

# THE LAV BOOK 2024

## The Leading AgriWomen Voices

Shaping the Future of Food & Agriculture, One Voice at a Time.





TROGON HALL



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# FORWARD

It is with immense pleasure that I welcome you to embark on a journey through the maiden edition of the Leading African-Women's Voices (LAV) program book. I reflect with pride on the profound impact of the dynamic platform created by the Leading African Women in Food Fellowship (LAWFF) to amplify the voices of African women in the food and agriculture sectors and facilitate learning, experience sharing as well as transformation of food systems across the continent.

African women play a pivotal role in agriculture, contributing significantly to food production, processing, and distribution. They are the backbone of food systems and the catalysts for innovation and sustainability. Through their resilience and creativity, these women are redefining agricultural practices, promoting biodiversity, and enhancing food security. LAWFF serves as a platform to recognize and support these trailblazers, disruptors, and ecosystem enablers who are making remarkable strides in their communities.

The fellowship categorizes participants into five distinct groups: Disruptors, Trailblazers, Food/Beverage Narrative Changers, Top Chefs in Africa, and Ecosystem Enablers. Each category reflects the diverse contributions of women in shaping the future of food in Africa. From chefs who celebrate our culinary heritage to innovators who leverage technology to solve pressing challenges, these women exemplify leadership and vision.

Despite their substantial contributions to economic development, women in the food and agriculture sector continue to face significant barriers in access to resources, leadership and decision-making opportunities. The LAWFF aims to confront these challenges head-on by providing mentorship, training, and a supportive community that empowers women to overcome obstacles and thrive.

I invite you to engage with this book and explore the achievements of LAWFF fellows. Their stories inspire us to continue to advocate for change and support initiatives that elevate women's voices in every sector. Together, we can build a more inclusive future where every woman has the opportunity to lead, innovate, and make a lasting impact on our food systems.

**Dr. Osasuyi Dirisu**  
**Executive Director, Policy Innovation Centre**  
**Senior Fellow, Nigerian Economic Summit Group**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who played a vital role in bringing the Leading African Women's Voices advocacy tool to fruition. This groundbreaking initiative would not have been possible without the visionary leadership of African Food Changemakers and the invaluable contributions of the Leading African Women in Food Fellowship (LAWFF) fellows, whose compelling stories and transformative journeys form the core of this work. We deeply appreciate the generous funding support of the Skoll Foundation, which made both the LAWFF program and the LAV Book a reality. Special thanks to our technical partners, including Sahel Consulting Agriculture and Nutrition Limited, CARE International, African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD), Mastercard Foundation, MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates), BellaNaija, Red Dish Chronicles Culinary, ChefCoco, and Bokamoso Foods. Their expertise and unwavering guidance have been instrumental in shaping this endeavour.

We are profoundly grateful to a distinguished group of leaders and mentors: Pat Mitchell, Prof. Joachim Von Braun, Ndidi Nwuneli, Agnes Konde, Carla Denizard, Ada Osakwe, Dr. Osasuyi Dirisu, Leena Hoffmann, Dr. Susan Kaaria, Dr. Dorothy Nyambi, Uche Pedro, Chef Stone Akanji Abiola, Lesego Serolong Holzapfel, Chef Coco Reinartz, Marieme Esther Dassanou, Abolade Anthony, Dr. Susharee Shome, and many others. Your insights, mentorship, and dedication to fostering a robust curriculum have been invaluable in equipping fellows with the tools to excel.

The LAWFF Close-Out Event and the LAV Book were skillfully led by Adanna Imafidor, the Program Lead for LAWFF, who provided visionary leadership in both spearheading the event and conceptualizing and developing the book, with the tireless support of Anna Indagiju Mambula. Their efforts were bolstered by the dedication of the AFC team: Ruth Egbe, Ebere Okoh, Amaka Chime, Gloriapraise Bassey, Bushirah Abdulrahman, Nosa Obano, Rose Ekong, Patience Braimoh, Emeka Mbachue, David Ogwuche, Rosemary Okoro, Ogheneruona Ekure, Victory Omoyibo, Sylvester Barau, and Chinweokwu Mmaju.

Finally, we extend our appreciation to the 2023 and 2024 LAWFF fellows and the LAWFF Alumni Network (LAN). Your unwavering commitment to advancing the role of women in food and agriculture exemplifies the transformative power of this fellowship, driving progress and advocating for a more inclusive and sustainable global food system.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Leading African-Women's Voices (LAV) advocacy tool was created to amplify the voices and contributions of African women in food and agriculture. Despite being the backbone of agricultural systems, women continue to face systemic barriers, including limited access to resources, exclusion from decision-making, and a lack of gender-responsive policies. Despite their vital roles, women remain underrepresented globally in agricultural policymaking and leadership. Only 19% of agricultural policies incorporate gender-specific goals, despite recognition of women's vital roles in 75% of policy documents.<sup>1</sup> Addressing these disparities is critical to unlocking the sector's potential. According to the FAO, closing the gender gap in agrifood systems could boost the global economy by \$1 trillion and reduce food insecurity for 45 million people<sup>2</sup>. Women's equality in agrifood systems could boost the global economy by \$1 trillion, reduce food insecurity by 45 million: new FAO report. By advocating for equitable representation and sustainable development, the LAV tool directly contributes to achieving SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

The Leading African-Women's Voices (LAV) Book draws its strength from the transformative experiences and insights gathered during the LAWFF Close-Out Event in Rwanda, which served as a critical moment in shaping this advocacy tool. This event brought together women leaders from across Africa for an immersive week of leadership development, capacity-building, and networking, equipping them with the necessary skills and confidence to drive change in the agricultural sector. The Close-Out Event, which culminated in the African Food Systems Forum (AFS Forum); one of Africa's premier agricultural gatherings provided a platform for fellows to showcase their innovative ventures, demonstrating the tangible impact of gender-inclusive agricultural leadership. Their participation at AFS Forum was a compelling demonstration of the significant contributions women are making in agriculture and served as an opportunity for them to engage with global stakeholders, amplifying their voices on a continental stage.

The LAV Book leverages these powerful moments and insights from the LAWFF Close-Out Event to fuel its mission of advocating for more inclusive, gender-responsive policies in agriculture. By showcasing the lived experiences and entrepreneurial journeys of women who are driving change, the LAV Book underscores the importance of fostering an environment where women's leadership is not only celebrated but actively integrated into the design and implementation of agricultural policies. This advocacy tool highlights the crucial need for increased representation of women in agricultural leadership, positioning them as key agents of sustainable growth and change in Africa's food systems. The LAWFF Close-Out Event opened with an impactful keynote by Temi Adegoye, Executive Chair of African Food Changemakers, emphasizing the transformative power of women in agricultural supply chains. Interactive sessions such as business pitching, scaling ventures on a budget, and navigating male-dominated sectors offered fellows actionable strategies to overcome challenges. These workshops highlighted the importance of community support, coalition building, and personal branding, providing fellows with a comprehensive toolkit to advance their impact.



The discussions yielded rich insights. Fellows learned how compelling storytelling could make business pitches more persuasive, attracting investors by aligning with market needs. They explored the critical role of social capital in shaping policy and seizing opportunities. Strategic alliances and mentorship emerged as vital tools for navigating male-dominated spaces, while coalition building demonstrated the power of collective advocacy in driving systemic change. Finally, the emphasis on authenticity in personal branding reinforced the importance of standing out in a competitive landscape, empowering fellows to lead with confidence and purpose.

The Leading African-Women's Voices (LAV) Book embodies a bold vision to redefine women's roles in agriculture. By elevating their stories and highlighting their transformative contributions, the book aims to drive policy reform, spark critical dialogue, and inspire systemic change. Positioned as a catalyst for gender equity, resilience, and inclusive growth, the LAV Book aligns with global development goals, empowering women to lead as architects of a sustainable and equitable global food ecosystem.

- » 1. See Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2024, September 24). *FAO leads new initiative and reinforces its commitment to accelerate gender equality efforts in agrifood systems: Commit to Grow Equality could benefit up to 54 million women worldwide*. Retrieved from FAO website.
- » 2. See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2023, April 13). *Women's equality in agrifood systems could boost the global 3. economy by \$1 trillion, reduce food insecurity by 45 million: new FAO report*. Retrieved from FAO website.

# GENDER EQUALITY IN AGRICULTURE: UNLOCKING POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

## INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the backbone of many economies, especially in developing regions like Africa. The agriculture sector accounts for 35% of Africa's GDP and employs more Africans than any other sector<sup>1</sup>. Despite their significant contributions, women who make up nearly half of the agricultural labor force remain underrepresented, underpaid, and often overlooked in policy-making. As we push toward sustainable development and food security, it is essential to explore gender disparities in agriculture and the transformative potential of gender-inclusive approaches.

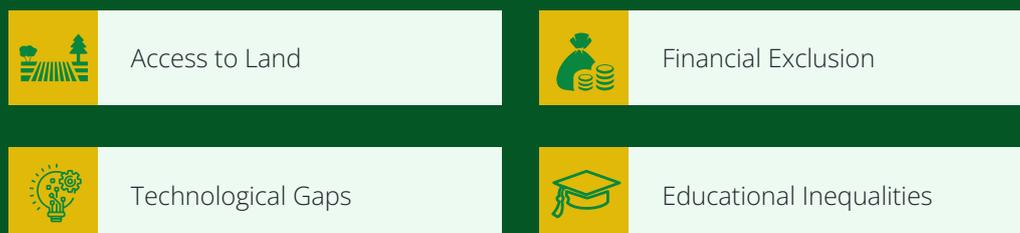
## THE INVISIBLE BACKBONE: WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Women in agriculture play crucial roles, from planting and harvesting crops to managing small-scale farms and taking care of family nutrition. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women contribute 40% of food production<sup>2</sup>. Yet, these women often lack access to the necessary resources, including land, financial services, education, and technology. Traditional gender roles also confine women to unpaid and unrecognized work, while men dominate higher-value chains and decision-making positions.

This gender imbalance is not just a social justice issue; it also has economic consequences. Studies suggest that if women had the same access to resources as men, agricultural yields could increase by 20-30%, which could significantly reduce global hunger and boost economies<sup>3</sup>. The world can no longer afford to ignore the potential of women farmers.

## GENDER-BASED BARRIERS IN AGRICULTURE

The gender gap in agriculture stems from a range of barriers, including:



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.whitecase.com/insight-our-thinking/africa-focus-summer-2023-africas-agricultural-revolution>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/africa-myths-and-facts/publication/women-agriculture-and-work-in-africa#:~:text=COMMON%20WISDOM%20%236%3A%20Women%20provide,to%20be%2060%20to%2080%25.>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fao.org/climate-change/news/news-detail/When-you-think-farmer-think-female/en>

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1. **Access to Land:** In many countries, land ownership is passed through male inheritance, leaving women with minimal control over land. Where women can access land, they often have smaller plots, and the land is of poorer quality compared to their male counterparts.
  2. **Financial Exclusion:** Women often lack access to credit or loans, which hampers their ability to invest in better seeds, tools, or technology. Financial institutions tend to perceive women farmers as high-risk due to the informal nature of their work or the absence of collateral like land titles.
  3. **Technological Gaps:** With the increasing importance of technology in modern agriculture such as the use of autonomous vehicles, digital platforms, and mobile-based extension services women are often left behind. Limited literacy, mobility restrictions, and unequal access to smartphones or the internet exacerbate this technological divide.
  4. **Educational Inequalities:** Women generally have lower levels of formal education, further limiting their ability to access training and information. This deficit in agricultural knowledge translates into fewer opportunities for growth and innovation.

## UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER IN AGRICULTURE

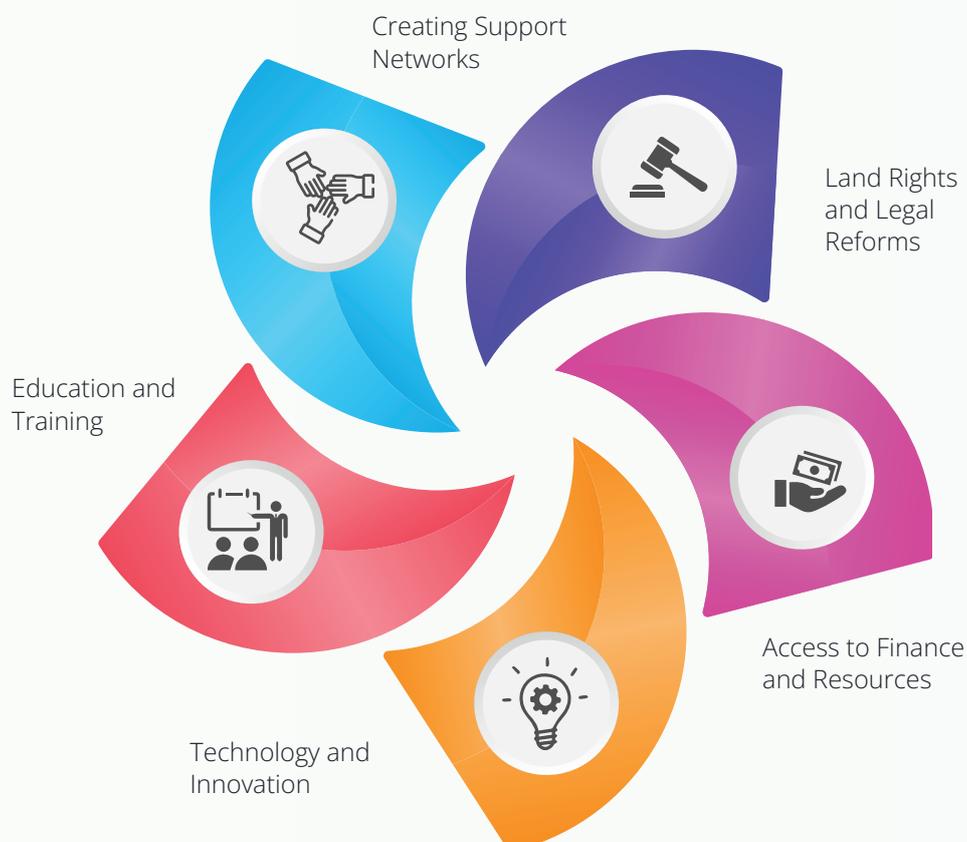
1. **Women as Custodians of Indigenous Knowledge:** While mainstream agriculture often focuses on industrial methods, women are often the keepers of indigenous knowledge about crops, soil management, and sustainable farming techniques. This knowledge is essential in building climate resilience, especially in regions vulnerable to environmental shocks. Women's expertise in preserving biodiversity, nurturing small livestock, and cultivating drought-resistant crops should be recognized as a powerful tool for sustainable agricultural systems.
2. **Gendered Impacts of Climate Change:** Climate change affects men and women differently due to their varied roles in agriculture. Women are often more vulnerable because of their dependence on rain-fed farming, which is highly susceptible to erratic weather patterns. Climate change exacerbates their already limited access to resources. However, empowering women through climate-smart agricultural practices can lead to more resilient farming communities. Programs that integrate gender considerations into climate adaptation efforts have been shown to have higher success rates.
3. **Entrepreneurship and Innovation:** A new generation of women entrepreneurs is emerging in agriculture, transforming the sector with innovative approaches. Women are leading initiatives in agri-tech, sustainable food processing, and agroecology. These ventures not only provide income but also foster environmental sustainability and community empowerment. Programs like the Leading African Women in Food Fellowship (LAWFF) have been instrumental in equipping women with the tools, networks, and resources to become key players in agribusiness.
4. **The Role of Women in Shaping Food Narratives:** Women are often the gatekeepers of household nutrition, influencing the dietary habits of families and communities. In many cultures, they have the power to promote diverse, nutritious,

and sustainable diets that support local food systems. Through storytelling and advocacy, women can reshape global narratives around food by emphasizing the cultural and environmental significance of indigenous crops and sustainable farming practices. This shift can help combat the dominant narrative of large-scale, monoculture farming that often excludes smallholder women farmers.

- 5. Leadership in Policy Advocacy:** Although women are underrepresented in agricultural decision-making spaces, the few who rise to leadership positions have a profound impact. Women policymakers often champion more inclusive, sustainable approaches to agriculture. Advocating for gender-responsive policies ensures that both men's and women's needs are considered in agricultural development plans. By amplifying women's voices in these critical spaces, the future of food systems can be more inclusive and equitable.

## STRATEGIES TO BRIDGE THE GENDER GAP IN AGRICULTURE

To create a truly gender-inclusive agricultural sector, the following strategies should be prioritized:





**Land Rights and Legal Reforms:** Governments must address discriminatory land laws and ensure women can own and inherit land. Formalizing women's land rights is a critical first step toward giving them more economic independence and bargaining power.

**Access to Finance and Resources:** Financial institutions and governments should design gender-responsive credit schemes that cater to the unique needs of women farmers. In addition, building women's financial literacy and introducing women-friendly insurance products can mitigate risk and encourage investments in their farms.

**Technology and Innovation:** Programs focused on digital literacy and the provision of technology designed with women in mind can bridge the tech divide. Mobile-based platforms for weather updates, market prices, and farming advice can empower women to make informed decisions.

**Education and Training:** Closing the gender education gap is vital. Offering women-targeted training sessions, mentorship programs, and leadership development can unlock their full potential. These programs should be flexible and considerate of the time constraints women face.

**Creating Support Networks:** Building strong networks, such as women farmers' cooperatives or mentorship circles, provides emotional, financial, and professional support. These networks can serve as a platform for knowledge sharing, collective bargaining, and increased visibility.

## CONCLUSION

Gender inclusivity in agriculture is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity for sustainable development. By closing the gender gap, we can unlock tremendous economic potential and ensure food security for all. Women, as custodians of agricultural knowledge and leaders in their communities, are essential to this process. Recognizing their contributions, empowering them with the right resources, and amplifying their voices will create more resilient and equitable food systems, benefiting everyone.

As we move forward, it's time to invest in women, not as beneficiaries, but as drivers of change in agriculture. The future of our global food system depends on it.

# AFRICAN FOOD CHANGEMAKERS (AFC)

AFC is a non-profit organisation focused on nourishing Africa and changing global narratives. We enable small and medium entrepreneurs (SMEs) in Africa to start and scale resilient and sustainable agribusinesses by providing training, funding opportunities, exposure, trade linkages, and fostering a vibrant community of entrepreneurs. Our community comprises members over 40 African countries, ranging from primary producers, aggregators, processors, chefs, cooks, distributors, innovators, and Agtech providers, who are all doing amazing work and creating innovative food products that impact global food systems. Membership is FREE and open to entrepreneurs with business operations anywhere along the agricultural value chain, from farm to table.

## AFCS VIEW ON GENDER: EMPOWERING AFRICAN WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

African Food Changemakers (AFC), gender equality is central to our mission of nourishing Africa and transforming global narratives about African food systems. Women are the backbone of agriculture in Africa, contributing significantly to food production, innovation, and sustainability. Yet, they remain underrepresented and often invisible in the broader agricultural discourse.

AFC acknowledges that empowering women is crucial for achieving sustainable development, addressing food security challenges, and fostering economic growth. Through AFC Membership Hub, we support agrifood entrepreneurs especially women, we amplify women's voices, provide them with opportunities

to scale their agribusinesses, and ensure their contributions are recognized on local and global platforms.

We believe that when women are empowered with the right resources such as training, funding, mentorship, and access to networks they become powerful changemakers. These women not only transform their businesses but also drive inclusive growth and foster a sustainable, resilient food system that benefits all of Africa. Our commitment to promoting gender equality aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1 & 5), as we continuously strive to bridge the gender gap in agriculture and celebrate the brilliance of African women.



## AFC MEMBERSHIP IMPACT

Launched at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the AFC Membership Hub established a digital community for entrepreneurs to share experiences, access tools and resources, gain motivation, and exchange innovative strategies to sustain their businesses. As a cornerstone of women's empowerment, the Hub fosters a supportive environment that propels female entrepreneurs toward success. Women now represent over 36% of total active members, highlighting deliberate efforts to include and uplift women in the agri-food sector. Through networking opportunities, tailored resources, and international exposure, the Hub has enabled women-owned businesses to thrive, increasing their visibility and facilitating connections with customers, suppliers, and partners across borders.



### Networking, Trade and Partnerships:

AFC has supported agribusinesses in increasing their sales and incomes by fostering a community for networking, trade, and partnerships beyond the borders of their geographical locations. More than 100 members in the community reported finding new customers, suppliers, and service providers (56% locally, 44% internationally) within the community, increasing their sales and reach by over 30%. Through connections made within the Hub, women agripreneurs have expanded their sales and income, contributing to the growth of local economies while gaining international traction.



### Global Recognition:

Members in the AFC community receive a spotlight on local and international platforms that increase their visibility and attract new stakeholders. More than 50% of the agribusinesses spotlighted attribute new stakeholder interest, sales, and growth to media opportunities provided through the Hub. Women members have been spotlighted on prestigious platforms, enhancing their credibility and creating pathways for additional stakeholder interest and investment.



**Steady Growth:** The number of women members has grown significantly, from 202 in 2020 to over 1,563 by 2024.

Impact Metrics	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Agri-Food SMEs actively engaged in the membership hub	766	1,364	2,065	2,583	4270+
Total women members	202	504	761	952	1563+
Country of engagement	33	37	37	38	43
Growth opportunities and resources provided to AFC members via the Hub (including funding, training, media showcases, exhibitions at fairs, trade linkages, etc.).	68	125	623	918	1100+
Knowledge Sharing Sessions where critical business and industry insights were shared	20	32	42	55	75+

## SCALING EXPORT PROGRAM (SEP)

The Scaling Export Program (SEP) engages an annual cohort of agri-food SMEs, equipping them to export healthy, nutritious products across Africa and to international markets, particularly in Europe and North America. Through training, market exposure, trade linkages, and business support, SEP empowers participants to navigate export challenges successfully. The program demonstrates a strong commitment to empowering women in export markets by fostering confidence, providing tailored training, and creating opportunities for global market entry. Female agriSMEs are among the key beneficiaries of SEP's interventions, including job creation, with 18% of new hires involving five or more women.

### KEY CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT OF SEP



**Export Confidence:** The SEP has instilled a high level of confidence among participants, with over 95% of respondents feeling well-equipped to manage export activities and 64% expressing strong confidence post-training. This level of confidence reflects the effectiveness of the program in preparing SMEs to navigate the complexities of the export market successfully.



**Increased Female Representation:** With an emphasis on female entrepreneurs, SEP ensures they are equipped to export their products, increasing their influence and presence in international markets.



**Export Activities:** SEP has catalyzed export activities, with 34% of respondents beginning to export predominantly processed foods. Notably, 87% of these new exporters have penetrated new global markets, with 25% entering 3-5 markets and 13% reaching more than 5. This expansion into diverse markets underscores the adaptability and growth potential of the SMEs involved, increasing the recognition of made-in-African products.



**Advancing Intra-African Trade:** The SEP has been instrumental in promoting intra-African trade, with Africa accounting for 36% of export destinations. This aligns with the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), showcasing SEP's role in fostering economic integration and enhancing the global competitiveness of African SMEs while reshaping the global narrative about African products. By driving intra-African trade and facilitating job creation, the program contributes to inclusive economic growth, ensuring that women play a central role in advancing the agri-food sector.



**Job Creation:** The program's impact on job creation is evident, with 78% of respondents reporting positive effects on employment. The majority of new jobs created involve hiring 1-5 employees, with a significant focus on female inclusion, where 18% of hires involved 5 or more women. These new roles are directly linked to the increase in export activities, demonstrating SEP's role in promoting inclusive economic growth while changing the narrative.



**International Showcasing:** Program participants exhibited their products at the Intra-African Trade Faire (IATF) in Cairo, Egypt; thirteen program participants showcased their products at the Lagos 9th Nigerian Agrofood & Plastic-Print-Pack exhibition event; five program graduates showcased their products at the New York Fancy Food Show, increasing visibility and market opportunities.

Through these efforts, the SEP has not only empowered agriSMEs to scale their operations but has also changed the narrative in the agri-food sector. By driving export growth, promoting job creation, and enhancing intra-African trade, the program contributes to the continent's sustainable economic development and food security. As SEP continues to evolve and expand, it promises to transform the food and agricultural landscape further, ensuring that African SMEs play a pivotal role in global trade.

## BUILDING RESILIENCE AGAINST CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SHOCKS (BRACE) PROGRAM

The Building Resilience Against Climate and Environmental Shocks (BRACE) Program is a transformative capacity-building initiative, funded by Skoll, designed to equip African small and medium-sized agribusinesses (agriSMEs) with the tools and knowledge to understand and combat the effects of climate change on their operations. By fostering awareness and enabling the adoption of climate-smart practices, BRACE empowers agriSMEs to develop resilient strategies that mitigate the impacts of climate change and enhance the sustainability of their businesses. The BRACE program has actively incorporated women in its climate-smart agricultural initiatives, enabling them to combat climate change's effects on their businesses. The program's focus on visibility and networking has amplified the voices of women agriSMEs, showcasing their resilience and innovation.

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE BRACE PROGRAM

- 01. Comprehensive Curriculum Development:** Created a robust curriculum on climate-smart agriculture that spans diverse agricultural sectors, including production, processing, packaging, logistics, and distribution.
- 02. Extensive Training Reach:** The BRACE program has trained over 1,000 agriSMEs across 20 African countries, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change in their businesses. Women-owned agriSMEs, in particular, have greatly benefited from the program's curriculum, adopting sustainable practices that enhance the longevity and competitiveness of their enterprises.
- 03. Business Efficiency Enhancement:** Achieved a significant impact, with 30% of trained businesses successfully adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, leading to increased efficiency and sustainability.
- 04. Visibility and Recognition:** The BRACE program has amplified the visibility of agriSMEs by showcasing their efforts and successes across all African Food Changemakers platforms. This recognition highlights the contributions of women in climate-smart agriculture, inspiring others to adopt similar sustainable practices and further advancing the sector's growth and innovation.
- 05. Networking and Collaboration:** The BRACE program has fostered a robust network among agriSMEs by facilitating opportunities for participants from various countries to connect, share knowledge, and collaborate. These networking initiatives have been particularly impactful for women entrepreneurs, promoting peer learning and cross-country collaborations that drive innovation and growth in the agri-food sector.

# THE LEADING AFRICAN WOMEN IN FOOD FELLOWSHIP (LAWFF)

The Leading African Women in Food Fellowship (LAWFF) Program, funded by the Skoll Foundation and introduced and designed by Ndidi Nwuneli, is a groundbreaking initiative that empowers women leaders within the African food and agriculture sector. It bridges the gender gap in agricultural discourse across diverse platforms, amplifying women's voices and elevating their visibility on a global scale. Empowered with cutting-edge knowledge, essential resources, and a robust network, these women become transformative changemakers, driving innovation and sustainable growth in Africa's food system. LAWFF offers an intensive six-month program featuring expert-led training, mentorship, and a vibrant community for exceptional female disruptors, entrepreneurs, policymakers, chefs, trendsetters, and storytellers. The program celebrates and supports women making significant impacts in the sector through various categories including Top Chef, Disruptors, Trailblazers, Ecosystem Enablers, and Food and Beverage Narrative Changers.

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- \* Build a strong sisterhood of women leaders supporting each other as they advance their individual and collective efforts to transform the food ecosystem.
- \* Facilitate access to critical resources and connections to advance the innovative work of female changemakers in the food ecosystem.
- \* Amplify the voices of female changemakers via media engagement and visibility for program fellows, both locally and internationally.
- \* Accelerate gender equity in the food and agriculture landscape.

SISTERHOOD BUILDING



RESOURCE ACCESS



NETWORK



VOICE AMPLIFICATION



GENDER EQUITY





## CHANGING NARRATIVES THROUGH THE LAWFF

- **Global Impact:** Since its virtual launch on March 8th, 2023, LAWFF has garnered a total of 1,286 nominations from 27 African countries (647 in 2023 and 639 in 2024), leading to the selection of 58 fellows from 12 countries. These fellows are being recognized and supported through the fellowship across five categories.
- **Comprehensive Training:** Over six months, the program delivered more than 26 lessons led by industry experts and thought leaders via weekly sessions on Zoom, complemented by a resource hub and a peer-to-peer learning system.
- **Mentorship and Engagement:** LAWFF engaged five mentors for each fellowship category to provide personalized mentorship, supporting fellows in their transformative journeys.
- **Media and Visibility:** The program spotlighted the fellows' contributions through media features on AFC social media pages, news outlets, publications, and international speaking engagements.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** LAWFF co-hosted events like the AGRF summit in Tanzania and Rwanda, where fellows were showcased, highlighting their impactful work in the food industry.

LAWFF further amplified their contributions by securing speaking engagements on International Platforms such as the Intra-African Trade Fair 2023, Creative Africa Nexus 2023 (CANEX) in Egypt, Policy Innovation Centre in Nigeria and Sahel Scholars Conference. The program continues to build a sustainable and inclusive food ecosystem, showcasing the diversity and brilliance of African women in food and food systems.

Learn more <https://lawff.afchub.org/fellows>



## THE LAUNCH YEAR: A LOOK AT THE LAWFF PROGRAM'S IMPACT IN 2023

The LAWFF Program officially launched on March 3, 2023, with the mission of bridging the gender gap in food system leadership and amplifying the voices of women driving transformative change in Africa's food systems. Dedicated to empowering and elevating women making a significant impact in the African food ecosystem, the program's design included a rigorous selection process, intensive training, and strategic media engagement to ensure the fellows were equipped with the necessary skills, resources, and visibility to drive innovation and sustainable growth.

The journey began with an overwhelming response, as 647 nominations poured in, underscoring the demand for such an initiative. After a meticulous evaluation process, 202 applications met the eligibility criteria, and 112 candidates advanced to the next stage. From these, 58 finalists emerged, culminating in the selection of 27 fellows representing 12 African countries. These exceptional women were chosen for their roles within the food ecosystem, their growth potential, and the measurable impact they had already made. By the program's conclusion, 26 fellows had successfully graduated, having gained invaluable skills, knowledge, and connections to further their work.

Spanning from May to September 2023, the fellowship featured weekly training sessions conducted via Zoom. With over 20 lessons delivered by industry experts and thought leaders, the curriculum combined theoretical insights with practical applications. Sessions were highly interactive, blending presentations, discussions, and Q&A opportunities, often led by both trainers and fellows. The program's innovative buddy system fostered collaboration and peer learning, while regular assignments and assessments ensured that knowledge was applied and retained.



**647**  
Nominations



**27**  
Fellows



**12**  
Countries



A centralized resource hub provided fellows with ongoing access to training tools, videos, and communication channels, fostering a vibrant learning community. This platform not only facilitated continuous engagement but also connected the fellows to the broader African Food Changemakers (AFC) network, encouraging collaboration and collective growth long after the fellowship period.

One of the program's standout features was its emphasis on media engagement. By partnering with media organizations, LAWFF amplified the voices of its fellows, sharing their stories with policymakers, industry leaders, and potential collaborators. This strategic visibility elevated the fellows' profiles, enabling them to extend their influence and inspire systemic change.

The Africa Food System Forum Summit, held in Tanzania in September 2023, marked a significant highlight of the program. Fellows had the opportunity to learn, network, and collaborate with key stakeholders, culminating in a graduation ceremony celebrating their achievements. The summit featured a co-hosted side event with AWARD, centered on "Gender-Responsive Policies as Drivers of Innovative Solutions for Equitable Agri-Food Systems." This discussion underscored the critical role of gender-inclusive policies in advancing agriculture and showcased the fellows' expertise and leadership.

During the summit, fellows participated in expert sessions covering essential topics such as business pitching, empowering women in male-dominated sectors, creative fundraising, and coalition building. Practical exercises in leadership, strategic planning, and elevator pitching further honed their skills. The summit also provided unmatched networking opportunities, connecting fellows with global stakeholders and expanding their professional networks.

At the AFC exhibition stand, fellows showcased their innovations, gaining invaluable exposure through media interviews and coverage. This platform not only celebrated their achievements but also positioned them as thought leaders capable of shaping Africa's food systems.

The program's impact was unequivocal. Fellows rated their overall satisfaction at an impressive 8.63 out of 10, while LAWFF's comparative rating of 7.88 against similar programs highlighted its excellence. A 100% recommendation rate further underscored the program's transformative influence on its participants.

In conclusion, the inaugural LAWFF Fellowship Program has established itself as a trailblazer in empowering women leaders across Africa's food and agriculture sectors. By combining comprehensive training, targeted mentorship, and strategic visibility, the program has provided its fellows with the tools to drive innovation, foster sustainable growth, and create lasting change. As the voices of these women resonate globally, the impact of LAWFF continues to inspire a new era of leadership in African agriculture.

# LAWFF 2023 Cohort



Name: **Wangari Kuria**  
Organization: **Farmer on Fire Ltd**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Abueng Leepile**  
Organization: **Bokamoso Abu Farms**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Noela V. Ojara**  
Organization: **Divine Organic Foods**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Atinuke Lebile**  
Organization: **Cato Foods and Agro Allied Global Concepts**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Aisha Hadejia**  
Organization: **Sahel Consulting Agriculture & Nutrition Limited**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Joyce Atuhaire**  
Organization: **African Women Agribusiness Network Uganda**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Mercy Olorunfemi**  
Organization: **Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Olutayo Adeyemi**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Sylvie Djacobou Deugoue**  
Organization: **Greenpeace Africa**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Laila Ayman**  
Organization: **Mesori Tech**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Dorothée Nganti Mvondo**  
Organization: **Agrix Tech**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Chantelle de Bruyn**  
Organization: **Buttercup Farmhouse**  
Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Yasmine Fofana**  
 Organization: **Afrofoodie**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Joyce Gyebi**  
 Organization: **Culinary for Social Change**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Ugonna Ejiogu**  
 Organization: **Mitya's Food Diary**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Anne Kirya**  
 Organization: **For Food's Sake Eat**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Moyosore Oluwa Odunfa**  
 Organization: **Atije Experience**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Jamila Lawal**  
 Organization: **Jamila Lawal Enterprises Limited**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Halima Zawiya The**  
 Organization: **Noodle Bar | Halima Zawiya Farms Limited**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Vera Osei-bonsu**  
 Organization: **Eat Smart Foods | Start Right Nutrition Limited**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Nadia Akiyo Dovonou**  
 Organization: **Veto Plus Benin Sarl**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Oluwatoyin Onigbanjo**  
 Organization: **August Secrets Ltd**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Lynne Odiwa**  
 Organization: **Nature's Best Green Culture**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Jacqueline Joyreen Banda**  
 Organization: **Jeyie Foods**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Anthonia Nkiruka Egbe**  
 Organization: **The Velvette Company**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**



Name: **Amaka Chukwudum**  
 Organization: **Amicable Mondiale Farms**  
 Status: **Cohort 1**

# LAWFF PROGRAM'S IMPACT IN 2024

The LAWFF Program in 2024 marked an exciting new chapter in empowering women leaders within the African food ecosystem. As we reflect on the year's achievements, we highlight the program's role in elevating the visibility and impact of women changemakers across Africa. The program's core mission; to foster leadership, innovation, and gender equity in agriculture has resonated deeply with participants, positioning them as key contributors to Africa's food ecosystem.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



**Call and Selection:** In 2024, LAWFF received 639 nominations from ten African countries, with 106 eligible nominees and 62 applicants. A rigorous selection process led to the identification of 31 finalists, unveiled on March 8, International Women's Day. These women were chosen based on their leadership potential and their capacity to drive impactful change in the food sector.



**Training and Mentorship:** The program began with a series of onboarding sessions, which included presentations and mock panel discussions. Fellows were then categorized by their area of expertise for targeted mentorship and skills development. This personalized approach ensured that each fellow was equipped to lead within her specific area of the food system, whether it be in business, policy, or social change.



**Close-Out Event and AGRF Summit:** A one-week physical close-out event in Kigali, Rwanda, from September 2-6, coinciding with the African Food Systems Forum (AFS) Summit, served as a platform for fellows to pitch ideas, network with industry experts, and showcase their innovative contributions to the food sector. The AGRF Summit allowed fellows to connect with global stakeholders and share their journeys, further cementing their roles as leaders in Africa's food ecosystem.



**Alumni Network:** Upon completing the fellowship, LAWFF established an Alumni Network to ensure continued support, collaboration, and impact among the program's graduates. This network provides a space for fellows to stay connected, collaborate on projects, and contribute to the larger mission of gender equity in African agriculture.

## A DIVERSE GROUP OF IMPACTFUL WOMEN

The 30 graduated fellows, each bringing a unique set of skills and experiences to the table, came from five distinct categories:



This diversity in representation showcases the breadth of the program, which encompasses a wide range of roles within Africa's food systems from entrepreneurship to policy advocacy, to innovative culinary leadership.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND INSIGHTS FROM THE LAWFF CLOSE-OUT

During the close-out event, 27 fellows attended in person and engaged in a series of expert-led sessions focused on key aspects of leadership, business growth, and social change. These sessions provided valuable insights and practical tools for the fellows to further their work and impact in the food industry:



- 01. Business Pitching:** Fellows honed their ability to pitch business ideas effectively, learning how to secure funding and support for their ventures.
- 02. Empowering Female Changemakers:** This session delved into the unique challenges women face in male-dominated industries and provided strategies to overcome these barriers.
- 03. Creative Fundraising:** Fellows were introduced to innovative approaches to raising capital, empowering them to explore new avenues of financial support for their businesses.
- 04. Building Coalitions and Support:** This session focused on creating strong networks and coalitions that can foster collaboration and drive systemic change in the food industry.

Each session was followed by interactive discussions, providing fellows with the opportunity to share experiences and deepen their learning.

## NETWORKING AT THE AFS FORUM

The AFS Forum was a key networking event for the fellows, allowing them to connect with global stakeholders, policymakers, and other changemakers in the food industry. The summit was a crucial platform for fellows to showcase their work, share their stories, and gain invaluable exposure.

Fellows also had the opportunity to display their products and services at the African Food Changemakers (AFC) exhibition stand. This allowed them to present their innovations to a wider audience, with interviews and business pitching videos providing further exposure and helping to amplify their voices.

## A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

The LAWFF program has proven to be a catalyst for change, empowering women to lead transformative initiatives within the African food systems. The culmination of six months of virtual learning and practical experience, the close-out event was a celebration of the program's success and the fellows' achievements.

With all 30 fellows graduating from the program, it is evident that LAWFF has had a lasting impact on the personal and professional development of these women. Through comprehensive training, mentorship, and media engagement, LAWFF has provided the fellows with the tools and networks they need to lead with confidence and make a meaningful impact in their communities.

The LAWFF program is more than just an educational initiative; it is a powerful force for change that continues to shape the future of Africa's food systems. By empowering women leaders, the program is fostering sustainable growth, advocating for gender-inclusive policies, and driving innovation across the African food ecosystem. The fellows, now equipped with the skills, connections, and visibility they need, are poised to lead the way in transforming Africa's food landscape for generations to come.



**639**  
Nominations



**30**  
Fellows



**10**  
Countries

# LAWFF 2024 Cohort



Name: **Miracle Chimechefughim Nduka**  
Organization: **Kitovu Technology Company**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Deina Mayaki**  
Organization: **Agriarche**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Lilian Jepkemboi Songok**  
Organization: **Gavo Foods International Ltd**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Ibinabo Moses**  
Organization: **Dailytummies**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Nana Achiaa Ankraah**  
Organization: **Saliscom Limited (Arise Foods)**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Chiamaka Kathryn Nwakalor**  
Organization: **Dish L'Afrique**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Maryam Ohunene Ahmed**  
Organization: **Mimies Homemade**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Victoria Temitope Ajayi**  
Organization: **Chow Noodle Bar**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Rukayat Momoh**  
Organization: **Giggles Culinary Place**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Katendi Nkanza**  
Organization: **Kate In Your Kitchen**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Wezi Sesela Mzumara**  
Organization: **Kwanza Cocoa**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Etimbuk Joseph Imuk**  
Organization: **Eti Farms Global Limited**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Nneka Ebun Ogboi**  
 Organization: **MASH Baby Food**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Fatuma Geoffrey Mang'ena**  
 Organization: **Healthy Seaweed Company Ltd.**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Aishah Anakuagbor Sulaiman**  
 Organization: **Royal Pearls Resources Limited**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Ozioma Antonetta Onwordi**  
 Organization: **Eden Whole Foods**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Victoria Mamza**  
 Organization: **Wangarau Ventures Int**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Adanne Margaret Uche**  
 Organization: **Ady's Agro Processing Limited**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Ashley Mutanu Mutiso**  
 Organization: **Itanya Africa Group**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Christine Atieno Ager**  
 Organization: **Vermi-Farm Initiative**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Maryann Ogechuwu Okoli**  
 Organization: **Esomchi Foundation**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Lidya Gaudence John**  
 Organization: **World Vision Organization**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Gugulethu Tarakini**  
 Organization: **Research and Education for Sustainable Actions**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Hadeer Nazmy Hegazy**  
 Organization: **Egyptian Food Bank**  
 Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Hadijah Nankanja**  
Organization: **Community Women Enterprise Network Limited**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Doreen Njoki Irungu**  
Organization: **Ustawi Afrika**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Rosinah Mbenya Kithandi**  
Organization: **Pelum Kenya**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Yasmeen Fahmy Amin**  
Organization: **GIZ-Agriculture Innovation Project**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Chancelle Bamuhaye**  
Organization: **Hope for a Better Future**  
Status: **Cohort 2**



Name: **Jacinta Mwende Mwau**  
Organization: **Eastern Africa Grain Council**  
Status: **Cohort 2**

# BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING LEADERS: TRANSFORMATIVE LESSONS FROM THE LAWFF PROGRAM

The Leading African Women in Food Fellowship (LAWFF) close-out event was more than just a culmination of six months of rigorous training, mentorship, and growth; it was a powerful attestation to the significance of community, accountability, and shared vision in fostering women's leadership and economic empowerment.

Among these, the event illuminated the critical role of sisterhood, a deeper, more personal form of community, in advancing women's leadership and economic empowerment. Beyond camaraderie, sisterhood represents a strategic alliance where women leverage collective strength to navigate systemic challenges, amplify their voices, and assert influence in spaces where they have been historically underrepresented. It cultivates a unique environment where women are emboldened to take risks, innovate, and push boundaries, knowing they have the unwavering support of their peers. This shared commitment fosters not only trust and confidence but also a sense of belonging and purpose, driving women to rise together and lead transformative change.

The event also reinforced a key takeaway: when you create a vision that resonates with women, they will not only embrace it but also run with it. Women in this fellowship demonstrated that given a strong, clear vision, they would engage wholeheartedly, driving initiatives forward and becoming champions of change within their communities and industries.

Another vital insight was the power of integrating the entire spectrum of the value chain within one community. By bringing together women from diverse segments of the food and agriculture sector; farmers, agripreneurs, policymakers, chefs, and storytellers, the fellowship fostered accelerated collaborations and knowledge exchange. This holistic approach created a "ladder for quick growth," as participants were able to leverage each other's expertise and networks to advance their ventures and drive impact more rapidly. Reflecting on this experience, I realized, **"Having a community is important, but creating an interconnected ecosystem within that community is the game changer."** This statement captures the essence of the fellowship: the creation of a dynamic ecosystem that enables women to thrive, innovate, and lead.

In addition to fostering a robust ecosystem, it became clear that **"As women, we must position ourselves within male-dominated spaces to balance conversations and assert our own narratives."** Women's presence in all spaces, including those traditionally dominated by men, is essential to ensure that diverse perspectives are represented and that women's stories and experiences are woven into the fabric of broader societal conversations.



Furthermore, as women ascend the ladder of success, supported and uplifted by ecosystem enablers, it is important to extend a hand downward to lift other women up. This mindset of mutual support and mentorship creates a continuous cycle of empowerment, ensuring that more women can benefit from opportunities and contribute to the growth and transformation of their communities.

Integral to this supportive environment is the principle of accountability, a cornerstone of the fellowship. It fosters a culture where transparency and continuous improvement become the norm. Women were encouraged to hold themselves and each other accountable not only for their successes but also for their growth and development. This culture of mutual accountability enabled fellows to confront challenges directly, celebrate each other's milestones, and share valuable insights, ultimately strengthening the entire community's resilience and capacity for impact.

As someone who facilitated this six-month journey, including conducting presentations, organizing a mock panel session, and matching fellows with mentors, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of such a program. The growth, confidence, and collaboration among the fellows have been remarkable, underscoring the importance of these elements in driving meaningful change.

## CONCLUSION

The LAWFF close-out event was a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when women come together, hold each other accountable, and are united by a shared vision. It reinforced the need for a supportive ecosystem that promotes collaboration and quick growth across the value chain. As we continue to champion women's leadership in food and agriculture, these insights will guide us in building stronger, more inclusive communities that drive sustainable impact.





LAWFF CLOSE-OUT EVENT 2024

**SESSIONS**



SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 | 4:30 PM - 5:30 PM (EAT)

# Becoming an Influencing Changemaker



### Session Objectives

- \* Empower women to drive impactful change through effective leadership.
- \* Foster inclusive networks that enable collaboration among changemakers for sustainable impact in Africa.

### Contributors

- \* 2024 LAWFF Fellows



### Background

The discussion highlights the challenges faced by women, particularly in agriculture and food-related sectors, as they work to drive change and innovation within their communities. Central to this conversation is the issue of gender inequality, deeply embedded in societal norms and perceptions shaped by religion, culture, family dynamics, and even social media. These perceptions perpetuate the belief in male superiority and female inferiority, limiting women's participation in decision-making processes and economic activities. However, a new demographic of women is emerging—those who value hard work, seek success, and aim to break free from these cultural and societal obstacles.



## Issues & Challenges (Policy)

### 1. Gender Bias Rooted in Tradition and Culture:

Deep-rooted cultural and traditional practices continue to reinforce gender roles, particularly in family structures, where women are assigned subservient roles and responsibilities. These practices often perpetuate the idea that a woman's place is primarily in the domestic sphere, limiting her ability to pursue professional opportunities. From childhood, girls are socialized into these gendered roles, being assigned domestic duties, while boys enjoy greater freedom and access to educational and career opportunities. This entrenched bias creates a cycle that undermines gender equality, perpetuating the inferiority complex among women and limiting their ability to access decision-making spaces and entrepreneurial opportunities.

### 2. Social Media Influence:

Social media platforms play a significant role in shaping societal values, and their growing influence has contributed to the glamorization of materialism and the portrayal of quick-fix success stories. This narrative often promotes shortcuts over hard work and perseverance, particularly among young women, many of whom are drawn to unrealistic standards of success. Such trends distract from authentic empowerment efforts, making it harder to advocate for genuine female success rooted in determination, skill-building, and resilience. The focus on superficial achievement can dilute the message of long-term empowerment, steering attention away from the structural issues that affect women's progress and promoting false perceptions of success that are not sustainable.

### 3. Lack of Representation in Decision-Making:

Women remain underrepresented in both formal and informal decision-making spaces. While they may be present in professional settings, they often face social exclusion in informal, male-dominated environments, such as gatherings and networking events. These informal spaces are crucial for accessing critical conversations and building influential relationships. As a result, women miss out on key opportunities to influence policy and professional discussions, which frequently occur in these male-dominated arenas where they lack sufficient representation.

### 4. Limited Support for Gender Advocacy:

Societal structures, including political, cultural, and religious leadership, remain slow in actively promoting

gender equality. Advocacy efforts for change are often fragmented, with limited collaboration between men and women. As a result, persistent gender inequality continues, with gender advocacy lacking the momentum and unified support necessary for impactful change. The absence of widespread male engagement in gender advocacy also hampers the progress toward inclusive policies and societal transformation.

### 5. Lack of Government Support:

Across Africa, government policies and regulatory environments are often not conducive to fostering business growth, especially for women-led enterprises. Entrepreneurs frequently face bureaucratic barriers and cumbersome administrative processes that make it difficult to navigate the system, stifling opportunities for business expansion. The lack of proactive government interventions and streamlined processes leaves women entrepreneurs vulnerable to systemic challenges that could otherwise be addressed through more inclusive and supportive governance.

### 6. Inadequate Financial Access:

Women entrepreneurs face significant barriers in accessing financing from banks, venture capitalists, and grant funders. Traditional financing systems often require collateral or impose rigid criteria that women, particularly those in agriculture, struggle to meet. Policy gaps, including the absence of gender-responsive financial instruments, prevent women-led businesses from scaling effectively. This limited access to finance further entrenches gender disparities, as women are unable to secure the capital necessary for business growth and innovation.

### 7. Inconsistent Support for Women-Led Businesses:

Existing policies and support systems do not adequately address the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Resources, mentorship programs, and funding mechanisms are often not tailored to meet the specific needs of women, particularly in sectors like agriculture. This lack of targeted support leaves women entrepreneurs at a disadvantage, as they face a scarcity of opportunities for mentorship, networking, and financial aid that could foster the growth and sustainability of their ventures.

## Issues & Challenges (Programmatic)

### 1. Lack of Support Groups:

Many women, particularly those grappling with work-life balance struggles or single motherhood, lack structured support networks that can provide resources, mentorship, and community backing. The absence of these safe spaces limits opportunities for women to share their experiences and find solutions to common challenges, such as balancing professional growth with family obligations. Establishing peer-driven groups where women can access emotional support and practical advice is crucial for enabling them to overcome societal and professional barriers.

### 2. Education and Awareness Gaps:

The societal gap in gender equality awareness stems from a lack of comprehensive education for both men and women. Many men remain unconscious perpetrators of gender bias due to their unawareness of the privilege that traditional structures grant them. Meanwhile, some women either do not recognize their own power to challenge gender norms or feel culturally pressured to conform. There is a clear need for targeted gender sensitivity training that challenges biases and encourages individuals to actively advocate for equitable practices in both private and public spaces. This requires a reorientation of mindsets starting from the community level, where both boys and girls are educated on equal roles and shared responsibilities.

### 3. Bias in Employment and Leadership Opportunities:

Gender-based discrimination in employment continues to stifle opportunities for women, with stories of job rejection based purely on gender being common. Even when women break through these barriers, they often face additional challenges such as bias in leadership

roles, unconscious stereotyping, and unequal pay. These biases not only hinder women's career growth but also affect their confidence in seeking leadership positions. Institutional reforms must focus on eradicating these discriminatory practices and creating systems that promote women's leadership on merit rather than tokenism.

### 4. Collaboration vs. Competition:

Social pressures and media-driven narratives often pit women against each other, encouraging a sense of unhealthy competition rather than fostering collaboration. This dynamic undermines collective progress in gender advocacy, as women are discouraged from supporting each other. Instead, the focus should shift toward creating ecosystems of mutual support, where women collaborate to achieve shared goals and celebrate each other's successes.

### 5. Sustaining Internal Team Commitment:

A recurring challenge for women entrepreneurs is the motivation of internal stakeholders, particularly employees, to align with the vision of the business. Too often, team members view their work as simply a means to an end; a paycheck, rather than a shared mission-driven effort.

### 6. Navigating Competitive Markets:

In an increasingly competitive market, building and maintaining brand loyalty is a critical challenge, particularly for women entrepreneurs. With more players entering industries, women often need to develop stronger strategic approaches to stand out, retain customers, and create lasting value.

## Policy Recommendations

### 01. Create Business-Friendly Regulatory Environments:

Governments must focus on simplifying regulations to foster an enabling environment for business growth, with particular emphasis on women-led enterprises. Excessive bureaucracy and complex regulatory frameworks often hinder entrepreneurial growth, disproportionately affecting women who may already face systemic barriers. By streamlining business registration processes, reducing licensing fees, and providing one-stop services for women entrepreneurs, governments can significantly reduce the regulatory hurdles that delay or prevent women from launching and scaling their businesses. This also includes tax incentives and subsidies aimed at encouraging women's participation in sectors like agriculture and technology.

### 02. Increase Financial Access for Women Entrepreneurs:

Policymakers need to ensure broader access to financing options like grants, venture capital, and low-interest loans specifically designed for women entrepreneurs. This financial access should be accompanied by mentorship programs that focus on financial literacy, helping women understand and navigate the intricacies of securing capital, managing cash flow, and scaling their businesses. In particular, collaborations with financial institutions should be prioritized to develop innovative financial products and inclusive funding mechanisms that cater to women's needs at different business stages.

### 03. Foster Sponsorship Programs for Women:

Sponsorship and advocacy programs are critical for women's success, especially in sectors dominated by male networks. Governments and industry bodies should actively promote sponsorship initiatives that connect women entrepreneurs with experienced advocates who can help them gain access to critical opportunities in formal business spaces. Unlike mentorship, sponsorship involves champions who actively advocate for women behind closed doors, positioning them for leadership roles, partnership opportunities, and greater visibility in influential circles. By fostering these programs, we can ensure that women are not only mentored but also promoted and endorsed in key spaces where decisions are made.

### 04. Develop Gender-Specific Entrepreneurship Policies:

Inclusive entrepreneurship policies are essential to address the specific challenges women face, such as balancing work-life responsibilities, navigating gender biases, and overcoming societal expectations. Governments should implement policies that ensure work-life balance provisions, such as flexible work hours, paid family leave, and accessible childcare services for women entrepreneurs. These policies should also tackle gender-specific constraints by providing support systems that empower women to manage both their professional and domestic responsibilities without compromise. Furthermore, policies must include clear provisions to address gender biases in access to markets, financing, and leadership roles, ensuring that women are equipped with equal opportunities for success.

### 05. Incentivize Technology Adoption:

Technology adoption is a key enabler of productivity and growth, especially for women farmers. However, resistance to new technologies, particularly in rural areas, often stems from cultural mindsets and financial constraints. To overcome these barriers, governments should introduce incentive programs such as subsidies, grants, and training initiatives aimed specifically at women farmers. These programs can encourage the adoption of agricultural technologies that improve efficiency, reduce labor burdens, and increase yield. Additionally, community education programs should be implemented to highlight the long-term benefits of technology adoption, such as increased income, better resource management, and sustainable farming practices. These efforts should involve local influencers and stakeholders who can help reshape perceptions and accelerate adoption at the grassroots level.

### 06. Strengthen Support for Women Entrepreneurs:

To empower women entrepreneurs, particularly in agribusiness, there needs to be a comprehensive support structure that includes targeted funding opportunities, mentorship, and training programs. Governments and development institutions should collaborate to create tailored financial schemes aimed specifically at supporting women-

led agribusinesses, with a focus on easing credit access and providing favorable lending terms. In addition, these efforts should include capacity-building programs to strengthen women's business acumen and provide them with the tools needed to navigate market challenges, improve product quality, and expand their market reach. Building stronger

linkages between women entrepreneurs and financial institutions is essential to reducing the financial burden that disproportionately affects women in business.

## Programmatic Recommendations

### 01. Education and Capacity Building:

Implementing gender-awareness programs that focus on both men and women is key to addressing deep-rooted gender biases. These programs should go beyond traditional workshops and include community-based initiatives that reorient young people from an early age. By engaging families, schools, and community leaders, we can instill the importance of gender equity and equality. Programs should also include practical strategies to help men and women alike challenge discriminatory norms, with an emphasis on promoting inclusive practices in the workplace and in social settings.

### 02. Showcase Success Stories:

Amplifying the stories of women who have triumphed over gender-related challenges is vital to inspiring others and challenging societal norms. Highlighting the journeys of women succeeding in male-dominated fields can break down stereotypes and provide powerful role models. These stories should be disseminated across multiple platforms, including social media, industry forums, and public events, to encourage women to share their own stories and build confidence. This approach can also educate society on the importance of creating environments where women can thrive on equal footing with men.

### 03. Encourage Collaboration Over Competition:

Social media and societal norms often fuel competition among women, undermining collective progress. To counteract this, platforms that promote collaboration, rather than competition, are essential. These platforms can be created through community-based initiatives and professional networks, fostering an ecosystem of mutual support where women work together to achieve shared goals. Encouraging cross-sector partnerships among women and offering peer mentorship opportunities will help cultivate a supportive culture that elevates all women involved.

### 04. Develop Employee Advocacy Models:

Entrepreneurship programs should go beyond external outreach and focus on cultivating internal advocacy within organizations. Leaders should be trained to inspire and engage employees as advocates for the business, turning them into champions of the brand. This involves creating inclusive work environments, where employees feel empowered to share the company's vision and values. Programs should also teach leadership strategies that focus on motivating staff to take ownership of the company's mission, ensuring that every employee is invested in the business's success and growth.

“

*Women must be found in rooms where decisions are made, not as token participants, but as voices that shape outcomes.*

**- LAWFF Fellow 2024**

“

*The challenge is not women's capability, but the outdated norms that keep them in the shadows. It's time to change the script.*

**- LAWFF Fellow 2024**

“

*Changing societal perceptions isn't just about uplifting women; it's about transforming the balance in every conversation, creating equality in spaces where women and men coexist.*

**- LAWFF Fellow 2024**

“

*When women support one another, we do more than lift each other; we disrupt the system that holds us back.*

**- LAWFF Fellow 2024**

“

*Entrepreneurship isn't just about business; it's about building a village of support around you—mentors, allies, and advocates—to help you grow*

**- LAWFF Fellow 2024**

“

*Women leaders must extend a hand down the ladder, not just climb it—our progress depends on lifting others as we rise*

**- LAWFF Fellow 2024**

“

*Women aren't just reshaping the future of agriculture; we're reshaping how the world perceives leadership, collaboration, and innovation.*

**- LAWFF Fellow 2024**

## Key Priorities, Action Steps, and Responsibilities

### Policy Recommendation: Promote Gender-Neutral Policies in Families and Schools

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Education, Family, and Social Welfare	Develop and implement gender-neutral curriculums and family support policies.	NGOs, UN Women, UNICEF	Support gender-sensitive educational programs  Provide grants for gender-neutral family initiatives.	Media Companies, Educational Institutions	Run awareness campaigns.

### Policy Recommendation: Create Business-Friendly Regulatory Environments

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry	Simplify business registration and reduce taxation for women-owned businesses.	Development Banks, IFC	Provide technical assistance and capacity-building to government for business regulatory reform.	Business Associations	Advocate for policy reforms; provide platforms for women entrepreneurs to navigate regulations.

### Policy Recommendation: Increase Financial Access for Women Entrepreneurs

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Central Banks, Ministry of Finance	Create women-specific financial products, low-interest loans, and guarantee schemes.	Donor Agencies, World Bank, UNDP	Fund initiatives for gender-lens investment and financial inclusion.	Financial Institutions, Venture Capital Firms	Develop targeted financing programs and venture capital for women-led businesses.

### Policy Recommendation: Foster Sponsorship Programs for Women

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Labor, Women's Affairs	Develop policies promoting sponsorship and mentoring programs for women.	NGOs, Foundations	Fund and create formal mentorship programs to connect women entrepreneurs with industry leaders.	Organized Private Sector, Corporations	Establish internal mentorship programs and sponsor initiatives for women entrepreneurs.



#### Policy Recommendation: Develop Gender-Specific Entrepreneurship Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Labor, Social Welfare	Draft policies that support work-life balance, family leave, and flexible working conditions.	Development Agencies	Provide policy research and recommendations for gender-inclusive entrepreneurship.	Corporates, SMEs	Adopt family-friendly workplace policies, including flexible hours and maternity benefits.

#### Policy Recommendation: Incentivize Technology Adoption

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Agriculture	Implement government-backed subsidies for women in agriculture to adopt technology.	FAO, USAID	Fund projects focused on technology adoption among rural women.	AgriTech Companies	Provide accessible, gender-sensitive agricultural technologies and tools.

#### Policy Recommendation: Strengthen Support for Women Entrepreneurs

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Finance, Development Banks	Offer financial incentives and tax breaks for women-led businesses.	International Financial Institutions (IFIs)	Provide grants and technical assistance for financial inclusion programs.	Banks, Microfinance Institutions	Create special loan products and reduced collateral requirements for women.

#### Policy Recommendation: Leverage Media and Popular Figures for Advocacy

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Information, Culture	Support media campaigns that promote gender equality messaging.	UN Women, Global Citizen	Partner with influencers to drive advocacy for gender equality.	Media, PR Firms	Collaborate with influencers to create campaigns advocating for women's empowerment and gender equality.

#### Policy Recommendation: Increase Female Representation in Leadership

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Government Bodies	Implement quotas and affirmative action to ensure women's representation in leadership roles.	Women's Advocacy Organizations	Lobby for increased female leadership representation at all levels.	Corporates, Industry Groups	Commit to gender equality by appointing women to leadership positions and boards.

### Policy Recommendation: Collaborative Advocacy Between Genders

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Gender, Social Affairs	Promote campaigns that engage men as allies in gender equality efforts.	Gender Advocacy Groups, NGOs	Develop programs encouraging men's participation in gender equality initiatives.	Private Sector Organizations	Promote diversity and inclusion programs that involve both men and women working towards gender equity.

### Programmatic Recommendation: Education and Capacity Building

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Education, Social Welfare	Incorporate gender-awareness modules in school curriculums and community programs.	International Organizations (UNESCO, UNICEF)	Support gender education programs and awareness campaigns in communities.	Corporates, Media Outlets	Create company policies and training on gender bias and inclusion; run media campaigns promoting gender equality.

### Programmatic Recommendation: Showcase Success Stories

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Information, Gender Affairs	Run campaigns showcasing successful women leaders and entrepreneurs.	Development Agencies, NGOs	Highlight success stories in programs and reports; fund storytelling initiatives.	Media, PR Agencies, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Teams	Feature women leaders in media campaigns, advertisements, and events.

### Programmatic Recommendation: Encourage Collaboration Over Competition

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Local Government, Community Centers	Fund and facilitate women-led collaboration platforms at the grassroots level.	International Development Organizations, Foundations	Support initiatives that promote collaboration through grants and leadership programs.	Industry Associations, Professional Networks	Organize sector-specific events, workshops, and platforms that foster collaboration among women.

### Programmatic Recommendation: Create Safe and Inclusive Spaces for Women

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Labor, Trade	Promote policies for gender-balanced workspaces and encourage women's participation in male-dominated fields.	UN Women, Gender Advocacy Groups	Support the creation of women-friendly spaces through community programs and gender policies.	Corporations, Professional Bodies	Host networking events, mentorship programs, and safe spaces for women in male-dominated industries.



#### Programmatic Recommendation: Develop Employee Advocacy Models

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Labor	Implement programs that encourage employee engagement and advocacy in businesses.	NGOs, Development Agencies	Provide training modules for leadership on employee engagement and advocacy.	Human Resources (HR) Departments, Corporate Training Programs	Develop employee engagement strategies and leadership programs that foster internal advocacy.

#### Programmatic Recommendation: Brand Loyalty and Customer Engagement Training

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Trade, Small Business Administration	Organize workshops and provide resources on brand building and customer engagement for entrepreneurs.	Development Banks, IFIs	Fund capacity-building programs aimed at helping women-led businesses improve customer relations.	Marketing Agencies, Business Consultants	Offer services, mentorship, and training sessions on brand loyalty and customer retention for women entrepreneurs.



SEPTEMBER 2, 2024 | 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (EAT)

# Empowering Women in the Culinary Industry: Navigating Challenges and Pioneering Change



### Session Objectives

- \* *Enhance Representation and Leadership Opportunities for Women in Culinary Spaces in Africa.*
- \* *Foster Innovation and Cultural Preservation in Culinary Entrepreneurship.*

### Speaker

- \* Chef Moyosore Oluwa Odunfa-Akinbo, Head Chef, ATIJJE & LAWFF Fellow 2023



### Background

The culinary industry in Africa is marked by significant gender disparities, with women often facing barriers to entry and advancement in professional kitchens. Traditionally male-dominated, these environments reinforce stereotypes that undermine women's capabilities, particularly in roles that require long hours and physical stamina. However, initiatives like ATIJJE are emerging as catalysts for change, providing a platform for women to challenge these norms and redefine their roles within the culinary space. Through its innovative fine dining experiences, ATIJJE not only showcases the richness of African food culture but also highlights the importance of women-led culinary teams. The organic establishment of an all-female kitchen at ATIJJE serves as a powerful example of how women can excel in traditionally male environments, fostering empowerment and challenging societal expectations.

## Issues & Challenges (Policy)

### 1. Gender Inequality in Professional Culinary Spaces:

The kitchen remains a highly gendered workspace, where the traditional male-dominated structure continues to shape perceptions. The conversation reflects on how ATIJE's fully female kitchen crew challenges this norm, yet such setups are rare. Women in the culinary sector often have to contend with deeply ingrained stereotypes that question their ability to handle the physical intensity, long hours, and fast-paced decision-making environments of professional kitchens. These perceptions are often reinforced by hiring practices that favor men for leadership roles in restaurants and food establishments, limiting women's access to high-ranking kitchen positions. Without deliberate interventions to dismantle these norms, women will continue to face barriers to entry, career progression, and the opportunity to redefine culinary excellence from a gender-balanced perspective. The conversation at ATIJE shows how even organic efforts to empower women in such spaces can transform professional kitchens, but more systemic change is needed to scale such initiatives across the industry.

### 2. Access to Professional Platforms for Women:

Although forums like the Africa Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) present significant opportunities for career development, women often face barriers in accessing these platforms. Without strategic networking and visibility, women are less likely to be invited to the table where funding, mentorship, and business deals happen. Professional gatherings, while publicly accessible, may not be inclusive or supportive enough for women, particularly in traditionally male-dominated sectors like agriculture and culinary arts. These barriers are often linked to broader systemic issues, such as limited representation, societal expectations, and unequal access to capital and resources. This points to the need for gender-specific initiatives within these forums such as scholarships, exclusive networking events, and mentorship programs that prioritize female entrepreneurs, chefs, and agricultural innovators like the Leading African Women in Food Fellowship (LAWFF). Empowering women with not only access but also visibility and voice within such spaces is crucial to overcoming the historical exclusion they face in these industries.

### 3. Undervaluing of Traditional Foods in Global Markets:

A recurring challenge in elevating traditional African foods to the global stage lies in overcoming preconceived notions about African cuisine. The tension between staying true to cultural heritage and making these dishes appealing to contemporary, often Westernized fine dining markets. Traditional Nigerian foods, rich in cultural history and meaning, are sometimes undervalued by global audiences who prioritize innovation over authenticity. This challenge is exacerbated by the lack of international exposure for African chefs, making it difficult for African cuisine to gain recognition on par with other global cuisines. There is a need for strategic storytelling and advocacy to shift perceptions and help audiences appreciate the uniqueness of these foods, not just as culinary products but as embodiments of cultural identity. To compete in global markets, African culinary entrepreneurs must strike a balance between preserving their heritage and adapting to modern gastronomic expectations, all while resisting the pressure to dilute the authenticity of their cuisine.



## Issues & Challenges (Programmatic)

### 1. Managing Culinary Challenges Under Pressure:

The immense pressure chefs face when things don't go as planned, especially in high-stakes settings like fine dining. The ability to adjust recipes or improvise when dishes fail to meet expectations is a core skill for culinary professionals, but it can also be one of the most stressful aspects of the job. The story of struggling with a tiger nut dessert highlights the delicate balance chefs must strike between delivering on creative visions and adapting under pressure. In such situations, the operational challenges are magnified by the need to meet guest expectations, maintain a high standard of quality, and salvage what might initially seem like a failed dish. For food entrepreneurs and chefs, the ability to navigate these moments is crucial, requiring not only culinary skill but resilience, creativity, and problem-solving under time constraints.

### 2. Confidence and Imposter Syndrome:

A prevalent challenge faced by many women in the culinary and food industries is a lack of confidence and imposter syndrome, especially when stepping

into leadership roles or taking on public speaking engagements. Women are often hesitant to promote themselves or their work, despite their accomplishments and expertise. The feeling of “not being enough” or questioning one’s qualifications can hinder women from seizing opportunities for visibility and advancement. This is particularly evident in moments when women are asked to share their expertise on public platforms, such as panel discussions, where they may feel they do not belong. This reflects the broader societal norms that condition women to doubt their abilities and downplay their achievements. Addressing imposter syndrome is key to empowering more women to step into leadership roles with confidence, enabling them to share their stories, successes, and expertise without hesitation.



## Policy Recommendations

### 01. Promote Gender Equity in Professional Kitchens:

National policies should actively work to dismantle gender stereotypes in the culinary industry by promoting equal representation and leadership opportunities for women. Incentive structures, such as tax benefits or public recognition for businesses that prioritize gender diversity and female leadership in their kitchens, can encourage more organizations to adopt inclusive practices. Furthermore, targeted training and career advancement programs for women, such as specialized culinary schools, apprenticeships, and leadership workshops, should be prioritized. Policies should also address the systemic barriers that prevent women from thriving in professional kitchens, such as discrimination, unequal pay, and lack of access to childcare or flexible working hours, ensuring that women can fully participate in and lead within the culinary world.

### 02. Enhance Visibility and Access to Industry Forums for Women:

To close the gap in representation within forums like AGRF, policy-makers should establish specific programs, fellowships, or scholarships that are dedicated to increasing women's participation and visibility in these influential spaces. This includes allocating more funding for initiatives aimed at amplifying the voices of women in food and agriculture through speaking opportunities, media platforms, and panel discussions. Gender quotas or targets could be implemented at key events to ensure balanced representation. In addition, policies should encourage collaborations with industry leaders to create platforms where women can showcase their work, share knowledge, and access critical resources such as funding, training, and mentorship. These efforts would support the professional growth of women and ensure their contributions are recognized on a global scale.

### 03. Support for Culinary Entrepreneurship with Traditional Foods:

There is a pressing need for policies that support entrepreneurs who are preserving and innovating with traditional foods, particularly those seeking to elevate cultural heritage in contemporary dining. Governments should offer financial incentives such as grants, tax relief, and recognition awards for businesses that successfully integrate traditional foods into fine dining or global food markets. Furthermore, policy frameworks can provide resources and technical support for food entrepreneurs to ensure the sustainable sourcing, production, and marketing of traditional ingredients. By promoting the culinary and cultural value of heritage foods, these policies could help position traditional dishes as both commercially viable and culturally significant, contributing to the preservation of food cultures while fostering economic growth within local communities.

### 04. Expand Networking and Mentorship Programs for Women:

Policymakers should prioritize the creation of long-term mentorship and networking programs specifically designed for women in the food and agriculture industries. Such policies could facilitate formalized mentorship pathways that connect emerging female chefs and food entrepreneurs with experienced industry leaders. These programs should focus on providing not only practical culinary and business skills but also fostering the confidence needed to overcome challenges such as imposter syndrome. Further, governments and industry bodies can collaborate to host regular networking events, industry roundtables, and leadership training tailored to women, ensuring they have the support, connections, and opportunities necessary to thrive in their careers. Expanding these initiatives at both national and global levels would empower women to break through barriers and advance into leadership positions.

## Programmatic Recommendations

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*In professional kitchens, the norm has always been male dominance, but having a fully female kitchen challenges that stereotype. It's empowering to show that women can handle the physical demands, the long hours, and the pressure, just as well, if not better.*

**- Chef MoyosoreOluwa Odunfa-Akinbo**

“

*This is more than just a forum; it's a sisterhood. The relationships you build here can transform your life. It's amazing how one connection, one conversation, can open doors that you never imagined.*

**- Chef MoyosoreOluwa Odunfa-Akinbo**

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*Sometimes things don't go as planned, but you have to adapt. When that ice cream didn't work, I had to think quickly and create something new. It's frustrating when the vision in your mind doesn't match reality, but that's when creativity kicks in.*

**- Chef MoyosoreOluwa Odunfa-Akinbo**

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*Sometimes, things just don't work, no matter how much effort you put in. But that's where resilience comes in. You have to keep pushing, keep creating, and trust that even a mistake can turn into something beautiful.”*

**- Chef MoyosoreOluwa Odunfa-Akinbo**

## Key Priorities, Action Steps, and Responsibilities

### Policy Recommendation: Promote Gender Equity in Professional Kitchens

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Labor and agencies with specific mandates on Gender Equality, and Small Business Development	<p>Develop national policies to dismantle gender stereotypes in the culinary industry.</p> <p>Create incentive structures (e.g., tax benefits) for businesses promoting gender diversity.</p>	Gender advocacy organizations, UN Women, USAID	Implement specialized culinary training programs for women.	Hospitality and restaurant associations, culinary schools	Address systemic barriers (pay gaps, childcare).

### Policy Recommendation: Enhance Visibility and Access to Industry Forums for Women

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Agriculture, Women's Affairs, and Trade	Create fellowships and scholarships for women to participate in industry forums.	AGRF, Global Gender Platforms, IFAD	<p>Allocate funding for initiatives amplifying women's voices in food and agriculture.</p> <p>Implement gender quotas at major events</p>	Event organizers, media platforms, agriculture companies, food forums	Develop platforms for women to showcase their work.

### Policy Recommendation: Support for Culinary Entrepreneurship with Traditional Foods

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Culture, Trade, and Agriculture	Offer financial incentives (grants, tax relief) for businesses preserving traditional foods.	UNESCO, cultural heritage funds, FAO	Provide technical support and resources for sustainable sourcing.	Culinary startups, restaurants, food entrepreneurs, cultural tourism companies	Recognize and celebrate traditional foods in global food markets.

### Programmatic Recommendation: Expand Networking and Mentorship Programs for Women

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Education, Women's Empowerment and Commerce	Establish mentorship pathways connecting women chefs and food entrepreneurs with industry leaders.	NGO-led mentorship programs, UNDP, IFC	Host regular networking events and leadership training tailored to women.	Industry leaders, women's networks, professional associations, mentorship platforms	Provide financial and practical support for these programs.

### Programmatic Recommendation: Expand Support for Female-Led Culinary Teams

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Gender Equality, Small Business Development, Tourism and Hospitality	Replicate the all-female kitchen model (like ATIJJE) across different regions.	UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP), USAID	Offer comprehensive culinary and leadership training for women.	Hospitality associations, culinary schools, food industry leaders, venture capital firms supporting female entrepreneurs	Provide targeted funding, mentorship, and technical assistance for women-led culinary ventures.

### Programmatic Recommendation: Establish Crisis Management and Adaptability Training

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Agriculture, Trade, and Labor	Develop culinary programs that include crisis management and adaptability training.	Development Organizations, World Bank, IFC, FAO	Conduct workshops on handling supply chain disruptions, recipe failures, and equipment breakdowns.	Culinary training institutions, food supply chain companies, restaurant associations, food industry leaders	Simulate real-world challenges to build resilience in chefs and entrepreneurs.

### Programmatic Recommendation: Implement Confidence-Building Workshops for Women in Leadership

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Education, Women's Empowerment, and Trade	Create workshops on public speaking, leadership, and self-promotion.	UNDP, NGOs working in gender empowerment, Global Gender Platforms	Organize networking events for women to practice confidence-building skills.	Leadership coaching firms, women's professional networks, media outlets promoting women's leadership	Launch social media campaigns showcasing female success stories for inspiration and empowerment.



SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 | 9:00 AM - 10:30 PM (EAT)

# Empowering Female Changemakers in a Male- Dominated World



### Session Objectives

- \* *Strengthen women's leadership and innovation in male-dominated fields through mentorship, funding, and skills development.*
- \* *To promote gender-inclusive policies that remove barriers and support women's professional growth.*

### Speaker

- \* Dr Susan Kaaria, Director, African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD)

### Contributors

- \* 2024 LAWFF Fellows



### Background

The conversation highlights key challenges faced by women in professional fields, particularly in accessing opportunities and support systems that foster their career growth. One of the recurring themes is the struggle to navigate male-dominated industries, where women often find themselves over-mentored but underfunded. While many mentorship programs exist, the real challenge lies in translating the skills gained into tangible financial support and resources to advance their work.



## Issues & Challenges (Policy)

### 1. Gender Bias in Education:

Gender stereotypes in primary and secondary education push girls away from science-related fields. Studies by organizations like UNICEF show that over 70% of people globally associate science with men, which perpetuates a male-dominated narrative.

### 2. Lack of Gender-Sensitive Policies:

Universities and research institutions often do not have gender-sensitive policies, contributing to the “leaky pipeline,” where the number of women in scientific fields drops progressively at higher academic and career levels.

### 3. Absence of Gender Data:

Many African universities and research institutions do not collect or analyze gender-disaggregated data, which is crucial for tracking and addressing gender disparities in recruitment, retention, and graduation rates.

## Issues & Challenges (Programmatic)

### 1. Unfriendly Work Environments:

Women often face hostile or unsupportive workplaces, which hinder their career progression. Institutional cultures may be gender-blind or discriminatory, making it difficult for women to thrive.

### 2. Balancing Work and Family:

Many women in agriculture face challenges balancing professional aspirations with family responsibilities, particularly when starting a family in their mid-20s.

### 3. Limited Access to Leadership Development:

Women are often placed in leadership positions without the necessary skills or support, leading to high failure rates. Many leadership programs do not equip women with the practical tools they need to succeed in challenging environments.

### 4. Rigid Academic Criteria for Fellowship Applications:

Some programs are limited to women with master's degrees, creating a barrier for talented individuals who do not meet this requirement but have relevant experience or bachelor's degrees.

### 5. Gender Gaps in Funding:

Women are often over-mentored but underfunded compared to their male counterparts. Funding opportunities should be more equitable.



## Policy Recommendations

### 01. Gender-Responsive Education Policies:

Governments and educational institutions should revise school curricula to challenge gender stereotypes and promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields among young girls. Early interventions, including role models and mentorship programs, can help shift perceptions.

### 02. Institutionalization of Gender-Sensitive Policies:

Universities and research institutions should adopt and enforce gender-sensitive policies that address recruitment, retention, and promotion of women. These policies should include gender quotas and monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance.

### 03. Mandatory Collection of Gender-Disaggregated Data:

Institutions should be mandated to collect and publish gender-disaggregated data on enrollment, graduation, and employment to identify gaps and

measure progress in achieving gender parity in agriculture and STEM fields.

### 04. Increased Focus on Funding Opportunities for Women:

To address the issue of over-mentoring and underfunding, policies should be introduced to allocate specific financial resources to women-led projects. This could include setting minimum funding targets or quotas for women.

### 05. Broaden Criteria for Fellowships:

Lowering academic barriers by including bachelor's degree holders or those with significant practical experience can help to create more equitable access to professional development opportunities for women in agriculture.

## Programmatic Recommendations

### 01. Supportive Work Environments:

Institutions should implement gender-inclusive practices, such as flexible work schedules and family-friendly policies, to support women in balancing their professional and family responsibilities.

### 02. Leadership Development Programs:

Institutions should invest in structured leadership training programs for women, focusing on essential skills such as emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and strategic negotiation. These programs should be practical and tailored to different career stages.

### 03. Institutional Capacity Building:

Broadly adopting efforts to collaborate with institutions is essential to fostering an enabling environment for women. Institutions require comprehensive training in gender integration to ensure they not only promote inclusivity but also

actively support and empower women in leadership roles. By embedding gender-sensitive practices into their core structures, institutions can create a more equitable and supportive framework for women to thrive and lead.

### 04. Offer Tiered Fellowship Programs:

Organizations could develop tiered fellowship programs with flexible academic or professional entry points, accommodating both highly educated professionals and those still in early career stages.

### 05. Enhance Proposal Writing and Networking Skills:

More emphasis should be placed on equipping women with the skills needed to write compelling proposals and navigate funding networks. This could be achieved through specialized workshops or ongoing mentorship focused specifically on fundraising and pitching ideas effectively.

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Creating an enabling environment for women requires a systemic approach; institutions must undergo training in gender integration to foster inclusivity and support for women in leadership roles.

- Dr Susan Kaaria

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To truly empower women professionals, organizations must implement flexible work schedules and family-friendly policies that prioritize work-life balance.

- Dr Susan Kaaria

“

Effective leadership development programs should focus on emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and strategic negotiation, tailored to the unique career stages of women.

- Dr Susan Kaaria

“

Building institutional capacity is not just about compliance; it's about transforming workplaces into supportive environments where women can thrive in leadership.

- Dr Susan Kaaria

“

Tiered fellowship programs should be designed with flexibility, accommodating women at various career stages and ensuring access to academic and professional development.

- Dr Susan Kaaria

“

Empowering women means equipping them with the skills to navigate funding networks and write compelling proposals, making targeted workshops and mentorship essential.

- Dr Susan Kaaria

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Revising school curricula to challenge gender stereotypes is crucial in promoting STEM fields among young girls, enabling early interventions like mentorship programs to shift perceptions.

- Dr Susan Kaaria

## Key Priorities, Action Steps, and Responsibilities

### Policy Recommendation: Gender-Responsive Education Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Governments, Educational Institutions	<p>Revise school curricula to challenge gender stereotypes and promote STEM for girls.</p> <p>Launch mentorship programs with female role models in STEM fields.</p>				

### Policy Recommendation: Institutionalization of Gender-Sensitive Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Universities, Research Institutions	<p>Implement gender quotas and monitoring mechanisms for recruitment, retention, and promotion.</p> <p>Update policies to support gender equity and compliance.</p>				

### Policy Recommendation: Mandatory Collection of Gender-Disaggregated Data

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Governments, Educational & Research Institutions	<p>Collect and publish gender-disaggregated data on enrollment, graduation, and employment.</p> <p>Analyze data to identify gender gaps in STEM and agriculture.</p>				



#### Programmatic Recommendation: Supportive Work Environments

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
				Private Sector, Research Institutions, Universities	Introduce flexible work schedules and family-friendly policies.  Create policies to support work-life balance for women.

#### Programmatic Recommendation: Leadership Development Programs

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
		NGOs	Develop tailored financial products for women in agriculture.  Invest in technological solutions that reach rural women.	Private Sector, Educational Institutions	Develop tailored financial products for women in agriculture.  Invest in technological solutions that reach rural women.

#### Programmatic Recommendation: Institutional Capacity Building

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
		Development Organizations, Research Institutions	Provide gender integration training.  Build institutional capacity to create supportive environments for women in leadership.  Appoint Diversity Officers.		

#### Programmatic Recommendation: Offer Tiered Fellowship Programs

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
		Development Organizations, Universities, NGOs	Develop flexible fellowship programs for women in different career stages.  Offer fellowships for academic and professional development.		

### Programmatic Recommendation: Enhance Proposal Writing and Networking Skills

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
		NGOs, Universities, Private Sector	Organize workshops on proposal writing and fundraising.  Offer mentorship on networking and navigating funding opportunities.		





SEPTEMBER 2, 2024 | 9:00 AM - 10:00 PM (EAT)

# *The Harvest of Equality: Empowering Women in Agricultural Supply Chains and Food Systems*



### Session Objectives

- \* *Promote Gender-Inclusive Policies in Africa.*
- \* *Provide effective policy and program recommendations to increase women's access to essential agricultural resources and enhance their contributions to food systems in Africa.*

### Speaker

- \* Temi Adegrooye, Managing Partner, Sahel Consulting Agriculture and Nutrition

### Contributors

- \* 2024 LAWFF Fellows



### Background

The African food ecosystem is at a critical juncture, requiring urgent attention to transform its potential into a sustainable, self-sufficient system capable of feeding both the continent and the world. Women play a pivotal role, constituting a significant portion of the agricultural workforce (up to 80% in food processing and production chains). Yet, they remain marginalized, both in policy design and in the distribution of resources. The failure to address gender inequality in agriculture is a major contributor to the continent's inability to fully leverage its food systems. Empowering women, providing them with equitable access to resources, and creating platforms that amplify their voices are key steps in realizing Africa's agricultural potential.



## Issues & Challenges (Policy)

### 1. Systemic Marginalization of Women in Agriculture:

Women in Africa represent 52% of the workforce in agriculture, yet their contributions are often overlooked. This exclusion from decision-making, policy development, and access to resources limits their potential to transform agricultural productivity and food security. If women are not fully integrated into the ecosystem, Africa will struggle to meet its food security goals.

### 2. Weak and Inconsistent Gender-Sensitive Policies:

Existing gender policies in agriculture are often vague, ineffective, or lack proper enforcement. For instance, national gender policies often fail to address specific, actionable items for improving women's participation in agriculture. Without strong, targeted gender-sensitive policies, these gaps will persist.

### 3. Disconnect Between Policy and Implementation:

There is often a gap between high-level agricultural policies and the realities on the ground. Governments create frameworks but are detached from the actual implementation, leaving a vacuum where local solutions could thrive if adequately supported.

### 4. Politicization of Initiatives:

Political interests sometimes dictate the direction of agricultural programs, which can undermine the intended impact. Funders, especially politicians, may not prioritize initiatives unless they align with their personal or political objectives, limiting the support available for grassroots efforts.

### 5. Exclusion of Informed Voices:

Policies are frequently developed without input from key stakeholders with practical knowledge. Women and local agricultural experts are often sidelined in favor of individuals with political connections, which compromises the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at addressing real issues on the ground.

### 6. Top-Down Approaches:

Government and donor-driven solutions tend to enforce external ideas onto local communities, often ignoring the needs and expertise of smallholder farmers and local entrepreneurs. This approach can lead to short-term projects that fail to deliver long-lasting results.

## Issues & Challenges (Programmatic)

### 1. Lack of Comprehensive Support Platforms for Women:

Existing programs do not provide a robust enough ecosystem of support that encompasses training, mentorship, and networking opportunities. Women need dedicated platforms where they can leverage each other's strengths, overcome weaknesses, and pool resources to drive transformative change in agriculture.

### 2. Neglect of Family and Care Responsibilities:

Programs and policies often fail to consider the childcare needs and family responsibilities that disproportionately affect women. Lack of support for childcare solutions impedes women's participation in agricultural programs and hinders their ability to contribute fully to economic growth.

### 3. Lack of Data-Driven, Strategic Interventions:

Many programs lack the necessary data to tailor interventions effectively. Without clear, data-backed

insights, programmatic efforts become fragmented and less impactful, failing to address the core challenges faced by women in agriculture.

### 4. Siloed Approaches to Capacity Building:

Training and capacity-building programs often operate in silos, focusing on individual aspects of agricultural productivity without addressing the holistic needs of women farmers, entrepreneurs, and innovators. This limits the comprehensive growth and development needed to transform food systems.

### 5. Scaling Impact:

There is a pressing need to scale agricultural initiatives to reach a broader segment of the population. However, many programs struggle to expand their reach due to a lack of coordinated efforts and sufficient funding.

**6. Limited Access to Funding:**

Many impactful programs remain underfunded, making it difficult for smallholder farmers, women, and agricultural entrepreneurs to realize their full potential. Even when funding opportunities exist, access is limited due to bureaucratic barriers and a lack of awareness or direct relationships with funders.

**7. Cultural Barriers:**

In regions like northern Nigeria, cultural norms restrict women's participation in agriculture and limit their access to education, tools, and resources. These

barriers perpetuate gender disparities in the sector, exacerbating food insecurity.

**8. Outdated Curricula in Agriculture Education:**

Agricultural education systems are failing to produce graduates with the skills needed to address contemporary agricultural challenges. The disconnect between academic learning and industry realities discourages young people from pursuing careers in agriculture.



## Policy Recommendations

### 01. Develop and Enforce Gender-Sensitive Agricultural Policies:

Governments must prioritize the development of robust, data-driven gender-sensitive policies that are enforceable at the national, regional, and local levels. These policies should focus on specific challenges, such as equal access to land, finance, and training, while addressing the systemic barriers that limit women's participation in agriculture. Policymakers should collaborate with stakeholders across the private sector, civil society, and international development to ensure these policies are actionable and result-oriented.

### 02. Promote Women's Leadership in Agricultural Decision-Making:

Women must be given a platform to actively participate in decision-making processes at all levels. This includes promoting their inclusion in government bodies, agricultural organizations, and trade unions where policies and initiatives are developed. Women's representation in these areas is essential for ensuring that policies reflect their unique needs and contributions to food systems.

### 03. Targeted Education and Training Initiatives:

Education and vocational training should be prioritized, with specific focus on rural women and young girls. These initiatives must go beyond general education and target key skills needed for agricultural innovation, such as sustainable farming practices, market access strategies, and financial literacy. In addition, mentorship programs should be incorporated to support women throughout their professional journeys in agriculture.

### 04. Establish Policies that Support Women in Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities:

National policies should incorporate community-based childcare solutions and workplace childcare provisions to ensure women can balance their roles in agriculture with family responsibilities. Childcare support is essential to unlocking the full potential of women in the agricultural workforce.

### 05. Strengthen Local Participation in Policy Development:

Governments and policy-makers should actively involve local leaders, particularly women's groups and smallholder farmers, in the design and implementation of agricultural policies. This will ensure that policies are more reflective of on-the-ground realities.

### 06. Decentralize Agricultural Policies:

Governments should adopt a hands-off approach, allowing private-sector organizations and community-led initiatives to take the lead in implementing agricultural programs. This shift will catalyze the desired changes while empowering local stakeholders.

### 07. Incentivize Political Will for Grassroots Impact:

Donors and governments should be encouraged to align their objectives with impactful grassroots initiatives, focusing on long-term benefits rather than short-term political gains. Advocacy efforts can highlight how supporting agricultural programs can also enhance political reputations by delivering tangible community benefits.

### 08. Ensure Representation of Knowledgeable Women in Policy Spaces:

For more inclusive decision-making, platforms should be established to amplify the voices of women who have a deep understanding of agricultural challenges. This will prevent politically connected individuals from representing issues they are not directly involved in.

## Programmatic Recommendations

### 01. Create Inclusive Platforms for Women's Empowerment:

Establish dedicated programs and platforms that facilitate mentorship, community building, and the sharing of resources among women in agriculture. These platforms should focus on nurturing a strong sense of sisterhood, enabling women to leverage each other's expertise and drive collective success. Programs like the Leading African Women in Food Fellowship (LAWFF) serve as vital incubators for innovation, empowerment, and advocacy within the sector.

### 02. Increase Women's Access to Critical Resources and Technologies:

Programs should focus on enhancing women's access to critical resources, such as land, capital, and markets. This can be achieved by working with financial institutions to provide tailored credit schemes for women in agriculture, establishing technology hubs in rural areas, and creating value chain initiatives that link women farmers with international markets.

### 03. Implement Data-Driven, Community-Centered Interventions:

Interventions should be designed based on real-time data and research that highlight the specific challenges faced by women in agriculture. Programs must ensure that they address the unique contexts of rural and urban women while focusing on community-driven solutions that promote collective growth.

### 04. Develop and Scale Organizational and Community-Based Childcare Solutions:

Programs should prioritize the development of childcare support, both at the community and organizational levels. By providing affordable and accessible childcare services, women can engage more fully in agricultural activities without the burden of balancing family responsibilities alone. This will lead to higher productivity and innovation in the sector.

### 05. Foster Strategic Partnerships and Alliances:

Programmatic efforts must focus on fostering partnerships between governments, private sectors, civil society organizations, and international donors. These partnerships will help mobilize resources, share best practices, and scale successful initiatives that empower women in agriculture.

### 06. Develop Scalable Models for Agricultural Programs:

Program coordinators and implementers should collaborate to create scalable agricultural models that can be replicated in different regions. Partnerships between smallholder farmers, entrepreneurs, and large-scale agricultural companies can help in reaching a wider audience.

### 07. Facilitate Access to Funding for Smallholders and Women Entrepreneurs:

Programs should explore innovative funding mechanisms, including pooled resources from alumni networks, microfinancing options, and community-driven funding platforms. These efforts can be complemented by targeted training on how to access and effectively use available funds.

### 08. Revitalize Agricultural Education:

Academic institutions should revise their curricula to better align with the current realities of Africa's food systems. Programs should promote internships and mentorship opportunities with agricultural entrepreneurs, allowing students to gain practical experience and develop a passion for modern agriculture.

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*Empowering women in agriculture is not just about fairness; it is about unlocking the vast potential that women bring to the food systems of Africa*

**- Temi Adegoroye**

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*Investing in women means investing in Africa's future, ensuring that the continent not only feeds itself but also contributes to global food security*

**- Temi Adegoroye**

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*The failure to address gender inequality in agriculture is a major contributor to the continent's inability to fully leverage its food systems*

**- Temi Adegoroye**

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*Programs and policies often fail to consider the childcare needs and family responsibilities that disproportionately affect women.*

**- Temi Adegoroye**

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*Women face significant barriers in accessing land, finance, agricultural inputs, and education. This inequality stifles the productivity gains that could be realized by empowering women.”*

**- Temi Adegoroye**

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*Creating platforms that amplify women's voices are key steps in realizing Africa's agricultural potential.*

**- Temi Adegoroye**

## Key Priorities, Action Steps, and Responsibilities

### Policy Recommendation: Develop and Enforce Gender-Sensitive Agricultural Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Agriculture, Gender Ministries	<p>Develop gender-sensitive policies based on data and analysis.</p> <p>Ensure national, regional, and local enforcement mechanisms.</p> <p>Incorporate equal access to land, finance, and training into policy frameworks.</p>	International NGOs, Multilateral Organizations	<p>Provide research and data to inform policy development.</p> <p>Advocate for the inclusion of women's issues in policy discourse.</p>	Agribusinesses, Financial Institutions	<p>Collaborate with governments to implement gender-sensitive policies in supply chains.</p> <p>Offer financial products and services that target women in agriculture.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Promote Women's Leadership in Agricultural Decision-Making

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Government Bodies, Agricultural Ministries	<p>Ensure women's representation in decision-making bodies (e.g., agricultural boards, unions).</p> <p>Create quotas or mandates for women's participation.</p>	Development Partners, Civil Society	<p>Empower women leaders through capacity-building initiatives.</p> <p>Support advocacy for women's inclusion in policy discussions.</p>	Agricultural Organizations, Trade Unions	<p>Include women in leadership positions within trade unions and associations.</p> <p>Promote women's representation in corporate governance.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Targeted Education and Training Initiatives

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Education, Agricultural Training Institutes	<p>Establish training programs for rural women on sustainable farming, market access, and financial literacy.</p> <p>Fund mentorship programs for women in agriculture.</p>	NGOs, Donor Organizations	<p>Provide scholarships and training programs targeting young girls and women in rural areas.</p> <p>Develop programs for vocational training focused on agricultural innovation.</p>	Agribusinesses, Training Providers	<p>Offer internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring programs for women in agriculture.</p> <p>Collaborate with educational institutions to provide technical skills training.</p>



### Policy Recommendation: Establish Policies to Support Women in Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
National Government, Ministries of Labor	<p>Create policies that support community-based childcare solutions.</p> <p>Incorporate workplace childcare provisions for women in agriculture</p>	International Development Agencies	<p>Provide funding and advocacy for gender-sensitive labor policies.</p> <p>Collaborate with governments to design family-friendly workplace models.</p>	Agribusiness Corporations	<p>Introduce flexible work policies and onsite childcare solutions for female workers in agriculture.</p> <p>Support community-based childcare initiatives.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Strengthen Local Participation in Policy Development

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Local and National Governments	<p>Involve women's groups, smallholder farmers, and local leaders in policy-making processes.</p> <p>Host local forums to gather feedback on agricultural policies.</p>	Development Organizations, NGOs	<p>Facilitate dialogue between governments and local stakeholders.</p> <p>Provide platforms for women's voices to be heard in agricultural policy discussions.</p>	Private Sector Leaders	<p>Engage with local leaders and communities in the development of corporate policies.</p> <p>Support local-level policy advocacy and stakeholder involvement.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Decentralize Agricultural Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
National Governments, Agricultural Ministries	<p>Adopt decentralized approaches to empower local communities and private organizations in implementing agricultural programs.</p> <p>Reduce top-down interference and promote local ownership of initiatives..</p>	NGOs, Donors	<p>Support grassroots organizations in leading policy implementation.</p> <p>Encourage local solutions and community-led agricultural initiatives.</p>	Private Sector Enterprises	<p>Partner with local farmers and entrepreneurs to execute agricultural programs.</p> <p>Provide funding and technical support for community-led agricultural initiatives.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Incentivize Political Will for Grassroots Impact

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
National Governments, Policy Makers	<p>Align political agendas with agricultural initiatives that support women and smallholder farmers.</p> <p>Offer incentives to political figures who champion grassroots agricultural programs.</p>	Development Organizations, Advocacy Groups	<p>Advocate for policies that highlight the long-term benefits of supporting women in agriculture.</p> <p>Promote political accountability for agricultural outcomes.</p>	Agribusinesses, Corporate Stakeholders	<p>Collaborate with governments to highlight the benefits of agricultural programs focused on women.</p> <p>Support advocacy efforts for increased political commitment to grassroots initiatives.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Ensure Representation of Knowledgeable Women in Policy Spaces

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Government Policy Makers	<p>Create platforms for women with expertise in agriculture to contribute to policy discussions.</p> <p>Reduce the influence of politically connected individuals without relevant expertise.</p>	NGOs, Women's Organizations	<p>Facilitate women's participation in policy platforms through advocacy and capacity-building initiatives.</p> <p>Mentor women leaders to enhance their participation in agricultural decision-making.</p>	Private Sector Experts	<p>Incorporate knowledgeable women in corporate decision-making processes.</p> <p>Support women's involvement in policy discussions at industry and government levels.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Create Inclusive Platforms for Women's Empowerment

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Agriculture, Women's Affairs	<p>Support mentorship and community-building programs.</p> <p>Fund and endorse platforms like LAWFF.</p>	NGOs, International Donors	<p>Provide financial and technical support for women-led platforms.</p> <p>Facilitate peer-to-peer learning opportunities.</p>	Agribusinesses, Corporations	<p>Sponsor initiatives and offer mentorship programs for women.</p> <p>Collaborate on community-building efforts.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Increase Women's Access to Critical Resources and Technologies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Agriculture, Financial Regulators	<p>Work with financial institutions to create credit schemes for women.</p> <p>Support technology hubs in rural areas..</p>	International Development Organizations	<p>Provide capital and technical expertise for value chain initiatives.</p> <p>Link women farmers to global markets.</p>	Agri-tech Companies, Banks	<p>Develop tailored financial products for women in agriculture.</p> <p>Invest in technological solutions that reach rural women.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Implement Data-Driven, Community-Centered Interventions

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
National Statistics Bureaus, Local Governments	<p>Collect real-time data to inform agricultural interventions.</p> <p>Ensure interventions are tailored to the specific needs of rural and urban women.</p>	Research Institutions, NGOs	<p>Conduct research on women in agriculture to identify key challenges.</p> <p>Design community-driven solutions to address these challenges.</p>	Private Research Firms, Community Organizations	<p>Invest in research to support community-driven initiatives.</p> <p>Help scale interventions through strategic collaborations.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Develop and Scale Organizational and Community-Based Childcare Solutions

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Labor, Social Services	<p>Provide policy support for organizational childcare.</p> <p>Fund community-based childcare initiatives.</p>	Donor Agencies, NGOs	<p>Facilitate access to funding for childcare solutions in rural areas.</p> <p>Work with local communities to establish childcare programs.</p>	Corporations, Agribusinesses	<p>Support on-site childcare services for female employees.</p> <p>Fund community-based childcare solutions.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Foster Strategic Partnerships and Alliances

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
National Government, Ministries of Trade	<p>Create public-private partnerships to support women in agriculture.</p> <p>Form alliances with international donors and private-sector stakeholders.</p>	Multilateral Development Organizations	<p>Provide funding and technical support for strategic partnerships.</p> <p>Facilitate collaborations across sectors to scale successful initiatives.</p>	Agribusinesses, Financial Institutions	<p>Partner with governments and development organizations to scale initiatives.</p> <p>Provide expertise and resources for cross-sector partnerships.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Develop Scalable Models for Agricultural Programs

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Government Agricultural Agencies	<p>Create pilot agricultural models that can be scaled regionally.</p> <p>Encourage collaboration between smallholders and larger agribusinesses.</p>	NGOs, Development Agencies	<p>Provide support for piloting scalable agricultural.</p> <p>Work with smallholder farmers to implement and refine models.</p>	Agricultural Companies	<p>Partner with smallholders to expand successful agricultural models.</p> <p>Provide funding and technology to scale models across different regions.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Facilitate Access to Funding for Smallholders and Women Entrepreneurs

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
National Development Banks	<p>Create policies to incentivize financial institutions to lend to women in agriculture.</p> <p>Support microfinancing programs</p>	International Donors, NGOs	<p>Provide microfinance solutions for women in agriculture.</p> <p>Support pooled resources from alumni networks and community-driven funding platforms</p>	Financial Institutions, Private Investors	<p>Offer tailored financial products for women farmers.</p> <p>Invest in community-driven agricultural funding platforms.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Revitalize Agricultural Education

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Education, Agricultural Training Institutes	<p>Revise curricula to align with Africa's current food systems.</p> <p>Promote internships and mentorship opportunities in modern agriculture.</p>	Educational Foundations, NGOs	<p>Fund scholarship programs focused on agricultural education.</p> <p>Promote partnerships between academic institutions and agribusinesses.</p>	Agricultural Companies	<p>Offer internships and mentorships to students in agriculture programs.</p> <p>Collaborate with universities to offer practical learning opportunities.</p>



SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 | 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM (EAT)

# *Cultivating Your Personal Brand: Navigating Success in the Food and Agricultural Systems Sector*



### Session Objectives

- \* *Create a personal brand that showcases their strengths in the food and agricultural systems sector in Africa.*
- \* *Enable entrepreneurs to effectively communicate their brand and connect with stakeholders in the food and agricultural systems sector.*

### Speaker

- \* Dr Aisha Musaazi Nakitto, Co-principal Investigator, Johns Hopkins University and Makerere University

### Contributors

- \* 2024 LAWFF Fellows



### Background

Women are actively engaged in various aspects of food systems, including food processing, marketing, and nutrition. Their participation is essential for the growth and development of the sector. Key topics of concern include branding, which is recognized as an essential identity and narrative that distinguishes products in a competitive market, as well as the delicate balance between career and family responsibilities. To address these challenges and enhance food systems, a commitment to collaboration, innovation, and sustainable practices is essential.



## Issues & Challenges (Policy)

### 1. Limited Support for Women Entrepreneurs:

Many women in the food system struggle with balancing career and family, leading to challenges in maintaining formal employment or starting their ventures. There is insufficient policy support, such as childcare or flexible working conditions, to help women maintain productivity in both roles.

### 2. Lack of Food Safety and Quality Standards Enforcement:

Weak regulation and enforcement of food safety standards in the informal sector pose significant risks to public health. Unhygienic food processing conditions present clear dangers, and entrepreneurs often struggle to maintain consistent safety standards, particularly when their products are distributed through third-party retailers. Contamination issues, such as maggots found in porridge, can severely damage brand reputations if not properly addressed.

### 3. Inadequate Waste Management Policies:

The food system lacks comprehensive waste management policies, particularly for those engaged in food processing. This results in unsustainable practices and environmental degradation.

### 4. Inadequate Research Support for Indigenous Foods:

There is a gap in comprehensive research on the health benefits of locally consumed foods, like bitter berries, and their potential role in addressing health challenges such as diabetes. This lack of data makes it difficult to develop food-based solutions for health issues, limiting the scope of indigenous foods in scientific discussions.

## Issues & Challenges (Programmatic)

### 1. Inadequate Market Research Support:

Many women struggle to transition their products from small-scale production to the commercial market due to a lack of market research skills and access to consumer insights. This gap affects their ability to innovate and grow.

### 2. Limited Access to Technical Expertise:

Many small-scale food processors lack access to food technologists or scientists, which hampers their ability to develop new products, ensure quality control, and drive innovation. This limitation restricts their capacity to meet market demands and adhere to safety standards.

### 3. Barriers to Exporting:

While some entrepreneurs successfully navigate the complexities of exporting their products, many face significant hurdles in accessing international markets. These challenges include compliance with stringent export regulations and the necessity of obtaining

various certifications. Without the proper guidance and support, small-scale producers may struggle to meet these requirements, limiting their ability to expand their reach and capitalize on global opportunities.

### 4. Balancing Consistency and Innovation:

Chefs and food processors experience challenges in maintaining consistent quality in their products due to factors like personal mood and staff performance. This inconsistency can lead to varying customer experiences and can affect brand loyalty.

### 5. Adapting to Consumer Preferences:

Entrepreneurs need to balance innovation and customer demands, such as creating new product variations (e.g., different flavors of cookies) while maintaining their core offerings. This requires a balance between expanding product lines and managing operational capacity.

## Policy Recommendations

### 01. Support Systems for Women Entrepreneurs:

Governments should implement policies that support working mothers, such as flexible work schedules, affordable childcare services, and mentorship programs to help women balance career and family responsibilities.

### 02. Strengthened Food Safety Regulations:

Policymakers must enhance food safety regulations and ensure stronger enforcement, particularly in the informal food processing sector. Regulatory bodies should enforce stricter food safety standards for products distributed through third-party channels. Providing training and resources to small-scale processors on hygiene standards would promote safer food production. Additionally, implementing policies that ensure proper handling, storage, and transportation can help prevent contamination and ensure consumer safety.

### 03. Waste Management Incentives:

Introduce incentives for sustainable waste management practices within the food system, such as tax breaks or grants for businesses that adopt eco-friendly methods of waste disposal and recycling.

### 04. Increased Funding for Indigenous Food Research:

Governments and academic institutions should provide more grants and support for research into the health benefits of indigenous foods. This would help validate claims about their nutritional and medicinal properties, enabling these foods to be integrated into mainstream health solutions.

## Programmatic Recommendations

### 01. Market Research Training and Support:

Programs aimed at women entrepreneurs in food systems should include extensive training on market research and product development. This would empower them to conduct consumer surveys, test product viability, and understand market demands.

### 02. Strengthening Collaborations with Technical Experts:

Expand partnerships between food processors and academic institutions or technical experts. This would provide entrepreneurs with access to food technologists and other specialists who can assist with product development and quality assurance.

### 03. Support for Export Readiness:

Establish export-readiness programs that help women entrepreneurs navigate regulatory requirements, obtain certifications, and connect with global markets. This could be done through trade fairs, business incubators, or mentorship programs that focus on international trade.

### 04. Implementing Standardization Processes for Food Products:

Entrepreneurs should invest in training and tools that help standardize food production processes. For example, implementing consistent recipe practices, quality control measures, and sensory evaluations can help ensure that products meet customer expectations consistently.

### 05. Developing Targeted Product Lines Based on Consumer Feedback:

Entrepreneurs should actively seek customer input and use it to guide product development. By focusing on high-demand variations and introducing new products based on consumer preferences, businesses can maintain relevance and satisfy diverse market needs.

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*Governments should not only create policies but also implement them with the nuances of real-life challenges women face. Providing flexible work schedules and affordable childcare is just the beginning; mentorship programs are essential to ensure women can balance career growth with family responsibilities.*

**- Dr Aisha Musaazi Nakitto**

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*Expanding partnerships between women entrepreneurs and technical experts can be a game-changer for product development and quality assurance. It's not just about access to technology; it's about giving women the support they need to bring innovative products to life.*

**- Dr Aisha Musaazi Nakitto**

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*Helping women entrepreneurs navigate the complex world of export regulations requires more than guidance. They need tailored export-readiness programs, access to trade fairs, and hands-on mentorship that connects them to global markets.*

**- Dr Aisha Musaazi Nakitto**

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*Standardizing food production is about consistency and trust. Women entrepreneurs who invest in quality control measures, like consistent recipes and sensory evaluations, not only meet customer expectations but build long-term credibility.*

**- Dr Aisha Musaazi Nakitto**

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*Building strong supply chain relationships is essential for ensuring quality from farm to table. Entrepreneurs must work hand-in-hand with farmers and retailers to implement best practices that ensure food safety and product consistency.*

**- Dr Aisha Musaazi Nakitto**

## Key Priorities, Action Steps, and Responsibilities

### Policy Recommendation: Support Systems for Women Entrepreneurs

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Government agencies, Local government offices, Regulatory bodies	<p>Develop and implement policies for flexible work schedules.</p> <p>Subsidize or provide affordable childcare programs.</p> <p>Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of support programs.</p>	NGOs and non-profit organizations, International development agencies	<p>Partner with governments to provide mentorship programs for women.</p> <p>Conduct research on barriers for working mothers and recommend solutions.</p>	Corporations and businesses, Industry associations	<p>Offer flexible work schedules for women in leadership positions.</p> <p>Provide in-house childcare or subsidized childcare services for employees.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Waste Management Incentives

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Government Agencies (e.g., Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Finance)	<p>Introduce tax breaks and grants for eco-friendly waste disposal methods.</p> <p>Set up regulations for waste reduction and recycling.</p>	<p>NGOs focused on environmental sustainability,</p> <p>Academic Institutions (e.g., Departments of Environmental Science)</p>	<p>Partner with governments to provide technical support on sustainable waste management practices.</p> <p>Conduct research on best practices for waste management.</p>	Private Companies (e.g., those in manufacturing or waste management)	<p>Adopt eco-friendly waste disposal methods.</p> <p>Apply for available tax breaks or grants for sustainable practices. Engage in recycling programs.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Increased Funding for Indigenous Food Research

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Government Agencies (e.g., Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health)	<p>Provide grants and allocate resources for indigenous food research.</p> <p>Integrate indigenous food research findings into national health strategies.</p>	NGOs focused on food security and nutrition, Academic Institutions (e.g., Departments of Food Science)	<p>Lead research on the health benefits of indigenous foods.</p> <p>Develop collaborations with governments and research institutions. Publish findings for wider use.</p>	Private Companies (e.g., those involved in food production or distribution)	<p>Collaborate with researchers and universities to promote indigenous food products.</p> <p>Support marketing of indigenous foods based on research outcomes.</p>



### Policy Recommendation: Strengthening Food Safety Regulations for Distribution

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Government Agencies (e.g., National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control, Ministry of Health)	<p>Enforce regulations on proper food handling, storage, and transportation through third-party distributors.</p> <p>Conduct regular inspections and audits.</p>	NGOs focused on public health, Academic Institutions (e.g., Departments of Public Health)	<p>Provide training on safe food distribution practices.</p> <p>Support third-party distributors with knowledge on compliance standards.</p> <p>Conduct studies on gaps.</p>	Private Companies (e.g., food distributors, retailers)	<p>Ensure adherence to food safety regulations.</p> <p>Train staff in proper handling and storage. Maintain logistics standards for safe distribution.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Market Research Training and Support

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Trade & Industry, Ministry of Agriculture, National SME Agencies	<p>Develop training programs for women entrepreneurs focused on market research.</p> <p>Offer grants to support market research and product development initiatives.</p>	NGOs focused on entrepreneurship (e.g., Tech-noServe, African Development Bank), Universities	<p>Design and implement training programs that include market research, consumer surveys, and product development for women in the food sector.</p> <p>Provide mentorship.</p>	Market research firms, Food companies, Trade associations	<p>Conduct in-house market research training programs.</p> <p>Facilitate access to consumer insights and product testing tools for women entrepreneurs.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Strengthening Collaborations with Technical Experts

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Science & Technology, Food Safety Authorities	<p>Establish government-funded partnerships between food entrepreneurs and technical experts.</p> <p>Fund research and development for food technology innovations.</p>	Academic institutions (e.g., Agricultural Research Centers), NGOs providing technical assistance (e.g., FAO, AGRA)	<p>Facilitate partnerships between women entrepreneurs and academic institutions.</p> <p>Offer technical assistance programs for food technologists and quality experts.</p>	Private labs, Technical experts, Food processing companies	<p>Provide access to in-house or outsourced food technologists for product development.</p> <p>Ensure quality control through collaborations with experts.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Support for Export Readiness

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Export Promo-tion Councils, Ministry of Trade, Certifi-cation Bodies	<p>Develop export-readiness programs that include trade regulations, certifications, and global market connections.</p> <p>Organize national trade fairs and incubators.</p>	Trade associa-tions (e.g., ITC, UNCTAD), Export-focused NGOs (e.g., Africa Trade Fund)	<p>Collaborate with governments to create mentorship pro-grams focused on export strategies.</p> <p>Support women entrepreneurs with certifica-tions and market insights.</p>	Export-focused businesses, Logistics com-pa-nies, International buyers	<p>Offer mentorship and net-working opportunities for women in export readiness.</p> <p>Assist with certifications and trade regulations for global markets.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Implementing Standardization Processes for Food Products

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Standards Regulatory Authorities, Ministry of Agriculture, Food	<p>Provide subsidies or grants to entrepreneurs to acquire tools for standardization.</p> <p>Develop policies supporting food standardization for SMEs.</p>	Universities, Food Research Institutes, NGOs (e.g., GAIN, IFAD)	<p>Conduct training programs on quality control and standardi-zation processes.</p> <p>Provide toolkits for food standardization, including recipe practices and sensory evaluations</p>	Food produc-tion compa-nies, Equip-ment suppliers	<p>Invest in tools and resources for product standardization.</p> <p>Implement internal quality control measures to ensure consistency across products.</p>

SEPTEMBER 3, 2024 | 9:00 AM – 11:00 PM (EAT)

# From Bootstrapping to Business Expansion: Funding Your Venture on a Budget



### Session Objectives

- \* Examine the specific policy and programmatic factors that impede business growth in Africa.
- \* Program recommendations to foster SME growth in Africa.

### Speaker

- \* Deji Adebuseye, Partner, Sahel Capital

### Contributors

- \* 2024 LAWFF Fellows



### Background

In recent years, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across Africa have faced significant challenges in talent retention and managing rising operational costs, particularly within the food processing sector. SMEs are vital to the continent's economy, accounting for approximately 90% of businesses and over 50% of employment across Africa. In Nigeria, for instance, the agricultural sector contributes approximately 24% to the GDP as of 2023. However, the food processing industry grapples with fluctuating raw material prices; staples like cassava, yam, and beans can see price increases of 20-30% during off-harvest seasons. This volatility poses serious challenges for small businesses striving to remain competitive. Employee turnover rates in Nigerian SMEs can range from 40% to 50%, primarily due to a lack of career development opportunities, inadequate compensation packages, and limited workplace incentives. High turnover rates lead to lost resources and reduced productivity, undermining the growth potential of these businesses. The challenges are not unique to Nigeria. In South Africa, SMEs account for over 90% of businesses and play a crucial role in job creation, yet they are adversely affected by load shedding (power cuts) and economic uncertainty. Similarly, Kenya's vibrant SME sector, heavily engaged in agriculture and food processing, faces rising input costs, including energy and raw materials. In Egypt, SMEs contribute significantly to the economy but often struggle with accessing financing and navigating bureaucratic hurdles. Ghana's growing SME sector also encounters challenges related to limited access to markets and inadequate infrastructure. Despite these diverse contexts, a common theme emerges: SMEs that implement holistic employee retention strategies—such as non-monetary incentives, recognition programs, opportunities for career advancement, flexible work arrangements, and community engagement initiatives—report 30% higher retention rates compared to those relying solely on salary increases. In addition, adopting innovative supply chain management and cooperative purchasing models can help small-scale food processors reduce procurement costs by as much as 15%, providing a crucial advantage in a competitive marketplace. This data underscores the urgent need for tailored policy and programmatic interventions that address these persistent challenges. By enabling African SMEs to thrive, they can significantly contribute to the continent's economic development. Fostering an environment conducive to growth and sustainability will help build a more resilient and dynamic economic landscape for Africa.



## Issues & Challenges (Policy)

### 1. Limited Support for SMEs in Packaging and Distribution:

Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face challenges in packaging and distribution, where limited geographic reach and reliance on a few large retailers stunted growth. This indicates a broader systemic issue in supporting SMEs to scale and diversify.

### 2. Lack of Financial Literacy Among Entrepreneurs:

Many entrepreneurs lack a solid understanding of their business finances, relying heavily on accountants or finance officers, if they even have them. This results in poor financial decision-making, mismanagement of resources, and a misunderstanding of key financial indicators such as profit margins and cash flow.

### 3. Inadequate Policy Framework for Equity Contributions:

Entrepreneurs often use personal funds to support their businesses but lack clear guidance on how to account for these injections as equity contributions. This creates confusion and limits opportunities to accurately assess business value for investment or taxation purposes.

## Issues & Challenges (Programmatic)

### 1. High Dependence on Single Retailers:

Over-reliance on a single distribution channel or major retailer creates significant risks for businesses, particularly SMEs. If the retailer faces operational challenges, reduces orders, or alters its terms, the business can experience a sudden loss of revenue, leading to cash flow issues and disruptions in operations. In addition, a single-channel strategy limits market reach and exposure, preventing businesses from tapping into diverse customer bases and alternative revenue streams. This dependency hinders long-term growth, as the business becomes vulnerable to market fluctuations and lacks the flexibility to adapt to changing market dynamics. Diversifying distribution channels through e-commerce, direct-to-consumer sales, or partnerships with multiple retailers can mitigate these risks, providing businesses with more stability and opportunities for expansion.

### 2. Entrepreneurial Misalignment with Business Operations:

Many entrepreneurs fail to maintain consistent involvement in the day-to-day operations of their businesses. The inability to harmonize leadership

presence with business activities creates operational blind spots, affecting customer satisfaction and internal morale.

### 3. Challenges in Business Valuation and Growth Metrics:

Entrepreneurs struggle with correctly valuing their businesses, particularly in sectors where metrics like EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation, and Amortization) are vital but not fully understood. This impedes their ability to secure financing or investment.

### 4. Mismanagement of Marketing and Self-Promotion:

Entrepreneurs, especially those who double as influencers or content creators for their brands, often fail to categorize their promotional efforts effectively, leading to undervaluation of their own contributions to business growth.

## Policy Recommendations

### 01. SME Support Programs for Packaging and Distribution:

Governments and industry bodies should create targeted programs that provide grants, technical assistance, and mentorship for SMEs to improve their packaging and distribution networks. Policies could include tax incentives for SMEs that diversify their market reach or expand their packaging capabilities.

### 02. Leadership Presence and Operational Engagement Mandates:

A policy framework should encourage business owners to maintain an active role in their companies, especially during growth phases. Initiatives such as leadership training programs or tax benefits for consistent executive involvement could improve business resilience and operational efficiency.

### 03. Mandatory Financial Literacy Training for Entrepreneurs:

Governments or private sectors could implement mandatory financial literacy programs for entrepreneurs seeking funding or business registration. These programs would ensure that business owners understand essential financial concepts like profit margins, cash flow management, and financial statement analysis.

### 04. Clear Policies on Equity Contributions and Valuation:

Policies should be developed to provide clear guidelines on accounting for personal funds used in business operations. This would help entrepreneurs categorize these contributions as equity, thereby improving their financial records and simplifying business valuation processes.

## Programmatic Recommendations

### 01. Diversification of Distribution Channels:

Programs that encourage businesses to diversify their sales channels are essential. This can be achieved through partnerships with e-commerce platforms, local markets, and regional distribution centers. Such programs could offer technical support and funding to businesses aiming to reduce reliance on single retailers.

### 02. Encouraging Leadership Engagement in Business Operations:

Entrepreneurs should be encouraged to stay actively involved in their operations, especially by participating in hands-on activities with their employees and customers. Programs could include leadership workshops focusing on “leading from the front” strategies, aligning leaders with business processes and frontline staff.

### 03. Valuation Workshops and Financial Management Support:

Business incubators and accelerators should offer workshops focused on business valuation, ensuring entrepreneurs understand how to assess their company's worth accurately using metrics like EBITDA. These workshops should also teach practical ways to improve financial record-keeping and reporting for potential investors.

### 04. Recognition of Entrepreneurial Self-Promotion as a Business Asset:

Programs could guide entrepreneurs who act as influencers for their own businesses to recognize and record these efforts as marketing assets. This would ensure proper accounting and elevate their contributions, potentially attracting more investment and partnerships by showcasing the value of brand self-promotion.

“

*We must break free from the mindset that giving someone a job is a favor. In reality, employees are exchanging their time and skills for compensation. We owe them respect, not just a paycheck*

**- Deji Adebuseye**

“

*If you treat your employees like they're just another clog in the wheel, don't expect extraordinary results. A business grows when every member feels valued, not just paid.*

**- Deji Adebuseye**

“

*It's not always about the money. People stay where they feel appreciated, challenged, and part of something bigger than themselves.*

**- Deji Adebuseye**

“

*People will always leave for better opportunities. The goal isn't to stop them but to make your organization a place they'll be proud of, even when they're gone.*

**- Deji Adebuseye**

“

*Growing a business isn't just about increasing output; it's about building capacity and navigating the complexities that come with scale.*

**- Deji Adebuseye**

## Key Priorities, Action Steps, and Responsibilities

### Policy Recommendation: SME Support Programs for Packaging and Distribution

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Government agencies, Ministry of Trade and Industry	<p>Create targeted programs with grants, technical assistance, and mentorship.</p> <p>Provide tax incentives for SMEs expanding market reach or packaging capabilities.</p>	NGOs, CSOs, development banks	<p>Provide technical assistance and funding for channel diversification programs</p> <p>Facilitate partnerships between SMEs and e-commerce platforms, local markets, and regional distribution centers.</p>	Private manufacturing companies, FMCG companies, Logistics and Distribution, Industry Associations	<p>Establish industry-led programs with grants, technical assistance, and mentorship.</p> <p>Collaborate with government agencies to secure funding and support.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Leadership Presence and Operational Engagement Mandates

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment	<p>Develop a policy framework encouraging active leadership.</p> <p>Implement leadership training programs and tax benefits</p>	INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, FBOs, and other related organizations	<p>Support leadership training programs and initiatives.</p> <p>Advocate for policies that encourage active leadership involvement.</p>	Private Sector Leadership Organizations, Corporate Governance Organizations, Private Sector Firms promoting executive development programs	<p>Develop industry-specific leadership training programs.</p> <p>Advocate for tax benefits or other incentives for active leadership.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Mandatory Financial Literacy Training for Entrepreneurs/ Valuation Workshops and Financial Management Support

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning; Central Bank of Nigeria	<p>Implement mandatory financial literacy programs.</p> <p>Ensure programs cover essential financial concepts.</p>	INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, FBOs	<p>Provide funding for business incubators and accelerators to offer workshops.</p> <p>Offer technical assistance and capacity building for financial management.</p>	Banks and financial institutions, Financial technology companies (FinTechs), Private equity and venture capital firms offering training and mentorship to entrepreneurs	<p>Offer voluntary or mandatory financial literacy programs.</p> <p>Partner with government agencies or NGOs to provide resources.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Clear Policies on Equity Contributions and Valuation

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning; Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)	<p>Develop clear guidelines for accounting for personal funds.</p> <p>Simplify business valuation processes through clear policies.</p>			Private Equity and Venture Capital Firms, Financial Advisory Firms, Private Law Firms specializing in corporate finance, Investment firms offering advisory on equity structuring	<p>Offer valuation services and education on how to effectively account for personal funds, manage equity, and structure business valuations.</p> <p>Partner with government agencies and development sector stakeholders to advocate for simplified valuation policies and provide market-driven feedback on existing guidelines.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Diversification of Distribution Channels

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy; Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment	<p>Create targeted programs with grants, technical assistance, and mentorship.</p> <p>Provide incentives for partnerships with e-commerce platforms, local markets, and regional distribution centers.</p>	INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, FBOs	<p>Provide technical assistance and funding for channel diversification programs.</p> <p>Facilitate partnerships between SMEs and e-commerce platforms, local markets, and regional distribution centers.</p>	E-commerce platforms, Logistics firms, Private Sector FMCG and retail companies investing in regional and global distribution networks	<p>Establish industry-led programs with grants, technical assistance, and mentorship.</p> <p>Collaborate with government agencies to secure funding and support.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Encouraging Leadership Engagement in Business Operations

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Labour and Employment	<p>Develop leadership training programs focused on "leading from the front" strategies.</p> <p>Implement policies or incentives that encourage active leadership involvement.</p>	INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, FBOs	<p>Support leadership training programs and initiatives.</p> <p>Advocate for policies that encourage active leadership involvement.</p>	Private Sector Companies, Leadership training organizations, Corporate governance consultants	<p>Develop industry-specific leadership training programs.</p> <p>Advocate for tax benefits or other incentives for active leadership.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Valuation Workshops and Financial Management Support

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning; Central Bank of Nigeria	<p>Offer workshops on business valuation, including EBITDA metrics.</p> <p>Provide training on financial record-keeping and reporting.</p>	INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, FBOs	<p>Provide funding for business incubators and accelerators to offer workshops.</p> <p>Offer technical assistance and capacity building for financial management.</p>	Investment banks, Financial advisory firms, Venture capital and private equity firms offering valuation workshops, Financial technology platforms offering valuation tools	<p>Offer voluntary or mandatory financial literacy programs.</p> <p>Partner with government agencies or NGOs to provide resources.</p>

### Policy Recommendation: Recognition of Entrepreneurial Self-Promotion as a Business Asset

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy	<p>Develop guidelines for recognizing and accounting for self-promotion efforts.</p> <p>Educate entrepreneurs on the value of brand self-promotion for attracting investment and partnerships.</p>	INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, FBOs	Provide technical assistance and resources for SMEs to leverage self-promotion as a marketing asset.	Marketing and advertising firms, Brand consultants and media agencies, PR and communications firms specializing in SME growth	<p>Develop industry-specific guidelines and standards.</p> <p>Provide training and re-sources to SMEs on equity and valuation.</p>



SEPTEMBER 2, 2024 | 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM (EAT)

# Business Pitching



### Session Objectives

- \* Train entrepreneurs to craft flexible business pitches that highlight financial and non-financial support for investors.
- \* Enhance entrepreneurs' communication and follow-up skills to build lasting investor relationships for sustainable growth.

### Speaker

- \* Maureen Munjua, Country Representative, Tanger, Kenya.

### Contributors

- \* 2024 LAWFF Fellows



### Background

In today's competitive landscape, the ability to deliver a persuasive pitch is essential for entrepreneurs, especially those leading female-led businesses that often face unique challenges in accessing funding. Successful pitches typically include a clear articulation of the business model, market opportunity, financial projections, and the team's qualifications, along with an understanding of the investors' interests and how the business aligns with them.



## Issues & Challenges (Policy)

### 1. Limited Access to Capital:

Female-led businesses face systemic barriers in accessing large sums of capital. Investors may offer smaller amounts or prefer to provide technical assistance over financial contributions, creating a gap between the financial needs of these businesses and the support they receive. This is particularly challenging for businesses that require significant upfront capital to grow.

### 2. Insufficient Diversity in Financial Support Mechanisms:

Current financial policies often focus on monetary investment without considering the diverse needs of businesses. Many businesses require a combination

of financial capital and non-financial resources, such as technical assistance, mentorship, or market linkages. The lack of such comprehensive financial support mechanisms limits business scalability and sustainability.

### 3. Unstructured Engagement Frameworks:

Policies that govern investor-business engagement are often unstructured, leaving entrepreneurs without a clear pathway for building long-term relationships with investors. Without formalized policies, businesses may struggle to secure continuous support beyond initial meetings or presentations.

## Issues & Challenges (Programmatic)

### 1. Difficulty in Meeting Long-Term Strategic Goals:

While businesses may develop three, five, or ten-year strategies, achieving these goals often becomes challenging due to external factors such as limited funding, market volatility, and operational hurdles. For female-led ventures, the challenge is exacerbated by gender-based barriers to resources and opportunities.

### 2. Inadequate Pitching and Communication Skills:

Entrepreneurs, especially in emerging markets, may lack the necessary skills to effectively pitch their ideas to investors. This can result in a disconnect between the entrepreneur's vision and the investor's understanding, leading to missed funding opportunities. Additionally, entrepreneurs often dominate conversations without giving investors the opportunity to ask questions or share their insights, which can deter potential partnerships.

### 3. Inconsistent Follow-Up and Relationship Management:

Many businesses fail to engage in consistent follow-up after initial meetings with potential investors. This is particularly detrimental when the conversation doesn't immediately result in a financial commitment. Regular and thoughtful follow-up is critical in building and maintaining investor relationships, but many businesses do not have the capacity or processes in place to execute this effectively.

### 4. Self-Doubt Among Entrepreneurs:

The transcript reveals a common challenge where entrepreneurs struggle with self-doubt and hesitation when interacting with potential investors. This lack of confidence can prevent them from seizing opportunities or taking proactive steps to initiate partnerships and collaborations, thereby stunting business growth.

## Policy Recommendations

### 01. Development of Integrated Funding Models:

Governments and financial institutions should introduce policies that promote integrated funding models combining financial capital with non-financial support such as technical assistance, mentorship, and access to networks. These models would allow businesses, particularly female-led enterprises, to receive the holistic support they need to scale effectively.

### 02. Incentivizing Long-Term Investment:

Introduce policy frameworks that incentivize investors to commit to businesses over the long term. Policies could include tax benefits, matching grants, or risk-sharing schemes for investors who commit to

supporting businesses over three, five, or ten-year periods. This would provide businesses with the sustained support they need to meet their strategic objectives.

### 03. Formalizing Investor Engagement Policies:

Establish policies that provide clear engagement pathways for investors and entrepreneurs. These could include structured pitch events, formal follow-up processes, and standardized reporting mechanisms to ensure continuous engagement and relationship-building between investors and businesses.

## Programmatic Recommendations

### 01. Adaptable Strategic Planning:

Encourage businesses to adopt multi-stage strategic plans that are adaptable to evolving circumstances. Rather than rigidly adhering to ten-year plans, businesses should create flexible strategies that can pivot based on available resources. For example, if full funding isn't secured, businesses can adjust their priorities and focus on critical areas where partial funding or technical assistance can have the most impact.

### 02. Entrepreneurial Skills Development Programs:

Implement training programs aimed at improving entrepreneurs' communication, pitching, and relationship management skills. These programs should teach entrepreneurs how to craft compelling narratives that resonate with investors, how to listen and engage with potential partners, and how to structure follow-up communications that lead to long-term relationships.

### 03. Structured Follow-Up and Relationship-Building Systems:

Programmatic initiatives should focus on building internal capacity within businesses for managing investor relationships. This includes developing structured follow-up processes after meetings, setting clear goals for each interaction, and regularly

assessing investor interest to keep the dialogue going. Automated or systemized follow-up processes can help entrepreneurs stay on top of potential opportunities and maintain engagement with investors.

### 04. Confidence-Building Programs for Entrepreneurs:

Implement confidence-building workshops and mentorship programs to help entrepreneurs, particularly women, overcome self-doubt and hesitancy. These programs can include role-playing pitch scenarios, personalized coaching, and peer-to-peer mentoring to boost entrepreneurs' confidence when engaging with investors and partners.

### 05. Cross-Sector Networking Opportunities:

Develop initiatives that connect businesses with diverse stakeholders beyond investors, such as government agencies, technical experts, and international development organizations. These networks can offer businesses non-monetary support, such as access to technical expertise, market insights, and strategic partnerships, which are equally valuable for long-term success.

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*It's okay to have long-term goals, but success often requires adaptability. Whether it's a three-year, five-year, or ten-year strategy, you must be ready to adjust based on what resources are available.*

**- Maureen Munjua**

“

*Think beyond just money. Your business may need technical assistance, mentorship, or access to networks just as much as financial investment. Those elements are critical to your growth.*

**- Maureen Munjua**

“

*Half the time, your first conversation with an investor doesn't lead to signing a check. But if you focus on listening and offering different options, you create a pathway to long-term support.*

**- Maureen Munjua**

“

*A good pitch is just the beginning. It's the follow-up those next steps and continuous engagement that will ultimately lead to securing resources.*

**- Maureen Munjua**

“

*Many times, self-doubt holds us back from pursuing opportunities or freezes us in critical moments. Confidence is key in breaking through those barriers.*

**- Maureen Munjua**

## Key Priorities, Action Steps, and Responsibilities

### Policy Recommendation: Development of Integrated Funding Models

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Finance, Central Banks, Regulatory agencies, Ministries of Trade and Industry	Develop integrated funding schemes combining capital and technical support.	Multilateral organizations (e.g., UNDP), Development partners (e.g., USAID)	Create programs offering mentorship and access to networks.	Business incubators, Industry associations	Promote public-private partnerships for resource sharing.

### Policy Recommendation: Incentivizing Long-Term Investment

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Tax authorities, Investment promotion councils	Design policies encouraging investors to provide comprehensive support.	Development partners, International funding organizations	Establish mechanisms for capacity-building and technical support programs.	Private sector investors	Implement reporting and evaluation mechanisms for long-term investments.

### Policy Recommendation: Holistic Business Development Support

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Commerce and Business Development	Design policies encouraging investors to provide comprehensive support.	Donor agencies (e.g., USAID, DFID), Capacity-building institutions	Establish mechanisms for capacity-building and technical support programs.	Chambers of commerce, Industry and trade associations	Encourage public-private initiatives to enhance business capacity.

### Policy Recommendation: Formalizing Investor Engagement Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
National Business Councils, Investment Authorities	Create formal investor-entrepreneur engagement platforms.	Multilateral organizations (e.g., UNCTAD), Development incubators	Implement structured pitch events and matchmaking programs.	Financial institutions, Business support platforms	Standardize reporting and follow-up mechanisms for investor relationships.



### Programmatic Recommendation: Adaptable Strategic Planning

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Trade & Industry, Ministry of Agriculture, National SME Agencies	Encourage businesses to develop multi-stage strategic plans adaptable to funding fluctuations.	NGOs focused on entrepreneurship (e.g., TechnoServe, African Development Bank), Universities	Promote public awareness of adaptable planning methodologies.	Venture capital firms, Business consultancies, Private consulting firms, Corporate strategic planning departments	<p>Provide consulting services to help businesses create adaptable, multi-stage strategic plans that can adjust to funding fluctuations</p> <p>Offer tailored strategic advice for businesses to align partial funding with priority areas.</p> <p>Develop tools and software that help businesses track and revise strategies based on changing resources</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Entrepreneurial Skills Development Programs

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministry of Trade & Industry, Ministry of Agriculture, National SME Agencies	Encourage businesses to develop multi-stage strategic plans adaptable to funding fluctuations.	NGOs focused on entrepreneurship (e.g., TechnoServe, African Development Bank), Universities	Promote public awareness of adaptable planning methodologies.	Venture capital firms, Business consultancies, Private consulting firms, Corporate strategic planning departments	<p>Provide consulting services to help businesses create adaptable, multistage strategic plans that can adjust to funding fluctuations.</p> <p>Offer tailored strategic advice for businesses to align partial funding with priority areas.</p> <p>Develop tools and software that help businesses track and revise strategies based on changing resources</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Structured Follow-Up and Relationship-Building Systems

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Innovation, Trade agencies	Create programs to help businesses build internal capacity for investor relationship management.	Trade associations (e.g., ITC, UNCTAD), Export-focused NGOs (e.g., Africa Trade Fund)	Encourage the adoption of automated follow-up systems to track investor communications and maintain engagement.	Financial institutions, Corporate accelerators, Tech firms providing CRM solutions - Venture capital firms	<p>Invest in CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems to automate and manage investor communications, making it easier for businesses to follow up after initial pitches.</p> <p>Develop and promote private-sector accelerators and incubators that focus on helping entrepreneurs build strong investor relationships and manage follow-up processes.</p> <p>Offer ongoing mentorship or advisory services focused on relationship management with investors.</p>

### Programmatic Recommendation: Confidence-Building Programs for Entrepreneurs

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Women's empowerment ministries, Local governments	Implement workshops and mentorship programs focused on overcoming self-doubt and improving confidence.	Development agencies, NGOs working on women's entrepreneurship	Promote role-playing pitch scenarios and peer-to-peer mentoring programs.	Mentorship networks, Professional coaching firms, Industry role models, Alumni networks	<p>Organize peer-to-peer mentoring networks and one-on-one coaching programs led by experienced industry leaders and successful entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Host private sector-funded confidence building workshops focused on role-playing pitch scenarios and overcoming self-doubt.</p> <p>Promote success stories of female entrepreneurs within industry forums to inspire and build confidence among aspiring entrepreneurs.</p>



### Programmatic Recommendation: Cross-Sector Networking Opportunities

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Industry and Trade, Innovation hubs	Develop cross-sector initiatives that connect businesses with government, technical experts, and NGOs	Development partners, Multilateral institutions	Facilitate business access to technical expertise, market insights, and strategic partnerships	Industry associations, Private sector think tanks, Corporate networking platforms, Sector-specific industry leaders, Consulting firms, Business associations	<p>Facilitate networking events and platforms where businesses can connect with technical experts, government representatives, and NGOs.</p> <p>Leverage private sector networks to provide businesses with access to mentorship, market insights, and strategic partnerships.</p> <p>Encourage corporate sponsorships and partnership opportunities for cross-sector collaboration in industry-relevant events</p>

SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 | 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM (EAT)

# Building Community of Support & Coalitions



entrepreneurs to  
it and sustainable  
ed Africa and the

### Session Objectives

- \* *Strengthen networks by fostering alliances for mutual support and collective action.*
- \* *Build a resilient community through mentorship, knowledge sharing, and strategic partnerships in Africa.*

### Speaker

- \* Chef Paul Newnham, CEO, SDG 2 Advocacy Hub

### Contributors

- \* 2024 LAWFF Fellows



### Background

Building strong and effective networks is critical to success in entrepreneurship, policymaking, and programmatic initiatives, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, nutrition, and community development. The transcript emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive networks that bring together a diversity of voices, allowing different stakeholders including entrepreneurs, scientists, and policymakers to learn from each other. This diversity is necessary not only for generating innovative solutions but also for creating more resilient communities. The need for a shared vision and mutual benefit is central to successful community-building. Whether it's in a chef-scientist network or a community focused on food safety standards, fostering an environment where different perspectives are encouraged creates stronger, more adaptable networks. However, building these networks requires time, investment, and a deep understanding of the community's needs, which extends beyond the transactional elements of business or policy goals.

## Issues & Challenges (Policy)

### 1. Hunger and Malnutrition:

Despite global progress, hunger remains a significant issue, with around 800 million people still lacking access to sufficient food. However, the problem is not just the absence of food but also its quality, as malnutrition rates are rising. Many people who have access to food consume unhealthy or non-nutritious diets, leading to conditions like obesity and related health problems. These nutritional imbalances place economic burdens on families, cities, and countries due to increased healthcare costs and reduced productivity.

### 2. Climate Change:

Farming and agricultural practices have become increasingly unpredictable due to climate change. Traditional farming methods, which relied on predictable weather patterns, are no longer as reliable. Climate-induced phenomena like storms, droughts, and inconsistent rainfall disrupt crop production, making it harder for smallholder farmers to maintain their livelihoods. This leads to financial stress and unsustainable agricultural cycles where farmers take out loans to replant crops that failed due to erratic weather patterns.

### 3. Biodiversity Loss:

The global food system has become overly reliant on a small number of crops such as corn, wheat, rice, soy, and potatoes, which were initially expanded to address hunger but have now created a narrow and unsustainable food base. This reduction in crop diversity has not only endangered lesser-known food varieties but also diminished the richness of diets and ecosystems. Biodiversity loss impacts food security and nutrition, making communities more vulnerable to environmental and economic shocks.

### 4. Global Governance and Coordination:

Global and regional efforts to address food security and agricultural challenges, like the Post Malabo Process and the Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, require strong political commitment and coordination. However, many countries struggle with aligning national policies to these frameworks, leaving gaps in effective implementation. Political processes are complex, involving compromises that can sometimes limit the scope of action needed to address these urgent issues.

### 5. Lack of Inclusivity and Diversity in Policy Frameworks:

In many sectors, policies tend to favor established voices, often limiting the participation of new or diverse perspectives. This results in repetitive discussions and minimal innovation, as the same ideas and approaches are recycled across different platforms. Without explicit policies promoting inclusivity and the integration of diverse voices, networks become insular and lose their potential for creating transformative change.

### 6. Insufficient Policy Support for Collaboration:

Many current policies prioritize competition over collaboration. This competitive focus leads to the creation of silos where entrepreneurs, businesses, and community organizations operate in isolation. Collaboration is often seen as an afterthought rather than a core component of policy frameworks. This hinders the ability to scale solutions that require collective effort, such as food safety standards or community-driven agricultural initiatives.

### 7. Rigid Policy Structures:

A common challenge with many policy frameworks is that they are too prescriptive, offering narrow, one-size-fits-all solutions. Policies that dictate specific methods rather than allowing flexibility in how objectives are achieved often stifle innovation. For instance, food safety regulations may be too rigid, preventing entrepreneurs from adopting context-specific solutions that may better suit their local environments.

### 8. Neglect of Holistic Family Support in Policies:

Policies addressing family welfare, particularly those aimed at supporting working mothers, often focus narrowly on economic outcomes, such as increasing income or employment rates. However, these policies fail to address the broader spectrum of challenges that families face, including mental health, work-life balance, caregiving responsibilities, and the need for community support. This gap in policy attention means that mothers, especially in entrepreneurial settings, do not receive the holistic support they need to thrive.

### 9. Health Labeling and Nutrition Misinformation:

There is widespread misinformation among consumers regarding certain foods, such as the misconception about allergies and intolerances (e.g., beans), due to unreliable sources like fitness instructors or online media. This reflects a need for clear, science-based health and nutrition labeling policies.



### **10. Limited Collaboration Between Social Scientists and the Food Industry:**

There is a lack of formal collaboration between social scientists and businesses in conducting research to understand consumers' true needs and motivations, which often go beyond functional benefits.

### **11. Inadequate Support for Working Mothers in Business:**

There are no clear policies to support mothers balancing professional careers and motherhood, which

results in their isolation, as many may leave their jobs to care for children without enough support structures in place.

### **12. Siloed Efforts in Food-Related Industries:**

There is little collaboration between food companies that target similar consumer segments, like mothers, creating isolated efforts instead of collective, ecosystem-building solutions.

## Issues & Challenges (Programmatic)

### **1. Building and Sustaining Networks:**

A key challenge in leadership development and community building is not just the initial formation of networks but also their sustainability. While some people excel at recruiting and establishing new connections, others may struggle to maintain those relationships over time. Effective networks require continuous nurturing through shared goals, open communication, and active engagement, which can be resource-intensive.

### **2. Limited Knowledge Sharing Across Regions:**

During the session, it became evident that even prominent chefs and food entrepreneurs lack knowledge of certain African ingredients and food traditions. This gap in local knowledge sharing, despite global travel and exposure, reflects a broader issue of insufficient intra-African collaboration and learning across the food system.

### **3. Access to Resources and Market Connections:**

For women entrepreneurs in food systems, accessing the right resources, mentorship, and market opportunities remains a major challenge. While programs like LAWFF are designed to help, there are still gaps in ensuring that all participants have equal access to the knowledge and connections needed to scale their ventures.

### **4. Maintaining Consistent Engagement:**

Keeping communities and networks engaged over time requires both emotional and practical investment. Networks must provide continuous value, including mentorship, market access, and new opportunities, to prevent participants from disengaging. This is especially true in resource-constrained environments,

where participants are managing multiple challenges simultaneously.

### **5. Competition Over Collaboration:**

In many entrepreneurial and community-based programs, competition among participants is often a barrier to building collaborative networks. Participants may prioritize their own success over collective goals, leading to a fragmented community where knowledge sharing is limited. This competition can undermine the shared vision that is essential for building strong, supportive networks.

### **6. Underinvestment in Relationship-Building:**

Programs often expect quick results and short-term outcomes, but building strong networks and communities requires time. Relationship-building is a gradual process that demands continuous interaction, shared experiences, and mutual trust. Many programs, however, do not allocate enough resources or time for these relationships to mature, resulting in weaker networks that are not equipped to handle long-term challenges.

### **7. Misalignment Between Program Objectives and Community Needs:**

Some programs focus narrowly on their specific product or service, failing to address the broader needs of the communities they serve. For example, a business focused on nutrition might not recognize that its target audience; mothers also struggle with time management, mental health, and finding support for balancing family and career. This misalignment between program goals and community needs can lead to limited engagement and lower overall impact.

### 9. Limited Reciprocity and Trust in Networks:

Successful networks rely on reciprocity, where members support one another and share resources or knowledge. However, some program participants may exploit these networks without giving back, weakening trust and discouraging others from contributing. This lack of reciprocity makes it harder to build sustainable, resilient communities where all members feel valued and motivated to participate.

### 10. Inability to Address Emotional and Social Needs of Consumers:

Programs often fail to capture and address the emotional, identity-driven needs of consumers (e.g., pride in heritage foods) and rely too heavily on marketing functional benefits, which do not always resonate with consumers.

### 11. Burnout and Overload Among Entrepreneurs and Their Teams:

Many entrepreneurs, driven by passion, push themselves and their teams too hard without pacing, which can lead to exhaustion, lower productivity, and

eventually burnout.

### 12. Lack of Market Research Tools Tailored to Target Audiences:

Businesses struggle to implement effective market research tools to understand consumer preferences, and as a result, may misinterpret their needs. This is compounded by poorly designed surveys that limit the depth of insights collected.

### 13. Limited Community and Ecosystem Building for Mothers:

Programs that cater to mothers do not focus enough on building supportive communities, leaving many mothers feeling isolated in their roles.



## Policy Recommendations

### **01. Strengthening Food Systems through Integrated Nutrition Policies:**

Governments should create policies that not only address food security in terms of quantity but also ensure food quality by promoting nutrition-sensitive agriculture. This means investing in local, diverse, and nutrient-rich food production to tackle malnutrition in all its forms. Policymakers should work with international organizations like the SDG 2 Advocacy Hub to prioritize nutrition, food access, and the role of women in food production within national frameworks.

### **02. 2. Climate-Resilient Agricultural Policies:**

National and regional policies must incorporate climate resilience in agricultural planning. Governments can implement subsidies for climate-smart agricultural practices, provide insurance schemes for smallholder farmers affected by climate change, and promote the adoption of technologies that enhance water management and sustainable farming. Farmers need tools to better predict and respond to climate fluctuations, ensuring they can sustainably produce food and support their livelihoods.

### **03. Diversity-Driven Agricultural Policy:**

Policies should encourage the cultivation and consumption of underutilized crops to promote biodiversity. Governments could offer incentives for growing indigenous and climate-resilient crops like Bambara nut, thus reducing dependence on a few global staples. This could also involve investments in research and development to enhance the productivity and marketability of these crops.

### **04. Cross-Sector Collaboration and Policy Alignment:**

National governments must work more closely with regional organizations like the African Union to align agricultural and food security policies with broader continental frameworks such as the Malabo Declaration. This would enable more coordinated and impactful interventions, particularly in rural areas and underserved communities, while ensuring that national policies feed into global agendas like the SDGs.

### **05. Foster Inclusivity Through Policy Incentives:**

Policymakers should create incentives for the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives in networks. This could involve funding programs that prioritize underrepresented groups, providing platforms for new entrepreneurs, and encouraging partnerships between different sectors (e.g., agriculture, health, and technology). Inclusive policies should mandate the involvement of different stakeholders at decision-making tables, ensuring that networks reflect the diversity of their communities.

### **06. Encourage Collaborative Ecosystems:**

To overcome the competition-first mindset, policies should promote the development of collaborative ecosystems. This could be achieved through the creation of shared resource centers, co-working spaces, and networking hubs where entrepreneurs and community organizations can collaborate. Policies should also incentivize joint ventures and partnerships between businesses and communities working toward common goals, such as food safety, environmental sustainability, or public health.

### **07. 7. Promote Flexible Policy Frameworks:**

Rather than dictating specific methods or approaches, policies should set overarching goals and allow for flexibility in how those goals are achieved. For example, in agriculture or food safety, regulations could focus on outcomes—such as ensuring public health—while allowing different communities to implement context-specific methods that suit their local conditions. This approach would encourage innovation and adaptability.

### **08. 8. Design Holistic Family Support Policies:**

Policies aimed at supporting families, especially working mothers, need to go beyond economic outcomes and address broader issues like mental health, caregiving, and community building. This could include policies for flexible work schedules, access to childcare, and community support programs that create safe spaces for mothers to share their experiences and challenges. Policymakers should also consider the impact of family dynamics, gender roles, and societal pressures on the ability of working mothers to thrive in both personal and professional capacities.

**09. Strengthening Food Labeling Regulations:**

Governments should implement stricter regulations and guidelines for health and nutritional labeling, ensuring that claims are evidence-based and align with credible dietary guidelines. This will help combat misinformation about food allergies, intolerances, and nutrition requirements..

**10. Normalizing Cross-Disciplinary Research Collaboration:**

Policy frameworks should encourage collaborations between businesses and social scientists to conduct deeper market and consumer behavior research. This will enable companies to develop products that address both functional and emotional consumer needs.

**11. Establishing Supportive Work Policies for Mothers:**

Policies should encourage flexible work arrangements for mothers, such as job-sharing, remote work, and childcare support, enabling women to remain in the workforce while balancing motherhood. This can reduce the isolation many mothers feel.

**12. Promoting Ecosystem Collaborations in the Food Industry:**

Policies that incentivize partnerships between companies targeting similar demographics (such as mothers) can create a collaborative ecosystem where businesses co-create solutions and share resources for greater impact.

## Programmatic Recommendations

**01. Developing Leadership Capacity through Continuous Learning:**

Programs like LAWFF should ensure that leadership development is an ongoing process, with participants continually exposed to new knowledge, ideas, and networks. This could be achieved through follow-up training sessions, peer mentoring, and exchange programs that allow fellows to learn from one another and share best practices.

**02. Facilitating Knowledge Exchange Platforms:**

Creating more platforms for chefs, farmers, and food entrepreneurs to exchange local knowledge and experiences would help address the gap in intra-African collaboration. Regional forums, digital platforms, or even exchange visits between countries could foster learning and help uncover forgotten or lesser-known ingredients, enhancing the diversity of food systems across the continent.

**03. Sustaining Networks through Effective Communication and Resource Sharing:**

Networks should be designed to ensure long-term engagement. This could involve establishing a dedicated team to manage ongoing activities, organize regular check-ins, provide access to continuous learning opportunities, and maintain strong communication channels. Identifying roles within the network, such as mentors, connectors, or resource facilitators, can help sustain relationships and ensure value for all members.

**04. Supporting Women Entrepreneurs with Resources and Mentorship:**

Programs need to ensure that women entrepreneurs not only gain access to markets but also have the mentorship and financial resources needed to scale their businesses. This could include partnerships with financial institutions to provide tailored loans or grants, collaborations with established businesses for market access, and ongoing mentorship from industry experts.

**05. Building Narrative and Storytelling Skills:**

Entrepreneurs and chefs need to be equipped with the skills to tell their stories effectively. Storytelling can play a powerful role in shifting narratives about African food systems and enhancing market opportunities for lesser-known ingredients. Training programs on narrative building, public speaking, and digital media could help participants craft compelling stories that resonate with diverse audiences.

**06. Create Collaborative Networks with Shared Goals:**

Programs should focus on building collaborative networks where participants are encouraged to work together toward shared goals. This could be facilitated through mentorship programs, peer-to-peer learning groups, and joint projects that promote mutual benefit. By fostering a sense of shared purpose, programs can reduce competition and create a more supportive, cohesive community.

### 07. Invest in Long-Term Relationship Building:

Programs should recognize that building strong networks takes time and should allocate resources accordingly. This includes creating opportunities for repeated interactions, such as regular meetings, networking events, and workshops that allow participants to get to know each other. Programs can also foster long-term relationships by encouraging informal interactions outside of formal program activities, such as social events or collaborative projects.

### 08. Align Program Objectives with the Broader Needs of the Community:

Programs should take a holistic approach to community-building by addressing not only the immediate needs of their target audience but also the broader challenges they face. For example, a program focused on nutrition for mothers could expand its scope to offer support for time management, stress relief, and community-building among mothers. This approach would create deeper engagement and foster a more resilient community.

### 09. Encourage Reciprocity and Trust in Networks:

To build trust and ensure reciprocity in networks, programs should implement mechanisms that encourage mutual exchange of value. This could include recognizing and celebrating members who contribute to the community, offering rewards for collaboration, or creating formal structures (e.g., mentorship programs) where participants are expected to give back. Building trust within the network will lead to stronger, more sustainable communities.

### 10. Shifting to Emotion-Driven Marketing:

Businesses should focus more on identity, heritage, and emotional connections with food in their marketing campaigns, especially when appealing to demographics like mothers or cultural groups. This can create stronger consumer loyalty.

### 11. Encouraging Entrepreneurial Pacing and Team Well-Being:

Entrepreneurs need to learn how to pace their projects, incorporating planned slower periods into their workflows to prevent burnout. Training programs on work-life balance and strategic time management should be incorporated into entrepreneurial programs.

### 12. Redesigning Market Research Tools:

Programs should incorporate open-ended, nuanced market research tools—designed in collaboration with social scientists that go beyond yes/no answers. This can provide deeper insights into consumer preferences and unmet needs.

### 13. Building Community and Support Systems for Mothers:

Programs should create opportunities for mothers to connect and share experiences, such as hosting community-building events or collaborative ventures. These networks would alleviate isolation and help mothers support each other, fostering a sense of community and empowerment.



“

*Inclusion isn't just about having a seat at the table; it's about ensuring diverse voices shape the conversation, especially in networks that touch on food security and agriculture.*

**- Chef Paul Newnham**

“

*Farmers need more than tools; they need resilience built into policies, helping them predict and adapt to climate shocks while securing their livelihoods.*

**- Chef Paul Newnham**

“

*We can no longer rely on just a few global staples. Encouraging the growth of underutilized, indigenous crops is a step toward food security that is rich in both nutrition and biodiversity..*

**- Chef Paul Newnham**

“

*Effective food policies don't exist in silos. Governments, regional organizations, and private sectors must align their efforts to create a food-secure Africa, where every community is empowered*

**- Chef Paul Newnham**

“

*Supporting women in business goes beyond access to markets. It's about providing the mentorship, resources, and financial backing that allows them to scale and sustain their ventures.*

**- Chef Paul Newnham**

“

*Collaboration must be incentivized at every level. It's in shared spaces, joint ventures, and community partnerships that the real magic of innovation happens.*

**- Chef Paul Newnham**

“

*Food is identity. To build loyal customers, businesses must tap into the emotional connections people have with food, heritage, and culture.*

**- Chef Paul Newnham**

“

*If we want to keep women in the workforce, we need policies that allow them to be both professionals and caregivers. Flexible schedules and childcare support aren't luxuries; they're necessities.*

**- Chef Paul Newnham**



## Key Priorities, Action Steps, and Responsibilities

### Policy Recommendation: Strengthening Food Systems through Integrated Nutrition Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Nutrition; In-ternational Organizations (e.g., FAO, SDG 2 Advocacy Hub)	<p>Create policies that promote nutrition-sensitive agriculture.</p> <p>Invest in local and nutrient-rich food production and collaborate with international organizations like SDG 2 Advocacy Hub to prioritize nutrition and food access.</p>				

### Policy Recommendation: Implement Climate-Resilient Agricultural Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Environment, Agriculture; Climate-focused Development Agencies	<p>Develop subsidies for climate-smart agricultural practices.</p> <p>Offer insurance schemes for smallholder farmers and promote the adoption of water management technologies and sustainable farming practices.</p>				

### Policy Recommendation: Promote Biodiversity through Diversity-Driven Agricultural Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Agriculture, Research Institutes	<p>Provide incentives for cultivating indigenous crops.</p> <p>Fund research for enhancing underutilized crops' productivity, and promote their market access.</p>				

### Policy Recommendation: Align National Policies with Regional and Global Frameworks

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Regional Development Organizations	Collaborate with regional organizations like the African Union and align national policies with continental frameworks like the Malabo Declaration and SDGs.				

### Policy Recommendation: Foster Inclusivity through Policy Incentives

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Environment, Agriculture; Climate-focused Development Agencies	<p>Introduce policies that fund programs for underrepresented groups.</p> <p>Mandate diverse stakeholder participation in decision-making and provide platforms for entrepreneurs.</p>				

### Policy Recommendation: Promote Collaborative Ecosystems

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Industry, Agriculture	Create shared resource centers, co-working spaces, and incentivize partnerships between businesses and communities working toward food safety, public health, and sustainability.				



#### Policy Recommendation: Promote Flexible Policy Frameworks

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Food Safety	Develop policies that focus on overarching goals like public health but allow communities flexibility in how to achieve them				

#### Policy Recommendation: Design Holistic Family Support Policies

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Labor, Social Welfare, and Health	Introduce policies that support working mothers with flexible work schedules, access to childcare, mental health services, and community support programs.				

#### Policy Recommendation: Strengthen Food Labelling Regulations

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
Ministries of Health, Food Safety Agencies	Implement strict guidelines for health and nutritional labeling, ensuring evidence-based claims that align with credible dietary guidelines.				

#### Programmatic Recommendation: Support Collaborative Ecosystems

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
		Development Agencies (e.g., USAID, GIZ), International NGOs	Partner with governments to create resource-sharing networks, co-working spaces, and hubs for collaborative ventures, targeting community organizations and entrepreneurs.		

### Programmatic Recommendation: Facilitate Cross-Sector Collaboration

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
		Regional Development Organizations, Multilateral Organizations	Work with national governments to align food security and nutrition policies with broader regional frameworks, ensuring cohesive interventions in rural and under-served areas.		

### Programmatic Recommendation: Provide Financial and Technical Assistance for Climate-Resilient Agriculture

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
		Development Banks, Climate-focused NGOs	Offer support to governments for developing and implementing climate-smart agricultural policies, including insurance schemes for farmers and water management technologies.		

### Programmatic Recommendation: Encourage Inclusivity in Decision-Making Processes

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
		International NGOs, Development Agencies	Fund programs that bring underrepresented voices into decision-making spaces, ensuring inclusive development of agricultural and nutrition policies.		

### Programmatic Recommendation: Promote Flexible Work Arrangements for Mother

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
		Development Agencies, Women's Advocacy Organizations	Collaborate with governments to promote flexible work policies, provide childcare support, and help design work-life balance solutions for mothers.		



**Programmatic Recommendation: Invest in Climate-Resilient Agricultural Technologies**

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
				Agri-tech Companies, Agri-business Corporations	Partner with governments and development agencies to develop and deploy climate-smart tools and technologies for water and land management.

**Programmatic Recommendation: Collaborate on Policy Advocacy for Inclusive Food Systems**

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
				Industry Associations, Private Sector Advocacy Groups	Work with governments and advocacy groups to promote policies that prioritize nutrition, biodiversity, and women's roles in food production.

**Programmatic Recommendation: Promote Emotional and Identity-Driven Marketing Strategies**

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
				Retail Chains, Food Processing Companies	Develop marketing campaigns that highlight cultural heritage, identity, and emotional connections with food, particularly targeting specific demographics like mothers.

**Programmatic Recommendation: Establish Cross-Disciplinary Research Collaborations**

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
				Private Research Firms, Agri-business Companies	Partner with social scientists to develop market research tools that provide deeper insights into consumer needs and behavior.

**Programmatic Recommendation: Encourage Flexibility and Work-Life Balance for Entrepreneurs**

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
				Private Companies, CSR Divisions	Offer training on strategic time management and work-life balance to prevent burnout and improve long-term sustainability in entre-preneurial ventures

**Programmatic Recommendation: Invest in Flexible Work Policies for Mothers**

Government Sector Driven		Development Sector Driven		Private Sector Driven	
Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps	Responsibility	Action Steps
				Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Divisions, HR Departments	Create flexible work arrangements like job-sharing, remote work, and provide childcare support to retain women in the workforce.

# LAWFF Testimonials

What stood out to me the most was the feedback mechanism. Each session felt like a stepping-stone, building on the last and creating a dynamic, iterative learning experience. The breakout sessions, the one-on-one mentorship, and the hands-on curriculum; they were all designed to address real challenges in business management, branding, policy building, and leadership. It wasn't just theoretical; it was practical, actionable, and tailored to the realities we face.

**Deina Mayaki – Cohort 2 Nigeria**



Looking back at my six months with the LAWFF program, I can only describe it as transformative. The connections I made with mentors and professionals in the agricultural sector were invaluable. I now have a network of people I can lean on for guidance and support. What stood out for me was how unique LAWFF is; there aren't many fellowships specifically designed for women in agriculture that provide not just funding opportunities but also collaboration opportunities and solutions to shared challenges. The program pushed me to think bigger and inspired me through the innovative projects other participants were working on.

**Doreen Njoki Irungu – Cohort 2 Kenya**



The LAWFF program has been a transformative journey for me—like a dream I'm still pinching myself over. I never imagined such an incredible experience was possible, and the knowledge I've gained has truly broadened my horizons. Every element of the program—from the mentoring sessions to the mock panels—played a significant role in my personal and professional development. Working one-on-one with Chef Stone as my mentor gave me invaluable insights into my career struggles and opened up new perspectives. The mock panel sessions pushed me out of my comfort zone, helping me find my voice and overcome my long-standing fear of public speaking.

**Katendi Nkanza – Cohort 2 Zambia**



Being part of LAWFF has been a transformative experience. I was humbled to be the only participant from Ghana, and the program exceeded my expectations with practical training like the vision board exercise and insightful mentorship from Dr. V. Sheree Williams.

LAWFF gave me the confidence to share my story, which has inspired other women and impacted lives. The network is phenomenal connecting women across Africa to collaborate rather than compete.

**Nana Achiaa Ankrah – Cohort 2, Ghana**



My experience as part of the Leading African Women in Food Fellowship (LAWFF) 2024 cohort has been transformative. The mock panel sessions stood out for me, as they aligned with my goal of becoming a better public speaker. In addition, the session on succession planning was profound, confirming the importance of preparing my organization, Community Women's Enterprise Network, for a sustainable future. The mentorship with Dr. V. Williams was invaluable. She not only shared relatable insights but also consistently asked how else she could support me, strengthening my belief in the power of mentorship for women entrepreneurs. The connections built through LAWFF have been extraordinary. The sisterhood within the fellowship and the opportunities to collaborate across countries like Ghana, Nigeria, and Malawi are inspiring.

**Hadijah Nankanja – Cohort 2, Uganda**



The program has enhanced my public speaking and presentation skills. I've learned how to present myself effectively, from improving my panel presentation skills to understanding the importance of appearance. The mock panel sessions and pitching exercises gave me invaluable feedback and tools to communicate more powerfully. I now feel empowered to influence decisions, share the work we do at Pelham Kenya, and represent the fellowship confidently.

**Rosina Mbenya – Cohort 2, Kenya**



# *Appreciation to Our Esteemed Funder - Skoll Foundation*

The Leading African Women in Food Fellowship (LAWFF) owes its success and impact to the unwavering support and visionary leadership of the Skoll Foundation. As a key enabler of transformative programs, SkollFoundation's investment in LAWFF has empowered women across the African food and agriculture sector to redefine leadership, amplify their voices, and drive meaningful change.

Through the Foundation's commitment to fostering innovation, social entrepreneurship, and systemic solutions, the LAWFF program has provided women leaders with access to critical resources, cutting-edge knowledge, and a robust support network. This has equipped fellows to champion sustainable growth, advance gender equity, and elevate Africa's food system on the global stage.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Skoll Foundation for recognizing the immense potential of African women changemakers and for enabling their journeys to transform challenges into opportunities. Together, we are building a future where women in agriculture thrive, influence decision-making, and inspire generations to come.

**Thank you, Skoll Foundation, for being an indispensable partner in this journey of impact and empowerment.**



*Special thanks to the Policy Innovation Centre (PIC) for inspiring the creation of the LAV Book.*



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**African Food  
Changemakers**

*Nourishing Africa and Changing Global Narratives*