

Transforming African Food Systems: Emerging African Perspectives Ahead of the UN Food Systems Summit

An Organized Symposium Submitted to the Virtual International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE)–2021

Thursday August 19, 10:30 –12:00 US EST

Organizers: AKADEMIYA2063 and USAID

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Introduction

A rapid and dynamic transformation of Africa’s food systems is indispensable for achieving the aspirations of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the 2014 Malabo Declaration. The ambitious food systems transformation agenda entails ensuring food systems deliver food security and nutrition for all Africans in a manner that is productive, equitable, inclusive, climate-smart, and sustainable. Africa’s recent economic and agricultural growth recovery driven by better policies and increased investments shows that progress is possible. However, transforming Africa’s food systems will require accelerating the progress while addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities brought on by a growing middle class, an increasing youth population, climate change, advances in digital technologies, and dietary changes across the continent. Moreover, Africa has to contend with the COVID-19 pandemic and its longer-term impacts that have further threatened food systems by disrupting agricultural input markets, supply chains, and trade and endangered the food security and nutrition of millions of people.

In preparation for the UN Food Systems Summit (FSS) in September, various African stakeholders at the country, regional, and continental levels have been mobilizing African perspectives on transforming the continent’s food systems to be healthier, more equitable, resilient, and sustainable. The Summit is expected to generate bold actions and game-changing solutions and thus accelerate action to deliver progress on all the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Symposium Objectives and Format

This ICAE 90 minute symposium seeks to share emerging African perspectives from independent food systems dialogues and briefing papers put together by diverse groups of African stakeholders on how best to transform African food systems. The symposium will provide a unique opportunity to discuss the timely subject of food systems transformation from both academic and policy angles and with a diverse audience of agricultural economists, non-economists, and policymakers at the conference. This session will begin with four (4) sets of 8-10 minute presentations that cover African voices on the following:

- a) The process of gathering and consolidating African voices for the UNFSS;
- b) Challenges and opportunities to building resilient and sustainable African food systems; and
- c) Game-changing solutions, technological innovations, and policy priorities for transforming African food systems.

The four presentations will be followed by comments from two discussants for a total of 10 mins, 5 mins for each discussant. Next, will be an open discussion involving the audience for 40 mins.

Target Audience

The primary audience for this session includes agricultural economists, the broader academic community, and non-academic stakeholders interested in Africa and food systems transformation.

Moderator/Chairperson: Dr. Ousmane Badiane, Executive Chairperson, AKADEMIYA2063, Rwanda

Presentation 1: Dr. Godfrey Bahigwa, Director, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission, Ethiopia

Presentation Title: Gathering and Consolidating African Voices for the UN Food Systems Summit

The presenter will briefly highlight the process of gathering and consolidating African voices and the next steps and expectations for the UNFSS.

Presentation 2: Dr. Sithembile Mwamakamba, Director of Policy Research and Analysis, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), South Africa

Presentation Title: Challenges and Opportunities to Building Resilient and Sustainable African Food Systems: African Viewpoints

The presenter will give an overview of challenges and opportunities to transforming African food systems that have come out of selected African independent regional food systems dialogues and briefing papers.

Presentation 3: Dr. Katrin Glatzel, Director of Policy Innovation, AKADEMIYA2063, Senegal

Presentation Title: Game-changing Solutions and Policy Priorities for African Food Systems Transformation: African Viewpoints

The presenter will showcase some game-changing solutions and policy options for ensuring sustainable, competitive, and inclusive African food systems, that have come out of selected African independent regional food systems dialogues and briefing papers.

Presentation 4: Mr. Lloyd Le Page, Tony Blair Institute

Presentation Title: Visionary Approaches to Food Systems Transformation: Insights from Ghana, Malawi, and Rwanda Case Studies

This presentation focuses specifically on the efforts by three African countries (Rwanda, Malawi and Ghana) that have demonstrated courageous and visionary political will to embark on a food systems transformation journey.

Discussant 1: Dr. Debisi Araba, Panel Member, Malabo-Montpellier Panel

Discussant 2: Dr. James Oehmke, Senior Food Security and Nutrition Policy Adviser, U.S. Agency for International Development, USA