

CFS47 Side Event - Transforming Agricultural Innovation for People, Nature and Climate

8 February 2021 – 13:00 CET

200 word summary

This side-event addressed the significant gaps that remain in the evidence base of what works, where and how that prevents us from achieving our climate goals through agriculture and food systems. It is part of near year-long campaign called 'Transforming Agricultural Innovation for People, Nature and Climate', co-chaired by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

The objectives of the event were threefold:

- Demonstrate how the UN Global Goals cannot be achieved without a transformation in the way we foster and accelerate innovation across food systems.
- Share stories about the different ways climate champions can help instigate change
- Mobilise more ambitious commitments from global leaders to deliver on this vision.

The speakers explored the latest evidence on the challenges and opportunities in scaling approaches that are proven to work.

The debate enabled attendees to articulate how they intend to deliver on their pledge. It is the hope of the organising partners—CGIAR, CCAFS, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Government of Thailand, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and International Fund For Agricultural Development (IFAD)—that these pledges will lead to more commitment to a climate-smart future at the UN Food Systems Summit and COP26.

Key quotes (agreed with speakers in advance)

Dr. Kanayo F. Nwanze - CGIAR Special Representative to the UN Food Systems Summit

Innovation in agriculture is crucial for addressing the climate crisis and improving the resilience of smallholders around the world. Through the transition to a more integrated One CGIAR, and a new 10-year strategy, CGIAR is aiming to develop and deploy scientific innovations faster, on a larger scale and at a lower cost.

Rachel Glennerster - Chief Economist - UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Less than 10% of investment in agricultural systems is spent on agricultural innovation. It's clear that such level of investment in agricultural innovation will not enable the effective transformation of global agriculture systems that we need. We need a real shift in how we invest in research – targeting it onto the biggest challenges for climate resilient agriculture, involving stakeholders from the outset, focusing on deployment and scaling, and linking finance to move technologies from early stage research all the way through to deployment in the field in an end to end approach.

Jyotsna (Jo) Puri - Director - Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division (ECG) - International Fund For Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Science and research are not focusing sufficiently on how to deliver! We know the 'what', but it is the how that should be the priority going forward - it's the only way to scale agriculture and food security interventions and be transformative.

Kundhavi Kadiresan - Managing Director, Global Engagement and Innovation

CGIAR is calling to double funding into agricultural research and innovation because without additional science-based action to align agriculture with climate targets, there is a very real possibility that the

number of people going hungry or facing malnutrition around the world could exceed 840 million by 2030.

Joao Campari - Chair, Action Track 3 - Boost Nature Positive Production at Scale, United Nations Food Systems Summit | Global Leader of Food Practice, WWF

To fully transform the food system, we must support scaling regenerative production systems, traceable supply chains, and innovations that ensure robust, resilient ecosystems, thriving communities, and climate justice. We must include voices and expertise from across the entire system, from farmers to rural and Indigenous communities to international organizations – their commitments and solutions will form the building blocks to the climate-smart future that United Nations Food Systems Summit and COP26 can secure.

Thanawat Tiensin - Chairperson of the UN Committee on World Food Security and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the FAO, IFAD and WFP

We need global and regional organizations to work more closely for breaking silos and building on successful examples.

Maria Helena Semedo - Deputy Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Innovation is the driving force that can transform our agri-food systems, boost family farmers' livelihoods, build a positive relationship with nature, enhance resilience, tackle climate change and stem biodiversity loss.

Ishmael Sunga - Chief Executive Officer - Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)

For impact at scale, innovation should be directed at strategic areas/points, and researchers should see farmers as partners in solutioning rather than as "beneficiaries" of their outputs. Finally, the output or acknowledgement of research should not be based on academic publication, but more on its contribution towards addressing the needs and challenges of farmers.