

Tuesday, 13 October 12:30– 14:00

Red Room

**Enabling innovation: cultivating young talent to drive sustainable agri-food systems in 2030**

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**ORGANIZERS**

Switzerland

Foodways Consulting GmbH

Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YARD)

**Abstract:** The agri-food system needs to evolve to meet the changing nutritional needs of the 21st century global population.

Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) will set out clear global targets, but to achieve them we will need to do things differently. Young people have the innovative thinking required to meet future challenges but often they don't have access to the support, knowledge and skills needed to take their ideas forward. In this interactive Side Event chaired by Mr. Frank Sesno, the internationally renowned journalist, attendees will hear from the winners of the UN-FAO-GWU Innovation Award and gain insight into young people's views on talent development in agri-food systems, drawn from the MyFood30 project, developed by the Swiss National FAO Committee with Foodways Consulting GmbH. Working with young people, attendees will discuss some of the challenges and opportunities identified and agree the actions needed to take this agenda forward. A Youth Panel will provide an opportunity for further exchange, before attendees are encouraged to reflect on their own roles in supporting the attainment of SDG 2. Interaction between event attendees and young agri-food actors across the world will be enabled via a Twitter discussion around #MyFood30#18

**KEYWORDS:** Innovation , Talent development , Youth , Education and training**Languages:** EN

**Summary:** The session was opened and moderated by Mr. Frank Sesno, international journalist and Director of the School of Media and Public Affairs, at the George Washington University. After setting out the event objectives, Mr Sesno introduced the UN-FAO/GWU Innovation Award - an initiative which encouraged students to find sustainable solutions for global hunger and malnutrition challenges. The award winners, David Wilson, Jeremy Robison and Anahi Ruiz, played short video clips presenting their answers to the equation food + innovation = ? and shared their aspirations for the next steps of their projects. Mr Adrian Aebi from the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture was then invited to introduce MyFood30 - a project designed to hear young people's voices on the future of our agri-food system and support them in maximizing their contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. Mr Aebi summarized the five key challenges identified through the project. These ranged from understanding the political and economic context and facilitating exchange between young people and decision makers to tackling practical barriers, addressing missing skills and knowledge and gaining practical work experience. Young volunteers within the audience then stood up and read out quotes shared by international respondents to the MyFood30 survey, recognizing the current barriers but also highlighting the next generation's commitment to making change happen. An interactive workshop session enabled participants to prioritize the measures needed to take this agenda forward, share best practice examples or suggest additional actions required. As the votes were counted, three young people joined Mr Sesno on stage for a panel debate and plenary discussion. The workshop exercise revealed that delegates wanted to see:

- more information about sustainability issues included in educational syllabuses
- a greater number of youth representatives on advisory boards
- increased support for agri-food sector specific start-up programmes
- inclusion of entrepreneurship skills in school and university syllabuses and
- the alignment of incentives to encourage professionals to create quality work experience placements.

Mr Sesno invited Mr Aebi and Ms Courtney Paisley from YPARD to share a few final thoughts before encouraging all attendees to consider the action that they could take on an individual level. Live tweeting throughout the event (#MyFood30) enabled young agri-food actors across the world to see how their views were being shared with international decision makers.