



FAO-IAFN Accelerator Mentorship Programme for Women-led SMEs in Africa Leadership and Human Resource Workshop

13 February 2025
15:00 – 17:00 CET
Via Zoom Meetings

Speakers' Biographies



Irina Wandera
Policy Manager, Emerging ag inc

At Emerging, Irina is working as Policy Manager. For over fifteen years, she has worked with different constituents, from grassroot communities to private sector players, to actively participate in policy processes ensuring public policies are shaped by multiple stakeholders. Her experience runs across various sectors including food, agriculture, environment, community conservation and health. Prior to joining Emerging, Irina worked at The Wildlife Foundation in Kenya and the Friends of Nairobi National Park, helping implement Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) programs to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts. Irina is a Rotarian and has served on several secretariats including the Rotary Leadership Institute and Rotary Day at the UN. A Kenyan national, Irina holds a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science from Kenyatta University in Kenya; Certificates in Policy Advocacy and Research Skills, and NGO Management from MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation in Arusha, Tanzania, and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) and Professional Development Certificate from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.



Farayi Zimudzi
**Subregional Coordinator for Eastern Africa and
Representative to the AU and UNECA, FAO**

Farayi Zimudzi was appointed as FAO Subregional Coordinator for Eastern Africa and Representative to the AU and UNECA, ad interim, in October 2023. She leads the Office and the multidisciplinary team with her extensive experience in the areas of agriculture, food security and nutrition, economics and trade, policy, livestock health and development, value chain development, disaster risk and natural resource management, and emergency and resilience programming. Alongside her responsibilities as Subregional Coordinator, ad interim, she concurrently serves as FAO Representative in Ethiopia. Prior to her assignment in FAO



SFE, Zimudzi served as FAO Representative in Namibia, appointed to the position in 2017. She has worked in the FAO Regional Office for Africa, leading the Resilience Team, and as an Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator for FAO's Representations in Lesotho and Zambia, as well as in FAO Headquarters between 2005 and 2013. She joined FAO as Assistant FAO Representative in Zimbabwe for five years. She commenced her career working as a Fisheries Officer in her native country Zimbabwe for 12 years. Zimudzi holds a Master of Science degree in Aquaculture from the University of Stirling, United Kingdom, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Science in Zoology and Ecology from the University of Zimbabwe.



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.



Jeanne Bernick
Executive Director, Pinion Global Network

As Growth Leader, Jeanne Bernick leads the firm's overall market and growth strategies across the food and agriculture industry and community businesses. Jeanne matches the needs of clients with Pinion's talent and tools, facilitating healthy, growing businesses that are sustainable for generations to come. She manages the firm's growth activities, including business development and market-related approaches, to best serve client needs for business advisory and accounting solutions. Jeanne also provides client-facing service in succession planning, utilizing her first-hand perspective and professional knowledge in working with family business owners, Jeanne understands the needs and roles that both family and non-family stakeholders play in profitable business. She has been recognized for her achievement in family enterprise advising, and holds a Certificate in Family Business Advising (CFBA). Over her distinguished career, Jeanne became one of the top editors in agriculture media at Top Producer magazine. She covered industry topics in rural America and places as far flung as Africa, where ag potential is enormous yet hunger and basic needs are overwhelming. From this experience, Jeanne gained a passion for supporting and empowering women in agriculture, and co-authored a book on women leadership in agriculture called "Ceres Rising". She is a featured speaker at women leadership events. From childhood, Jeanne Bernick has walked in the shoes of ag producers, growing up on a cattle ranch in Southern Missouri. During her career as both a journalist and consultant, she has visited operations across America and the world, spending many hours driving dirt roads, listening, and learning from business owners and operators about their wants and needs for business profitability. Their stories have shaped her and fuel her passion for connecting clients with the right business resources to sustain their long-term livelihood.



Nimo Kanina
Professional Speaker, Entrepreneur, Storyteller

Nimo Kanina is a seasoned, results-oriented business professional with over 20 years of both corporate and entrepreneurial experience. An effective and confident communicator, Nimo is a professional speaker who enables high-impact conversations. Leveraging her robust experience and warm wit, she brings analytical depth and perceptiveness while facilitating engaging discussions that resonate with audiences. Nimo previously worked in consulting and banking in the United States, where she spent several years at Goldman Sachs, a leading Wall Street firm. Upon returning to Kenya in 2008, she founded several Kenyan-based companies including one of the first concrete pole manufacturing businesses in the country. She holds an MBA from the University of Chicago's Booth Graduate School of Business as well as an undergraduate degree in Business from



Vanguard University, Southern California. Nimo attended and graduated the Owner-Manager Programme (OMP) at Strathmore Business School and the SEED Transformation Program from Stanford University Graduate School of Business.



Césarie Kantarama
Farmer and Chairperson, INGABO Syndicate Farmers Union

Césarie Kantarama is a professional farmer from the Southern Province of Rwanda, renowned for its suitability for cassava cultivation. She primarily farms cassava and actively participates in the multiplication of resistant cassava cutting varieties. Césarie serves as the Chairperson of INGABO Syndicate, a prominent Rwandan farmers' organization, and is an active member of the Agripool, a global hub of agri-experts under Agriterria - a Dutch agri-agency. With over 25 years of experience in national and regional farmers' organizational leadership, Césarie has attended numerous conferences, trainings, and study tours organized by United Nations, IFAD, FAO, Rwanda's Ministry of Agriculture, international agri-agencies, and farmers' organizations. Her contributions to agriculture have been recognized through various awards, including top honors in competitions organized by "Famille Terre" and UPADI from Canada, and "Flandre Orientale" from Belgium. In addition to her extensive work in crop farming, Césarie is also involved in animal feed processing. She has served as a mentor for the past two cohorts of the FAO-IAFN Women SME Accelerator Program, guiding and supporting young entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector.



Donna Rosa
Chief Entrepreneurship Officer, Efour Enterprises LLC

Donna Rosa is Founder and Chief Entrepreneurship Officer at EFour Enterprises LLC. Donna began her career as a food technologist with a background in nutrition. After earning an MBA she transitioned to the business side of the food industry, and eventually moved into international development, supporting microenterprises and small businesses in Africa, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Central America, the Middle East, and Russia. Donna is Past Chair of the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) International Division. She founded and currently leads the division's Food Science for Relief and Development (FSRD) initiative, which seeks to expand the use of food science to improve global food and nutrition security. She has also supported IFT's Volunteer Globally program and published articles, blogs, podcasts, and sessions on FSRD. Donna serves on several boards, lending her expertise in entrepreneur support in developing countries. She has worked with smallholder farmers, small food processors, and small enterprises of all kinds, including numerous women-led businesses.