

BIOGRAPHIES

STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE OF FARMING SYSTEMS: LAND, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND ACCESS TO FINANCE – MAKING SMALL HOLDER FARMERS THE BACK BONES

9:00am-10:30am (EST)



H.E. MS. AMINA J. MOHAMMED

United Nations Deputy Secretary-General

H.E. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed is the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Mohammed served as Minister of Environment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria where she steered the country's efforts on climate action and efforts to protect the natural environment. Ms. Mohammed first joined the United Nations in 2012 as Special Adviser to former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon with the responsibility for post-2015 development planning. She led the process that resulted in global agreement around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the creation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ms. Mohammed began her career working on the design of schools and clinics in Nigeria. She served as an advocate focused on increasing access to education and other social services, before moving into the public sector, where she rose to the position of adviser to four successive Presidents on poverty, public sector reform, and sustainable development. Ms. Mohammed has been conferred several honorary doctorates and has served as an adjunct professor, lecturing on international development. The recipient of various global awards, Ms. Mohammed has served on numerous international advisory boards and panels. She is the mother of six children and has two grandchildren.



QU DONGYU

Director General, FAO

Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), has spent his life working on how to make sure the world is fed.

Born in 1963 to a rice-growing family in China's Hunan Province, Qu studied horticultural science at Hunan Agricultural University and then plant breeding and genetics at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. He later added environmental science to his knowledge portfolio while earning a PhD at Wageningen University, in the Netherlands.

His vision is founded on the belief that freedom from hunger is a basic human right, and that in the 21st century we have the capability to eradicate chronic food insecurity. While challenges loom, Qu's cardinal principle is that "problems can also be the source of progress".

Before coming to FAO, Qu served as China's Vice Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, where one of his achievements was to promote inclusive and innovative development and make sure information and communication technologies (ICT)

were available in rural areas so that more than 400 million farmers could use their smartphones as a new farming tool.

That vision has been consistent across a professional career that includes periods in central and local government, in and leading research institutes, and as a human resources leader at the China Three Gorges Project Development Corporation, a \$40 billion investment project.

Among his national initiatives has been to improve reporting of wholesale prices for agricultural products in China and foster the establishment of more than 100 specialty production areas geared to making local comparative advantages work to the benefit of local farmers. As Vice Governor of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, one of China's landlocked and poorest areas, Qu formulated action plans aimed at poverty reduction, disaster reduction and prevention, women empowerment, agritourism and mutual learning platforms designed to boost trust between ethnic groups.

Qu says he represents the combination of an "Asian soul" and a "global mind". His motto is "Simple life, but not simple work".



MS. CRISTINA DUARTE

United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa

Ms. Cristina Duarte is the United Nations Special Adviser on Africa and UnderSecretary-General of OSAA since 1 August 2020. She is the strategic adviser to the Secretary-General on African Affairs, the focal point in UNHQ for relations with the AUDA-NEPAD as well as the African Group with regard to Africa's development. As the head of OSAA, she supports the Secretary-General in promoting coherence in the UN system's engagement in Africa and chairs the Inter-Departmental Task Force on African Affairs (IDTFAA), and advocates and mobilizes the United Nations, its Member States and other key stakeholders around Africa's transformative vision articulated in the 2030 and 2063 Agendas.

Prior to joining the UN, Ms. Duarte served as Cape Verde's Minister of Finance and Planning for 10 years. She has also served as Director of a World Bank reform program and Vice President of Citibank giving her a valuable exposure on the functioning of international finance systems. When Mrs. Duarte left Government in 2016, she was invited to governance and advisory positions in various international and regional organizations; namely, Member of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration, Member of the United Nations High-Level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs, a Member of President Paul Kagame's Advisory Committee on African Union Reforms, a Member of the Board of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and a Member of the Board of the Institute of African Leadership for Sustainable Development (UONGOZI Institute). Mrs. Duarte is committed to public service.



HONOURABLE JOSEPHINE LAGU YANGA

Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, South Sudan

Hon. Josephine Lagu holds a BA Hons degree majoring in Philosophy, and Psychology minor from the University of Khartoum, Sudan. After teaching for a few years in Juba University, she won a scholarship to pursue postgraduate studies in the University of London, Institute of Education in United Kingdom, where she attained Advanced Diploma Education and master's degree in Educational Psychology, before undertaking her PhD studies.

A trained teacher educator, she achieved the position of Senior Lecturer in Education and briefly served in 2008/2009 as Undersecretary for Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, Government of South Sudan.

Minister Josephine had always been keen in politics and is a women's rights activist. She is currently leader of the People's Democratic Movement (PDM) and Chairperson of the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA), an umbrella grouping of eight political parties that are signatories to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan.

Holding the portfolio of Agriculture and Food Security, in the R-TGoNU, Hon. Josephine Lagu is particularly passionate about the development of the agricultural sector to fuel economic growth in the nascent country. She has been actively promoting the motto "Let's Produce what we Eat", as a way of ending the country's dependence on food imports.



DR. SIMPLICE NOUALA FONKOU

Head of Division of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Development, African Union Commission

Dr. Simplicie Nouala is the Head of Agriculture and Food Security at the African Union Commission, with excellent professional training and seasoned expertise and experience of about 35 years with 16 years at the AUC in agriculture and food security policies, programme development and implementation. He is in charge of the formulation and implementation of AU policies strategies and programs that promote sustainable agriculture growth and transformation on the continent. He oversees and coordinates the implementation of several continental programs and initiatives on sustainable agriculture systems, food security and food safety.



BEATRICE GAKUBA

Executive Director, Africa Women, Agribusiness Network (AWAN) Afrika

Ms. Beatrice Gakuba is the Executive Director and founder of AWAN AFRIKA (African Women in Agribusiness Network).

After a 20-year career in poverty alleviation and integrated development with various United Nations Agencies and other Development organizations, Ms. Gakuba returned to her native Rwanda in 2004.

She then started one of Rwanda's most thriving businesses in horticulture and has been hailed by international leaders as an example of the potential success of entrepreneurship in economically revitalizing economies in African countries.

In 2005 she was appointed Chairperson of the board of Rwanda Air, making her the first African female to chair the board of a national airline.

Beatrice Gakuba is a Food security and Nutrition Expert, Senior Content Adviser in Agribusiness, Social innovator, and a seasoned entrepreneur. She is very passionate about issues related to women in Agribusiness and economic empowerment.



DR YEMI AKINBAMIJO

Executive Director, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)

Dr. Yemi Akinbamiyo is an agriculture expert with a track record of leadership in Food/Nutrition Security, Rural Development, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Prior to his appointment as the Executive Director of FARA in 2013, Yemi was the Head of Agriculture and Food Security Division at the African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

With more than 30 years in the practice of agriculture and rural development, he has served with increasing responsibilities and leadership roles in institutions with national, regional and continental mandates, including twice as a Head of Diplomatic Mission.

Dr. Akinbamiyo is widely published in various agricultural disciplines. He is a former editor of the Bulletin of Animal Health and Production in Africa (Peer-review Journal) and lead author of the book, Crop-livestock Integration in West African Cities.

He is a former university lecturer and obtained his PhD in Agricultural and Environmental Sciences from the Wageningen Agricultural University, The Netherlands.



DR ABDOULAYE MOHAMADOU

Executive Secretary Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)

The Executive Secretary of CILSS has more than 30 years of professional experience in various fields of development: research and development, food security and nutrition, climate change and the fight against desertification, land tenure, natural resource management, pastoralism, decentralization, local authorities, conflict management, mediation, management, diplomacy and training. Prior to joining CILSS, he held the position of Deputy Executive Secretary of the Council of the Entente in charge of Administration and Finance in Abidjan in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, from August 2016 to his appointment.

This internationally recognized expertise was built on national edifices: Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad from November 2011 to June 2016. In addition to this background, he was Director General of the National Institute of Agronomic Research of Niger (INRAN), Scientific Director of the Laboratory of Studies and Research on Social Dynamics and Local Development (LASDEL) from 2007 to 2010, and a researcher at the National Institute of Agronomic Research of Niger (INRAN) from 1990 to 2004.

At the academic level, the new Executive Secretary of CILSS has been a

teacher-researcher at the Faculty of Agronomy of the Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey since October 2004.

He has also conducted several studies and coordinated several development projects with various structures for the benefit of Sahelian and coastal countries with a strong interest in the core business of CILSS.

Over the years, Dr Abdoulaye MOHAMADOU has built up an expertise on issues that are currently topical; these include peace, security, the fight against terrorism, violent conflicts and knowledge management.

As a researcher, he has to his credit a varied bibliography of scientific publications and books on development.

As an actor in rural development, Dr Abdoulaye MOHAMADOU remains in tune with the challenges and the mandate of CILSS and his contribution will be put to good use by this multidisciplinary and multicultural team in order to achieve the common mandate “Another Sahel is possible”.



MARIA HELENA M.Q. SEMEDO

Deputy Director-General

Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, is an economist and politician from Cape Verde. A leading expert in global development issues, she has worked in public service for over thirty years. Over the last decade, FAO has helped shape a new global narrative where agriculture is prominently recognized as a solution in addressing increasingly complex emerging issues – from transforming food systems to dealing with climate change.

Leading to deliver, Semedo promotes an integrated, inclusive approach, resulting in greater cross-sectoral engagement and stronger strategic partnerships, better positioning FAO in its role to promote a transition to sustainable food and agriculture systems. As part of the FAO Core Leadership Team, Semedo works to develop impactful initiatives such as the FAO Green Cities Action Programme and the corporate strategy for mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors, fostering multi-stakeholder dialogues that optimize the Organization’s 75 years of technical expertise and experience, its global reach and innovative approaches, all contributing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Before taking up her current duties in 2013, Ms Semedo gained valuable experience and insight in Africa, first as FAO Representative in Niger, then as Deputy Regional Representative for Africa and Sub-regional Coordinator for West Africa. Prior to her international career, she worked as an economist for the Cabo Verde Ministry of Planning and Cooperation before becoming Secretary of State for Fisheries, then in 1993 Minister for Fisheries, Agriculture and Rural Affairs – the first-ever woman Minister in her country. After serving as Minister for Tourism, Transportation and Marine Affairs from 1995-1998, she became Member of Parliament, a position she held until 2003.



ISMAHANE ELOUAFI
Chief Scientist, FAO

Ms. Ismahane Elouafi holds the position of Chief Scientist at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. From 2012 until her appointment, Ms. Elouafi was Director General at the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture based in the United Arab Emirates. Previously, she held senior scientific and leadership positions, including Senior Adviser to the Assistant Deputy Minister, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Research Branch in Ottawa, Canada (2006-2007); the National Manager of Plant Research Section (2007-2010); and Director of Research Management and Partnerships Division at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (2010-2012).

She also worked as a scientist with several international research organizations, including the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences, and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center.

She sits on the boards of the International Food Policy Research Institute, the USA; the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International, the UK; and the Professional Development Institute, Canada. She is also a member of the Scientific Group for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and of the CGIAR System Management Board.

Ms. Elouafi is a strong advocate for diversifying into neglected and underutilized crops and rethinking food systems as a whole. She is also internationally known for her work on promoting use of non-fresh water in agriculture and empowerment of women in science.

Her contributions to science and policy have been recognized with a number of prestigious awards and accolades, including the National Reward Medal by His Majesty Mohamed VI, the King of Morocco (2014), and the Excellence in Science Award from the Global Thinkers Forum (2014).

Ms. Elouafi holds a B.Sc. in Agricultural Sciences (1993) and an M.Sc. in Genetics and Plant Breeding (1995) from the Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine, Morocco, and a Ph.D. in Genetics (2001) from the University of Cordoba, Spain.