



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



# MENA AGRIFOOD INNOVATION DAYS

Organized in the framework of the  
Food For the Future Summit @ Dubai-Expo



23-24 February 2022



Dubai Exhibition Centre at  
EXPO 2020 - Dubai



# CONTEXT

The MENA region has unique food security concerns. The region suffers from multiple burden of malnutrition, with growing number of undernourished people and at the same time rapid increase in overweight and obesity due in large part to unhealthy diets. Demographic growth and poor agricultural productivity combined expose the region to the vagaries of international food markets. Water scarcity, the degradation of fertile land, and climate change put additional pressure on fragile agroecosystems. Solutions exist to address these issues. They require innovation, technologies, and investments that are conducive to efficient, healthy, sustainable and resilient agrifood systems for the benefit of all.

Partners and key regional players have expressed a need for a multipurpose regional platform to bring together different stakeholders from the MENA region to engage on agrifood systems transformation, foster innovation and technologies, and improve the region's capacity to adapt its food systems so that they are more productive, more resilient, more inclusive and more sustainable, and deliver healthy food for everyone. Knowledge sharing and awareness raising play an important role in fostering the necessary changes. To that, The MENA AgriFood Innovation Days, held during the "Food for Future Summit" organized by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment of the United Arab Emirates in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is planned to take place on 23-24 February 2022.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) AgriFood Innovation Days will help foster engagement between the public and private sector, cities and municipalities, academia and civil society to

discuss action, key vulnerabilities and challenges from a distinct MENA perspective with the common goal of transforming the region's agrifood systems.

# OBJECTIVES

## The MENA AgriFood Innovation Days aim to:

- Provide regional and global stakeholders a platform to discuss action towards enhanced food security and nutrition in the MENA.
- Acknowledge and build upon global and regional efforts of the MENA to address food security and nutrition on the region.
- Offer a platform to national, regional and international institutions for advancing their work by convening the engagement of key stakeholders in the region on food system transformation.

Over the course of two days, the MENA AgriFood Innovation Days, as part of the Food for Future Summit, will act as a forum for exchange between stakeholders. A series of events taking place over the two days will gather decision makers, practitioners, innovators, the private sector, producers' associations, and other key actors. These will combine in depth technical sessions on key topics, ted-talk style presentations, high-level panels and an exhibition, or innovation fair, to showcase success stories and innovative approaches to agrifood systems transformation.

# PROGRAMME

Day	Time	Session	Item no.
Feb 23	10:20 – 10:30	Opening of the Day	
	10:30 – 12:00	Digital Agriculture: Policies and Pathways	1
	12:00 – 12:30	BREAK	
	12:30 – 14:00	<b>High-level Panel: Trade, Innovation, and Technologies for Food Security in the MENA</b>	2
	14:00 – 15:00	BREAK	
	15:00 – 16:30	Youth Driving AgriFood Innovation	3
	16:30 – 17:30	Big Data and Analytics for AgriFood Systems Transformation	4
Feb 24	10:20 – 10:30	Opening of the Day	
	10:30 – 12:00	Science, Innovation and Food: The Cutting Edge in Academic Research	1
	12:00 – 12:30	BREAK	
	12:30 – 14:00	<b>High Level Panel: The Committee on World Food Security Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition: from commitment to action</b>	2
	14:00 – 15:00	BREAK	
	15:00 – 16:30	Disruptive AgriFood Solutions led by Businesses	3
	16:30 – 17:30	Trailblazing Women in Agrifood Systems	4
	18:00 – 20:00	<b>Dinner offered by FAO</b> (Healthy Diet, Zero Waste)	

# HIGH-LEVEL SESSIONS

## High-level Panel: Trade, Innovation, and Technologies for Food Security in the MENA

23 Feb: 12:30-14:00 hrs.

The main objective of this Panel is to recognize and promote the need for a use of trade, innovation and technology as enablers for transforming agrifood systems and achieving food security in the MENA region. The following specific outcome is expected from this Panel.

- a. Highlighting the importance of trade, innovation and technology for transforming the agrifood systems
- b. Outlining major issues and pathways for enhancing MENA region's participation in international trade in food and agriculture and increasing the intra-regional trade
- c. Finding pathways to enhance private sector's role in ensuring food security in the region
- d. Identifying gaps, challenges and pathways to enhance the availability, access and use of technology in agriculture in the region.



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### SPEAKERS

- **H.E. Mariam AlMheiri**, Minister of Climate Change and Environment – Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, The United Arab Emirates.
- **H.E Abbas AlHajj Hasan**, Minister of Agriculture – Ministry of Agriculture, The Republic of Lebanon.
- **H.E Salem Abdullah Issa Al-Soqtari**, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation and Fish Wealth – Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and Fish Wealth, The Republic of Yemen.
- **Ms. Anabel González**, Deputy Director-General – World Trade Organization (WTO), Switzerland.
- **Mr. Ayman Amin Sejiny**, CEO of Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector – Islamic Development Bank Group, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- **Mr. Máximo Torrero Cullen**, Chief Economist – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- **Ms. Ismahane Elouafi**, Chief Scientist – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- **Ms. Daria Zinovieva**, Head of International Department – Agro Export, Russia.

**Moderator: Dr. AbdulHakim Elwaer**, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative – FAO.



# The Committee on World Food Security – from Commitment to Action

24 Feb: 12:30-14:00 hrs.

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) formally adopted “[Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition](#)” on 10 February 2021 during its 47<sup>th</sup> plenary session, as a result of an inclusive multi-stakeholder negotiation process informed by scientific evidence. The Guidelines include a wide range of recommendations to promote transparent and accountable governance, sustainable food supply chains, access to healthy diets, food safety, nutrition education, gender equality, and resilient food systems in humanitarian contexts. The event seeks to raise awareness about the CFS Voluntary Guidelines, its substantive content and priority areas, and actions to advance sustainable food systems that deliver healthy diets. The event will also showcase UAE leadership on sustainable food systems, both at home and in the broader region, including how efforts to implement the CFS Voluntary Guidelines can help countries achieve their national food security plans and achieve the relevant Sustainable Development Goals – especially SDG-2 on hunger and nutrition.

## SPEAKERS

- **H.E. Mariam AlMheiri**, Minister of Climate Change and Environment – Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, The United Arab Emirates.
- **H.E. Bwino Fred Kyakulaga**, Minister of State for Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda.
- **H.E. Ambassador Pio Wennubst**, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to United Nations Organizations in Rome, Italy.
- **H.E. Gabriel Ferrero y de Loma-Osorio**, Chairperson – the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).
- **Mr. AbdulHakim Elwaer**, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative – FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa.
- **Mr. Máximo Torero Cullen**, Chief Economist – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- **Ms. Jessica Fanzo**, Bloomberg distinguished professor of Global Food Policy and Ethics – John Hopkins University.
- **Ms. Anna Scavuzzo**, Deputy Mayor of Milan.
- **Dr Martien van Nieuwkoop**, Global Director Agriculture and Food Global Practice, The World Bank.

**Moderator: Mr. Christopher Hegadorn Secretary**, Committee on World Food Security (CFS).



# TECHNICAL SESSIONS:

## Digital Agriculture: Policies and Pathways

In partnership with **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**

10:30-12:00 hrs.

To address the challenges of agri-food systems and rural transformation, new development approaches are needed, that combine innovative policies, technologies and organizational processes and practices, and use of digital and other types of innovation for the improvement of agriculture and food systems, into Agriculture 4.0 (the Fourth Agriculture Revolution). Developing, adopting and scaling up of digital innovation technologies requires that the stakeholders and decision-makers develop a better understanding of impact pathways, risks and benefits of technologies, as well as new partnership and business models involving the public and private sectors, civil society and farmer organizations.

### SPEAKERS

- **Mr. Máximo Torero Cullen**, Chief Economist – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- **Mr. Karim Abdelghani**, Programme Coordinator, Arab Regional Office, International Telecommunication Union (ITU).
- **Mr. Yousef Hamidaddin**, CEO, AgriTech Accelerator, Jordan.
- **Mr. Bernhard Kowatsch**, Head of the Innovation Accelerator, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

**Moderator: Mr. Dino Francescutti**, Sub-Regional Coordinator, FAO.



## Youth Driving AgriFood Innovation

15:00-16:30 hrs.

Young people are driving innovation in agrifood systems and have a key role to play in achieving global food security and nutrition. The current crisis has brought both new challenges and opportunities for young innovators working to transform the sector. Paramount to ensuring that young people and their transformative ideas thrive is the ability of governments and partners to deliver an enabling environment and the business and technical support they need to grow. This session will showcase two partnerships that strive to achieve just that.

### SPEAKERS

- **Ms. Carla Tanas**, Co-Founder Industry Disruptors Game Changers and CEO Future Agro Challenge.
- **Mr. Ramy Boujawdeh**, Deputy General Manager, Berytech.
- **Mr. Robyn Schryer Fehrman**, President & CEO, Enactus.

**Moderator: Ms. Dalia Abulfotuh**, Economist, FAO.

## Big Data and Analytics for AgriFood System Transformation

16:30-17:30 hrs.

Discussion by practitioners in big data analytics in the field of agriculture, to i) showcase different applications of Big Data, artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technologies, ii) present the interface of those technologies and how it can be used practically, iii) discuss the regulatory and policy challenged in the future and the consequences of these developments worldwide on the agrifood systems sector.

### SPEAKERS

- **Mr. Maximo Torero Cullen**, Chief Economist – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- **Mr. David Davies**, CEO and Founder, AgUnity, Australia.
- **Mr. Saifullah Khan**, Partner, Bizilance Consultants, UAE.

**Moderator: Mr. Ahmad Mukhtar**, Senior Economist, FAO.



## Science, Innovation and Food: The Cutting Edge in Academic Research

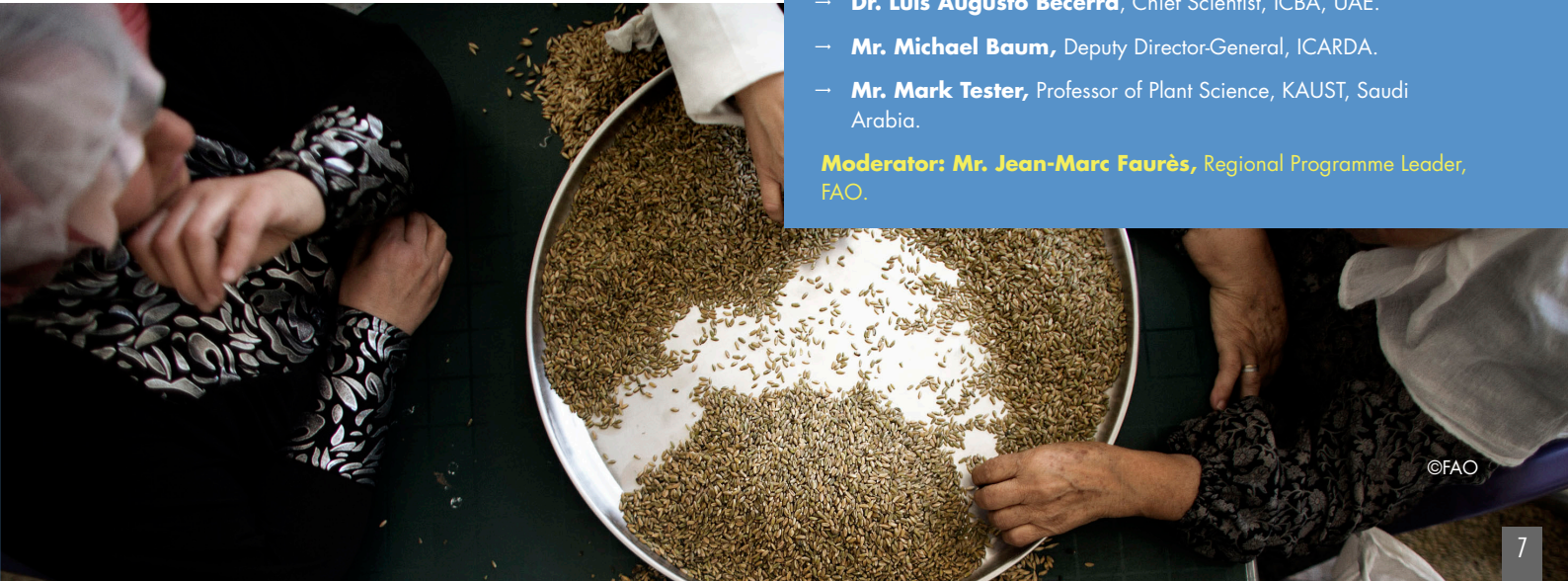
24 Feb: 10:30-12:00 hrs.

A closer look at the latest research findings coming out of the region's best academic and research institutions and how they can be better leveraged in the development of policies, programmes, technologies and products.

### SPEAKERS

- **Ms. Ismahane Elouafi**, Chief Scientist – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- **Dr. Ismail Serageldin**, ex vice-president of the World Bank and founder director Emeritus Library of Alexandria.
- **Dr. Rachid Serraj**, Director of Strategy at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, Morocco.
- **Dr. Luis Augusto Becerra**, Chief Scientist, ICBA, UAE.
- **Mr. Michael Baum**, Deputy Director-General, ICARDA.
- **Mr. Mark Tester**, Professor of Plant Science, KAUST, Saudi Arabia.

**Moderator: Mr. Jean-Marc Faurès**, Regional Programme Leader, FAO.



## Disruptive AgriFood Solutions led by Businesses

15:00-16:30 hrs.

The foundation of collaborations and effective partnerships lies in identifying common ground and synergies, risks and minimizing trade-offs that can hinder progress.

Representing public and private sector agri-business companies, the panelists will showcase their experience in applying disruptive solutions in improving their business models and share their views on the ways to make disruptive technologies sustainable and inclusive.

### SPEAKERS

- **Mr. Ayman Amin Sejiny**, CEO of Islamic Corporation for the development of the Private Sector – Islamic Development Bank Group, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- **Mr. Majid Sultan Al Qassimi**, CEO, SomaMater, UAE.
- **Mr. Ramy Boujawdeh**, Deputy General Manager, Berytech, Lebanon.
- **Mr. Bernhard Kowatsch**, Head of the Innovation Accelerator, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).
- **Ms. Daria Zinovieva**, Head of International Department – AgroExport, Russia.

**Moderator: Mr. Kayan Jaff**, Senior Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Officer, FAO.



## Trailblazing women in MENA AgriFood Systems

16:30-17:30 hrs.

The main purpose of the session is to clarify the interlinkages between innovation and gender equality in agrifood systems, by illustrating the opportunities and risks women and girls in the MENA region.

The session will present examples and cases in which innovation has proved successful to promote women's socio-economic inclusion, with specific reference to decent employment and entrepreneurship in the MENA agrifood sector. It will also highlight the different stakeholders that should be involved to ensure a gender-responsive strategy for the promotion of agricultural innovation, and the mechanisms and incentives can be explored to support it, at different levels.

### SPEAKERS

- **Dr. Tarifa AlZaabi**, Acting Director-General, International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA), UAE.
- **Ms. Ismahane Elouafi**, Chief Scientist – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- **Ms. Ghada Haider**, GAIA, Lebanon.
- **Ms. Habiba Al Marashi**, Emirates Environmental Group, UAE.

**Moderator: Ms. Maryam Rezaie**, Agro-Industry Officer, FAO.

## INNOVATION FAIR AND MARKETPLACE

Over the last two years, FAO, with partners, have scrutinized the region and identified success stories that have transformative potential. These success stories address major constraints, have a positive impact on youth and women, offer solution for smallholders, and are scalable and sustainable. The success stories sessions will be an opportunity to exchange on best practices, and for the originators to seek opportunities for scaling up their approaches.

## **Food For the Future Summit @ Dubai-Expo**

Hosted by the Ministry of climate change and the environment, UAE

In strategic partnership with Food and Agriculture Organization

<https://www.foodforfuturesummit.com/>

