

FIFTH ANNUAL AFRICAN DIASPORA AGROFOOD FORUM

ADAF
2021

RECOVERY, RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY: AFRICAN DIASPORA
AGROFOOD ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN A CHANGING WORLD

17&19
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AFRICA DIASPORA AGROFOOD FORUM 2021 5TH EDITION

17TH & 19TH SEPTEMBER 2021

SUMMARY

The 5th African Diaspora Agrofood Forum (ADAF) was held online on Friday 17th September 2021 with a series of conferences, and on Sunday 19th September 2021 at the Plant Palace of the Meise Botanic Garden, Belgium, with an exhibition of agrofood products by 15 African entrepreneurs.

The 5th ADAF was the second online edition of the much-anticipated annual gathering. Founded by Maureen Duru, who holds a PhD on diaspora foods and agricultural value chains, and also founded Belgium-based NGO [The FoodBridge](#), the ADAF reunited stakeholders to discuss the role of the African Diaspora and global agribusiness in supporting development both on the African continent and in diaspora communities. The 5th ADAF, which focused on '*Recovery, resilience and sustainability: African diaspora agrofood entrepreneurship in a changing world*', was supported by [COLEACP](#), [African Diaspora Projects Initiative](#), [Sankaa](#) and [Meise Botanic Garden](#). Over 200 participants followed the online conferences, available in both English and French. The recordings are available on [The FoodBridge](#) and [COLEACP](#) YouTube channels.

Ms Duru founded the ADAF with the dual aim of highlighting the potential of the African diaspora, and also, crucially, to bridge the gap between diaspora agricultural entrepreneurs (agripreneurs), policy-makers and funding organisations. Jutta Kleber, representing the Meise Botanic Garden, pre-Covid-19 host of the Forum, co-presented the welcoming remarks and emphasised how the Meise Botanic Garden, its plants and research activities link in many ways with African diaspora agrofood products. Ms Kleber noted that all four panels included African diaspora entrepreneurs sharing their successes and challenges, as well as stakeholders from the policy and finance sectors discussing how to create an enabling environment for the entrepreneurs, and experts presenting how research and innovation contribute to the development of the agrofood sector and the creation of new opportunities.



The ADAF's first panel, on 'Re-strategizing policymaking for a post Covid-19 agrofood sector', opened with affirmative advice from Escipi3n J. Oliveira G3mez, Assistant Secretary General responsible for Structural Economic Transformation and Trade at the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS): "Believe in yourself and embrace your culture." All panelists shared the work of their organisations, as well as opportunities particularly for diaspora entrepreneurs. Jeremy Knops, General Delegate of COLEACP, presented a comprehensive overview of COLEACP's work and programmes. He stressed the importance of including diaspora stakeholders in the transformation of the African food system, highlighting the multiple roles of the diaspora as potential consumers, investors, business partners, entrepreneurs and trainers. Maxy Ogbede, charg3 of ACP affairs at the Embassy of Nigeria, shared the [Government of Nigeria's Economic Sustainability Plan](#), which commits US\$5.9 billion to economic recovery, including in the agricultural sector, as well as a dedicated investment initiative for diaspora. Raschad Alkhafaji, newly appointed Director of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in Brussels, shared [FAO's 2022-2031 Strategic Framework](#) and the [FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme](#), as well as strategic initiatives to build diaspora agripreneur networks, something he holds close to his heart as a diaspora member himself. Carine Nsoudou, Director of the Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT), outlined the network building and research activities of the Platform and its strategic partnership with the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) with their reflection paper and recommendations on '[Building trust, mobilizing resources and ensuring sustainability](#)'.

Complementing the focus on policy, the second panel shone a light on 'African diaspora entrepreneurs as transnational stakeholders in African development'. All participants in this panel epitomised the wealth in the diaspora through their own entrepreneurial activities, often being trained in a different field, yet developing their initiatives and passions in the agrifood sector. Richard Dickens Agbenyo was no exception. Trained as a banker in the Netherlands, Agbenyo now runs his own farm, [Van de Dutchies Farms](#) Ghana, including offering training harnessing the potential of youth in agriculture. Lina de Munck, founder of Soulfood Mama sauces, is a serial entrepreneur who began hosting underground dinners in Brussels during her studies in Communication, then developed her brand [Soulfood Mama](#). She has now launched herself as a branding consultant, drawing on her lived experience travelling on the continent to source products and inputs directly. Similarly, Moussa Faye, a qualified IT engineer, quit his day job to launch his sorrel/hibiscus juice brand, [Moussa's Bissap](#), which can now be found in supermarkets and caf3s in Belgium and the Netherlands. Suzanne Awung also travels regularly between her country of origin, Cameroon, and Belgium, where she has put her PhD to direct use in her roles as CEO of [Suzy Farms](#), a trainer on sustainable agricultural practices for farmers, and a farmer in her own right, when she returns to work in the fields for several months every year. Andrew Bamugye, Founder of Destiny Farms, leveraged his experience in the banking and finance sector to develop his poultry farming in Uganda, becoming a recipient of the [2020 Ugandan Diaspora Agribusiness Investor Award](#), a joint initiative between FAO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uganda and the Uganda Agribusiness Alliance. Bamugye is also a proud alumnus of the [Tony Elumelu Foundation's entrepreneurship programme](#).

During the third panel, the ADAF highlighted initiatives that are 'Innovating for growth in the African agrofood sector'. Sarah Kiyingi Kaweesa's retirement project saw her launch [Bio Jigsaw Ltd](#), a

company producing hair extensions and other products from the banana plant – an innovation that saw her also win the [2020 Ugandan Diaspora Agribusiness Investor Award](#). Xavier Scheldeman, Head of Research, showcased the ongoing [research projects at Meise Botanic Garden](#) with African and diaspora farmers and researchers, including on the opportunities to achieve legal protections for origin-products through labelling of [Geographical Indications](#). Fombong Forkwa’s initiative as co-founder of [Wasterminators Ltd](#) in Cameroon, demonstrated how waste can be turned into wealth, and how both the black soldier fly and the giant African land snail are profitable by-products of the industry. Both were available to taste at the entrepreneurs’ exhibition at Meise Botanical Garden!

A key prerequisite of any entrepreneurial initiative is finance, and this was the focus of the final panel, ‘Accessing resources for sustainable agrofood entrepreneurship’. Elke Briers, international consultant for the [King Baudouin Foundation](#), explained all the grants available for NGOs and those in the private sector seeking funding, with a special focus on the economic and social impact requirements of the Foundation. Lamin Darboe, CEO of [Bantaba](#), explained how and why he set up the platform to link diaspora entrepreneurs with diaspora investors, with the hope of catalysing growth and building together. Mateja Dermasia runs [Anteja ECG](#) with a similar aim, this time connecting producers on the African continent with investors based in Europe via the [phy2app](#). As a member of the European diaspora, she explained how teaching by Kenyan scientist Calestous Juma on agricultural innovation led to her dedicating her career to catalysing the development potential of the African agribusiness sector.

The Forum engaged with critical questions from stakeholders, especially regarding going beyond theoretical policy discussions to real life impact in the field and with African communities, as well as the journeys of the entrepreneurs featured. All panelists were selfless in their engagement with the topic and shared their real-life commitment to ensuring diaspora stakeholders take their place as builders of diaspora and African wealth. Yentyl Williams, Founder of the [ACP Young Professionals Network](#) and moderator of the event, contextualised the significance of the present moment: whereas both diaspora and youth were mentioned just once under the previous EU-OACPS Cotonou Partnership Agreement, both diaspora and youth feature prominently within the [new EU-OACPS Partnership Agreement](#), referenced 16 and 60 times, respectively. This Forum has taken a critical step in showcasing not only diaspora wealth, but also the commitment of policymaking and funding organisations to build *with* African diaspora communities, both at home and abroad. The ADAF is a key opportunity to promote diaspora perspectives in the agribusiness sector, catalysing their place as stakeholders in valuable international networks, and harnessing diaspora wealth to contribute to building a future grounded in sustainable development. Keep watching this space between now [#ADAF2021](#) and ADAF2022!



COLEACP is co-organising this event through its Fit For Market SPS programme implemented framework of Development Cooperation between the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and the European Union.

