

SAHEL
FOOD SYSTEMS
CHANGEMAKERS
CONFERENCE
2024



Theme

INNOVATIVE GOVERNANCE MODELS:

A PATHWAY TO FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY
IN NIGERIA



Event

COMMUNIQUE

24
24TH
OCTOBER
Abuja
Continental
Hotel



BACKGROUND

The Sahel Food Systems Changemakers Conference is an annual gathering driven by Sahel Consulting's mission to transform Nigeria's agricultural and nutritional landscape. It convenes partners, thought leaders, experts, and advocates across sectors to address pressing challenges in Nigeria's food system through multisectoral collaboration.

Each year, this conference brings together a network of key partners who share a commitment to making impactful changes in agriculture and food security. With these partners, Sahel Consulting and her sister organisation African Food Changemakers, collaborate to address key issues across Nigeria's food system.

The importance of this conference is underscored by Nigeria's persistent food insecurity crisis. Despite Nigeria's rich agricultural potential, food insecurity is on the rise, with food inflation at 32.7% and many Nigerians spending nearly 60% of their income on food. As of August 2024, 31.8 million Nigerians were food insecure.

Last year's conference tackled these issues by catalysing actions such as the Subnational Food System Dashboard, championed by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), which guides local policymakers in evidence-based decisions, and the "Building Sustainable Climate Monitoring for Resilient Agricultural Systems" project, which aims to strengthen climate early warning systems for farmers.

This year's focus is on promoting innovative governance models that will foster better collaboration, efficient policies, and accountable frameworks within Nigeria's food systems. By prioritizing these models, the conference seeks to overcome structural barriers to food security and drive sustainable agricultural growth. Sahel Consulting is committed to transforming the ideas and strategies discussed into practical initiatives that will shape a more resilient and secure food future for Nigeria and beyond.

2024 Objectives

Re-examine the role of international donors and global funding partners in supporting sustainable food systems.

Address governance challenges hindering the responsible use of research findings for policy formulation and implementation.

Outline practical recommendations to strengthen governance mechanisms and enhance multi-sectoral collaborations for improved food security outcomes in Nigeria.

Showcase replicable innovative governance models in food and nutrition implemented across the continent



The annual sahel food systems changemakers conference for 2024 was held at the Abuja Continental Hotel, Abuja. The conference with the theme "Innovative Governance Models: A Pathway to Food and Nutrition Security," brought together over 600 stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, industry leaders, non-governmental organizations, and development partners. In an era marked by complex challenges for food systems globally and within Nigeria, this conference served as a critical platform for fostering dialogue and innovation to enhance governance structures that prioritize food security, resilience, and nutrition for all.

This year's conference highlighted the urgent need for inclusive and adaptable governance models that can effectively respond to emerging issues within food systems, such as climate change, economic shifts, and demographic pressures. With a focus on evidence-based approaches, delegates engaged in robust discussions and exchanged insights on how policies and practices can be reshaped to meet the evolving demands of food and nutrition security in Nigeria and beyond.

This communique encapsulates the collective insights, recommendations, and commitments of conference delegates during the interactive sessions. We aim to inspire and empower leaders, communities, and institutions across sectors to work collaboratively to build a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive future for food and nutrition security.



Dr. Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi

Honourable Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Federal Republic of Nigeria, presenting the Ministerial Address

OUTCOMES

The following strategic themes emerged as critical components and innovative pathways in achieving a secure and resilient food system for Nigeria.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

The role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in addressing governance challenges for agribusiness, securing necessary resources, and advancing sustainable agricultural practices was underscored. These multi-stakeholder platforms are vital for building infrastructure, expanding market access, and enhancing capacity for smallholder farmers. The development of a digital tool to track these partnerships can be instrumental in fostering coordination, accountability and transparency in the transformation of food systems. This further supports the nation in developing cohesive policies that bridge the gap between national objectives and local implementation. These partnerships are also imperative for the sustainability of innovations within the sector.

CLIMATE RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS

Sustainable agriculture and climate resilience emerged as central themes. Participants highlighted the importance of increasing investment in environmentally sustainable farming techniques to improve productivity and adaptability, particularly in the face of climate change. Key strategies included the promotion of climate-smart practices, the adoption of renewable energy solutions, and a focus on soil health to support agricultural productivity over time. Collaboration between relevant MDAs is essential to institute early warning systems that support farmers and other value-chain actors to sustain productivity in the face of adverse climate events.



Dr Andrea Ruediger
of the German Development Cooperation
reporting on outcomes from her breakout session

NUTRITION INTEGRATION INTO NATIONAL POLICIES AND PLANS

Embedding nutrition goals and indicators across *Food+Agriculture+Climate* policies is essential for a more holistic approach to national food and nutrition security. This emphasis on nutrition as a fundamental component across relevant sectors will ensure that food security is addressed from both a quantity and quality perspective. Stakeholders emphasized that enhancing the nutritional value of locally produced food is essential to meet the population's dietary needs and achieve comprehensive food security. Developing a national reference document to guide all stakeholders within the farm-to-fork value chain in promoting and choosing nutrient-rich diets is a crucial step toward achieving nutrition security across the country.



Opening session hosted by the Nigeria Agribusiness Group (NABG)

CAPACITY BUILDING AND EMPOWERMENT

A key priority identified was the need for comprehensive training programs to strengthen the capacity of the local governments. These programs should empower local government officials with the authority and resources necessary to design and implement initiatives tailored to the unique food and nutrition needs of their communities. In tandem, equipping small-scale producers, particularly women and youth, with the technical skills required to adopt sustainable and profitable farming practices is key to expanding farmers' practical skills and access to necessary resources, and ultimately the utilization of these resources to enhance productivity.

INCLUSIVE, DATA-DRIVEN POLICYMAKING

The conference highlighted the importance of data in shaping food system policies that actively address gender inequalities and improve decision-making processes. The Nigeria Food Systems Dashboard was presented as a tool to enhance policy coordination, ensure consistency across regions, and strengthen transparency through evidence-based governance. Enriching the dashboard with sub-national level data is instrumental to facilitating the development of informed and evidence-based policies for food and nutrition security at various levels of government.

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY IN AGRICULTURE

Technology adoption was highlighted as a crucial driver for agricultural improvement. Conference sessions detailed the role of increased access to mechanization, precision farming, digital tools, and innovative financing in enhancing productivity, reducing operational costs, and connecting farmers more effectively with markets.

STRENGTHENED REGIONAL ALLIANCES

Delegates recognized the importance of regional collaboration in addressing cross-border food security issues. They proposed enhanced knowledge-sharing frameworks and joint initiatives among African countries to tackle shared challenges such as security, drought, food scarcity and infrastructure gaps. This alliance creates a platform for members to learn from one another and exchange effective strategies for the production and trade of essential crops.

YOUTH AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN FOOD SYSTEMS

The crucial role of youth in agricultural innovation was emphasized. Funded programs targeted at providing young entrepreneurs with training, financing, and access to technology are essential in fostering job creation and sustainability in the agricultural sector. This includes low-interest loans, grants, and mentorship programs to stimulate youth-led initiatives and enterprises within food systems.

SECURITY OF LIVES AND PROPERTY IN FARMING COMMUNITIES

The conference highlighted the pressing need to improve security measures in rural areas where farmers face threats such as theft, conflict, and violence. Strengthening local security frameworks and increasing the presence of community-based security initiatives were identified as vital for safeguarding farmers, their families, and their assets. Improved communication and collaboration with law enforcement were highlighted as essential for preventing and responding to incidents affecting agricultural communities.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Breakout session

Climate, Food Insecurity, and Conflicts: Innovative Approaches to Building Resilience in Vulnerable Communities



Facilitator: Mercy Corps

COMMITMENTS

CHC Agritech Africa will train 100,000 farmers to transition to conventional farming methods while providing them with access to advanced agricultural technologies. Additionally, the organization will offer capacity-building on fertilizer applications with subsidized access to micro inoculants, requiring strategic partnerships to enable these goals.

Greenvest is implementing the FARMASSIST project, which aims to strengthen Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices and promote digital inclusion for farmers through an integrated assistance approach. They will require cross-sectional partnerships, funding, and partnerships for effective implementation.

HelloTractor will scale its tractor services to reach the last-mile farmers and conduct training programs for tractor operators and technicians across various states, with funding being essential to implement these activities effectively.

Zakrich Farm Limited is committed to training local farmers on the proper use of chemical fertilizers and Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) techniques, with funding identified as a necessary resource to support these initiatives.

Bright National Group is committed to scaling climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and conservation efforts while deploying marketing strategies, cooperative-led innovations, product development, and packaging solutions. This initiative will require investment, partnerships, and knowledge transfer.

Green Thumb Conservatory is committed to training farmers in sustainable, zero-waste agricultural practices, including sustainable pesticide usage. Partnerships are necessary to support the training initiatives and promote these practices among farmers.

Breakout session

Nutrition and Food System Policy Actions: Leveraging the Nigeria Food Systems Dashboard for Coordinated Policy Action



Facilitator: Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

COMMITMENTS

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security, the Nigeria Governors' Forum, and the Bureau of Statistics (NBS) will lead efforts to ensure that data updates for the dashboard are timely and that policies align with the latest food security needs. They will promote and support the adoption of the Nigeria Food Systems Dashboard across states, enabling more effective data-driven decision-making throughout Nigeria.

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) with support from Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) Nigeria and Sahel Consulting will focus on conducting capacity-building activities to strengthen local expertise on the usage of data for policymaking. Additionally, they will develop and lead public awareness campaigns to engage communities and enhance understanding of food security initiatives.

UN agencies and the World Bank to provide essential financial resources to back sustainable development initiatives within Nigeria's food systems. They will also offer technical expertise, ensuring that food security strategies adhere to global best practices and are scalable for long-term success.

Breakout session

Crop Strategies – Barrier or Pathways to Food System Transformation? The German Cooperation's Experience in the Rice and Potato Strategies

Facilitator: German Development Cooperation



COMMITMENTS

ECOWAS Rice Observatory will strengthen stakeholder engagement across the rice value chain, facilitating collaboration to address challenges and promote sectoral growth. Partnerships and funding are essential resources for implementing this commitment.

There is a need for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in collaboration with the Ministry of Livestock Development and other government agencies to initiate the review of grazing laws and policies that will foster a secure agricultural environment.

Advocacy to be led by the local farmers' associations for the inclusion of diverse grains in national agricultural strategies to ensure a more resilient food system. This will be complemented by community engagement and educational efforts to drive awareness of these strategies.



SAHEL Consulting Agriculture & Nutrition Ltd. Sahel Consulting Agriculture and Nutrition Limited is committed to transforming Africa's agriculture and nutrition landscape. We partner with government agencies, private sector companies, and leading international development organizations to conduct in-depth market research on key value chains, analyze and shape policies, develop business restructuring and governance strategies, launch innovative businesses and ecosystem solutions, organize convenings, and provide training programs that promote sustainable agricultural development across Africa. We understand that sustainable impact can only be delivered through private sector-led initiatives and collaboration with various stakeholders along the value chain to execute evidence-based solutions. We collaborate with and support the work of donor partners intervening in policy, innovation, and technology to foster growth. Sahel has a robust team of development experts who co-create and implement long-term projects focused on transforming the agricultural landscape.



African Food Changemakers (AFC) African Food Changemakers (AFC) is a virtual hub that empowers and equips active African agri-food entrepreneurs to start and scale profitable and resilient agribusinesses, connect with experts, and celebrate their successes on the African continent. Our vision is to create a million successful and sustainable African agribusinesses that are transforming the food ecosystem and are recognized and respected across the globe. The hub supports these agribusinesses by providing training, funding opportunities, exposure, trade linkages, and fostering a vibrant community of changemakers. We believe that connections made through food are a powerful way to change narratives. AFC is transforming global narratives about Africa by celebrating the continent's contributions to the global food ecosystem, showcasing African innovations and cooking methods, and amplifying and scaling proudly African food and beverage brands. AFC partners with local and international organizations to host podcasts, film events, documentaries, conferences, and convenings that amplify the voices of African food entrepreneurs and their products globally.

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