UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake

SESSION REPORT

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Type (click one):

☐ Plenary

☐ Ministerial Roundtable

☐ High-level Panels

☐ Featured Event

X Investment Dialogue

☐ Stakeholder Action Session

Data and AI: Building Trust and Investment in Agrifood Systems.

28 July 2025 | 16:30 - 18:00

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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	Welcome	Introduced session and welcomed participants

2. H.E. Dr Amna Al Dahak Al Shamsi, Minister of Climate Change and the Environment, United Arab Emirates	Opening	A shared commitment to the planet's future and people, focusing on the transformative capacity of investment, data, and technology in driving equitable, sustainable, and resilient food systems worldwide. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) exemplifies this approach, transforming its landscape through ingenuity and strategic investment, which now drives its focus on revolutionizing the agricultural sector. The UAE's national food security strategy 2051 aims to implement resilient agricultural practices and boost local food production. The Minister emphasized the importance of leveraging enablers such as technology, data, and AI to address diverse and growing demands.
3. Joachim von Braun, President of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences; Professor (em.) for Economic and Technological Change Center for Development Research (ZEF), Bonn University	Keynote	Mobilize private sector investment, data, and artificial intelligence for agri-food systems, noting the rapid changes and opportunities in the field. Let’s shift from "tools for farmers" to "tools for food systems" to open broader opportunities across value chains, markets, and enterprises.
4. Christine Gould, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, GIGA	Panel 1	Moderator
5. C.D. Glin, President, PepsiCo Foundation	Panel 1	PepsiCo's role as one of the world's largest food and beverage companies, sourcing 30 crops from 60 countries. Technology alone is not enough; investment in the enabling environment (connectivity, data systems, local capacity) and public-private partnerships are critical.

6. Katsuya Kashiki, Chief Strategy Officer, Safaricom Ethiopia	Panel 1	Let's overcome the digital divide. Safaricom's primary responsibility is to enhance their network footprint to nationwide coverage. The Mpesa mobile money platform is a "financial lifeline, a data infrastructure, and catalyst for inclusive growth," enabling transparent financial flows, de-risking investment via digital micro-loans and index insurance and facilitating climate/social investment delivery.
7. Mwenda M'Mailutha, Chief Executive Officer, Kenya National Farmers Federation	Panel 1	Let's make the case for farmer-led digital futures. Key factors for farmer participation are digital literacy, affordability (of devices), and connectivity, especially for rural areas.
8. Snehal Verma, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, NatureDots	Panel 1	Excited about the ability of these technologies to compute millions of data points effectively to transition to resilient, systems-based food production with farmers. Highlighted the need for patient, catalytic capital to de-risk initial deployments and network capital to accelerate learning and upscaling.
9. Federico Ronca, Lead, Data and Digital Solutions, World Economic Forum	Panel 2	Moderator
10. Debra Mallowah, Head of Africa & Bayer Crop Science	Panel 2	Smallholder farmers produce 70% of Africa's food but face a huge gap in technology adoption. She identified five main barriers of last-mile digital infrastructure, trust, data poverty, cost and access to finance, and the human capacity gap. The shift needed is from "how do we scale technology" to "how do we scale trust".

11. John Matogo, Corporate Social Responsibility Leader for Middle East and Africa, IBM	Panel 2	IBM's role as a data and AI company in making the world work better for farmers. IBM focuses on setting standards for data exchange and access while protecting privacy and building trust. They also aim to develop digital literacy and enable data exchange through APIs.
12. Beverly Postma, Executive Director, Grow Asia	Panel 2	There is an enormous investment opportunity in smart farming, IoT, and AI in agriculture, particularly in Asia, with exponential growth projected. However, farmgate adoption is not keeping pace (less than 5% in Southeast Asia). A major barrier is the lack of affordable finance and working capital for farmers.
13. Jenny Löfbom, Country Director Kenya, IDH	Panel 2	Data is the foundation for investment readiness. IDH, with its philanthropic and investment arms, helps companies design inclusive business models that consider both company and farmer profitability. She acknowledged that technology alone will not solve problems; its purpose and users must be understood.

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

The session highlighted a shared commitment to transforming agri-food systems to be equitable, sustainable, and resilient. Discussions emphasized the critical role of investment, data, and technology, including AI, as enablers for this transformation.

However, participants acknowledged significant challenges: a deep digital divide, with only 25% of the world's farms having 3G/4G access, and low digital capabilities among farmers. Other barriers include infrastructure gaps (connectivity, electricity), high costs of data and devices, lack of financing, digital illiteracy, and a fundamental lack of trust in unfamiliar technologies and the actors behind them.

Key recommendations for action:

- Co-creation and Human-Centred Design: Solutions must be developed with farmers, tailored to local needs, and build on existing trust-based systems, rather than bypassing them.

- Infrastructure Investment: Prioritise investment in both hard (connectivity, reliable electricity) and soft infrastructure (digital literacy).

- Financing at Scale: Leverage blended finance tools to overcome capital shortages and de-risk investments, particularly for innovative startups and smallholder farmers.

- Building Trust: Strengthen trust by engaging intermediaries, enforcing data protection, promoting digital safeguards, and ensuring accountability. This includes creating digital profiles for farmers to enhance their market access and financial identities.

- Policy Alignment and Partnerships: Align technology with policy, fostering public-private partnerships, and encouraging shared risk, value, and data to accelerate adoption and ensure that digital access is treated as a rights issue. Responsible AI design is crucial to avoid inequalities.

The overarching message was to move beyond rhetoric and pilots to scaled enterprises that deliver concrete impact and restore ecosystems for a nature-positive future.