

Affiliated Session during the Pre-Summit of the United Nations Food System Summit 2021

## Rural Voices: Listening to Small-Scale Producers and Agri-Entrepreneurs

Tuesday, 27 July 2021  
13:30-14:20 CEST / 7:30-8:20am EDT  
Held Virtually | Session Website ([HERE](#))

### Background Note

**INTRO/SESSION OVERVIEW:** The 2021 United Nations Food System Summit (UNFSS) aspires to be a people's summit that engages and draws input from many millions of people across the world. It has created a mechanism for encouraging dialogues at the national, regional and global levels. However, some of the most important actors tend to be forgotten, small-scale producers and other rural people living in remote areas, often without Internet access and a way to make their voices heard. To be held on the margins of the UNFSS Pre-Summit, this affiliated session will bring together a diverse group of small-scale producers and agri-entrepreneurs from around the world to discuss the challenges they face in regards to farming, food systems and value chains, particularly in rural areas. The session will explore solutions they believe will make food systems more sustainable, ensure nutritious food availability and equitable livelihoods.

**BACKGROUND/PROGRESS:** An estimated 63 percent of the world's poor people work in agriculture, the overwhelming majority of them on small farms in remote rural communities. While they produce much of the world's food, they remain vulnerable to hunger and often struggle to make a decent living. The United Nations aims to involve millions of rural people in the 2021 UNFSS as part of an ambitious public engagement process in which indigenous communities, family farmers and, in particular, rural women and youth, are invited to participate in Independent Dialogues to help transform global food systems.

As crucial as these global dialogues will be, there is a risk that they may fall short in engaging millions of people at the heart of our food systems – the women and men who depend on small-scale farming for their livelihoods. The digital platforms used to gather these dialogues traditionally require reliable technology, steady internet access, while being conducted in dominant languages rather than local dialects. Already underrepresented in decision making and leadership in the food system, women face additional gendered barriers to participate in such conversations. One excellent approach to reaching those in rural communities, especially women, whose voices might not otherwise be heard is through interactive radio programs in the form of “on-air dialogues,” which engage large numbers of people, most of them living far from influential urban centers.

This session will showcase a series of interactive radio programs known as “on-air dialogues” held over the past few months to help amplify the variety of views, perspectives, ideas, and challenges facing small-scale producers in rural Africa. Farm Radio International (FRI), with support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other global partners, has utilized its radio networks to ensure that rural voices and opinions are heard and shared with those making decisions so they too can participate in the unfolding global dialogue examining the future of farming, food distribution, and value chains.

The discussion will explore key themes that emerged from these radio dialogues using video, audio recordings, and live participation to foster an open discussion between rural people and decision-makers. It is an opportunity to listen and learn from localized experts. IFAD will also highlight their “Rural Voices” platform that provides a space for rural people to be seen and heard to express their

views in the context of the global dialogue around food systems transformation and those that work in them, especially the poor and marginalized who are IFAD's target group.

**\*FORMAT:** The format of the session provides an opportunity for leaders from governments, civil society, the private sector, and the UN System to share strategies and partnership initiatives. In partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Farm Radio International (FRI), World Vision International, and Global Citizen this session will be held virtually, and will include opening and closing remarks by high-level government representatives, as well as an interactive panel discussion featuring rural small-scale producers, agri-entrepreneurs and leaders from diverse regions. Maximum time will be given to listening to these rural voices from around the world. Brief videos and audio clips from the "on-air dialogues" will be interwoven throughout the session to amplify the important views of the most remote and often overlooked rural people.

**ADDITIONAL INFO/CONTACT:** Additional information, documents and session resources will be provided in the coming days and updated on the session webpage. For further information, please contact Ms. Michelle Porter ([m.porter@ifad.org](mailto:m.porter@ifad.org)), Ms. Simona Siad ([s.siad@ifad.org](mailto:s.siad@ifad.org)), and Mr. Travis Renz ([t.renz@ifad.org](mailto:t.renz@ifad.org)). Or visit our session webpage and RSVP ([link here](#)).

### **Run of Show (TBC)**

#### **1. Opening**

- **Moderator: Liz Agbor-Tabi**, Vice President, Global Policy, Global Citizen (1 min intro)
- Opening Remarks: TBC – Government Representation

#### **2. Rural Voices in Action**

- **Intro video:** Voices and images of rural small-scale producers, agri-entrepreneurs and leaders from around the globe with messages to world leaders. Video will include voices from remote rural areas, including Africa, Asia, Latin America, Near East, and the Pacific Islands. (2 min)

#### **3. Rural Voices On-Air**

- **Introducing Farm Radio International** by **Hélène Papper**, Director, Communications Division, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), interviewing **Rex Ciopata**, International Farm Radio (FRI) Tanzania, to share FRI experiences on the power of radio networks to give the most remote and marginalized rural voices a platform to be heard. (8 min)

#### **4. Open Discussion**

- Powerful Discussion between the moderator and four rural voices, leaders - producers, agri-entrepreneurs and leaders from diverse regions. There will be three discussion topics related to farming and food systems, and exploring the gendered dynamics of these systems. The discussion topics will highlight themes of mutual interest that rural people across the globe are most concerned about.
- Each discussion topic will be introduced by a one-minute collection of audio clips provided by FRI with images of rural people.
- **Panellists:**
  - o **Kinlay Penjor** operates a small bakery in **Bhutan** together with two friends from his days in University. The bakery sources grain flours, fruits and other ingredients locally, providing a sustainable market for local smallholder producers and dairy processors. Since starting the bakery in 2018, Kinlay has expanded production capacity of pastries and candies sold to local markets, and has recently penetrated wholesale markets in the capital city.
  - o **Dorothy Chia Vandefan** is a young certified seed producer and entrepreneur who recently established and has successfully expanded her agricultural business in

**Nigeria.** Starting with rice on just half a hectare of land in 2017, she now cultivates various grains on 30 hectares. Her company provides agricultural services to local farmers, processes and markets certified seed, thus offering employment opportunities to other young people.

- **Jennifer Keli** and her husband, Doni, run a small agri-processing company in the **Solomon Islands**. They locally source nuts, root crops and fruits from women smallholder producers, which they process, package and market as healthy snacks. Jennifer provides training to the women producers to help them increase their productivity and build their commercial capacity.
- **Ester Simon Bayda** is a farmer and mother of two children, aged 2 and 4, in **Tanzania**. Ester leveraged village level inputs and training to expand her production and income, which enabled her to buy her 2-acre farm. She grows sweet potato, sunflower and maize for her own household consumption and to sell locally. Ester also leads two community savings groups to enable increased opportunities for other local farmers and producers.

## **5. Closing Remarks**

- **Closing remarks:** TBC - Government Representation

## **6. Wrap up**

- Moderator to give brief wrap up of discussion and final reflections. Session Ends.