

Session title:	Forging resilient food systems with smallholder farmers and agri-SMEs
Session number:	21
Type of session:	/ Zoom Internal Session
Day:	Monday, 6 September 2021
Time:	14:30-16:15
No. of participants:	55-73 participants (55 at peak; 73 unique log-ins)
Session Organizers:	AMEA/HarvestPlus
Moderator:	Mark Blackett (AMEA) and Peter Goldstein (HarvestPlus)
Rapporteur:	Filipe Di Matteo, AMEA
Relevant outcome:	As outcome of the session, dozens of participants had the opportunity to connect and exchange knowledge about scalable and sustainable approaches to deliver nutritious food and economic benefits for producer and consumers.
Objectives:	The session highlighted the urgent need to support practical, proven, scalable approaches to engaging and empowering those who make up the backbone of African agriculture and food systems: smallholder farmers and agri-food SMEs. The session achieved this by diving deeper beyond the high-level discussion of food systems transformation, so that we heard from those “on the ground” about what works, what does not, and what our priorities should be. Examples were presented from the extensive portfolio from HarvestPlus and the AMEA Network.
Speakers:	
(*Name, Title, Organization)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mark Blackett, Network Director, AMEA 2. Jane Onoka, Agribusiness Supply Chains and Gender Advisory, IFC 3. Donald Mavindidze, Regional Director Africa, HarvestPlus 4. Atinuke Lebile, Co-Founder, Cato Foods 5. Douglas Steinberg, Practice Director Building Resilient Communities, NCBA CLUSA 6. Djalou Franco, Senior Agribusiness Advisor, Rikolto 7. John Ereng, East Africa Lead for Sustainable Rice Program, Rikolto 	

Main highlights:

(*For Insights and newsletter. To be based on the theme of the day. Fill in in bullet form)

KEY CHALLENGES

- Support the transformation of our current Food Systems by helping deliver Food and Nutrition security, Environmental sustainability, and Social and Economic Justice to both producers and consumers.

INNOVATIONS PROPOSED

- We discussed the importance of delivering quality and scalable approaches that support the tackling of the Key Challenges mentioned above. Two examples are below:
- 1) Multi-stakeholder platforms/networks, such as AMEA, are not an innovation per se. However, the innovative aspect of it is that, in the AMEA Network, actors are striving to stop the re-invention of the wheel in every project. AMEA members and partners are sharing knowledge, resources, and tools to tackle one of the chief challenges in global value chains: the gaps in the professionalization of farmer organizations and agri-SMEs, who are key actors in our Food Systems.
- 2) Biofortification: HarvestPlus has been experimenting in different models for seed generation and multiplication, by setting up localized planting systems that lead to secondary multipliers within communities. As such, work with farmers has improved access to biofortified seeds and markets but there is a need to make them efficient and accessible. By taking the value-chain approach, HarvestPlus is supporting policies and strategies to strengthen an enabling environment including financing to de-risk smallholder and SMEs and provide supporting structures for the farmers and make sure they are connected to markets.
- HarvestPlus staff attending explained that all biofortified crops promoted by HarvestPlus are developed through conventional, non-GM breeding techniques with their CGIAR crop development partners and national breeding programs, as well as with farmers themselves who participate in testing and varietal selection. The crops are provided to countries as public goods for delivery to farmers.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ NEXT STEPS

- Regarding Food Security and Nutrition: participants agreed that actors need to make available the latest technology to increase productivity and access to nutritious foods.
- Regarding Social and Economic Justice: participants agreed that multi-stakeholder platforms that are locally-led and involve smallholder farmers,

including women and youth groups, are key to deliver social and economic justice to producers and consumers.

- Regarding Environmental Sustainability: participants recognized the importance of having programs anchored in public policy and strategies, such as National Rice Development Strategies. This also enables partnerships with private sector to be developed.

Session Summary:

(*To go in final report. Max 300 words. Fill in prose)

With the participation of more than 50 guests, the session organized by AMEA and HarvestPlus highlighted the urgent need to support practical, proven, scalable approaches to engaging and empowering those who make up the backbone of African agriculture and food systems: smallholder farmers and agri-food SMEs. The session opted to go beyond the high-level discussion of food systems transformation, and dive deeper into discussions instead, so participants could hear from those “on the ground” about what works, what does not, and what our priorities should be. Key notes by Jane Onoka, from IFC, illustrated what she believes is broken in our Food Systems, setting the tone for the discussions that followed. Examples to support the “fixing” of the Food Systems by means of sustainable and scalable approaches were presented from the extensive portfolio from HarvestPlus and the AMEA Network.

In the end, three break-out groups permitted participants to exchange their experience and knowledge about the three overarching challenges presented by this session: Delivering Food Security and Nutrition, achieving Social and Economic Justice, and improving Environmental Sustainability.

Tweetable quotes with timestamp:

(*For podcast and to go to AGRF Communication for social media. Minimum 3 per session)

- “Strengthening supply chains becomes key because farmers working in silos can’t achieve much by themselves. But working together, they can access finance, markets, they can achieve much more.” Jane Onoka, IFC, 14.46 EAT
- “When your intervention finds relevance in other people, it means it’s achievable and scalable.” Jane Onoka, IFC, 14.48 EAT
- “Biofortification is not only a solution to some of the issues in food systems – it’s also an economic opportunity, largely for Agri-SMEs” Donald Mavindidze, 14.58 EAT
- “Biofortification is one of the sustainable food systems interventions that have done a lot for agri-SMEs.” Atinuke Lebile, Cato Foods, 15.01 EAT
- “We need to take a systems approach if we want to accelerate and scale change: from crop varieties all the way to the consumer’s plate” Donald Mavindidze 15.14 EAT

- “When you talk about socioeconomic justice, you are also talking about equity and inclusion, or ownership and voice.” Douglas Steinberg 15.17 EAT
- “To mainstream sustainability, we need to take learnings from our projects and use them to change not only public policy but also policy in the private sector” John Ereng 15.43 EAT

How has the session contributed to the AGRF outcomes?

*(For end of AGRF communique/ Press release. List 3 - 5 top outcomes)

- The session highlighted the urgent need to support practical, proven, scalable approaches to engaging and empowering smallholder farmers and agri-food SMEs.
- The session dived deeper beyond the high-level discussion of food systems transformation, illustrating key messages with videos about the experience from those “on the ground” about what works, what does not, and what our priorities should be.
- The session tackled the need for low-cost, sustainable, and scalable approaches to Food Security and Nutrition through HarvestPlus’ work with biofortification in Nigeria.
- The session tackled the need for low-cost, sustainable, and scalable approaches to improve Social and Economic Justice through the sharing of NCBA CLUSA’s experience with their Feed the Future project in Senegal.
- The session tackled the need for low-cost, sustainable, and scalable approaches to Environmental Sustainability through Rikolto’s experience with the Sustainable Rice Platform standard in East Africa. The Sustainable Rice Platform is one of the largest stakeholder platforms in the World, bringing together most of the major actors in the rice sector.

COMMITMENTS