

SE32: Reducing inequalities in food systems through entrepreneurship and enterprise

Organized by: The Kingdom of Morocco, OCP Group, and the Private Sector Mechanism.

Inequalities in food systems exist for many interrelated reasons and are one of the primary causes of poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Addressing systemic inequalities in food systems requires a coordinated approach. CFS's Policy Guidelines on Engaging Youth in Agriculture and Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition calls on all actors to promote private and social enterprise and entrepreneurship through education programs, capacity building, mentorship coaching and access to finance.

The Moderator, Robynne Anderson, Private Sector Mechanism (PSM) introduced the side event by highlighting its objectives to demonstrate that entrepreneurship and small and medium enterprise act as the greater driver of economic development in rural areas in ways that reduce inequalities and improves the food and nutrition security outcomes of rural people and the most vulnerable.

In providing Opening Remarks, Mr Abdellah Larhmaid, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco highlighted that "Support for smallholder farmers is a key pillar in reducing inequalities in Agrifood systems. Through targeted initiatives, we empower them to thrive and contribute to resilient, sustainable food systems." He emphasised that innovation is key to the success of agrifood systems transformation and that education is the key to success in developing new innovations and technologies, in particular in engineering, agriculture, data, and soil science.

He also indicated how the Moroccan Government has introduced numerous initiatives to empower smallholder farmers, ensuring that they have access to resources, training and technology needed to empower productivity and increase their incomes through targeted support programs, including capacity building initiatives and improving access to markets. He concluded by emphasising that, by fostering collaboration between the government, private sector and civil society, Morocco has been able to leverage innovation, investment, and expertise to tackle some of the most pressing challenges in agriculture.

In Responding to the moderator's question to describe the work done at farm level to reduce inequalities, Mr Younes Addou, Vice President, Agribusiness and

Sustainability Solutions, INNOVX described their approach that combines venture capital investment and business development activities that take the initial idea and go through the whole process from the incubation step to the incorporation of subsidiary with its own activities, business model resources. Kenneth Obayuwana, CEO, AgriTech Digest built on this approach by outlining the latest trends in Nigeria around the agricultural technological space and how his team seeks to create an ecosystem for startups and investors to be able to connect and create a kind of ecosystem between them. A key challenge is leveraging our media to amplify the work of the startups, bring other participants in and ensure the broader general business environment is hearing about what they are doing.

Rachid Mousaddek, Senior Principal Scientist, ICARDA/INRA & Chair of the Near East & North Africa (NENA) region within the FAO Global Soils Partnership In addressing this 'ecosystem' and how young people have responded to recognizing the need to improve soil health, firstly acknowledged that around 60% of Africa's soils are marginal soil. However, he stated that only youth can make the change on this by promoting practices that can produce more with less optimizing technologies based on sustainable soil management, recognizing that soils are one of our non-renewable resources.

In closing remarks, the Moderator emphasised that, as highlighted by all the Panellists, to be most effective, small and medium businesses and family farms need access to finance, advisory and extension services to ensure economic, environmental and social sustainability.