

## Speakers' Biographies



### **Robynne Anderson – Director General, International Agri-Food Network**

Robynne Anderson is an authority on global agricultural and food policies. Her engagement reaches throughout the value chain, providing support on strategy and management to a broad range of clients ranging from scientists to governments, farmers to food processors. Robynne has engaged in processes at the UN General Assembly, Rio+20, the UN Committee on World Food Security, the UN negotiations on the Sustainable Development Goals. She broke new ground in bringing new issues to prominence in the international policy fora, such as the role of women in farming, Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure, the importance of post-harvest losses and food waste in food security. Robynne represents accredited organizations at the United Nations, bringing the voice of agriculture in multi-governmental processes. Her company serves as the Secretariat of the [International Agri-Food Network \(IAFN\)](#), she founded the [Farming First](#) coalition in 2007, and has co-ordinated the Farmers Major Group, and the [Global Business Alliance 4 the Environment \(GBA4E\)](#). She led the two-year long negotiations for obtaining the declaration by the UN General Assembly of the [International Year of Pulses](#) and then co-ordinated the activities for the year on behalf of the Global Pulse Confederation reaching 1 billion people on social media. Robynne is the youngest person inducted into the [Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame](#), and is one of just 8 women in the Hall. She also received the 2018 Demeter Award for Woman in Agriculture. Prior to founding Emerging Ag, Robynne established Issues Ink, an agricultural publishing company specializing in 12 magazines and electronic titles on Canadian and American agriculture. She started her career in Canadian politics as legislative assistant to the then Deputy Prime Minister of Canada. In addition to her role at Emerging Ag, Robynne is part of a family farm in Manitoba, Canada. She is also the founder and current chairman of the [Manyinga school project](#), a non-profit organization that supports orphans to learn agricultural skills through schools.



### **Ilyes Bdioui – Senior Investment Consultant and Agri-SMEs Blended Finance Fund in Africa, AfDB**

A seasoned Development Finance professional with over 13 years of experience in investment banking and multilateral development banks, specializing in African markets. Currently, managing an \$85 million Trust Fund at the African Development Bank, which is dedicated to advancing the African food value chain with a focus on empowering women in agriculture and supporting climate-resilient agri-SMEs. Co-founder of Bridging Angels Network, an angel network investing in high-growth African startups. Educational background includes a bachelor's

degree in mathematics and science and a dual master's degree in finance and entrepreneurship.



**Michelle Gacinya – Administration Manager, Bank of Kigali**

Self-directed and driven professional expert with experience working in banking, international trade and development industries leading continuous improvement, supply chain transformation, logistics and cross functional teams to ensure success and achieve goals. I am now in banking supporting seamless running of bank operations in the most customer-centric way and towards the achievement of the bank's

strategy.

I bring on board skills and experience in business operations management, customer relationship management, business development, supply chain and risk management, and global logistics backed up by MSc Logistics and Supply Chain Management from Herriot Watt University & Bachelor of Business Administration (Finance).



**Sophie Goudard – Vice President, Operations, Emerging ag Inc**

Sophie has joined the Emerging ag team in the role of Vice President, Operations, and focuses primarily on team logistics, scheduling and event planning.

Sophie has spent the last 15 years as a professional in the business of live arts. Providing high standard services handling the administration and logistics of many international productions touring stages of the world. She has been honing her skills in an environment requiring precise organization,

interpersonal and leadership qualities.

Passionate about development, Sophie's strength is to organize and motivate people to accomplish goals and empowering them by providing clear direction to execute successfully their strategic initiatives.

A French national from a mixed background, Sophie holds a Master of Arts in International Cultural Exchange Strategies from the Institute of Political Sciences of Lyon, a BA in Legal Studies and Political Science from the Institute of Political Sciences of Rennes and a BA in History. Sophie speaks English and Spanish after living in North America for twelve years and studying in Mexico, she became proficient in German in the last 8 years working mostly in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. She currently lives in France.



**Nicole Kamanzi – Regional Business Manager, Bank of Kigali**

Nicole Kamanzi is a seasoned Professional Banker with 16 years of comprehensive expertise spanning retail, SME, corporate, and agriculture sectors. She has diligently cultivated a profound understanding of financial landscapes. Throughout her tenure, she has spearheaded initiatives that not only expanded customer base but also significantly augmented their portfolios. Nicole's journey is characterized by a relentless pursuit of excellence in banking, driving growth, and fostering lasting client relationships. With a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from ULK University and an MBA in Project Management from Mount Kenya University, her educational journey is anchored in the pursuit of knowledge and expertise. Nicole's motto is "Empowering ambition, enriching Lives: Where learning meets legacy". In her free time, she enjoys travelling and watching movies.



**Auxillia Kambasha – Head of SME Banking, Standard Bank Group**

Auxillia is a professional seasoned banker with a wealth of experience in relationship management and fostering the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). She is currently the Head of Enterprise Banking at Stanbic Bank Zimbabwe, a post that she has held for more than 5 years. She is responsible for the growth of those SMEs that falls within her area. She holds an MBA from Gloucestershire University and is a graduate in Chartered Secretary and Administrator. Auxillia's passion lies in empowering SMEs, and she has actively contributed to this sector by sitting on various panels where she has offered her expertise to help SMEs realise their full potential. Her dedication and commitment to her growth and development of SMEs make her a valuable asset in the banking industry.



**Christopher L. Mgani – Senior Manager Business Banking, NMB Bank Plc**

Mr. Christopher L. Mgani is a Senior Manager - Business Banking at NMB Bank Plc. He is in charge of overseeing growth and retention of Commercial & Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) businesses within across Tanzania. Mr. Mgani comes with a vast banking experience of over 14 years spanning from Credit, Corporate and SME

Banking. Prior to joining NMB, Mr. Mgani worked for PwC under Auditing Assurance before proceeding to Exim Bank where he worked as a Credit Manager.

Mr. Mgani holds a Msc. Finance and Economic Development from University of Glasgow and Bachelor of Arts in Economics from University of Dar es Salaam.



**Nomathemba Mhlanga, Agribusiness Officer, FAO  
Subregional Office for Eastern Africa**

Ms Nomathemba Mhlanga (Noma) is an Agribusiness Officer and Programme Manager for FAO's regional programme on decent employment in agrifood systems in Africa. In the Eastern Africa sub-region, Noma leads the organization's normative and field programme on agribusiness and value chain development, including postharvest management, agricultural finance and investment. Additionally, she supports entrepreneurship and decent employment opportunities, especially for youth and women, ending child labour in agriculture, and tackling distress migration. Noma holds a PhD in Applied Economics and Management, an MSc Degree in Agricultural Economics from Cornell University, USA and a BSc Honours Degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of Zimbabwe.



**Richard Midikira – Senior Manager, Innovation &  
Partnerships, Aceli Africa**

Richard envisions an Africa where a strong enabling environment empowers SMEs to succeed and improve the livelihoods of millions. With a background in management consulting at Deloitte and Ernst & Young, he spent seven years working with enterprises across East & Central Africa to improve risk management and governance and align both with business strategy. He also consulted for two years on a project for the International Trade Centre (ITC) to increase trade and investment flows between India and East Africa. His current role at Aceli includes managing technical assistance to agricultural SMEs.



**Ama Mintah – Associate Director, Finance, Cargill**

Ama Mintah works with Cargill as Country Controller/Associate Director for the Ghana businesses. She started her career with KPMG as Audit Associate for approximately 3 years. From there, she worked on her own for five months mainly providing accounting services. In 2008, she got the opportunity to work with Cargill as an accountant. Other roles that she has occupied at Cargill include the senior accountant role, accounting manager and head of finance. Ama is a chartered accountant with 20 years' work experience. Her expertise include financial reporting, working capital management, process, governance and controls and talent development.



**Andrew Mude – Lead, AgriSME Development and Financing, AfDB**

Andrew Mude is the Division Manager – Agricultural Research, Production and Sustainability at African Development Bank. He has close to 15 years of progressive experience as a scientist, program manager and practitioner in development economics. He joined the African Development Bank in early 2019 as Manager for the Agricultural Research, Productivity and Sustainability Division in the Agriculture and Agro-Industries Department. His division houses the Bank's Climate Smart Agriculture, Livestock, and Blue Economy Flagships, the Land program, as well as Technologies for an African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT). Andrew previously served as Principal Economist at the International Livestock Research Institute where he led a team that 1) developed and introduced evidence-based scalable solutions for enhancing smallholder resilience to agro-climactic variability and related shocks and 2) leveraged transformational technology to relax information constraints and empower decision making across the agricultural value chain. Andrew was the 2016 recipient of the Norman Borlaug Award for Field Research and Application recognizing exceptional, science-based achievement in international agriculture and food production by an individual under 40.



**Beatrice Mwambije – Senior Manager Retail Products, NMB Bank Plc**

Ms. Beatrice is a Retail Product expert with over 13 years of experience currently overseeing Women and Youth market proposition at NMB bank Plc, one of the East Africa's largest banks.

Active within the organization and community; Beatrice has been instrumental in rolling out of Women and Youth market proposition for the organization and launching of first in the market innovative products and solutions such as Jasiri Gender Bond, Digital group account and Micro savings wallets. She seats in an internal diversity and inclusion committee – NMB Balance. Currently she also serves as Board member at Ujuzi Tanzania Forum. Beatrice started her career at PWC as an associate auditor.



**Susan Njihia – Innovation and CX Lead, Hello Tractor**

Susan Njihia leads innovation at Hello Tractor, an agricultural technology company using IOT technology to connect small holder farmers with farm equipment owners. She is passionate about driving innovation momentum with a keen interest in product design and customer experience.

She has more than 8 years of experience driving and supporting startup growth through innovation and has gained practical and conceptual business knowledge with a strong understanding of the innovation ecosystem, especially in Eastern Africa. She also sits at the Digital Agricultural Association board where she is extensively exploring the market system in agriculture and the role of system players in economic growth and livelihood of key stakeholders.

In essence, Susan is passionate about driving agricultural innovation momentum and leveraging frontier innovation such as AI to drive customer-centric solutions to achieve substantial impact in food security.



**Jehiel Oliver – CEO, Hello Tractor**

Jehiel Oliver is the founder and CEO of Hello Tractor, an agricultural technology company that connects tractor owners with smallholder farmers in need of tractor services. At Hello Tractor, Jehiel is responsible for overall management and strategy. He has been honored with numerous awards for his work in social entrepreneurship

including being recognized by Foreign Policy Magazine as a Top 100 Global Thinker and a World Economic Forum Circulars inaugural cohort member. He was appointed under

the Obama Administration to serve two years as a member of the President's Advisory Council on Doing Business in Africa, where he most recently chaired the technology subcommittee. Prior to Hello Tractor, Jehiel started his professional career in investment banking then consulting. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Nairobi, Kenya.



### **Amath Pathe Sene – Managing Director, Africa Food Systems Forum**

Pathé is an Agricultural Engineer by training and Climate and Environment Expert. He has over 18 years' experience in the fields of agriculture, green finance & Agri value chains development, environment, climate change and sustainable natural resource management, food systems and nutrition security, rural development, and poverty reduction; rural infrastructure development; safeguards and de-risking public and private sector investments in sustainable agriculture. In his professional career, he has occupied various technical, managerial and leadership roles both at local, country, regional and global level, working across four regions in the World (Africa, South America, Central Asia and Europe). Prior to joining AGRF, Pathé was the IFAD Lead Regional Environment and Climate Specialist for West and Central Africa based in Rome and later in Abidjan. He also acted as Director of the IFAD Abidjan sub regional office, and Country Director for Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, and Liberia. Before joining IFAD, Pathe was Policy Specialist on sustainable development with UNDP Global Policy Centre on Sustainable Development based in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). He previously worked with both UNDP and UNEP as Regional Program Advisor based in Nairobi (Kenya), providing technical assistance to African Countries on mainstreaming poverty, environment and gender objectives into national development and investment frameworks. Before that, he served as Program Officer and acting Team Lead with the UNDP Country Office in Mauritania. Pathé's other previous positions outside the UN include food security program and sub office manager in Afghanistan, a consultant with European Union in France and Agricultural Researcher at the Senegalese Agricultural Research Institute. He holds an MSc and post-graduate degree in Rural Societies, Territories, Sustainable Development and Natural Resources Management from Institut Agronomique Mediterranéen de Montpellier, France; an MSc on Agricultural Engineering from Ecole Nationale d'Agriculture de Meknes (Morocco) and MSc on Agribusiness, entrepreneurship and Gender from the Centre for International Agricultural Development Cooperation (Israel). Pathé speaks French, English, Portuguese, Wolof and Serer. He is a married and father to three awesome children.



**Langelihle Simela – Agribusiness Development Manager, Absa**

Langelihle is an agribusiness development specialist with over 20 years experience keen to apply agricultural sciences to develop emerging commercial agribusinesses and enable them to access finance and grow their enterprises. She looks to optimally utilise agri-resources in RSA and across Africa, with special focus on people and partnerships. Langelihle has a PHD in Animal Science from the University of Pretoria where she was also lecturer. Previously, she was the CEO at National Emergent

Read Meat producers Organisation (NERPO).



**Mirte Smits – Rabo Partnerships, Rabobank**

Mirte is a Program Manager in Advisory Services for Rabo Partnerships, providing technical assistance to financial institutions in emerging countries. She is based in the Rabobank head office in Utrecht, The Netherlands and current projects she manages are located in Africa and South-eastern Europe and entail a range of topics, from commercially expanding agri value chain financing to compliance to data privacy regulation. Mirte is passionate about access to finance, agriculture finance, credit risk management, banking operations and challenging Rabo colleagues to execute their daily expertise in a different setting at Rabo's partner banks. Mirte has a solid background in Lending, having worked as Investment Manager for the Acquisition Finance/Leveraged Lending team of Rabobank's Wholesale department, providing structured loan products to private equity-backed companies. She holds a master's degree in Financial Economics from Erasmus University Rotterdam.



**Gulnara Yunusova – Treasurer, IFAD**

Gulnara Yunusova is Treasurer of IFAD. In this position she is responsible for IFAD's borrowing program, liquidity management, financial planning, balance sheet management and back office operations. Before joining the Fund in 2021, Gulnara spent almost two decades in World Bank Group, starting her career on ALM desk at IBRD and then transitioning to IFC Treasury, where she oversaw the delivery of derivatives and local currency solutions for IFC clients. Gulnara holds BSc in Economics from Uzbekistan University of World Economy and Diplomacy





Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

International  
Agri-Food Network

and MSc in International Finance from School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.