

# UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake

## SESSION REPORT

All session recordings will be available after the conclusion of the session. Please send the report of your session to your focal point at the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub.

Type (click one):

- ☐ Plenary
- ☐ Ministerial Roundtable
- ☐ High-level Panels
- ☐ Featured Event
- ☒ Investment Dialogue
- ☐ Stakeholder Action Session

## Bridging Investments to Smallholder Farmers and SMEs through Value Chain.

29 July 2025 | 15:00 - 16:20

Name of note-taker: Paolo Harris Paz, Andrew Goodwin, Gabriel Torres

Session lead/co-lead: UNGC, UNIDO

E-mail of note-taker:

List of speakers, in all segments, and key messages

NAME AND TITLE OF SPEAKER	SEGMENT (opening, panel, closing, etc.)	KEY MESSAGES OR/AND RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
1.Sanda Ojiambo, Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations Global Compact	Opening	Invest in the “hidden middle” (processing, manufacturing) to build resilience and revenue for smallholders.

		Unlock innovative, inclusive finance with real on-the-ground impact.
2. Gunther Beger, Managing Director, Directorate of SDG Innovation and Economic Transformation, UNIDO	Opening	Strengthen the hidden middle, such as processing, packaging, storage, and logistics.  Address food waste through innovations and investment in local value addition, infrastructure development, as well as enhanced access to finance for small-scale producers and SMEs.
3. Bernice McLean, Senior Programme Officer, New Partnerships for Africa's Development (NEPAD)	Panel 1	Moderator
4. Dejene Tezera, Director, Division of Agribusiness and Infrastructure Development, UNIDO	Panel 1	AIFPs provide a platform to drive investment in food systems, effective platforms for lowering barriers to entry for agro-processing SMEs, creating economies of scale, integrating smallholder farmers into structured value chains, and filling the critical missing middle in food systems infrastructure.
5. Katie Carson, Director Corporate Affairs Global Food & Climate Policy, TetraPak	Panel 1	Hidden middle accounts for 20% of food-related emissions.  Policy focus should expand beyond agriculture and consumption.  Private sector is key for investment, growth and capacity-building.  Ensure policy coherence.
6. Paula Felipe, Regional Manager, Financial Institutions Group, Upstream and Advisory, Eastern and Southern Africa, International Finance Corporation	Panel 1	Chronic underfinancing of smallholder farmers and the resulting ripple effects across the value chain.  SME agtech can lead to supply chain integration and reduction of risk.  Link banks to finance key crops and de-risk investment.
7. Joachim von Braun, Professor for Economic and	Panel 2	For strong food processing industry performance, there is a need to focus on skills

Technological Change, Bonn University, Center for Development Research		development, financing machinery and hard infrastructure, while focusing on the demand side of food food industries.
8. Vincent Doumeizel, Senior Advisor & Head of the UN Global Seaweed Coalition	Panel 2	Oceans cover 96% of habitable Earth but produce <2% of food.  Seaweed is a major opportunity; focus on regenerative aquaculture.  UN Seaweed Pledge in development.
9. Jacqueline Corbelli, Founder, US Coalition on Sustainability & Chairman and CEO, Brightline	Panel 2	AI can scale food systems transformation.
10. Christopher Brett, Lead Agribusiness Specialist, World Bank	Panel 2	Aquainvest (World Bank platform) links private and public sectors for seaweed growth.  Seaweed industry projected to create 50M jobs by 2030.
11. Etienne Thabiso Rouge, Programme Director, East Africa, IDH	Panel 2	Project on direct investment in farmer-facing SMEs → deployed over 50m euro to collectively serve 1.2 M smallholder farmers  Investing in rural aggregators is a sure way of bringing smallholders to formal markets  Calling upon investors to provide funds to ag sector; for SMEs and smallholders
12. Dr. Mabouba Diagne, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senegal	Closing	Aid often fails to reach smallholders; focus on soil and water challenges.  More funds must go directly to farmers; large multi-national organizations must rethink approaches.

#### Overall session summary, conclusions and recommended actions (max 250 words)

This session, convened by the UN Global Compact and UNIDO, featured speakers from the Global Seaweed Coalition and the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security from Senegal to Tetra Pak, UNIDO and the World Bank. It discussed how integrated agro-food parks (IAFPs) and seaweed aquaculture can serve as transformative models to accelerate food systems transformation.

#### Outcomes:

The session underscored the urgent need to unlock finance and investment for smallholder farmers and SMEs by addressing the “missing middle” of food value chains – logistics, processing, storage, and packaging.

The dialogue emphasized the critical role of the private sector, early engagement of international financial institutions, and the importance of infrastructure and enabling policy environments in de-risking investments.

Boosting investment in skills such as training, R&D and technology adoption to enhance productivity and innovation across the entire food value chain.

Expanding the focus of food system transformation to include ocean-based resources can unlock multiple benefits, including and unlock investments for seaweed and regenerative aquaculture as scalable, low-emission food solutions.

Greater recognition of Integrated-Agro Food Parks (IAFPs) as scalable models that can strengthen smallholder and SME participation in value chains, reduce food loss and waste and attract investment from the private sector.

The session called for systemic approaches that leverage cross-sectoral partnerships, new technologies, and tailored financial instruments to better connect smallholders and SMEs to national, regional, and global markets.

Looking ahead, participants called for targeted financial products adapted to smallholders and SMEs, and the creation of platforms that leverage digital innovation and cross-sectoral collaboration. There was a strong call for the UN and international financial institutions to work jointly with governments to build enabling ecosystems that attract sustainable investment, reduce barriers to entry, and link local value chains more effectively to global markets.