret Miano



Margaret Miano, MESPT

In her presentation, Margaret Miano explained that the BDCG network has grown significantly, reflected in new activities, expanding membership, and broader regional engagement, and emphasized that the symposium is only one part of a vibrant year-round platform dedicated to strengthening market

systems development. She reported that the network now in its 20th year brings together government, private sector, academia, and development actors, supported by ANCA members and guided by a governance structure designed to enhance training, knowledge sharing, inclusivity, resilience, and strategic partnerships.

Margaret noted that thematic working groups, led by various institutions, have driven continuous dialogue and learning throughout the year, while the introduction of membership fees and collaborative resource mobilization aims to ensure long-term sustainability. She also highlighted the importance of structured, institutional membership, stronger convening power, and consistent participation across the annual calendar, and called on members to help shape the 2026 events, training programs, and governance council, stressing that the network's growth and relevance depend on honest feedback, shared responsibility, and collective planning.



In her session, Margaret emphasized the importance of member input in shaping the network's future, guiding participants through selections on the most effective quarter for market systems training, the nomination of institutional leaders to join the Network Council, and the need for strong organizational representation at governance level to steer strategic direction. She clarified that the council should consist of CEOs, country directors, and senior leaders capable of championing network activities and providing institutional continuity, noting that nominated leaders would later receive clear terms of reference and orientation. Margaret thanked members for their active engagement, affirmed that their feedback would inform the 2026 calendar and the first council meeting of the year, and reiterated that collective participation, structured planning, and consistent involvement are essential for strengthening the BDCG's governance and sustaining momentum across the network.

In her closing facilitation, Margaret guided the final proceedings by coordinating the photo session with the governing council and secretariat, expressing deep appreciation for their year-long support and the collective effort that made the symposium's many "firsts" a success. She acknowledged the facilitators and rapporteur for their meticulous work in capturing discussions across thematic areas, noting that their behind-the-scenes dedication ensured high-quality documentation of the symposium's outcomes. Margaret also thanked the secretariat for their tireless coordination throughout the event and recognized contributors such as Asher for logistical support to participants. She concluded by appreciating members' engagement, acknowledging those departing early, and affirming that the collaborative spirit demonstrated would continue to strengthen the network as it moves forward.

7.4.2. *About BDCG*

7.4.2.1. Suggested Date for Next Year's Symposium

Feedback on the preferred timing for the next symposium revealed strong consensus around **November 2026**. Out of 51 respondents:

- **49 participants** preferred November.
 - **23 specified the last week of November**
 - **3 preferred early November**
 - **2 preferred mid-November**
 - The remainder simply indicated November.
- Only **2 respondents** suggested October or December 2026.



This indicates a clear preference for hosting the symposium in **late November 2026**.

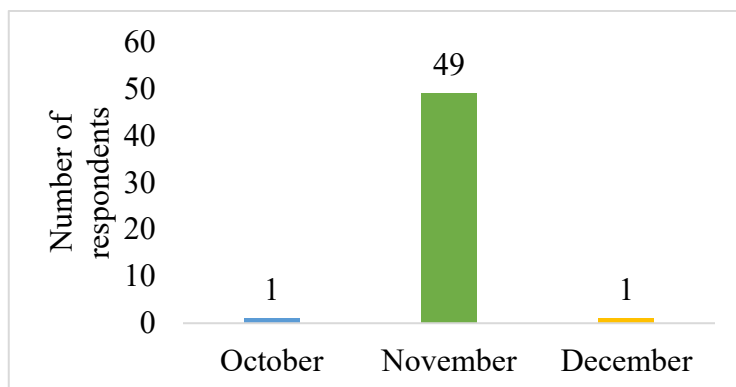


Figure 7.4.2.1: Preferred Month for Next Symposium

The majority of respondents selected November 2026 over October and December.

5.4.2.2 The preferred town for next year's symposium location

Mombasa was preferred by the highest number of participants (26), followed by Malindi, Kisumu, and Nanyuki, each preferred by 4 respondents. Naivasha and Diani were preferred by 3 respondents each, while Homabay, Kakamega, and Zanzibar were preferred by 2 respondents each. The towns preferred by one respondent each included Rubavu (Rwanda), Kigali (Rwanda), Mount Elgon, Turkana, Meru, Eldoret, and Kitale.

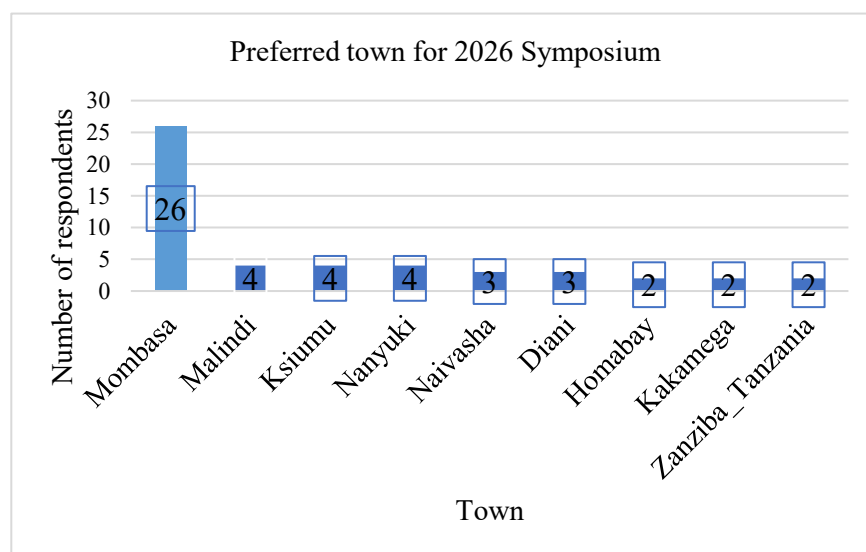


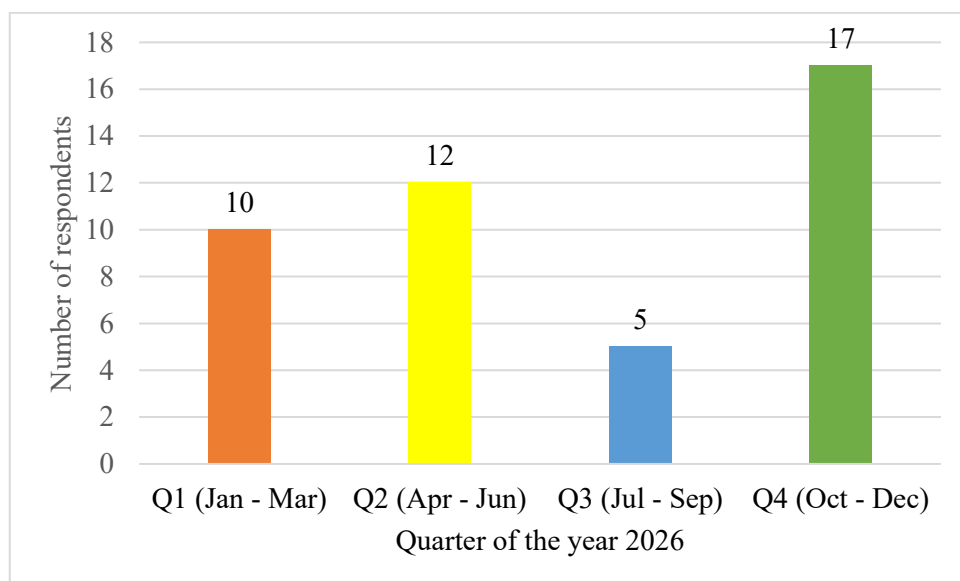
Figure 7.4.2.2: Preferred Town for 2026 Symposium

Mombasa was the most preferred location, followed by Malindi, Kisumu, and Nanyuki.



7.4.2.2. The quarter of the year when market systems training would be most effective.

Most respondents (17) indicated that market systems training would be most effective in the fourth quarter of the year. Twelve respondents preferred the second quarter, while ten suggested that the first quarter would be most effective.



7.4.2.3. Nomination of Institutional Leaders to Join the Network Council

Participants nominated a diverse group of institutional leaders to join the network council. The top nominees were:

- **Rebecca Amukhoyo** (CEO, MESPT) – 8 nominations
- **Wairimu Wahome** (Country Director, Heifer International) – 8 nominations
- **Victor Ndiege** (CEO, Kenya Climate Ventures) – 8 nominations
- **Patrick Lumumba** (Country Director, Africa Guarantee Fund) – 4 nominations
- **Winnie Mailu, David Beer, Janet Mumassabba, and Geoffrey Nyamota** – 2 nominations each

Additional nominees who received one nomination each are listed in **Table 1** below.



Table 1: Nominated Institutional Leaders to Join the Network Council

Name	Position	Organization	# Respondents
Wairimu Wahome	Country Director	Heifer International	8
Rebecca Amukhoyo	CEO	MESPT	8
Victor Ndiege	CEO	Kenya Climate Ventures	8
Patrick Lumumba	Country Director	Africa Guarantee Fund	4
Winnie Mailu	Head of Thematic Support and Capacity Building	Ripple Effect Nairobi	2
David Beer	CEO	TradeMark Africa	2
Janet Mumassabba	Senior Regional Manager	MEDA	2
Geoffrey Nyamota	Country Director	iDE Global – Kenya	2
Matehews Wanjala	Senior Programme Manager – Market Systems	TradeMark East Africa	1
Esther Moyi	Director	ECLOF	1
Gilbert Kamanga	National Director	World Vision Kenya	1
Patrick Lumumba	Country Director	AGF	1
Miriam Mbembe	Operations Director	World Vision Kenya	1
Dr. Andrew Edewa	Director of Standards and SPS Measures	TradeMark Africa (TMA)	1
Prof. Thomas Rewe	Coordinator, National Bioeconomy Education & Policy Framework	Pwani University	1
Genesio Mugo	Chairman	Kenya Dairy Board	1
Prof. Halimu Shauri	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Extension)	Pwani University	1
Mr. Wahome	AESA Coordinator	–	1
Lauren Landis	Country Director	WFP	1
Jules Ngankam	GCEO	African Guarantee Fund	1



PART EIGHT: OFFICIAL CLOSING

7.5. Closing Remarks

7.5.1. Closing remarks – BDCG secretariat chair Rebbeca Amukhoye



In her closing remarks, the BDCG Secretariat Chair, Rebbeca Amukhoye, expressed appreciation to all participants and emphasized that the symposium had powerfully embodied the theme of transforming market systems for resilience, inclusion, and sustainability within an evolving donor environment. She noted that the discussions reaffirmed the BDCG's longstanding message that coordinated, aligned, and priority-driven interventions are essential to addressing challenges in food systems, youth employment, climate adaptation, and inclusive growth. She further acknowledged the shifting donor landscape characterized by reduced flexibility, changing risk appetites, and heightened expectations while stressing that these shifts represent not a shrinking space but an evolving one that demands innovation, accountability, and stronger collaboration.

She highlighted the major themes that emerged from the three-day convening, including the critical need for strengthened public–private–donor coordination, deeper commitment to meaningful inclusion, and a renewed focus on climate-responsive development. She reported that counties had emphasized structured



partnerships, evidence uptake, and data-driven tools as prerequisites for effective collaboration, while sessions on inclusion challenged stakeholders to translate policy commitments into concrete investments and institutional change. She also noted that climate change is reshaping development priorities and that agri-finance must evolve through approaches such as blended finance, cooperative lending, and gender-responsive products. Across all sessions, she observed a strong call for data, evidence, and research to guide programme design and investment decisions.

In concluding, she stated that the BDCG is proud of the leadership demonstrated by its members in co-creating knowledge and aligning interventions, but she emphasized the need for continued improvement in coordination, learning, and accountability to communities. She thanked government representatives, private sector actors, academia, civil society, SMEs, and the organizing team for delivering a world-class symposium. She closed by urging all participants to carry forward a renewed spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility, turning dialogue into action and action into measurable impact, with the collective aim of building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable market systems for current and future generations.

7.5.2. Closing Remarks – Noah Meely Chair of the MESPT Board of Trustees



In his closing remarks, the Chair of the MESPT Board of Trustees, Noah Meely, noted that the Market Systems Development Symposium had brought together a community of innovators, practitioners, and leaders united by a shared commitment to transforming Africa's market systems. He emphasized that despite shifts in the



donor landscape, opportunities for meaningful impact remain abundant, provided that actors embrace creativity, strengthen partnerships, and uphold systems thinking. He further stressed that true inclusion requires structural change that elevates youth, women, and persons with disabilities as co-creators of market systems, and he highlighted the critical role of community-driven innovation, market alignment, and capacity building in driving sustainable transformation.

He highlighted that discussions on climate resilience and the green transition reaffirmed Africa's potential to address climate shocks through regenerative agriculture, circular economy solutions, green technologies, and strengthened local institutions. According to him, the symposium acknowledged that finance becomes transformative only when combined with capability development and market coherence, noting that practical models from blended finance to guarantees demonstrated what is possible when capital is paired with strong partnerships. At the same time, he acknowledged persistent challenges such as donor fragmentation, weak research uptake, and inconsistent policy coordination, while commending participants for collaboratively developing actionable solutions including multi-actor platforms, PPP models, county scorecards, and inclusive leadership pathways.

He concluded by expressing pride in the collaborative spirit that defined the symposium, commending speakers, partners, county governments, researchers, SMEs, and the MESPT team for their collective effort in shaping a world-class event. He urged participants to carry the insights gained back to their institutions, counties, and businesses, turning conversations into tangible action that advances inclusive, resilient, and sustainable market systems. He closed with appreciation and encouragement, expressing hope that the connections formed would grow into lasting partnerships and that the ideas generated would translate into meaningful innovation.