



FAO-IAFN Accelerator Mentorship Programme for Women-led SMEs in Africa Business Development & Marketing Workshop

6 December 2024 | 15:00 – 17:00 CET | *Via Zoom Meetings*

Speakers' Biographies



Denyse Uwera
Visual Design Strategist, Emerging ag inc

Denyse, a Rwanda-based multifaceted content creator, joined Emerging in the role of Visual Design Strategist. She blends visual communication with a decade of expertise, collaborating with farmers, cooperatives, agribusinesses, and development organizations in East-Central Africa. Her specialization lies in visual brand development and digital marketing campaigns. Prior to joining Emerging, Denyse collaborated with notable organizations such as GIZ, the Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture (RICA), Fairtrade Deutschland, Agriterro Congo, and various international coffee partners from Rwanda, Australia, Europe, and the USA. Holding a bachelor's degree in Creative Design from the National University of Rwanda, she is driven by a passion for excellence and embraces continuous learning in this dynamic industry. Denyse's dedication to photography and women empowerment is portrayed in her authored coffee-table book, "STRONG WOMEN BEHIND A STRONG COFFEE".



Robynne Anderson
Director General, International Agri-Food Network

Robynne Anderson is an international thought leader on food and agriculture with expertise in issues management and strategic development across the entire value chain. Over the years, she has advised a broad range of clients from government leaders to business captains, farmers, food processors and researchers. With close to 30 years of international experience, Robynne has contributed to apex multilateral processes and negotiations helping to shape pivotal outcomes like the Sustainable Development Goals.



In 2010, Robynne founded Emerging ag, a boutique international consulting firm providing communications and public affairs services to clients in the agriculture, food and health sectors. As its President, she leads a team of 32 dynamic, international professionals providing expert services to clients around the world, with a strong focus on global policy issues and engagement with international organizations. Robynne often represents clients at the United Nations, bringing the voice of agriculture to inter-governmental processes. In this role, she is secretariat for the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN) the Private Sector Mechanism that represents agribusinesses at the UN Committee on World Food Security and led engagements in the 2021 Food Systems Summit. Prior to founding Emerging ag, Robynne established and ran for almost 20-year Issues Ink, a leading agricultural publishing company specializing in agriculture, and founded the Farming First coalition in 2007. She started her career in Canadian politics as a legislative assistant to the then Deputy Prime Minister. In addition to her role at Emerging ag, Robynne is involved in her family's farm in Dugald, Manitoba, Canada. She is also the founder of the Manyinga school project, a non-profit organization that supports orphans to learn agricultural skills through schools which in 2021 became Farmers Abroad Canada, a not-for-profit charitable organization focused on supporting agricultural education in 2 countries in Africa and growing. Passionate about food, agriculture, and diversity and inclusion, Robynne serves in a number of international boards and advisory groups and is the youngest person inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2017, one of just 11 women in the Hall. She received the 2018 Demeter Award for Women in Agriculture.



Carlos Watson

Chief, Private Sector, Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division (PSU), FAO

Mr Carlos Watson is currently the Head of the Private Sector Engagements Unit, within the Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division (PSU). He was previously appointed as the FAO Representative to the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He has been working in management, resource mobilization and international cooperation for the last 25 years. Having joined the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 2014, he led the South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) team to formulate and execute Resource Mobilization Strategies and SSTC Strategies as well as negotiate national Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Member States. Passionately committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially ending hunger together, he was actively involved in an organization-wide effort in developing innovative mechanisms that enable private sector investment to apply an SDG lens to all activities. Prior to joining the FAO, he was the Chief of Resource Mobilization of the International Cooperation and Partnership Department at the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, between 1995 and 2014. He was responsible for the financial relationships of the Bank and built successful partnerships with international banks,



development agencies and governmental institutions, through which CABI has been able to achieve many of its development commitments and benefit the people in the region. Mr Watson, a national of Honduras, holds a Master's Degree in Industrial and Administrative Sciences from the University of London-City in the United Kingdom, and a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial and Mechanical Engineering from the University of Bridgeport in the United States.



Kelsie Reuter
Global Brand and Marketing Director, Cargill

Kelsie Reuter is an energetic marketer with experience managing \$200M+ brands, launching new products that you've probably eaten, and meeting customer needs better than competition. Kelsie has worked in many different industries from aerospace and ice cream to electronics and pet food. Currently, she is the Global Brand Marketing Director for Cargill. She graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Supply Chain Management, and later received her MBA from the University of Minnesota. Outside of work, you'll find Kelsie reading "Rebel Girls" to her kids or planning her next getaway with her husband.



Vera Osei-Bonsu
Founder & CEO, Start Right Nutrition Ltd & Eat Smart Foods

Vera Osei-Bonsu is an enthusiastic "babyfoodpreneur" from Ghana in West Africa. Vera has over 9 years' experience in Food manufacturing and Food advocacy. Vera is currently the CEO and founder of Eat Smart Foods and Start Right Nutrition Limited all situated in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana and she is on the journey of creating Nutritious Baby food products from local food ingredients, which are mostly plant based and naturally fortified to nourish children from the ages of 6months to 5 years. In the year 2018, she wrote the 1st infant and Toddler Recipe Book for Ghanaian Children titled "Start Right", which gives caregivers a step-by-step approach to successful weaning, which earned her an award as the most outstanding woman in Food and Nutrition in Ghana by Women in Aviation and Afric Media Galaxy in 2019. Vera has successfully formulated over 9 food products from grains, fruits and vegetables for children which are currently selling in Ghana. She has a strong database for Caregivers especially women where she advocates for healthy child nutrition through food recipes, food videos and demonstrations each day. Due to her impact in the food and nutrition space, Vera has many awards and recognitions to her credit. In 2022, Vera was awarded as an *Emerging star in Agribusiness by Women in Agriculture Africa under Guzakuzu. In 2023, Vera won a Global award in Iceland for promoting activities in nutrition capable of impacting lives positively by Global Women in Innovation and



Inventions. In 2024, Vera also won a gold award for Food Innovation by Global Women in Innovation and Inventions, London. Vera is currently an Obama Leader Africa Fellow. A leading Africa Woman in Food fellowship by African Food Changemakers. Vera loves to read, research, create thought provoking and interesting marketing strategies and materials for her clients and most importantly she loves to impact women positively. Vera believes there are many ideas and opportunities around us in Africa that can be transformed into tangible things to transform the African Continent. It is her dream that every mother will have a sustainable and healthy way of feeding their children right in Ghana, Africa and beyond.



Alima Bawah
Founder, Cowtribe

Alimatu Bawah Wiabriga is a former broadcaster and is now the co-founder of Cowtribe. She holds a diploma in Early Childhood Development from the University of Education, Winneba, a degree in Business Management from Accra Business School, and an MBA from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. She is an Obama Africa Foundation Fellow and a recipient of the prestigious Queen's Young Leaders Award for her active role in promoting innovation in the agricultural sector in Ghana. With over 6 years of experience in entrepreneurship, she loves to explore impact-for-profit business models in rural markets. She is a speaker at several international events across Africa, Europe and America.



Jen Hertzog
Brand and Client Experience Leader, Pinion LLC

Jen Hertzog is a principal and serves as brand and client experience leader for Pinion, LLC. As Client Experience leader she works to create and maintain a highly collaborative culture and operating environment committed to employee engagement, client advocacy, and overall continuous improvement. Combining creativity and strategy, Jen also leads the firm's marketing team to connect our unique service offerings to our key industries through thought leadership and meaningful connections. As brand leader she works to align initiatives and strategies throughout the organization with the overall brand position and message, both in the United States and through the Pinion Global Network locations in Australia and South Africa. Key areas of expertise: Branding, Marketing, Market/Client Research, Experience – Client, Brand, End-User Research, Process Improvement.



Georgie Ndirangu

Global Communications Professional

Georgie is an award-winning journalist, trained broadcaster, and global moderator, having previously worked with the BBC, CNBC, and Forbes Africa, and interviewed numerous Heads of State and figures worldwide. He has a background in Actuarial Science, and expertise in the development world, which he executed at Portland Communications for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Evercare, and others across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the UK. At the Mastercard Foundation, Georgie was responsible for setting up the Pan-Africa Program Communication department - conceptualization, development, and implementation of the communication strategy, and visibility of partners' and the Foundation's work across Africa. He currently serves on the board of the Doris Mollé Foundation - focused on neonatal care - to reduce Tanzania's and the region's burden of preterm birth and its negative impact on health, communities, and economies. He is also a member of the Africa Climate Ambassadors Programme, under the Creative Economy Pillar, and a 'Now Generation Network' Member at the Mo Ibrahim Foundation - a coalition of young Africans committed to moving the continent's development agenda forward.



Milica Petruljeskov

Senior Private Sector Specialist, FAO

Milica Petruljeskov is an economist at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Based in FAO's headquarters in Rome, Italy, Milica supports agribusiness and private sector partnerships work in Africa. Milica has more than 12 years' experience on rural finance, agricultural investments, value chain analysis and private sector partnerships, through the support of various FAO projects and normative work in Africa and globally. Milica holds advanced degrees in Economics (MSc.), and Development Economics and International Cooperation (MSc.).



Charlotte Binya
Director, BICHAF Enterprises

Charlotte has been an entrepreneur in the food industry for over 7 years. She specializes in processing and preserving food products without using chemicals, but also in quality control in a production unit. Charlotte helps women who want to start up in this field, both with advice and with improving their working methods. She also helps them to set up and manage their business.



Nomathemba Mhlanga
FAO Representative in Rwanda, FAO

Ms. Nomathemba Mhlanga (Noma), a national of Zimbabwe has been appointed to serve as FAO Representative ad interim in Rwanda effective 07 October 2024 until a substantive FAO Representative to Rwanda has been selected.

Noma has been with FAO for more than 15 years in various progressive capacities both in the field as well as at HQ.

Currently, she is an Agribusiness Officer at the FAO subregional Office for Eastern Africa and manages the Decent Employment in Agrifood Systems Programme in the Regional Office for Africa. Her areas of expertise (among others) include value chain and agribusiness development, post-harvest management, agricultural finance and investment, and entrepreneurship support especially for women and youth.

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.