

IFAD Innovation Day
Plenary Session hosted by Finland
Towards a Circular Economy: Experiences from Southern Africa and Finland
Tanja Grén, Permanent Representative of Finland to FAO, WFP and IFAD
Opening remarks
21st June, 2022

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

On behalf of the Embassy of Finland in Rome, it is my great honour to welcome you to this plenary session on “Towards a Circular Economy: Experiences from Southern Africa and Finland”. We are pleased to host this important and topical event.

Circular economy enables a transition to a new, more sustainable, low-emission and resource-smart economic model and provides solutions to the biggest challenges we are facing – overconsumption of natural resources, climate change and biodiversity loss.

Circular economy practices help us rethink and transform the way we produce and consume food.

Digitalisation and innovation are key drivers in the move towards a circular economy. The Sustainable Development Goals and climate goals of the Paris Agreement will not be achieved without investments into digital infrastructure, technology and innovation.

Digital solutions can significantly reduce resource consumption and accelerate uptake of digital economy practices also in the food sector. They support real-time information flow between service providers and users, optimization of logistics in value chains and enable smart production processes.

Finland is a pioneer in global circular economy. Our vision is that in 2035, the Finnish economy will be based on a carbon-neutral circular economy society.

Finland’s development policy priorities include strengthening economies through innovation and promoting sustainable use of natural resources and low-emission and climate-resilient development.

We aim to create equal opportunities for sustainable and climate-friendly food production and access to safe and nutritious food. Through cooperation with multilateral partners, we are

currently strengthening our role to support green and digital twin transition in Africa. This includes cooperation on circular economy approaches, practices and innovation.

With the African Development Bank, the Nordic Development Fund and Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, we have recently launched the African Circular Economy Facility, to develop and diffuse circular practices in regional member countries. We are very pleased to have a keynote speech from Dr. Mari Pantsar from Sitra in today's session.

We also cooperate in the Team Europe framework and in cooperation with UN entities to support Green and Digital transition globally and in Africa.

Partnerships between the government, academia, the private sector and CSO's are central to developing a circular economy. The public and private sector must come together to innovate and invest.

Donors and financiers should enable and invest in these partnerships. Today we will hear perspectives on circular economy and related partnerships from a variety of stakeholders, which are already making progress towards a circular economy.

I look forward to the discussions and sharing of experiences today. I wish you all a very successful session!

Thank you.