



CALA Impact

African Food Systems Champions Forging Innovative Pathways

CALA is an AGRA-led initiative



AGRA
Sustainably Growing
Africa's Food Systems



African
Management
Institute



Implemented by

KFW

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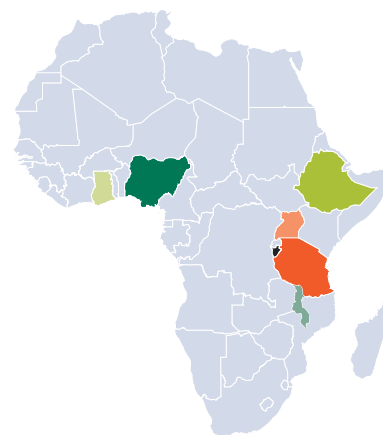
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PROLOGUE:

Inspiring Change To Power Africa's Agricultural Transformation

The transformation of Africa's agricultural sector is a multi-faceted process. With the collaborative effort of AGRA, the African Management Institute (AMI), USAID Policy LINK, and the German Development Cooperation through KfW Bank, the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) is catalyzing this transformation by nurturing potent leaders. The Advanced Leadership Programme addresses Africa's food security challenges through a unique approach that combines knowledge, practical tools, on-the-job coaching, and environmental sustainability.

The comprehensive 16-month programme blends online and in-person learning, hands-on projects, and peer-to-peer coaching. It empowers the leaders with relevant skills and knowledge to tackle real-time issues in their respective national agriculture programmes, thus delivering high-impact change. The programme places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability. It incorporates agroecological principles, climate change adaptation, and environmental and social management systems (ESMS). This aspect ensures a more resilient agricultural sector and directly responds to Africa's susceptibility to climate change. Through this transformative programme, CALA is developing a new cadre of 'delivery champions'. These committed individuals join a robust network of peers across the continent, enabling mutual support for ongoing national priority achievements. Each successive cohort of leaders expands this formidable network, promising brighter prospects for Africa's agriculture sector. The Impact Stories in this book offer readers a deep dive into the concrete impact of the programme. Through the stories of the programme's graduates, the book manifests the transformative power of effective leadership and serves as a beacon of inspiration for the next generation of leaders.

The partnership between AGRA, AMI, USAID Policy LINK, and the German Development Cooperation through KfW Bank embodies the power of synergy. Their collective effort epitomizes a commitment to capacity building, policy advocacy, and technical solutions, converging on sustainable food systems for Africa's prosperity and food security. AGRA encourages all stakeholders to join this transformative journey by expressing gratitude to all partners, especially the German Development Cooperation, for their generous financial support. Through robust leadership and cooperation, the transformation of Africa's agriculture sector is within reach, promising sustainable growth and prosperity for the continent.



Epigraph:

Dr. Agnes Kalibata, Dr. Apollos Nwafor, Daniel Momanyi, Rebecca Harrison, Robert Ouma

Dr. Agnes Kalibata, President of AGRA

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Africa's agricultural sector brims with vast opportunities. Our journey at AGRA has made it abundantly clear that attaining food security and fostering inclusive agricultural transformation in Africa calls for a new generation of leaders.

“Achieving food security and inclusive transformation demands result-oriented, responsive, and adaptable leaders. They must champion collaboration and sustainability, ready to engage with various stakeholders in this new era. This is the cornerstone of our shared mission at AGRA”

Dr. Apollos Nwafor, Vice President – Policy and State Capability, AGRA

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“For Africa to realise its food security agenda by 2030, there is a need to adequately address the leadership gap in the implementation of agricultural and food systems transformation across Africa

CALA practically addresses this leadership gap by capacitating leaders in Africa with adequate leadership skills that will facilitate them to implement transformative food systems solutions across the continent successfully”

Daniel Momanyi, Interim Program Officer CALA, AGRA

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“When applicants are accepted into the CALA program, they become part of a distinguished team comprising exceptionally talented individuals. These individuals share a common goal: establishing a lasting heritage for future generations. Their mission is to guarantee that the implementation of Food Systems is championed by proficient and capable leaders throughout the continent. By joining this team, successful CALA applicants become integral contributors to a noble cause that prioritizes developing and sustaining food-related initiatives across the continent, thereby securing a prosperous and sustainable future for our children.”

Rebecca Harrison, CEO of the African Management Institute (AMI)

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“At AMI, we are committed to enabling ambitious entrepreneurs and leaders across Africa with practical tools and training. We strongly believe that the success of any organization—be it a business, civil society organization, or government—hinges on effective leadership. In particular, collaborative leadership can catalyze success in agriculture, driving continent-wide progress.”

Robert Ouma, Regional Director – USAID Policy LINK

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“Leadership is a crucial yet often overlooked factor in agricultural development in Africa. Strong leadership brings people together, sets a vision, and ensures progress. Successful African countries in agriculture have exemplified great leadership. USAID Policy LINK is proud to support CALA by coaching individuals and cohorts, recognizing coaching as an effective means to accelerate leadership learning”

1.0

Ethiopia: Ethiopia's Agricultural Renaissance – Overcoming Challenges and Seizing Opportunities

Food Systems Champions

Efa Muleta serves as the State Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, representing the public sector, Semira Mohamed Beyan is the Managing Director of Gate for Opportunity, representing the civil society sector. Fentahun Mengistu, the Country Director of Sasakawa Africa Association, contributes to this cause from the civil society perspective. Finally, Rahel Moges Beyene, Founder and Managing Director of Ethiogreen Production and Industry PLC, represents the private sector. The individuals are dedicated to improving food systems in Ethiopia, working towards sustainable agricultural practices, and driving progress in the nation's agricultural sector.

While fraught with daunting challenges, Ethiopia's agricultural sector is a goldmine of untapped opportunities. Under the guidance of transformative leadership, the nation stands well-equipped to navigate these challenges, seize opportunities, and unlock its full agricultural potential. Such progress promises a future characterized by sustainable food production and rural prosperity and contributes significantly towards securing national food security, thereby paving the path for a more prosperous Ethiopia.

Positioned within the vibrant tapestry of East Africa, Ethiopia now stands at the cusp of an extraordinary transformation, poised to overwrite past adversities with a narrative of growth and prosperity. This impending change is particularly evident in its agricultural sector, a sphere marked by complex challenges yet teeming with abundant opportunities and the promise of innovation.

Despite Ethiopia's wealth of arable land, formidable challenges loom over its agricultural sector. The environmental degradation triggered by improper land management, the technological stagnation resulting from inadequate investments in modernization, and the devastating effects of climate change form a triad of hurdles that disrupt the pathway towards a sustainable agricultural future. Fragmented efforts and a lack of comprehensive, systematic approaches to agricultural development further complicate the situation.

Yet, amidst these adversities, there exists an indomitable spirit of optimism. Ethiopia's agricultural sector is abounding with untapped potential, buoyed by an extensive array of natural resources, a climate conducive to various crops, and a vast populace that forms a significant part of the agricultural workforce. If these elements are optimally cultivated and skilled, they hold

the potential to fuel unprecedented growth, elevating the nation to a new plane of agricultural prosperity.

The key to unlocking this immense potential within Ethiopia's agricultural sector lies in cultivating transformative leadership. Effective and visionary leaders can drive this agricultural revolution, uniquely able to metamorphose challenges into opportunities. These dynamic individuals can implement appropriate policies and strategies, foster effective coordination and collaboration among various agricultural stakeholders, and inspire their communities to echo their progress.

1.1 Efa Muleta Boru:

Redefining Ethiopia's Agricultural Narrative

Deep in the pulsating heart of East Africa, a seismic transformation is being orchestrated. Ethiopia, a nation often viewed through the kaleidoscope of adversity, is now transmuting into an epicentre of remarkable progress. According to the Advisory State Minister, Ministry of Agriculture Efa Muleta Boru, a key orchestrator in this metamorphosis is Dr. Abiy Ahmed, the third prime minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Boru, a man suffused with an unshakeable conviction in Ethiopia's capacity to revolutionise its agricultural narrative, is an active catalyst in this transformation. "The integration of innovative technologies and data in the transformation of Ethiopia's food system is not a discretionary matter, but an imperative for sustainable economic growth," Boru asserts. Emphasizing the urgency of this transformation, he illuminates the cardinal role of agriculture: "Embracing the task of rejuvenating our agricultural sector is not merely a choice, it is an exigency. This sector forms the economic verte-

PROFILE

Advisory State Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Efa Muleta Boru holds a BSc in Agricultural Economics from Hawassa University in Ethiopia, an MSc in Development Economics from Ethiopian Civil Service University, a Doctor of Business Administration from Key West University in Florida, USA, and is currently a PhD candidate in Technology and Innovation Management in collaboration with Adama Science and Technology University and Seoul National University in South Korea.



brae of our nation, underpinning the livelihoods of over 70% of our populace.”

In guiding this transformation, Boru stipulates the lodestar: “Our ultimate goal is to foster sustainable growth, fortify socio-economic prosperity, and galvanise our sense of self-reliance.” The country’s agricultural sector, invigorated by novel, homegrown initiatives, is at the vanguard of this change, spearheaded by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy. Boru continues: “Within the ambit of this initiative, we have instigated a multitude of programs with the explicit aim of elevating our agrarian communities and nurturing greater food autonomy.” Among these programs are the three Flagship programs. Those are the National Wheat flagship program, National Rice flagship program, and oilseed and animal feed program, which is meticulously designed to alleviate poverty and boost livestock farming, targeting Ethiopia’s five most ubiquitous species.

The nation has ventured into rice farming in an audacious endeavour to diversify Ethiopia’s agricultural yield. “This initiative does more than supplement our staple crops; it provides our agrarian population with a lucrative alternative, thereby nourishing rural prosperity,” Boru elucidates.

Despite these significant strides, Boru remains cognizant of the arduous journey ahead. “Our journey towards the comprehensive transformation of Ethiopia’s food system has merely commenced. The challenges are substantial, yet with unyielding commitment, a lucid vision, and our homegrown approach, we stand on the firm terra firma of a promising future,” he concedes.

Boru soberly acknowledges the paradox of Africa housing 60 per cent of the world’s available arable land yet grappling with nourishing its own population. In addressing the pressing challenges confronting Africa’s agri-food systems, Mr. Boru sheds light on a jarring statistic: Africa possesses an astounding 60 per cent of the world’s available arable land, yet it continues to grapple with the formidable task of producing enough food to nourish its own population. This glaring discrepancy has given rise to one of our most critical humanitarian crises, with poverty and hunger ravaging the continent. Mr. Boru astutely identifies a range of factors contributing to this predicament, including persistently low productivity, inadequate investment, underdeveloped rural infrastructure, soil degradation, and limited implementation capacity. These formidable challenges disproportionately burden the African agricultural sector, stifling its potential for growth while exacerbating the plight of food insecurity.

“We know the formidable challenges that doggedly pursue the African agricultural sector. Among these are persistently low productivity, inadequate investment, underdeveloped rural infrastructure, soil degradation, and limited implementation capacity. The impact of these issues is disproportionate,

“Embracing the task of rejuvenating our agricultural sector is not merely a choice, it is an exigency. This sector forms the economic vertebrae of our nation, underpinning the livelihoods of over 70% of our populace.

gravely burdening the agricultural sector, stunting its growth potential, and amplifying the predicament of food insecurity, he underlines. In response to these adversities, Ethiopia is pioneering an innovative approach that spans diverse agricultural value chains, aimed at reversing these daunting trends.

He says that Ethiopia has strategically integrated technological innovations and modern farming practices into the heart of the agricultural value chain. Introducing high-yield, disease-resistant crop varieties, advanced livestock breeding techniques, and initiatives promoting the responsible use of fertilizers and pesticides substantially enhance productivity. Another endemic issue is inadequate investment, which has historically hindered the growth of Ethiopia’s agricultural sector. In response, the government has implemented initiatives to attract both local and international investors, providing incentives for investments in agritech, mechanization, and value-addition processes. Such efforts have not only increased financial resources directed

towards the sector, but have also opened the doors for the introduction of modern technologies and practices. Underdeveloped rural infrastructure has been a perennial challenge, often resulting in post-harvest losses and limited market access for farmers. The Ethiopian government is, therefore, investing significantly in infrastructural development. This includes enhancing road networks for better connectivity, constructing storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses, and establishing agro-processing plants in rural areas to create value addition opportunities for farmers.

Soil degradation, largely due to inappropriate farming practices and climate change, has also been a significant impediment to agricultural productivity. To counter this, Ethiopia has undertaken massive initiatives for sustainable land management. These include establishing terracing systems on agricultural lands, promoting agroforestry, and introducing soil conservation measures.

With the Sustainable Development Goals as his north star, Boru emphasises Ethiopia's unwavering commitment to eradicating poverty (SDG1) and hunger (SDG2). By aligning with the ambitious Green Legacy Initiatives spearheaded by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopia is set on a path to overcome its agricultural challenges, paving the way for a future characterized by sustainable food production, poverty alleviation, and an uplifting of livelihoods for its people. The country's ambitious Green Legacy Initiative, aiming to plant 20 billion seedlings by 2024, embodies a proactive approach to combating soil degradation and mitigating climate change.

Limited implementation capacity, often lacking technical expertise and knowledge, has also been a crucial challenge. Ethiopia is tackling this through comprehensive capacity-building programs like farmer training and extension services. These initiatives focus on enhancing farmers' skills, improving their understanding of sustainable farming practices, and promoting the effective use of modern farming technologies. The multipronged approach adopted by Ethiopia in addressing these challenges is not just an innovative response; it represents the country's unwavering commitment to fostering a resilient, sustainable, and productive agricultural sector. This approach has already begun to yield promising results, and with continued dedication, Ethiopia is poised to overcome these challenges, forging a future characterized by sustainable food production, rural prosperity, and national food security. Boru, the State Minister for Agriculture, carries with him a repertoire of experiences moulded and enriched by his engagement with various capacity-building programs. The Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) Advanced Leadership Programme offers a special place among these. As he navigates the complex landscapes of agricultural reform, he often alludes to the pivotal role this program has played in shaping his leadership acumen.

"The Advanced Leadership Programme offered by CALA is not merely a collection of courses or workshops," Boru shares, "It is a meticulously calibrated amalgamation of diverse experiences designed to enhance the understanding and execution of national agricultural priorities. The knowledge I accrued from this program has shaped my perspective on agriculture and fortified my capacity to catalyse transforma-

tive change in Ethiopia's agricultural landscape."

A key facet of this program is its comprehensive approach, designed to augment the competence of individuals engaged in developing national agricultural priorities. Boru's engagement with the program has imbued him with a deeper understanding of the interlinkages between policy, practice, and the multifaceted dimensions of agricultural development. "I am heartened by the decision I made to partake in CALA's program," Boru states emphatically. "It has expanded my vision and equipped me with the tools and insights necessary to manoeuvre the intricacies and challenges that abound in public service, particularly within the context of agricultural transformation."

As a leader in public service, Boru understands that knowledge, while being a potent tool, must be synergised with practical, on-the-ground experience. With its focus on experiential learning, CALA's program allowed him to bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing a well-rounded perspective on effective agricultural policy formulation and implementation.

"The journey of transforming Ethiopia's agricultural sector is arduous, fraught with challenges that test our resilience, creativity, and determination," Boru reflects. "However, armed with the expertise and insights gained from CALA's Advanced Leadership Programme, and our unwavering commitment to reform, we are carving out a path towards a sustainable, prosperous, and food-secure future for Ethiopia."

He expresses that the programme has enabled him to develop a profound comprehension of the intricate facets of leadership and the diverse range of skills essential for propelling progress. He further states that the programme has equipped him with the indispensable abilities and perspectives needed to adeptly strategize, cooperate, mentor, and coordinate within the agricultural sector. He expresses gratitude for the priceless lessons imparted by CALA and reaffirms his unwavering dedication to continually enhancing the agricultural sector for the betterment of farmers and the nation.

1.2 Dr. Fentahun Mengistu Tiruneh: Ethiopia and Africa Must Foster Capable, and Visionary Leaders for Agricultural Advancement

Leaders are the driving force behind progress in any endeavour

Dr Fentahun Mengistu Tiruneh knows firsthand the immense potential of the agriculture sector in Ethiopia but also understands the daunting challenges it faces - from environmental degradation to technological stagnation and the impact of climate change.

As the Country Director of the Sasakawa Africa Association-Ethiopia, Dr Fentahun leads and coordinates various programs and initiatives to unlock the full potential of Ethiopia's agriculture sector. Despite some daunting challenges, he is very optimistic about the future of agriculture in Ethiopia and Africa.

"The major opportunities for agriculture are the abun-



PROFILE

Dr Fentahun holds a PhD in Agriculture (Bodenkultur) with Honours from Boku University of Natural Resources & Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria, a Master of Science (M.Sc) degree in Horticulture/vegetables & Soil Microbiology (Minor) from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute/IARI/, New Delhi, India, and a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree in Agriculture/plant sciences/ from the then Alemaya University of Agriculture (now Haramaya University), Dire Dawa, Ethiopia. Dr Fentahun has also completed several short-term courses and received certificates and diplomas in various fields, including leadership, ICT and knowledge society, interdisciplinary team research, institutional leadership, gender & nutrition, food systems, environmental and social risk management, etc.

He has previously worked as the Director General of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) and the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute and as a Senior Agronomist for Tufts University in Addis Ababa on a USAID-funded Agricultural Knowledge Learning, Documentation, and Policy (AKLDP) project. He has also held several other key leadership positions in the agricultural sector in Ethiopia.

Dr Fentahun's commitment to improving agricultural research and development has been recognized through numerous awards and recognition. He is an accomplished leader with an impressive track record in agricultural research and development, and his expertise continues to be highly valued in the sector. He has significantly contributed to advancing agriculture in Ethiopia and the wider East African region. His research has focused on grain and horticultural crop breeding, nutrition, crop protection, agro-techniques, crop agro-biodiversity, microbiology, climate, conservation agriculture, and other areas.

dance of natural resources, the favourable growing environment, and the sizable population, which might result in significant growth if skilled. The major challenges facing agriculture include environmental degradation, technological stagnation, lack of coordination, lack of systems approach to development, and climate change impacts," he says.

According to Dr Fentahun, leaders are the driving force behind progress in any endeavour. He firmly believes that with the right leaders at all levels, opportunities can be seized, potential can be unlocked, and problems can be effectively resolved. Visionary and transformational leaders put in place the appropriate policies and strategies at the right time and situation and mechanisms for coordination and collaboration to address development problems and seize opportunities holistically. Leaders promote change, make sure the necessary expertise is available, and inspire others to follow their lead," he says

He is a highly respected expert and leader in agricultural research and development in Ethiopia and East Africa. With over three decades of experience in the field, Dr Fentahun firmly believes that the solution to the challenges facing the agriculture sector in Ethiopia and Africa lies in capable, visionary, and transformational leaders who can collaborate effectively. He serves as a civil society leader who participated in the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) program, where he had a transformative experience and highlighted the importance of developing agricultural leaders at all levels to address these challenges and unlock the full potential of Ethiopia's agriculture sector.

He enrolled in CALA, expecting to learn how to solve complicated problems through collaborative leadership. The course exceeded his expectations, teaching him the basics of leadership, including communication, influencing, motivation, emotional intelligence, and more. He learned to become a transformative and adaptive leader, drive others to embrace change, collaborate, and work in synergy. Dr Fentahun's interpersonal and familial connections, teamwork and leadership in the workplace, and technical knowledge on relevant subjects all substantially improved due to CALA. He described CALA as a unique experience that differentiates it from other leadership programs.

Dr Fentahun notes that the CALA program is instrumental in creating a network of like-minded leaders across Africa who can collaborate and work together to address the agriculture sector's complex challenges. He emphasized that the program is not just about obtaining a certificate but about producing leaders with the necessary skills to lead African agricultural development collaboratively and solve complex problems in an indeterminate future.

In addition to the technical skills he gained, Dr Fentahun also appreciated CALA's focus on soft skills such as communication, influencing, motivation, and emotional intelligence. These skills are essential for effective leadership and collaboration, especially in the agricultural sector, which involves multiple stakeholders and complex challenges.

One of the most significant takeaways for Dr Fentahun from CALA was the emphasis on handling difficult conversations and objectively giving feedback by describing the situation, the person's behaviour, and the impact of that behaviour on the workplace. This feedback approach, known as Situation, Behavior, Impact (SBI), is critical for building trust and fostering open team communication.

Dr Fentahun also found the ALP projects to be a valuable experience, providing delegates with hands-on experience and allowing them to tackle real problems of national importance.

While working on my ALP project (which was actually on wheat blending), I navigated through National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP)/ comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and learned things that I would not have learned otherwise," he noted

Dr Fentahun's experience with CALA has not only improved his leadership skills and knowledge. Still, it has also allowed him to network with other CALA delegates and serve as a mentor to future representatives. He acknowledges the importance of networking and collaboration to drive positive change and encourages prospective CALA delegates to value these connections.

Dr Fentahun commends CALA for its role in empowering African leaders to drive positive change in their communities and beyond. CALA's unique approach to integrating numerous techniques and its focus on collaboration, hands-on experience, and real-world problems make it valuable in fostering African leadership.

His participation in CALA is just one example of the program's success in empowering African leaders to drive change and promote sustainable development. Through programs like CALA, African leaders gain the knowledge, skills, and networks to tackle complex challenges and drive progress in their communities and beyond.

1.3 Dr. Semira M. Beyan: The Future of Ethiopian Agriculture Lies in Sustainable Practices

Ethiopia's agricultural landscape presents three primary opportunities, according to Dr Semira Mohammed Beyan. Firstly, the country's diverse agro-climate provides a conducive environment for various types of farming, making it a hotbed for agricultural innovation and diversity. Secondly, the young population, teeming with fresh ideas and energy, can potentially drive the sector forward. Lastly, Ethiopia's economy is primarily agriculture-led, with national development plans and policies prioritizing this sector.

“

The CALA programme introduced me to a variety of very practical and powerful leadership tools and approaches that I could implement directly.”

However, there are also formidable challenges. Firstly, investment in the youth, particularly in agri-ideas and businesses, remains inadequate despite some improvements in recent years. Secondly, sector leaders' commitment to implementing well-documented agri-policies and plans is questionable, limiting the potential impact on the lives of smallholders and the broader society. Lastly, the degradation of natural resources, whether man-made or natural, poses a serious threat to the sustainability of agricultural practices.

For Dr. Beyan, developing agricultural leaders is the key to addressing these challenges and harnessing opportunities. Given that most of Ethiopia's population depends on agriculture, leadership development must be prioritized to contribute to the social and human capital of organizations. Dr. Beyan believes that every plan and action taken at higher or lower managerial levels are greatly impacted by the position holder. Therefore, building the capacity of these leaders to become system leaders is non-negotiable for a prosperous and food-secure future.

She explains, "We see every plan and action taken at higher or lower managerial level are greatly impacted by the position holder- or are the reflection of the position holder as systems are not yet well established. Thus, I believe a holistic capacity building of agricultural leaders to be system leaders is non-negotiable if we envision a food secure and prosperous Ethiopia-Africa".

Dr. Beyan, the force behind her decision to participate in the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) program, is deeply motivated by her desire to bring about impactful changes in her field of expertise.

"My long-term career goal is to be an impactful leader in my areas of expertise and thus contribute to the efforts made to ensure food and nutritional security in Ethiopia," Dr. Beyan says, with conviction in her voice. She understands the importance of continuously honing her skills and expanding her knowledge. "To realize my goals, it is important to strengthen my technical capacity and leadership skills—to continue learning no matter what my position is," she adds.

A particularly poignant moment during our conversation comes when Dr. Beyan speaks of the gendered expectations and biases that women leaders often face. "Excellence is more expected from women than men when they hold positions," she says. There's a sombre note to her voice as she continues, "Men's mistakes are not noticed as much as women's, especially in leadership or decision-making positions." But instead of being daunted by these societal biases, Dr. Beyan sees them as challenges to be overcome. "Until we manage to solve gender stereotypes, I think, as a woman, it is important to adjust myself according to the working beliefs of the working force," she

PROFILE

Born and bred on the farmlands of Ethiopia, Dr. Beyan is the embodiment of a revolution that is quietly altering the agricultural landscapes of her country. Semira is a leading light in agricultural science, leveraging her knowledge to boost the productivity and resilience of Ethiopian farming. Armed with a Doctorate in Agriculture from the Tshwane University of Technology in South Africa, a Masters in Soil Science, and a Bachelor's degree in Plant Production and Dry Land Farming from Hawassa University, Dr. Beyan has a formidable academic background. This forms the bedrock of her work in enhancing agricultural practices and promoting sustainable farming techniques. In 2022, Semira was selected for CALA Advanced Leadership Programme and here she turned her focus to gender-responsive climate action, developing a toolkit tailored to the Ethiopian context.



But her expertise goes beyond academia. Semira has also held leadership roles in multiple organizations, implementing, monitoring, and managing various projects. These spanned urban agriculture, gender-sensitive climate-smart agriculture, food diversification, nutrition improvement, and women's empowerment. Dr. Beyan is the founder and Executive Director of Gate for Opportunity (GO), Ethiopia's local civil society organization. She leads a team that formulates and implements the organization's strategic plan focusing on development projects. Her leadership has seen the realization of several successful projects, underscoring her commitment to creating opportunities in agriculture and beyond. As a volunteer, advisor, and trainer at Youth

and Cultural Development (YCDF), Semira lends her expertise to guide agricultural projects. She designs proposals, leads implementation processes, and offers training on urban agriculture, composting, and soil management.

In 2017, as a postdoctoral fellow at Tufts University's IMMANA program, Dr. Beyan delved into the complex relationship between soil micro-nutrient levels and the nutritional status of women and children. Her work illuminated soil health's profound impact on human health, a critical insight for a country where agriculture is a dominant part of life. Semira has also been an educator, teaching undergraduate and graduate students in two Ethiopian universities. She has taught various soil and plant nutrition topics, further underscoring her vast knowledge in the agricultural sphere. Despite her busy schedule, Semira stays updated through numerous skill development training and shares her knowledge widely. She has published and presented research papers, disseminating critical findings and contributing to the academic discourse on agriculture and climate change.

In a world of climate change and food insecurity, Dr. Beyan's dedication to sustainable and efficient agricultural practices, women empowerment, and her ability to translate complex research into actionable strategies make her a key player in Ethiopia's agricultural transformation. Her life's work, grounded in rigorous research, passion, and practical applications, echoes the belief that a sustainable agricultural future is within grasp.

says determinedly. Her experience during the CALA program seemed to have marked a turning point in her leadership journey. "The CALA programme introduced me to a variety of very practical and powerful leadership tools and approaches that I could implement directly," she shares enthusiastically. "I am now better equipped to lead teams of diverse individuals, communicate more effectively, build a successful team with a collaborative goal, and develop appropriate solutions to problems."

Dr. Beyan's time with the CALA program significantly impacted both her personal and professional development. She observes, "The CALA program allowed me to showcase my leadership strengths and weaknesses and allowed me to learn about myself in the process. I now have a new confidence in myself and am starting to feel more comfortable in leading."

Dr. Beyan particularly appreciates the CALA program's approach to teaching negotiation. "I had difficulties in approaching partners for grants or funding to work on projects," she admits. "The courses and webinars in CALA helped me in shifting this mindset, convincing me that negotiation skill can be learned and improved, and there is always a win-win situation in negotiation."

Reflecting on the challenges she faced before joining the CALA program, Dr. Beyan recalls, "Creating a shared vision among my staff and building a team was a challenge. But the CALA program introduced me to various practical and powerful leadership tools and approaches that I could implement directly."

The value of the CALA program is underscored by its comprehensive and in-depth materials, knowledgeable facilitators, and the opportunities it presents for networking and collaboration. "It allowed me to know several individuals, even in my own country, to communicate on various initiatives and look for future collaboration and partnership," she explains.

Dr. Beyan also credits the CALA program for expanding her view on agriculture's role in Africa's economic development. "The events and webinars I attended changed my perspective about the agriculture sector of Africa. Agriculture has huge potential in the economy of Africa if collaboration, and partnership mindsets are put," she asserts.

Her experience with CALA has also profoundly influenced her career trajectory. "It has impacted my career in so many ways," she shares. "I am aware of my

leadership skills – strengths and weaknesses – and have made me aware of the decisions I make, the actions I take every day at work.” As a CALA alumna, she can contribute to the program’s continued success by sharing CALA’s positive impact in creating vibrant African agricultural leaders. “I think I will do my best to contribute and share the positive impact that CALA is doing in creating vibrant African agricultural leaders,” she commits. Dr. Beyene gained several specific skills from CALA, including problem-solving, influencing and persuasion, agro-ecology considerations in agriculture, and skills in environmental and social management systems.

1.4 Rahel Moges Beyene:

Championing the Global Emergence of Teff and Authentic Ethiopian Cuisine

“Undoubtedly, one of the greatest opportunities and most promising prospects in Ethiopia lies within the field of agriculture, which holds immense growth potential. This potential is particularly evident in the realm of agroprocessing, where I am actively involved,” Rahel Moges Beyene, the Managing Director of Ethiogreen Production and Industry PLC, confidently emphasized.

As someone deeply involved in agroprocessing, she identified the radical innovations happening in this sector as a game changer. Reflecting on her experience with the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) program, Rahel Moges Beyene acknowledged its profound impact on her worldview and approach to business. She shared, “It was an enlightening experience to witness various governmental and private entities coming together within our region in Africa. This collaboration highlighted our shared challenges, deepening my belief in the potential of intra-Africa trade.” By integrating individuals from diverse backgrounds – from private enterprises to policymakers – CALA gave Beyene a holistic perspective of the African agricultural landscape. This unique platform encouraged dialogue and facilitated shared learning, leading to increased understanding and alignment among the participants.

Beyene’s insights point to the crucial role of multi-sectoral collaboration in addressing common challenges and harnessing shared opportunities within Africa’s agricultural landscape. Her emphasis on the importance of intra-African trade underscores the potential for regional cooperation to drive economic growth and sustainable development in Africa. Beyene, coming from a business background, expressed her newfound appreciation for the complex bureaucratic processes that often intertwine with the private sector. She appreciated the program’s capacity to reveal these complexities, allowing her a broader understanding of the overall dynamics shaping her industry. “Being part of a business entity, I not only recognize the bureaucratic complexities but also appreciate the alignment in policies and working environments across different sectors,” Beyene explained. Her CALA experience, thus, went beyond expanding her knowledge base to influencing her approach towards collaboration and trade, strengthening her conviction in the potential of intra-African trade as a catalyst for agricultural and economic growth.

Beyene also stressed the importance of balanced representation in leadership programs like CALA. She asserted, “The comprehensive perspective gained through interactions with individuals from government, policymakers, and diverse sectors has been invaluable for my business endeavors. However, I believe it is important for CALA to strike a balance and ensure adequate representation from the private sector. This is my constructive feedback on the matter.”

As she leads Ethiogreen, a company dedicated to producing and marketing organically grown agricultural products, Beyene’s experiences with CALA have further cemented her belief in the transformative power of agriculture, both for Ethiopia and Africa as a whole.

For over a decade, she has been leading a culinary revolution with ancient Ethiopian grain, and is spearheading efforts to promote the global success of Teff and authentic Ethiopian cuisine. Known for its versatility and rich nutritional profile, Teff holds huge potential for reshaping the global culinary landscape.

“Recognizing the untapped potential of Teff was the starting point of my entrepreneurial journey,” shares Beyene. The George Washington University graduate understood that Teff’s versatility, adaptability, and exceptional nutritional value could make it a global sensation. In 2012, she founded the company with the goal of showcasing Teff’s culinary possibilities and health benefits to a broader audience. Under her astute leadership, Ethiogreen swiftly rose to prominence, prioritizing high quality standards in the production of Injera, a beloved Ethiopian flatbread made exclusively from 100% Teff. “Our commitment to authenticity has resonated with our customers, making Ethiogreen’s Injera a staple among Ethiopian diaspora in the United States,” Beyene notes.

However, Beyene’s ambitions extend beyond Injera. Noticing the growing demand for Teff-based products, she initiated developing and producing a range of Teff offerings, from flour and baked goods to snacks and beverages. “Diversifying our Teff portfolio has opened new market opportunities and solidified our position as an industry leader,” she states.

Aware of the significance of meeting international food processing standards, Beyene invested heavily in modernizing Ethiogreen’s production process, packaging, and distribution systems. Aligning the company’s operations with international sanitation and health standards, she facilitated greater market access and captured the attention of health-conscious consumers worldwide.

Ethiogreen operates from a state-of-the-art 640 square meter facility near Bole International Airport, which is equipped with various departments, including storage, milling, dough making, baking, and packaging rooms. High-quality, locally-manufactured equipment such as clay ovens, stainless steel dough barrels, and electrical double-chamber boilers ensure the production of top-notch Teff Injera and other Teff-based products.

While Teff has gained acceptance, Beyene noticed that alternative grains such as sorghum or maize, occasionally blended with Injera, were not as popular. She attributes this to consumers’ limited knowledge about

PROFILE

Rahel Beyene, a seasoned professional with a remarkable educational background in information technology and business, is a name of repute in the field of sustainable production. She has been at the helm of Ethiogreen Production and Industry for over a decade, guiding the company through stages of significant growth and success.

Beyene's journey in the field of technology began at Ivy League institution, George Washington University. From 2001 to 2003, she delved into an array of subjects, beginning with an associate degree in Management and Business Administration. Her thirst for knowledge led her to a bachelor's degree in Information Systems, further bolstering her capabilities. She culminated her academic pursuits with a master's degree in Telecommunications and Networking, laying the groundwork for her successful career. Beyene made her first professional strides as a Network/Security Engineer at Netserv, where she honed her skills and gained invaluable experience.

She subsequently moved to Verizon Communication, a globally acclaimed telecommunications company. This rich, practical experience coupled with her academic prowess led her to Ethiogreen. As the Managing Director, she has driven innovation and driven the company towards sustainable practices, making it a leader in its field. Her stellar academic credentials, paired with her diverse professional experiences, led to her success and continue to contribute to Ethiogreen's development, making Rahel Beyene an embodiment of academic excellence and professional dexterity. At the U.S. Department of State, where she had the opportunity to support a significant project.



these grains' nutritional benefits and stresses the need for education and awareness. She shared this at CALA action learning project.

"We need to ensure transparency in the injera market," Beyene asserts. To combat this challenge, Beyene emphasized the importance of both awareness creation and government regulations. She called for policies that would enforce accurate labeling and information disclosure by vendors. "It is crucial to ensure transparency in the injera market," Beyene asserted. "Vendors should be required to clearly label their products, indicating the presence of other grains in the blend."

Accurate labelling is just one part of the equation. Beyene stressed the need for comprehensive educational campaigns to dispel misconceptions surrounding alternative grains and highlight their nutritional advantages. "We must provide consumers with the right information," she insisted. "By understanding the value of these blended grains, consumers can make informed choices based on their dietary preferences."

In addition to accurate labeling and education, Beyene proposed the implementation of incentives to promote the cultivation of alternative grains. By supporting farmers who grow sorghum, maize, and other grains, Ethiogreen Production and Industry PLC aims to diversify the injera market and meet the growing demand for alternative options.

"Farmers play a crucial role in the injera industry," Beyene affirmed. "We need to recognize their efforts and incentivise them to cultivate alternative grains. This will not only enhance the diversity of injera production but also contribute to the economic growth of our farming communities." "Moreover, education and awareness campaigns must be conducted to emphasize the nutritional benefits of these blended grains. We need to shed light on the value they bring to the table and dispel any misconceptions surrounding their consumption. Educating the public can encourage an open-minded approach towards embracing diversity in injera production.

Incentivizing farmers who grow sorghum, maize, and other grains can further promote their cultivation and contribute to their increased value. By recognizing their efforts and providing support, we can empower these farmers to meet the demand for alternative grains and diversify our injera production, offering consumers more choices without compromising on quality," she noted.

Teff, a gluten-free super grain, is the centerpiece of Rahel Beyene's culinary revolution. The ancient Ethiopian grain, with its small size and diverse color palette ranging from white to dark brown, has been a staple in Ethiopian cuisine for centuries. It is renowned for its exceptional nutritional value, packed with essential nutrients such as fiber, protein, iron, and calcium. Teff's unique flavor profile, described as earthy and nutty, adds depth to dishes and lends itself well to various culinary applications.

What sets Teff apart is its remarkable adaptability and versatility. It can be ground into flour, fermented to create Injera, and used as an ingredient in a wide array of baked goods, snacks, and beverages. Teff flour serves as a nutritious alternative to traditional flours, offering a gluten-free option for those with dietary restrictions. Its ability to absorb flavors and moisture makes it an ideal base for creating delicious and nutritious foods.

According to Beyene, Teff is not only celebrated for its culinary attributes but also for its impact on sustainable agriculture. This resilient grain is highly drought-tolerant, requiring less water compared to other grains. It also has a short growing season and thrives in various soil types, making it well-suited for small-scale farming. As a result, Teff plays a significant role in promoting food security and economic stability in Ethiopia, while also capturing the interest of health-conscious consumers around the world.

What sets Teff apart is its remarkable adaptability and versatility. It can be ground into flour, fermented to create Injera, and used as an ingredient in a wide array of baked goods, snacks, and beverages.



She says she prioritizes upholding the highest quality standards in Injera production—the iconic Ethiopian flatbread made exclusively from 100% Teff. Rahel's commitment to authenticity has resonated with customers both domestically and internationally. Ethiogreen's Injera has become a dietary staple among Ethiopian diaspora customers in the United States, thanks to Rahel's unwavering dedication to preserving traditional methods and flavors.

Beyene's ambition extends beyond Injera. Recognizing the growing demand for Teff-based products, Rahel has spearheaded the developing and producing a

wide range of innovative Teff offerings—Teff flour and baked goods to Teff-based snacks and beverages. Rahel's drive to diversify the Teff portfolio has opened new market opportunities, further solidifying the company's position as an industry leader. Beyene understands the significance of meeting international food processing standards to compete globally. Through Ethiogreen, she has made substantial investments in modernizing the production process, packaging, and distribution systems.

2.0 NIGERIA:

Closing the Disconnect between scientific knowledge and its On-ground Application

Food Systems Champions

Sugra Mahmood is the Director of Irrigation Agriculture and Crop Development at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Vincent Aduramigba Modupe, a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, represents the public sector. Grace Fosen, as the Country Project Manager for Mennonites Economic Development Associates (MEDA), contributes to the cause from the civil society sector.

While laden with notable challenges, Nigeria's food system also possesses significant growth and development potential. Critical challenges include food insecurity, environmental degradation, socio-economic disparities, and the overarching spectre of climate change. The latter can severely impact crop yields and agricultural productivity with erratic weather patterns and extreme climatic events. Yet, nestled within these challenges lie promising opportunities in the agricultural sector, largely owing to Nigeria's rich endowments of arable land, a favourable climate, and a burgeoning population. The pathway to harnessing these opportunities and mitigating challenges is rooted in innovative and transformative strategies. Chief among these is incorporating technology into the food system to empower small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the agricultural sector. By embracing digital tools, businesses can surmount challenges, augment agricultural productivity, and contribute substantively to the nation's overall prosperity and well-being.

Leadership is the linchpin in the successful implementation of these strategies. Agricultural leaders can shepherd the adoption of climate-smart practices—such as drought-resistant crop varieties, water-efficient systems, agroforestry, and sustainable land management techniques—to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Moreover, they can promote policies and investments that buttress climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts within the sector. These may encompass endorsing renewable energy solutions, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural activities, and enhancing climate information and early warning systems to aid farmers.

In addition, effective leadership can foster an environment conducive to knowledge sharing and capacity building, thus cultivating an understanding and application of climate-smart agricultural practices among farmers. Developing leadership skills at all levels of the agricultural sector—from smallholder farmers to high-ranking officials—is fundamental to actualizing scientific innovations, promoting accountability, stimulating innovative solutions, and driving the adoption

of optimal practices.

Despite these strides, the disconnect between scientific knowledge and its on-ground application is a persisting hurdle. Often, this gap stems from weak ties between the scientific community and policymakers. To bridge this chasm, a robust framework for integration within national agricultural policies is needed, along with fortified communication channels between researchers and strategic stakeholders. Investing in cultivating a cadre of agricultural leaders equipped with the essential skills and knowledge could transform Nigeria's agricultural landscape. These leaders would spearhead efforts to build resilient, productive agricultural systems that guarantee food security and counteract the detrimental effects of climate change. By connecting the dots between scientific research and its practical application, and leveraging the power of effective leadership, Nigeria stands poised to unlock its vast agricultural potential and contribute significantly to global food security. This approach aligns with the broader objective of catalyzing comprehensive development, enhancing livelihoods, and cementing Nigeria's position in the global food market.

2.1 Sugra Mahmood: Inspiring the Next Generation of Agricultural Thought Leaders

A Visionary Leader in Agriculture and Rural Development

In the realm of agriculture and rural development, Sugra Mahmood, Deputy Director at the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, is driven by a powerful conviction. For Sugra, creating a food system that nourishes the population, protects the environment, and contributes to overall well-being and prosperity is not just a duty or responsibility—it is an undeniable and unwavering commitment that she believes is imperative.

PROFILE

Sugra Mahmood, is Deputy Director at Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD). She has played a vital role within the ministry for over two decades. With her dynamic contributions and innovative ideas, she has served in various capacities, including Director of Irrigation and Agricultural Development.

Mahmood is widely recognized for her fervent dedication to agricultural development and has emerged as a driving force in promoting the sector throughout Nigeria.

In her pivotal role as Deputy Director, Mahmood oversees the implementation of FMARD's policies and programs in critical areas such as irrigation, agricultural development, and rural progress. Additionally, she coordinates collaborations between the ministry, other government bodies, development partners, and private sector stakeholders.

Mahmood's reputation as a thought leader in the agricultural sphere stems from her unwavering commitment to excellence and her determination to uplift farmers and rural communities in Nigeria. Some of her notable achievements include: spearheading the development of the ministry's National Irrigation Master Plan, showcasing her strategic foresight; successfully leading the execution of the ministry's Agricultural Transformation Agenda, highlighting her transformative leadership skills; coordinating partnerships between the ministry and globally recognized entities such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, demonstrating her diplomatic acumen. Mahmood serves as a role model for aspiring women in the field of agriculture and inspires those striving to improve the lives of farmers and rural communities.



Driven by a deep understanding of the intricate connections between food, the environment, and the well-being of Nigeria, Mahmood strongly believes in agriculture's transformative potential. Like many countries, Nigeria faces significant challenges in its food system—challenges that cannot be overlooked or taken lightly. Food security, environmental degradation, climate change and socio-economic disparities demand a new approach that surpasses the ordinary. Mahmood firmly believes that these challenges call for innovative and transformative actions that address the root causes and pave the way for a future where everyone can access nutritious food and preserve natural resources for generations to come.

Mahmood acknowledges the dual nature of the situation facing Nigeria's agricultural sector. "The sector brims with both significant opportunities and daunting challenges, especially with the added dimension of climate change," she says. "One of the greatest opportunities lies in the vast potential for increased agricultural productivity and expansion, all while addressing the impacts of climate change. Nigeria is blessed with abundant arable land, a favorable climate, and a rapidly growing population. These factors together present an enormous opportunity to meet the increasing demand for food while adopting climate-smart practices."

However, Mahmood also acknowledges the profound challenges posed by climate change. "Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events such as droughts and floods adversely affect crop yields, livestock production, and overall agricultural productivity. These challenges exacerbate food insecurity, particularly for vulnerable communities who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods," she adds.

To navigate the challenges, Mahmood noted that ubiquitous access to technology is paramount in empowering SMEs within the food systems. Access is critical to ensuring equal opportunities and support for small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the agricultural sector. By harnessing technology, these businesses can effectively address challenges and acquire the essential tools needed to thrive in the interconnected world of the food system.

Mahmood is clear about the essential role of agricultural leadership in navigating the intersecting challenges and opportunities. "Strengthening food systems and ensuring food security is about national sovereignty, the resilience of the economy, and ensuring a decent livelihood for all Nigerians. This forms the foundation of our efforts," she asserts.

She elaborates on agricultural leaders' pivotal role in promoting climate-smart practices, emphasizing, "Leaders can guide the adoption of such practices, which include using drought-resistant crop varieties, employing efficient water management systems, incorporating agroforestry, and utilizing sustainable land management techniques. By weaving climate resilience into our agricultural systems, we can adapt to the changing climate while mitigating its negative impacts."

Mahmood continues to describe the wider-reaching responsibilities of agricultural leaders. "These leaders can advocate for policies and investments that support climate change adaptation and mitigation within the agricultural sector. This includes promoting the adoption of renewable energy solutions, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural activities, and fortifying climate information and early warning systems for farmers. Effective leadership can also facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building programs to enhance the understanding and application of climate-smart agriculture practices among farmers," she says.

Mahmood emphasizes the importance of fostering a strong cadre of agricultural leaders. These leaders, she asserts, are critical in capturing the opportunities, addressing the challenges, and responding effectively to the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector.

"Food security and strong food systems are more than just about

meeting agricultural needs. They are intrinsic to our national sovereignty, to bolster our economy's resilience, and to guaranteeing a decent livelihood for all Nigerians," Mahmood affirms. "Our objective is to advance comprehensive development, uplift livelihoods, and firmly position Nigeria in the global food market. This vision will be brought to fruition by the skilled and knowledgeable agricultural leaders we nurture today."

Mahmood believes that by endowing these leaders with the requisite skills and insights to advance climate-smart practices, Nigeria can build resilient, productive agricultural systems, ensuring food security and mitigating climate change's adverse effects. "Leaders are instrumental in facilitating the adaptation of climate-smart approaches such as using drought-tolerant crops, managing water efficiently, implementing agroforestry, and deploying sustainable land management strategies. This way, we make our agricultural systems resilient to climate changes and minimize their detrimental impacts." She also underscores the role of agricultural leaders in advocating for beneficial policies and investments that enhance the agricultural sector's capacity to adapt to and mitigate climate change. "This involves championing renewable energy solutions, reducing agricultural activities' greenhouse gas emissions, and fortifying our climate information and early warning systems for farmers. Additionally, effective leadership is pivotal in enabling knowledge transfer and capacity-building programs, fostering a better understanding and implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices among our farmers," she says.

Mahmood shares her motivation for participating in AGRA's African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA). "I've always been a firm advocate for lifelong learning and constant self-improvement," she states. "When I learned about CALA, I saw it as a unique opportunity. It goes beyond conventional pedagogies, offering a transformative learning experience tailored for agricultural leaders like myself. The prospect of gaining new perspectives, enhancing my skills, and contributing more effectively to Nigeria's agricultural sector was truly compelling."

Mahmood says: "Before joining CALA, I was already deeply embedded in agricultural development due to my role at the Ministry. However, CALA served as a powerful reminder of the indispensability of continuous learning and growth in leadership. It didn't just add to my knowledge; it also affirmed my expertise and contributions to the agricultural sector. It was a testimony to the value of my work."

She adds: "Being part of CALA meant being in the company of various African agricultural leaders, individuals holding pivotal roles in their respective countries' agricultural sectors. This networking amplified my work's importance and provided a fertile ground for mutual learning and validation. We shared our experiences, challenges, and triumphs during interactive sessions, a constant reminder that we were all united in the journey towards agricultural transformation."

Mahmood elaborates on the influence of the CALA program: "CALA's Advanced Leadership Program has been pivotal. It didn't just provide transformative experiences and enhance my leadership skills; it validated my role and efforts in fostering agricultural development. The program validation of my skills, the opportu-

nity to work with fellow leaders, the acquisition of new knowledge, and the affirmation of innovative practices all underscored the significance of my work within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. I'm invigorated to continue making a meaningful difference, bolstered by the insights and experiences gained through CALA, to contribute to the sustainable growth of Nigeria's agricultural sector."

She reflects on her learnings: "CALA underscored the importance of collaboration and innovation in advancing agricultural development. These key insights have guided my efforts in fostering partnerships, encouraging collaboration, and embracing innovative solutions. By applying these principles, I've been able to effect palpable changes, enhancing agricultural practices, empowering farmers, and fostering sustainable development in Nigeria."

Mahmood shares her insights: "Engaging in the CALA Advanced Leadership Program requires a significant commitment, especially given the program's 16-month duration. Despite the demands and commitments of senior positions, the dedication to CALA proves incredibly valuable for senior leaders for several reasons."

"Firstly, it demonstrates an ongoing commitment to professional development. As senior leaders, we must remain informed about the latest trends, best practices, and innovations in our fields. CALA provides a unique opportunity to boost our leadership skills, widen our knowledge base, and gain new insights to amplify our effectiveness as leaders."

Mahmood further elaborates on broadening perspectives: "The CALA program unites senior professionals from various backgrounds across Africa. Interacting with fellow participants and experts exposes us to differing viewpoints, experiences, and approaches to agricultural leadership. This opens our outlooks and equips us with a comprehensive understanding of the sector's challenges and opportunities, enabling us to develop more well-rounded and informed strategies."

She also highlights the networking and collaboration aspects: "CALA establishes a platform for senior leaders to build relationships and cooperate with like-minded individuals. Building robust connections with fellow participants, experts, and mentors can lead to future collaborations, partnerships, and knowledge exchanges. The relationships formed during CALA can extend beyond the program, providing ongoing support and a network of trusted colleagues across the continent."

Mahmood explains CALA's strategic leadership development: "By dedicating my time to CALA, I got the opportunity to delve deeply into diverse areas, including developing more strategic thinking, and gaining insights into emerging trends that could shape the future of agriculture."

Mahmood says "CALA equips leaders to drive transformative change in their respective countries and organizations. By investing time and commitment into the program, senior leaders can acquire the knowledge, skills, and networks necessary to spearhead impactful initiatives and policies that benefit the agricultural sector and rural communities. The long-term benefits of the program far outweigh the temporary commitment."

"In essence, while the commitment to CALA may seem formidable at first, it's important to recognize the substantial value derived from the program, far outweighing the initial investment. The knowledge, networks, and personal growth achieved through CALA can significantly amplify our effectiveness as senior leaders and contribute to the sustainable development of agriculture in our countries. Embracing the commitment to CALA demonstrates our dedication to continuous improvement, our commitment to transformative change, and our recognition of the importance of investing in our leadership development."

Mahmood underscores the potential of Africa's youth: "African youth are the transformative agents in our food systems. Their participation isn't just desirable – it is indispensable for sustainability. They bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a commitment to sustainability."

Mahmood elaborates on African youth's demographic significance: "They constitute a large fraction of the continent's population. With their energy, innovation, and fresh outlooks, they are an untapped potential that can revolutionize our food systems."

“ Strategic leadership in the agricultural sector is crucial. It's about establishing a framework for integration within the National Agricultural Technology Innovation Policy (NATIP) and communicating key messages to policy-makers and strategic stakeholders.”

"It is not just about drawing youth into food systems to tackle food security, nutrition, and rural development challenges," she clarifies. "Instead, it's about actively involving and harnessing their creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, and technological adeptness to drive positive change."

Mahmood notes, "We can build inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems by empowering and nurturing young people. These revamped systems can then address the daunting challenges of hunger, malnutrition, and poverty, ensuring a prosperous future for Africa. Therefore, youth engagement in agriculture is not just beneficial – creating the most jobs in Africa and securing a sustainable future is necessary."

2.2 Fostering Agricultural Transformation:

Dr. Vincent Aduramigba-Modupe's Journey with CALA

Dr. Vincent Aduramigba Modupe, a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, Ibadan, Nigeria is a staunch advocate for building stronger bridges between scientific research and policy-making in Nigeria's agriculture sector.

"In my view," he begins, "the greatest opportunities in Nigerian agriculture lie in our fertile lands, diverse

climates, and the energetic spirit of our people. With these resources, we have the potential to not only meet our own food needs but to also contribute significantly to global food security."

However, he is quick to point out the challenges that lay in the way. "Bio-physical constraints, such as erratic rainfall patterns, low soil fertility, pest and disease infestations, pose significant hurdles. But even these can be overcome through scientific research and technology. The real issue is the disconnect between our scientific knowledge and its application on the ground."

Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe laments the fact that much of the valuable research conducted in Nigeria's academic institutions never makes it into the hands of farmers and decision-makers who could put it to good use; this he adduced to weak linkages between the scientific community and policy-makers.

To bridge this gap, he champions the development of leaders in agriculture at all levels, from small-scale farmers to high-ranking officials. "Strategic leadership in the agricultural sector is crucial," he explains. "It's about establishing a framework for integration within the National Agricultural Technology Innovation Policy

(NATIP) and communicating key messages to policy-makers and strategic stakeholders."

For Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe, these agricultural leaders will serve as the linchpin in bringing science-led management innovations to scale through value chain development within Nigeria's agricultural sector. They will ensure that research findings does not gather dust on academic shelves but rather finds its way to the fields, farms, and marketplaces where it can make a real difference.

"Ultimately," he says, "the future of Nigerian agriculture lies in the hands of these leaders. And through their efforts, I am confident that we will see a transformed agricultural landscape, that is resilient, sustainable, and prosperous for all."

In Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe's leadership journey; the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) holds a significant place. His decision to participate in CALA stemmed from his rich background and ambition to hone his skills further.

"As a developmental soil scientist with over 23 years of experience in sustainable agriculture, I have always been passionate about contributing to the improvement of agricultural productivity in Nigeria," he says. His work, he explains, involves providing science-based

PROFILE

Vincent O. Aduramigba-Modupe, PhD, is a distinguished developmental soil scientist and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, Obafemi Awolowo University, located in Moor Plantation, Ibadan, Nigeria. With over 23 years of expertise in integrated soil fertility management, digital soil mapping, systems agronomy, and agricultural development, Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe has made significant contributions to the field. His research has been widely published in high-impact factor journals, showcasing his extensive knowledge and commitment to advancing agricultural practices.

Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe's accomplishments have been recognized through numerous prestigious fellowships, including those awarded by Israeli MASHAV, German CIPSEM, Australia ALAF, and Chinese NDRC. His multidisciplinary leadership skills have been demonstrated in various West African countries, where he successfully managed teams and led collaborative projects focused on soil nutrient management. Notably, he served as the Regional Coordinator of the ILWAC project, which was funded by the World Bank/CORAF and implemented in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, and Nigeria.

Currently, Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe is coordinating the soil mapping and formulation of specialty fertilizers for cocoa, oil palm, tomato, and wheat in Nigeria. This initiative is supported by OCP funding. Moreover, he holds the position of Nigeria team leader and steering committee member for the European Commission-approved H2020-MSCA-RISE-2019 project, Integrated Nitrogen Studies in Africa (INSA). This project brings together 15 African and European institutions to investigate and address nitrogen-related challenges in Africa.

Additionally, Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe has been the Africa Centre Director for the International Nitrogen Initiative since 2019, further highlighting his dedication to promoting sustainable nitrogen management. Furthermore, he currently serves as the President of the African Association of Precision Agriculture (AAPA) for the term of 2022 to 2024, showcasing his commitment to advancing precision agriculture practices throughout Africa.

knowledge to policy-makers and strategic partners, helping to navigate the complex interrelationships within agricultural systems.

However, Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe found himself driven to seek new heights in his professional development. "I wanted to upscale my skills in developing and generating demand-driven technologies. These technologies should be environmentally sound, technically appropriate, economically viable, and socially acceptable in Nigeria for sustainable food security."

CALA offered him the perfect platform to achieve this. Through CALA, he hoped to acquire new skills and insights that would enhance his ability to generate such technologies. The opportunity to share this knowledge with others also intrigued him.

His eyes light up as he mentions his "strong passion" for disseminating the skills he has acquired through learning workshops. "Sharing knowledge across the agro-value chain in Nigeria is just as important as acquiring it. By empowering others, we can multiply the impact of our efforts and pave the way for a brighter future for Nigerian agriculture."

Thus, participating in CALA was more than just an opportunity for personal growth for him; it was a chance to uplift the agricultural sector in his country to new heights of sustainability and productivity. Through his dedication and relentless pursuit of knowledge, he is setting a shining example for agricultural leaders everywhere.

Reflecting on his time before and during the CALA Advanced Leadership Program (ALP), Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe shares a transformative journey that reshaped his perspective and approach towards his work in agriculture.

"Before CALA ALP," he begins, "I was primarily focused on research and development from an academic perspective, working somewhat on the periphery of the food systems." His experience was rich but somewhat siloed. While his work contributed to scientific knowledge, he felt disconnected from the direct, on-the-ground impact he yearned to achieve.

"We live in demanding and changing times," he emphasizes. "Agriculture faces a multitude of complex, interconnected challenges with profound implications on productivity. These challenges require a new paradigm shift that fosters deliberate partnerships and teamwork at all levels."

And it was at the CALA ALP where he found the catalyst for this shift. "During the program, my role evolved dramatically. It broadened beyond the lab and the field, into the realm of fostering collaboration between and among various stakeholders. I began to connect resources directly to food systems and sustainable agricultural development," he explains.

Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe's experience with CALA ALP challenged him, not just as a scientist, but as a leader. He was encouraged to become a champion for a systems approach to agriculture, tasked with the mission of realizing this vision not just in Nigeria, but across the whole of Africa, and even beyond.

"The CALA ALP wasn't just a leadership program," Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe concludes. "It was an awakening, a call to action to step out of the conventional sphere and lead the charge towards a more holistic, sustainable, and inclusive agriculture sector."

Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe's participation in the CALA Advanced Leadership Program had a profound and lasting impact on both his personal and professional trajectories.

"The program expanded my horizon in systems thinking," he shares, reflecting on his personal growth. "Through collaboration and partnership, I learned the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement. I was challenged to champion successful partnerships, mapping key actors in relevant government agencies, research institutions, and other stakeholders, not just in Nigeria, but also beyond our borders."

This newfound perspective and skill set didn't just change his approach to his work; they propelled his career to new heights. Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe now leads the National Soil Survey and Soil Fertility Mapping of Nigeria, a program under the umbrella of the Agricultural Climate Change Management Services Department of the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. This role, central to the nation's agriculture policy and practice, is a testament to his capability and influence as a leader.

"The CALA ALP was more than just a leadership program to me; it was a stepping stone," he continues. "It enriched my career in ways I hadn't anticipated. In recognition of my growth and contributions, I've been put up for promotion to a full professorial chair."

The ALP, it seems, didn't just impact Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe; it transformed him. It equipped him with a wider perspective, a richer set of skills, and a more profound sense of purpose. And in doing so, it reinforced his commitment to transforming Nigerian agriculture and, in turn, the possibility of positively impacting the lives of millions.

The lessons Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe learned from CALA have shaped his perspective and found tangible application in his work. A blend of practical and theoretical courses, such as problem-solving, setting goals for success, influencing others, and building a great team, gave him valuable tools he uses daily.

"My experiences at CALA equipped me with the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds," he explains. "I learned to navigate different perspectives' complexities and communicate effectively in a team environment. These skills have been instrumental in my current roles."

Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe shares three key projects which he has applied his CALA learnings:

First, the Horizon 2020 research proposal entitled "Integrated Nitrogen Studies in Africa," funded by the European Commission. "Working with 15 institutions in Africa and Europe to build a vibrant research network among academics, both experienced and early career researchers, has been an exciting and challenging endeavor. I used the problem-solving and team-building skills I learned at CALA to bring together and manage this diverse team," he shares.

The second project involves the formulation of specialty fertilizers for cocoa, oil palm, tomato, and wheat, catered to Nigeria's agro-ecological zones, funded by the OCP Group. "This has been a game changer in Nigeria's fertilizer industry. Setting clear goals and influencing others were key in the success of this project," he points out.

Thirdly, he was involved in a challenging project with

the FMARD (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development). "Working with civil servants and a variety of institutions in Nigeria to build a vibrant soil research network for sustainable soil management and enhanced agricultural productivity requires a careful application of all the lessons I learned from CALA. It's been very tasking, but incredibly rewarding," he says.

Through these initiatives, Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe exemplifies how CALA has shaped his approach to leadership – by fostering collaboration, problem-solving, and effective communication. His journey serves as a testament to the power of CALA's transformative influence on the leaders it nurtures.

Like any worthwhile endeavor, Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe's journey with CALA was not without its challenges. He encountered resistance and lack of cooperation from certain team members during the writing of the funded ALP project, a hurdle that had the potential to derail their efforts. One member, in particular, seemed to actively work against the ALP's success.

"Dealing with such resistance was certainly challenging," he admits. "However, one of the key principles I learned at CALA is that challenges are opportunities for growth and learning."

Specifically, the problem-solving course at CALA was instrumental in helping him navigate these issues. "The program equipped me with a set of principles and techniques to deal with such situations effectively," he explains. "Rather than allowing the resistance to hinder our progress, I used it as an opportunity to engage, understand differing perspectives, and find a way forward."

He applied problem-solving techniques to understand the source of resistance, and through open communication, sought to align the team around common goals. Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe utilized his leadership skills to turn a potential stumbling block into a stepping stone, effectively steering his team back on track.

"Challenges are inevitable in any leadership journey," Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe shares, "but CALA taught me that it's not the absence of problems that defines success, but how we address and learn from them. This lesson has been invaluable in my career and personal life, and I am grateful for the growth it has facilitated."

Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe holds CALA in high regard, distinguishing it from other leadership programs he has experienced. "CALA's impact is life-changing," he asserts. "It doesn't merely aim to produce leaders. It aims to produce champions who will lead the transformation of agricultural and food systems in Africa. The distinction lies in this ambitious, transformative vision."

Furthermore, CALA has significantly expanded Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe's professional network within the African agricultural community. "Through CALA, I have connected with numerous professionals and stakeholders across the continent. These connections have opened up opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing that have greatly enriched my work," he shares.

One such opportunity was his invitation to speak at the 2022 African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF), a platform that brings together stakeholders in Africa's agricultural landscape to discuss and commit to programs, investments, and policies that can improve the livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers.

"This was a significant milestone in my career," he says. "Sharing my thoughts and experiences at a prestigious forum like the AGRF was made possible through my participation in CALA."

For Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe, CALA is not just a leadership program; it's a platform for change, a community of like-minded professionals dedicated to transforming Africa's agricultural and food systems, and a stepping stone to opportunities that have the potential to change countless lives for the better.

From addressing food security challenges to promoting data science and integrity, Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe has significantly applied the skills and knowledge gained from CALA. "The use of innovation platforms and technology such as Open Data Kit (ODK) in research has been instrumental in enhancing agricultural development," he shares. He tackled resistance to technology adoption using problem-solving techniques and trans-disciplinary approaches learned at CALA.

A particularly memorable experience for Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe was the success of their ALP in Bauchi state. "It's now being adopted by other government agencies as a model in public-private extension service delivery," he says. He also fondly recalls the supportive atmosphere fostered by the AMI and AGRA teams, as well as the learning laboratories and coaching sessions.

One key takeaway from CALA for Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe is that Africans should play a central role in solving Africa's agricultural problems. He believes that agriculture can be a powerful driver of Africa's economic development, moving it from potential to actual.

The CALA program has had a transformative impact on Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe's career trajectory. He now focuses on addressing the weakest link in Nigeria's agricultural sector for sustainable development and has honed his leadership skills for successful partnerships and effective communication.

As a CALA alumni, Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe pledges to contribute to the program's continued success by being a strategic partner and champion. He is eager to be an ambassador for CALA in Africa and beyond, testifying to the program's role in building impactful leadership across the continent.

When asked about unique knowledge or skills gained from CALA, he mentions the application of skills from the courses attended and the experience of working with team members from diverse disciplines to solve real-life national problems in Nigeria.

Summing up his CALA experience, Dr. Aduramigba-Modupe enthuses, "CALA is building a formidable and winning team across Africa. I am happy to be part of this."

2.3 Grace Fosen: Agriculture holds enormous potential for boosting Africa's economic development

Agriculture has the potential to catalyze Africa's economic progress, notes Grace Fosen, the Country Project Manager at Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) in Nigeria. Grace possesses an insightful perspective on the agricultural sector's opportunities and challenges.

"Undoubtedly, Africa is blessed with abundant human and natural resources," Grace points out. "These form the bedrock of immense opportunities in the agricultural sector. The richness of our soils, the diversity of our crops, and the vigour of our people all contribute to our potential for agricultural prosperity." However, Grace recognizes that this potential is not without hurdles. "We grapple with issues such as the lack of intentionality in enforcing good practices and policies. Furthermore, there's a need for strict follow-up on agreed-upon principles and procedures for agricultural development."

For Grace, these challenges underscore the importance of developing agricultural leaders at every level. "We need leaders who foster a culture of accountability, inspire innovative solutions to the problems we face, and drive the adoption of best agricultural practices," she says. "With effective leadership, we can unlock the potential of our resources and overcome our challenges."

Grace firmly believes that agricultural leaders are key to sustainable growth and development. "Leadership is more than a role; it's a catalyst for transformation. By nurturing leaders within the agricultural sector, we can spearhead a movement towards sustainable growth, prosperity, and food security for all," she concludes.

Grace's motivation to participate in CALA was rooted in her personal and professional growth ambition. "The desire to better myself and contribute more effectively to my organization and community drove me to CALA," she shares. "I saw it as an opportunity to expand my horizons and to deepen my understanding of leadership in the agricultural sector."

Before joining CALA, Grace was deeply engaged in her work at Mennonites Economic Development Associates. She enjoyed her role and the daily tasks it involved. However, her experience at CALA transformed her approach to her work, igniting in her a renewed sense of purpose and a broader perspective on her role within the organization and the agricultural sector.

"After participating in the CALA program, I saw myself not just as an employee meeting deliverables but as a change agent," Grace explains. "CALA awakened in me a new understanding of my potential impact on my organization and our stakeholders. I realized that my role extended beyond accomplishing tasks to solving problems, fostering growth, and guiding others on the same path."

Her time at CALA therefore served not just as a program for leadership development but as a pivotal experience that reshaped her perspective on her role and her potential to effect change. "CALA redefined

for me what leadership means," she says. "It's not just about leading; it's about bringing others along and facilitating growth and development at every level."

Grace's participation in CALA significantly impacted her personal and professional development. "The program helped me evolve into a better version of myself," she shares. "It heightened my attention to detail and cultivated a more considerate perspective, both in my personal life and work."

Grace's professional competencies also grew thanks to CALA. "My problem-solving skills have improved, and I've become a more patient and attentive listener," she notes. One key lesson Grace took away from her time with CALA was the importance of a holistic approach to leadership. "CALA taught me to go beyond the work environment and to pay attention to the well-being of my team members," she recalls. "It made me realize the power of empathy and the importance of supporting people professionally and personally."

This realization has influenced Grace's leadership style.

She now prioritizes the overall well-being of her team members, reaching out to understand and address their needs. She gives a specific example of how this lesson played out in her work: "I once took the time to understand and address personal challenges that were affecting a colleague's performance in my organization. Recognizing and addressing those personal issues improved my colleague's work performance and built a stronger, more empathetic relationship between us. This experience reinforced my belief in the importance of holistic, people-centered leadership."

Grace admits that while she did not face substantial hurdles during her time with CALA, balancing her day-to-day responsibilities with the program's requirements presented some challenges. "Juggling my everyday tasks while fulfilling the requirements of the program was sometimes demanding," she shares. "However, by honing my time management skills and dedicating myself fully to the process, I overcame these hurdles and actively participated in the program."

PROFILE

Fosen Grace is a Nigerian female professional with extensive experience in project management, stakeholder engagement, donor relationship management, fundraising and grants management. Grace has skill for people management, security management, and capacity building. She has expertise in market systems, agriculture value chains, youth and women entrepreneurship support, women and girl child empowerment, Orphans & Vulnerable Children (OVC) support, youth development, agro value chains, agriculture sector financing, green finance, water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH), community engagement, and strategic management.

Fosen currently holds the position of Country Project Manager at MEDA NIGERIA - WAY PROJECT, a GAC Funded project based in Bauchi, Nigeria. She provides programmatic and managerial oversight for implementing agriculture value chain activities. She demonstrates strategic leadership, facilitates committee meetings, ensures compliance with donor requirements, and supervises program thematic areas.

Prior to her current role, Fosen worked as the Deputy Field Project Manager at MEDA NIGERIA - WAY PROJECT. She collaborated with the Country Director to oversee project implemen-

tation and managed the project implementation team. She also engaged stakeholders, developed strategies for agricultural value chains program implementation, and facilitated community dialogues on social issues.

Fosen previously served as the Head of Capacity Building and Focal Lead for the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and Federal Department of Cooperatives engagement at the FGN Rural Finance Institution Building Program, which was IFAD funded. She played a key role in partnership development, sensitization activities, capacity building, and policy engagement in the microfinance industry.

She also worked as a Grants Officer at Winrock International AIM Project, an USAID funded project, where she managed subcontracts, coordinated capacity building, processed grant-related documents, and provided technical support to partners.

Fosen's experience also includes roles as a Community Development Coordinator at the United Nations Development Program, an Agricultural Officer at the National Special Program for Food Security (FAO), and a Program Facilitator for Poverty Reduction and Youth Empowerment at the National Poverty Eradication Program.

She holds a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from the Federal University of Technology, Adamawa State, Nigeria, and a Bachelor's of Technology (B.Tech) in Agricultural Economics and Extension from the same university.

Fosen has also engaged in consultancy work, including a national consultancy with Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) where she supported the inception mission for the Nigeria WAY Project in organizing project flag off workshops, collecting data, and strategic planning, providing access to finance support to women and youth in agricultural value chains.



PROFILE

Holding the reins at Sahel Consulting Agriculture & Nutrition Ltd as the Managing Partner, Temitope Adegoroye, a CALA alumnus, has an indelible mark on Nigeria's agribusiness landscape. His deep-seated passion and commendable professional trajectory have seen him carve a reputation as a seasoned strategist and astute project manager, expertly guiding the company through the complex terrains of client engagement, project execution, and overall strategic direction.

Temitope's aptitude shines brightest regarding his forte: roots and tubers, seed system development and value chain approach. His profound knowledge, backed by extensive hands-on experience, has seen him lead a multitude of diverse value chains, making significant strides within agribusiness.

Temitope has honed a particular mastery in market analysis, strategic development, business sustainability, and project management, positioning him as a sought-after advisor in the agricultural sector. His portfolio boasts a wealth of successful consulting projects in areas such as seed system innovations, mechanization, on-farm productivity enhancement, and improved market access for agribusiness stakeholders.

Temitope's educational credentials include an MBA from the prestigious Lagos Business School, Pan Atlantic University, and a Master of Science degree in Agronomy from the University of Ibadan. An alumnus of Obafemi Awolowo University in Ife, he began his journey in the field with a bachelor's degree in Plant Science. He also holds leadership certificates from the Harvard Kennedy School – Executive Education, Boston, USA and IESE Business School in Barcelona, Spain. He is an IMAGINE Leader, a global community of transformational leaders committed to leading systemic change and having a positive impact.

Temitope's blend of academic excellence, professional experience, and relentless pursuit of innovation sets him apart in the dynamic agricultural and nutrition sectors. His commitment to Sahel Consulting and the broader private sector goes beyond mere duty; it is a testament to his vital role in shaping the future of agriculture in Nigeria.



When asked about what distinguishes CALA from other leadership programs she's experienced, Grace highlights CALA's commitment to networking and resource sharing. "CALA is unique due to its focus on creating networking and professional development platforms," she notes. "The program provides a space for building strong human connections and accessing valuable resources."

CALA's emphasis on networking had a significant impact on Grace. "Through CALA, I've established meaningful relationships that continue to flourish," she states. "These connections have benefitted me personally and contributed positively to the broader agricultural sector in Africa. Being part of CALA's network has opened doors and facilitated collaborations that have enriched my work and made a tangible impact on the communities we serve."

Grace highlights a specific instance of applying the empathy skill learned from CALA to impact her organization positively. "Through CALA, I grasped the importance of empathy in leadership," she recounts. "I put this skill into action when one of my colleagues was grappling with personal issues that hindered their work performance. By extending empathy and support beyond our professional relationship, I was able to help them surmount their challenges, which positively impacted our entire team's dynamics."

Grace shares a memorable experience from her time with CALA that profoundly influenced her perspective on the role of agriculture in Africa's economic development. "One of the standout moments during my time with CALA was attending the AGRF conference," she recalls. "There, I had the opportunity to interact directly with individuals whom I had only read about in the past. This experience was highly enriching and allowed me to establish connections that have proven mutually beneficial."

The insights and connections Grace gained through this experience have broadened her understanding of agriculture's role in Africa's economic growth. "This experience reinforced my conviction that agriculture holds enormous potential for boosting Africa's economic development," she states. "I came away with a renewed belief that with intentional efforts and strategic focus, we can harness the power of agriculture to drive significant economic growth across the continent."

Grace believes that her experience with CALA has deeply impacted her career trajectory and business approach. She says, "CALA has revolutionized my approach to the agricultural industry, encouraging me to view it more like a business and to instill this mindset in others. The emphasis on results, networking, and lifelong learning has played a pivotal role in my personal growth."

As advice for future CALA delegates, she recommends embracing the opportunities the program offers. "Seize every chance to grow, be actively involved in the program, and capitalize on every opportunity to connect, network, and learn from others," she advises.

As a CALA alumni, Grace sees herself playing a key

role in promoting the program's ongoing success. She intends to act as an ambassador for the program, sharing her positive experiences and its impact on her career. "By advocating for CALA and encouraging others to participate, I hope to foster the development of more leaders and practitioners in the agricultural sector," she states.

CALA has also profoundly influenced her perspective on the role of agriculture in Africa's economic development. Grace believes that agriculture holds immense potential for transforming African nations into self-sustaining entities that significantly contribute to their GDPs. "CALA has deepened my understanding of how targeted efforts and strategic focus can leverage the power of agriculture for economic development in Africa," she says.

Regarding specific skills or knowledge gained from CALA, she highlights the importance of inter-organizational collaboration. "The ability to work effectively with leaders from various organizations was a unique skill I acquired from CALA. I learned the significance of collaboration, decision-making, and coordinated project implementation, providing me with valuable insights that I hadn't gained from other professional or educational experiences," she shares.

Finally, Grace expresses her gratitude for her CALA experience, describing it as a transformative learning journey. "I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to participate in the CALA program. The skills and lessons I learned continue to support my field work. CALA has played an instrumental role in my growth, and I am committed to using the skills and network I've gained to drive positive change in the agricultural sector," she concludes.

2.4 Temitope Adegroye: Cassava can turbocharge Nigeria's agricultural renaissance

Nigeria is at a crossroads. With immense agricultural potential, it could transform its economy and become a major food exporter. However, it first must overcome food crises and address its agricultural sector's challenges. Temitope Adegroye, the Managing Partner at Sahel Consulting Agriculture & Nutrition Ltd, says, "Nigeria is in a food crisis. We require passionate and driven leaders in the sector to rise up to the call to serve humanity at this critical period and address the food crisis which is no longer looming, but here."

He further emphasized the role of strong leadership in overcoming this crisis, arguing that agricultural leaders must have the capacity and commitment to take collaborative action. Adegroye underlined, "However, we can only give what we have as leaders and the leaders in agriculture need to build the capacity to address the issues collaboratively." His remarks highlight the urgency of the food crisis in Nigeria, the need for passionate and determined leadership, and the importance of collaboration in addressing such pressing issues.

Discussing his motivation to join the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA), Temitope explained, "I have a passion for developing the food systems in Nigeria and across Africa. I believe

that Africa can feed itself if we can address the critical challenges of insecurity, climate change, poor market access of small-scale producers, and policy inconsistencies." His statement underscores his strong belief in Africa's potential to achieve food security while overcoming multifaceted challenges.

Reflecting on his experience during the CALA Advanced Leadership Program, Temitope Adegroye said, "CALA gave me the platform to understand and appreciate the principles of collaborative leadership, the panacea for food systems development in Africa. It was a good reminder that I have a critical role in Nigeria and Africa's push for agricultural sustainability." His insights suggest that the program played an important role in sharpening his understanding of effective leadership and its significant impact on Africa's agricultural development.

Discussing the program's impact on his personal and professional development, Temitope revealed, "I am a better leader who is conscious of my role in the agriculture and food landscape and has the people and network of hungry established and emerging leaders to achieve my goals."

He shared key takeaways from his CALA experience: "A specific example is my ability to work with multiple stakeholders and align interests. During the program, the struggles of working with all team members from various organizations and different levels of leadership taught me patience and understanding of the priorities of different groups of people/stakeholders and how my objectives align with their interests – to obtain their buy-in. This has been particularly useful in my engagements with the public sector."

When asked about challenges he faced during the program, he responded, "Difficulty in aligning with other team members on activity milestones. This was addressed through smart planning and flexible execution." And speaking on what distinguishes CALA from other leadership programs, he opined, "CALA's focus on building leaders in the African agriculture landscape is unique and amazing because it is what we need at this critical time. The program is creating a network of vibrant leaders who can change the story of Africa's agriculture by leveraging innovation and partnerships."

Adegroye spoke on implementing CALA knowledge and skills in his work, saying, "I will discuss the instance of building partnerships for my organization. We developed a project that attracted interest from various partners. I drew on the lessons from CALA to build and manage the relationships with the partners. This has led to the successful implementation of the project and improved the organisation's profile."

He recalled a memorable experience, "One of the most memorable experiences was the exposure visit to Kenya to see first-hand the transformations happening in the agriculture sector. It opened my eyes to the possibilities and the potential that Africa has to transform its agriculture and food system. CALA has made me believe in the power of leadership and innovation to drive the changes we desire in the agriculture sector and the broader economy."

Speaking about the impact of CALA on his career and his advice for future delegates, he said, "CALA has

boosted my confidence and equipped me with the necessary skills to engage at different levels – from grassroots to policy levels. My advice to future delegates would be to come with an open mind, ready to learn, unlearn and relearn. Be prepared to challenge the status quo and make a difference.”

When asked about his role as CALA alumni, he said, “The alumni circle is critical to the program’s success since the cohorts will spend more time post-program solving problems than they spent together during the program. The alumni program is critical to keep the fire burning.” Speaking on his newly gained insights from CALA, Temitope highlighted the essence of teamwork and mutual support, stating, “Collaborative leadership – we need each other to deliver the food ecosystem of our dreams for Africa

Temitope spotlighted the overlooked opportunities in the Nigeria’s cassava seed system sub-sector. Renowned for his commitment to agricultural development, he suggests that this underexplored sector could be a powerhouse for job creation, income generation, and food security. “Our cassava seed system sub-sector is a treasure trove of untapped opportunities that could turbocharge Nigeria’s agricultural renaissance,” said Temitope. “These untapped prospects could be the springboard for driving economic growth and fortifying our national food security, but they remain largely unexploited.”

Capitalizing on his exhaustive experience and deep understanding of the agricultural value chains, Temitope stressed the indispensable role of collaboration among all cassava stakeholders to unlock the sector’s full potential. “The need for effective collaboration among all players in the cassava value chain cannot be overemphasized,” he asserted. “This collective approach is key to significantly boosting the sector’s productivity and thereby contributing to Nigeria’s overarching agricultural evolution.”

“Agriculture in Nigeria stands on the cusp of a major transformation,” said Temitope. “In this exciting period of change, I want to emphasize the crucial, catalytic role that the private sector can and must play.” Collaboration and innovation underscore the catalytic role of the private sector and the necessity for cross-industry collaboration with stakeholders along the entire value chain. Temitope said, “The private sector plays a critical role in driving growth in the agriculture and nutrition landscape and Sahel Consulting is intentional in the design and implementation of projects, putting the private sector as a major anchor of initiatives. Also, sustainable impact in the food ecosystem can only be delivered through strong stakeholder collaboration

along the value chain.” Despite implementing several high-impact intervention programs and focusing on key agricultural areas, Sahel Consulting is aware of the persist challenges. These include soaring food prices, unpredictable weather patterns, and socio-economic disruptions brought on by global events like COVID-19. However, Temitope steadfastly believed in the potential for innovation and transformation.

“We strongly believe that now, more than ever, there is an audience for innovative and practical strategies to strengthen the Nigerian agribusiness landscape,” said Temitope. He called for developing vibrant business models that promote local sourcing of raw materials, value addition, and consumption of made-in-Nigeria products, asserting these strategies can help mitigate the impacts of external crises.

Temitope’s message conveyed the urgency of this matter and a clear vision for how Nigeria’s agricultural sector could not only navigate current challenges but also lay the groundwork for a more resilient and sustainable future. In the face of a rapidly evolving global economy, Temitope’s comments underscore the pressing need for private sector involvement in the ongoing metamorphosis of the Nigerian agricultural sector. He firmly believes that the dynamism, innovation, and efficiency inherent in the private sector can stimulate growth and development in agriculture while the government continues to focus on implementing policies that support an enabling environment for a thriving ecosystem.

With years of experience in the field and a keen understanding of the country’s agricultural landscape, Temitope advocates for a collaborative effort involving the government and farmers and private businesses. This triangulated partnership is necessary to unlock the full potential of Nigeria’s agriculture and set it on a sustainable path to prosperity.

“Private sector participation in the agricultural sector goes beyond mere capital investment,” Temitope elaborated. “It involves bringing their innovative spirit, their penchant for efficiency, and their capacity for scale to bear on the pressing challenges and immense opportunities within the sector.”

3.0

Tanzania: Food Systems Champions Reimagining Tanzania's Agriculture

Featured Food Systems Champions in Tanzania include Elleykedo Ngoyani, a Principal Economist in the Ministry of Finance and Planning, representing the public sector. Elizabeth Swai, the Managing Director of AKM Glitters Company Limited, represents the private sector. Honest Mseri, the Executive Director of the Agricultural Non-State Actors Forum (ANSAF), represents the civil society sector. Gaudensia Bakile, as the General Manager of G2L Company Limited, also represents the private sector. Additionally, Editrudith Lukanga is the founder and executive director of the Environmental Management and Economic Development Organization (EMEDO).

Tanzania, a land rich in agricultural wealth, stands at a crossroads. Its untapped potential lies dormant within its fields, streams, and above all, within its people. Recognizing this, a cadre of visionaries, the Food Systems Champions of Tanzania, have risen, eager to usher in an era of sustainable growth and prosperity. Through their collective experience and wisdom, they discern the opportunities, acknowledge the obstacles, and envisage transformative solutions for the country's food systems. One of the most impactful opportunities lies within the hands of smallholder farmers. They are not merely tillers of the land, but the Champions see them as latent entrepreneurs primed to catalyze rural economies. Given the proper tools – improved access to financing, quality inputs, and actionable market data – these farmers could bloom into influential change agents, lifting their communities from the clutches of poverty and into prosperity. The Champions also see a gleaming promise in the private sector's active participation. Despite the challenges – inadequate capital, scant market information, and obstacles in reaching consumers – the agricultural value chains offer immense potential. They beckon investors and innovators to spur growth and bridge the chasm between farms and markets.

But seizing these opportunities is no easy feat. The Champions understand that robust policies on paper often lose their vigor when faced with the reality of implementation. The disjointed actions of diverse stakeholders, the scarce allocation of financial resources, and the lack of grassroots involvement form a formidable barrier that hampers the transition from policy to practice. Undeterred, the Champions propose a roadmap to navigate these complex challenges. Firstly, they advocate a paradigm shift in seeing smallholder farmers, treating them not as aid recipients but as empowered entrepreneurs. Secondly, fostering private sector involvement by cultivating an investment-friendly environment can trigger a ripple effect of growth across the agricultural sector. Thirdly, they call for an inclusive and collaborative ethos to bridge the gap in policy implementation. More excellent dialogue with non-state actors, wider engagement with community members, and synchronized efforts from all stakeholders can turn these well-intended policies

into actionable change. Lastly, the Champions see the transformative power of leadership development at grassroots levels. When communities are led by individuals endowed with the skills to challenge the status quo and instigate change, a tidal wave of transformation is inevitable. These Food Systems Champions are not merely observers of Tanzania's agriculture landscape but the sculptors of its future. By seeing the opportunities, facing the challenges, and envisioning the solutions, they kindle a beacon of hope, guiding the nation towards a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive agricultural future..

3.1 Empowering Tanzanian Farmers Through Innovative Clustering Approach: Insights from Ellykedo Ngonyani

Smallholder farmers in Tanzania are entrepreneurs who contribute significantly to the country's agricultural sector. Unfortunately, they often face significant challenges, such as a lack of access to financing, market information, and reliable inputs. To address these challenges, Ellykedo Ngonyani, a CALA graduate passionate about advancing Africa's agricultural sector through leadership and management skills, sees a clustering approach as a significant way to empower smallholder farmers

Government Efforts to Develop and Support the Agricultural Sector in Tanzania

Ngonyani is an economist who works for the Ministry of Finance and Planning in the Department of National Planning. In particular, he is responsible for leading the productive sectors, including agriculture. Tanzania's current development plan is called Vision 2025, which has specific long-term perspective plans for implementing the vision. Within the long-term perspective plan is a five-year development plan, and the country is implementing the third five-year plan. Ngonyani emphasized that agriculture is a priority area for the country regarding food security and employment.

An experienced economist, he has worked with pro-

ductive sectors for over a decade. He has a background in agricultural economics and has been engaging with the Ministry of Agriculture and key stakeholders involved in agriculture. "My background is in agricultural economics, and I have a passion for agriculture. With my position now as a lead economist with the government, I am at the point where I assume leadership roles. When the opportunity presented itself, I decided to sharpen my leadership skills, which is why I joined the CALA," he says.

Ngonyani pointed out that agriculture in Tanzania significantly contributes to the country's GDP and livelihood. As such, the Department of National Planning is working hard to ensure that the agricultural sector is developed and supported to achieve sustainable economic growth and development. He says it is essential that policymakers and stakeholders view smallholder farmers in Tanzania from the perspective of small business holders so as to unlock their potential as entrepreneurs capable of pushing economic development to the next level.

Considering smallholder farmers in Tanzania as entrepreneurs makes it easier to provide them with the necessary support and resources to succeed in their enterprises. This includes access to financing, market information, and reliable inputs, which are essential for the success of any small business. Ngonyani and other CALA delegates from Tanzania were instrumental in designing a groundbreaking clustering approach for the poultry value chain, transforming the lives of smallholder farmers and youth, and enabling them to become successful entrepreneurs in the Tanga region. The clustering approach promotes collaboration and partnerships between smallholder farmers, commercial hatcheries, input suppliers, and financial intermediaries, resulting in increased profitability and improved farmer livelihoods. The Tanzanian government has recognized the approach's effectiveness and has set aside land for youth and women to engage in agriculture using this mechanism. Ngonyani says the clustering approach promotes agricultural transformation and contributes to Tanzania's national food security objectives. This approach converges inputs and supplies with smallholder farmers, creating

PROFILE

Ellykedo Ngonyani is a highly skilled Principal Economist at the Ministry of Finance and Planning in Tanzania. With a demonstrated history of working in the public policy industry, Ellykedo possesses expertise in entrepreneurship, econometrics, rural development, international trade, and economic development. His analytical abilities and comprehensive understanding of the economic landscape make him an invaluable asset in shaping national development frameworks.

In his current role, Ellykedo is responsible for designing, preparing, analyzing, and providing strategic advice on medium- and long-term national development frameworks, including National Visions and National Medium-Term Development Plans. He plays a vital role in identifying and assessing growth potentials within the country's productive sectors, contributing to

formulating effective policies and strategies. Ellykedo's insights into macro and sectoral policies and his understanding of broad socio-economic development issues enable him to provide valuable guidance on sustainable development.

Prior to his position at the Ministry of Finance and Planning, Ellykedo served as a Project Officer at Dalberg, a renowned consulting firm in Dar es Salaam.

During his tenure, he was an integral part of the D-Implement team, which aimed to lead an agricultural transformation in Tanzania by supporting the agriculture ecosystem to adopt innovative business practices. Ellykedo made significant contributions to the Dodoma region, focusing on the sunflower value chain and aligning agricultural practices with the national agenda of commercialization and industrialization.

Ellykedo's extensive experience also includes his role as a Senior Policy Analyst at the President's Office Planning Commission. Here, he played a key role in strategic thinking for the national economy, analyzing growth potentials within productive sectors and advising on policy formulation. He actively contributed to the development of the National Five Year Development Plan, with a strong emphasis on industrialization for economic transformation and human development. Additionally, Ellykedo actively participated in the preparations of various National Annual Development Plans, contributing to Tanzania's sustainable and inclusive growth.

Ellykedo has enriched his professional journey by working as an Export Promotion Officer at the Tanzania Trade Development Authority (TANTRADE). In this capacity, he facilitated access to external markets for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), offering guidance to exporters and coordinating export promotion programs such as trade fairs and exhibitions. His efforts contributed to expanding Tanzania's international trade networks and promoting its products and services on a global scale. Ellykedo's academic background includes a Post-Graduate Diploma focused on Poverty Analysis from ESRF/REPOA/ISS - Erasmus Mundus. Additionally, he served as an Assistant Lecturer at Dodoma University, where he shared his knowledge and expertise in economics, project appraisal, and planning.



a sustainable mechanism that ensures input suppliers and farmers have a market for off-takers, and financial intermediaries can finance suppliers and farmers when they come together.

Ngonyani reflected on the impact of the CALA training program on his leadership skills, stating, "In terms of leadership, it has made me realize what issues in leadership are supposed to be. For instance, when organizing key stakeholders, what attributes, as a leader, are you supposed to portray within that context? The program has impacted me in the right direction. It has sharpened my leadership skills in my career, and I'm striving to become a better leader. This program has helped me understand how leaders are supposed to behave and lead effectively."

He says some of the leadership skills he has improved are organizational and communication skills, decisiveness, visionary thinking, adaptability, and integrity, all essential attributes for effective leaders.

He also noted, "With this program, we managed to work as a team. So, I have strengthened my team spirit and skills. Also, because it's a self-paced program, you need some discipline in time management. This program has taught me how to manage time and how to lead groups of colleagues under assigning problem analysis, and how to spot some traits that the colleagues may have to execute the assignment."

Ngonyani spoke enthusiastically about how the CALA program positively impacted his personal and professional growth, stating, "This course has integrated me with so many people, for instance, when we had an opportunity to attend the AGRF in Kigali, and through that, we met some prolific personnel and business community. So you know what other people are doing and what kind of businesses are happening in agriculture. So, it has widened my entrepreneurial perspective to see if I can do that in Tanzania. I am planning to do so in the near future, but I need preparation for that. This program has helped me both professionally and personally."

When asked about his memorable experiences during the program, Ellykedo mentioned attending the AGRF Forum and engaging with colleagues from different countries, as well as working on a project that made him realize the impact he could have on his community. He said, "Another memorable experience was the particular project each group of students had to undertake. It made me realize how deeply I can impact my community with such kinds of projects in hand."

Ellykedo also emphasized the importance of working together between the public and private sectors, stating, "From the policy level, the private sector from the execution level, how we integrate the two, and how it lasted to make the effectiveness of the project. So I could say partnership between public and private sectors is crucial because it affects both ways."

Finally, when asked how the program assisted him in exploring new opportunities to promote the government's agenda for agriculture, Ellykedo noted, "For instance, we need the program in agro-ecological systems and also climate issues so we could integrate those issues to see how much our agriculture practices can hurt climate and how we can manage climate to better the agriculture practices. So, it has helped me

combine food agriculture resilience with the global climate issues and in Tanzania, in particular."

Ngonyani described how the CALA program changed him: "Of course, I am different. As I have said, I had an opportunity for coaching sessions, individual coaching sessions, group coaching sessions, and, of course, with the program itself. The way they have structured it and the topics they picked while I was studying changed me a lot." He noted that the program helped him to identify his strengths and weaknesses as a leader and organize himself to develop the necessary qualities.

Ngonyani also stated that the CALA program has helped him to address work challenges, particularly by engaging colleagues in teamwork and identifying their strengths and weaknesses to achieve organizational objectives. When asked for advice from individuals who want to join CALA in the future, Ngonyani encouraged them to participate actively, saying that the program helps engage with day-to-day issues that affect communities and agriculture. Regarding CALA's contribution to Tanzania's national food security objectives, Ngonyani stated that the program aligns with the priority areas of the Agriculture Sector Development Program, which aims to improve the enabling environment for agriculture and address productivity and profitability issues. He emphasized that agriculture is a priority sector in Tanzania, and any changes in the sector significantly impact the population. Ngonyani also highlighted AGRA's impact on Tanzania's agriculture sector, stating that the organization has done a tremendous job addressing food security and working with the government to tackle sector challenges.

3.2 Elizabeth Swai pioneers innovative youth-led chicken project to combat joblessness in Tanga

Ms Elizabeth Swai is an exceptional woman, a visionary, and a trailblazer in the Tanzanian poultry industry. She has been quietly making waves by breeding Kuroiler chickens - turning them into the go-to choice for farmers seeking to profit through poultry farming. Her journey as a poultry entrepreneur began in 2006 as the founder of AKM Glitters Company Limited. Since then, she has earned numerous accolades, including the Malkia wa Nguvu 2019 award, offered by the Clouds Media Group in Tanzania, among other honours. She is an authorised Kuroiler breeder in Tanzania. Every year, her company breeds, on average, 3.4 million chicks, and she wants to double the number.

In 2021, she again demonstrated her unwavering commitment to excellence by joining the AGRA-led Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA). Through CALA, she says she has gained invaluable insights and clarity that will allow her to take her work to even greater heights, helping her to transform the lives of even more people.

"I am naturally driven to make a positive impact and bring about meaningful changes in people's lives, particularly in the realm of food systems. Through CALA, I gained greater clarity on building durable and sustainable systems, which has inspired me to work with the government and donors to create a sustainable poultry business for young people."

Ms Swai was chosen from a competitive pool of 382

eligible delegates from eight African nations in 2021: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ghana, and Nigeria. In December 2022, 16 months after they started the leadership program, they earned their CALA certificate.

While researching for the perfect Action Learning Project, a flagship project in CALA where delegates are required to design, implement and monitor a project that will contribute to their country's National agriculture investment plans (NAIPs/Flagships), she came up with the idea of a brooders centre for youths in Tanga, as a different business model from the over 500 brooders across the country that she supplies with a package of day-old chicks and tools, resources, extension services and training. Ms Elizabeth, with her Team Umoja ALP members, Honest Mseri, Ellykedo Ngonyani and Ms. Nsia Raymond approached Tanga City Council and, with the help of the TangaYetu project enabled by Fondation Botnar, the five brooder houses were established, at Neema Area, along Pangani Road in the city. The city council provided the land, but initially, Ms Elizabeth and her team Umoja members, through Ms Elizabeth's company, AKM Glitters Company Limited, had to take out a loan to build the brooders as the donors needed more convincing about the project's viability.

"For me, the CALA program was all about turning decisions into actions. At first, it was tough because I had to convince the youths that the chicken value chain was viable for self-employment. Many of them dropped out after training, but with perseverance, more training, and guidance, we were able to get about 50 youths (19 female, 31 male) on board and passionate about the project. Today, each brooder has slightly over 2000

chickens, which are ready for sale after 3 to 4 weeks," she notes.

Ms Swai provided leadership training to the 50 youths. One of the greatest impact of her leadership to the youth was that these youth formed five small groups of 10 youths each and elected their own leaders. Each group (10 youths) manages their own brooder house. "Each group has its committee, and they make their own decisions but consult with us (AKM Glitters) when necessary. Guidance is critical, and we provide training in mindset change, management, financial management, and group development. These skills are essential for young people to understand business and work together as business partners," she says.

"This result would not have been possible without my training as a CALA student. Through engagements like these, we instil a passion and drive to put more effort into transforming food systems, which is crucial for addressing gaps in nutrition. If we manage our food systems properly, our nutrition and environment can become sustainable. It's all about how we manage our resources," she notes. Ms. Swai's dream is to open such centres in diverse locations in and out of Tanzania and translate the business model into a formidable international franchise.



PROFILE

Elizabeth Swai is a talented entrepreneur with a passion for driving sustainable agriculture, empowering women, and building successful businesses.

In 2020, Elizabeth founded Voice of Agriculture Online TV, an innovative media platform based in Dar es Salaam. Using the platform Elizabeth is dedicated to communicating vital information on climate-smart agriculture, nutrition, agri-investment, and policy has greatly contributed to raising awareness and supporting informed decision-making in these critical areas.

Elizabeth has excelled as an entrepreneur in the poultry industry. As the founder of AKM Glitters Company Limited, she demonstrated her exceptional business acumen and leadership abilities. Elizabeth secured funding to establish and manage the USD 4.3 million Kuroiler Breed Mother Unit Model project in collaboration with the World Poultry Program. This initiative, funded by the Melinda and Gates Foundation, aimed to introduce a new breed of poultry into Tanzania. Additionally, Elizabeth partnered with various organizations, including EFTHA and SEAF, to implement projects that supported smallholder farmers, improved feed mill infrastructure, and promoted sustainable poultry enterprises across the country.

Elizabeth's expertise extends beyond entrepreneurship. She has mentored and trained individuals and organizations, equipping them with essential skills in career management, communication, HIV & AIDS, records management, and poultry keeping. Her commitment to empowering others is evident through her mentorship of poultry keepers, youths in business, and a CEO under the CEO Round Table of Tanzania.

Elizabeth's contributions to the agricultural sector have earned her recognition on both national and international platforms. She has served as a panelist at renowned events such as the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) and the World Economic Forum (WEF), where she shared her insights and expertise on various topics related to agriculture and entrepreneurship. Alongside her entrepreneurial pursuits, Elizabeth has actively engaged with numerous organizations and associations related to agriculture. Elizabeth serves as a board member of GIBRI (Young Investor and my Mentee) and the Tanzania Meat Board, holding strategic positions that enable her to contribute to important decisions in these organizations.

At the time of the interview, held at the end of February 2023, she noted that over 10,000 chickens were generating profits. “Each youth here receives a monthly allowance of 70,000, and they still have profits to collect for about six months. This will enable them to sustain their business and grow even further.” The young people are accommodated and care for the chickens twenty-four hours a day.

Apart from the 50 youths running and managing the five brooders, Ms Swai’s team works with overstaying farmers who keep poultry in their households. The program had its share of challenges but is slowly gaining ground. According to the project marketing lead, Abdulrzzck Jiwe, the first two months were challenging due to the traditional preferences of the local market, which initially did not embrace the Kuroiler breed.

To change this perception, the project leaders worked closely with the government livestock officers to acquire new clients in different locations in Tanga.

Looking to the future, he sees great potential for the project to break boundaries, especially if they can replicate it in other areas.

According to Ms Swai, poultry farming is more than just a nutrition and income generation solution at the household and investment levels. The project has marketers who make outreach to youth and women groups and encourage them to rear Kuroiler chickens.

As the founder of AKM Glitters, she has been making significant strides in proving the commercial viability of local chicken farming. This sector is proliferating and has enormous potential to benefit millions of youth nationwide.

“The poultry sector is not yet fully recognised, but we are in discussions with the government to determine its contribution to the national economy. Poultry farming is growing fast and has the potential to benefit the majority of the population, with around 75% of Tanzanians involved in poultry,” she notes.

Swai’s work has been noticed, with orders pouring in from countries such as Madagascar, Comoros, Malawi, Burundi, and Kenya. Her company’s relationship with AGRA has also been incredibly positive, with Swai benefiting from virtual training facilitated by AGRA and high-level visits at her poultry farms. She also has a good working relationship with FAO Madagascar, Agri-farm in Madagascar, and several other NGOs.

City director hails AKM Glitters in the youth poultry project.

According to Ms Hawa Msuya, the acting city director, the Tanga Yetu project’s partnership with CALA’s Team Umoja ALP group through AKM Glitters is a significant step in enabling youth to engage in farming and livestock keeping. “After six months of training, these youth will become trainers to other young people joining the program. AKM Glitters has taught them how to raise chickens from one day to one month old and, even after selling some chickens, how to keep the remaining chickens until they reach 4–5 months.

She is grateful for the leadership of Ms Swai and her

team at AKM Glitters and CALA’s Team Umoja ALP group for enabling young people to learn chicken rearing. “They are teaching us how to rear chickens, from one-day-old chicks to one-month-old ones. After one month, some people take them home and rear them until they are four to five months old before selling them. If they have taken laying hens, they will start laying eggs, and they can sell them or hatch them to get more chicks,” she noted.

How the youths benefit

Ms Msuya explained that “the fifty young people rear chickens for six months. And at the end of each month, they sell over 10,000 chickens. After selling, they take the profits. “This project has five chicken-rearing groups, each with ten young people. Therefore, each group has about 2,000 chickens. They are in their third rearing stage, and these young people are being trained to participate in both farming and animal husbandry.

“After completing this project, the City Council plans to provide loans to young people taught how to rear chickens. After six months, they will become mentors for other young people who will participate in similar projects,” she explained. “We expect that they will maintain the groups and transform them into cooperatives or saccos,” she noted.

The public official noted that many young people graduate from college and are left without jobs. “The government has seen one way to provide young people with self-employment is by grouping them with various training in agriculture, vegetable farming, or chicken farming. When we say agriculture, we mix livestock farming with crop farming. So the government has seen an easy and simple way to help young people by involving them in livestock farming and crop farming,” she says. She notes that the chicken pilot, led by CALA’s Team Umoja ALP group through AKM Glitters, has proved a success and should be continued and emulated. “This is a great project, and we welcome everyone in Tanzania and beyond to come and see how it works,” she says.

Youth voices: Agents of change

Twenty-six years old Ms Kulthumu Fadhili Yambi is the leader of one of the groups. She is grateful to the Tanga Yetu Project for selecting her and the other 49 youths to participate in the project led by AKM Glitters. To her, the project has been life-changing regarding personal development and business outlook.

“Through Madam Elizabeth, I have learned many things. Firstly, as a young girl, I have learned to be confident and to dedicate myself. The most important thing I have learned is that nothing is impossible with determination, courage, dedication, and wholeheartedness. If you set your mind to something, you can achieve it, but if you lack determination, you can fail.”

Ms Yambi says the pilot project is the beginning of a new thing in her life. “I want to become a successful businesswoman who employs herself and creates jobs for other young people like me. I want to lift them out of the unemployment mindset and work with them in business to make a profit and sustain ourselves financially.”

31-year-old Vivian Faustine Mtejeta is the overall lead-

er of the 50 youths. "All of us were jobless and often hopeless before we got into the project," he says. He has learned a lot from Ms Swai, and his biggest concern is the sustainability of the groups. They are working with the Tanga Municipal Council to ensure that all group members get national IDs and become legally registered so that they can move to the next level. He says Ms Swai's decision to allow all participants to buy chickens at discounted rates was a master stroke. "Most of us have some chickens at home, thanks to the

project. It has not limited us from making more money, and we can showcase what we have at home, and more people believe in us," he says.

The Tanga Municipality's Youth Programme Officer, Simon Mdele, thanked Ms Swai, CALA's Team Umoja ALP group and her AKM Glitters staff for their chicken raising education. He says only 50 of the over 120,000 young people in Tanga City Council have benefited from this scheme. He stated his desire to see stake-

PROFILE: MSERI'S JOURNEY FROM PROJECT OFFICER TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: *CALA transformative leadership empowerment journey*

When Mseri, a dedicated project officer, found himself thrust into a management role as the head of operations, he realized the need for effective leadership skills. Lacking formal training, he decided to join the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) program. Reflecting on his personal experience and the profound impact of CALA, Mseri passionately expresses, "I cannot emphasize enough how transformative it has been for my career. CALA equipped me with an array of essential skills that have significantly shaped my leadership journey."

Mseri vividly recalls the moment of transition and the challenges it brought. "When I made the transition from a project officer to a management role, suddenly finding myself as the head of operations, I was entrusted with the responsibility of providing effective leadership to my team," Mseri shares. "However, I lacked formal training in leadership, which is when I made the decision to join the CALA program. Little did I know that it would be a game-changer for me." The CALA program delved deep into the intricacies of team-building, providing Mseri with the knowledge and understanding needed to foster a collaborative and productive work environment. "It helped me understand the dynamics of bringing individuals together, allowing me to create a strong and cohesive team," Mseri shares, emphasizing the program's invaluable contribution to his leadership development.

Moreover, CALA's focus on impact measurement enabled Mseri to assess the effectiveness of their initiatives and make informed decisions based on data-driven insights. "I gained invaluable insights into measuring impact, allowing me to steer our organization towards sustainable growth and positive outcomes," Mseri explains, showcasing the practical value of the CALA program.

However, the emphasis on emotional intelligence resonated most profoundly with Mseri. "Emotional intelligence is often overlooked in academic and professional settings, but it plays a vital role in effective leadership," Mseri asserts. CALA provided him with a deep understanding of emotional intelligence and its practical application, enabling him to navigate challenges while prioritizing his team's well-being and mental health.

"The program delved into the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, teaching me how to communicate with my team and listen to them even if I disagreed," Mseri reflects. "This was critical in my leadership training, as it allowed me to build trust and foster a supportive work environment."

The tangible outcomes of the CALA program quickly became evident in Mseri's career trajectory. Shortly after completing CALA, he received an unexpected call from his organization's board, offering him the role of executive director due to leadership changes. "This appointment was

a testament to the impact of the CALA program," Mseri proudly states. "My implementation of the CALA teachings showcased my leadership qualities and solidified my position within the organization."

Recognizing the significance of emotional intelligence in the agricultural sector, Mseri emphasizes, "This skill is often overlooked, but it is crucial in leading with empathy, managing diverse stakeholders, and fostering a healthy work environment." CALA's emphasis on emotional intelligence equipped Mseri with the tools to excel in his leadership role and positively impact the agricultural sector.

"As leaders, we have a responsibility to uplift one another and forge ahead together," Mseri emphasizes. "CALA alumni, including myself, have proven invaluable in this regard. Equipped with stakeholder management, stress management, and effective influence skills, we can make a lasting impact."

Drawing from his own experience, Mseri wholeheartedly recommends continuing the CALA program to empower leaders who face challenges in their respective roles. "CALA has been the catalyst for my professional growth," Mseri affirms. "By nurturing leaders equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, CALA can contribute to the growth and transformation of the agriculture sector, creating a promising future for Africa."

With unwavering determination, Mseri remains dedicated to promoting agricultural productivity, advocating for smallholder farmers, and making a meaningful contribution to the industry's growth. CALA has instilled in him the passion and drive to create a positive impact. He firmly believes that with more leaders like himself, the future of agriculture in Africa looks exceptionally promising.

"I have realised that through visionary leadership, strategic investments, and unwavering commitment, Tanzania can unlock the bountiful potential of its agriculture sector. It is a future where growth knows no bounds, smallholder farmers thrive, and the nation emerges as a beacon of agricultural excellence," Mseri says.

His exceptional management skills and commitment to sustainable agriculture practices and empowering smallholder farmers have earned him recognition as a leading agriculture leader. In the capacity of the secretariat for the national task force, Mseri led the effort to develop the National Post-Harvest Management Strategy (2019-2029) for Tanzania. He also contributed to other agricultural policies and plans including the Agricultural Statistical Strategic Plan, Cooperatives Policy and Tanzania Food systems pathways 2023. He is also a member of the national sector skills on Agribusiness and Agro-processing. With over 15 years of experience in the agricultural sector, He holds a Master Degree in Economics from the University of Dar es Salaam.



holders reproduce the idea in outlying areas so that more young people might take advantage of it. He urged Ms Swai to continue her leadership efforts in using poultry farming to create employment opportunities for the youth.

3.3 Honest Mseri: Leadership as the Catalyst for Transformation in Tanzania's Agricultural Sector

In the vast expanse of Tanzania's untapped arable land lies a world of opportunities waiting to be harnessed, according to Honest Mseri, the Interim Executive Director and Head of Operations at the Agricultural Non-State Actors Forum (ANSAF). As a graduate of the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA), Mseri is acutely aware of this immense potential and envisions a future where Tanzania's agriculture sector flourishes, ushering in economic prosperity and improving the lives of smallholder farmers.

Addressing Challenges and Empowering Smallholder Farmers

The organisation he leads, ANSAF is a non-partisan and non-governmental organization that has developed various interventions to address the challenges facing the agricultural sector in Tanzania. "We work we work to influence government prioritization through evidence based advocacy. We also educate smallholder producers on investment trends. ANSAF also advocates for an increased budget to improve performance and livelihoods," he says.

Mseri has been a driving force in the creation and success of JUWAVITA, an initiative of ANSAF that unites smaller producers and gives them a platform to identify their challenges and come up with their solutions. This community-led approach has successfully addressed the unique needs of smallholder farmers in Tanzania, leading to sustainable solutions created and implemented by the farmers themselves.

"At ANSAF our focus areas include value chain development, climate change, cooperatives, post-harvest management, nutrition, and youth engagement in the agricultural sector. We are working to reduce post-harvest losses, strengthen national post-harvest management systems, advocate for better nutrition, and create opportunities for youth in the sector," he says.

Mseri emphasises that Tanzania's agricultural sector presents immense opportunities for growth and transformation. Untapped arable land, the potential for irrigation farming, and a burgeoning livestock sector hold great promise. However, various challenges, such as low productivity, inadequate storage and processing facilities, and a shortage of extension officers, impede progress. Effective leadership is pivotal in addressing these challenges and harnessing the opportunities.

The key to unlocking this potential lies in strategic investments and transformative leadership. Mseri passionately advocates for irrigation farming as a game-changer for Tanzania's agriculture. "I passionately advocate for irrigation farming as a game-changer for Tanzania's agriculture. With ap-

proximately 700,000 hectares of water bodies and more than 20,000,000 hectares of land suitable for irrigation, the stage is set for a productivity revolution. By tapping into this resource, Tanzania can substantially increase its agricultural output, fueling economic growth and greatly enhancing agriculture value-added exports," he notes.

But the possibilities do not end there. Tanzania's livestock sector, second only to Ethiopia in Africa, offers boundless opportunities. Yet, it grapples with the shackles of low productivity and a disheartening rate of milk wastage due to inadequate processing and storage capacity. Mseri sees this as a pressing challenge that demands immediate attention. To overcome it, Tanzania must invest in enhancing its capacity to absorb milk production, ensuring that valuable resources are not lost and smallholder farmers can reap the rewards they deserve.

Mseri is also aware that Tanzania's burgeoning population presents a unique advantage. "With a youthful demographic, where the mean age ranges from 18 to 20 years old, lies the potential to revolutionise the entire agricultural value chain. By harnessing this younger generation's energy, innovation, and determination, Tanzania can unlock new avenues of growth, create employment opportunities, and propel the agriculture sector to unprecedented heights," he says.

Moreover, Mseri envisions a future where Tanzania fully embraces value addition. The current practice of exporting raw products, such as cashews, limits the country's revenue potential and job creation. However, by investing in local processing and value addition, Tanzania can elevate its agricultural exports, generate higher returns, and foster a thriving business ecosystem. Every step along the value chain becomes an opportunity for economic empowerment and inclusive growth from the fields to the shelves.

A multiplicity of leaders to provide extensive support for smallholder farmers needed. Mseri says Tanzania faces significant challenges in realising accelerated economic empowerment via agriculture. "Low productivity, stemming from factors such as the limited use of quality seeds and a shortage of extension officers, poses a formidable hurdle," he says. Mseri recognises the urgent need to address these issues head-on. The country must prioritise the quality and accessibility of seeds, ensuring that farmers have the tools they need to maximise productivity. Additionally, the shortage of extension officers requires immediate attention. With only a fraction of the necessary personnel, knowledge transfer and technical support are needed, stifling progress. "Tanzania must invest in building the capacity of extension services to empower farmers with the latest agricultural practices and innovations," he says.

Moreover, Mseri highlights the critical role of leadership in tackling the sector's challenges and unleashing its potential. He asserts, "Building leadership capacity is crucial for addressing the capacity challenges we face." This transformation must transcend sectors, reaching the public, civil society, and private domains. Strong leadership brings together diverse stakeholders, facilitating collaboration, and driving collective action towards agricultural sector improvements.

Mseri goes further, emphasizing the importance of independent reviews. Leaders with the ability to provide

PROFILE

Gaude Bakilile is the General Manager at G2L Company Ltd, a position held since September 2020. Before this role, she served as the Monitoring and Evaluation Manager at the VUNA Project – G2L Company from November 2016 to August 2017. She also worked as the Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator at YES Tanzania from May 2013 to October 2014, and as a Project Manager at CRS-KIMKUMAKA partner from November 2008 to April 2013. Gaude holds a Bachelor of Arts and Social Science (BA) degree in Economics from the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), which they completed from 2004 to 2007.



unbiased assessments can critically evaluate the government's performance, identifying areas of success and areas that require improvement. By promoting transparency and accountability, independent reviews foster a culture of continuous growth and ensure that Tanzania's agricultural sector remains on the path to sustainable development.

Realizing the opportunities and overcoming the challenges in Tanzania's agricultural sector requires a paradigm shift in leadership. Mseri ardently states, "Building the capacity of leaders in the public, civil society, and private sectors, and developing more leaders who can provide independent reviews will be critical to achieving sustainable agriculture development in Tanzania."

"We require a multiplicity of leaders to provide extensive support for small-holder farmers, enabling reduced production costs, enhanced productivity, and the promotion of business-oriented cooperatives. This concerted effort will ultimately unlock the benefits within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)," he says.

3.4 Gaudensia John Bakilile: Driving Innovation in Agro-Processing and Trading

The future of sustainable and inclusive economic development in Tanzania lies in the hands of passionate and dedicated leaders like Ms Gaudensia Bakilile, who is driving innovation in agro-processing and trading as the General Manager of G2L Company Limited.

Before undergoing the program at the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) Advanced Leadership program, Ms Bakilile was committed to promoting the welfare of smallholder farmers.

After completing the program, her eyes were opened more comprehensively and deeper. She gained valuable insights and skills that have enabled her to take the proper steps in helping smallholder farmers. The program has equipped her with new knowledge and approaches to address the agricultural sector's challenges. It has enabled her to become a more effective leader and advocate for sustainable and inclusive economic development in Tanzania.

Ms Bakilile learned the importance of setting clear learning goals and creating strategies to achieve them while participating in the CALA. Through the program, she gained valuable insights into personal and organizational growth. She developed the skills to assess her strengths and weaknesses, identify areas for improvement, and create effective strategies to meet her goals.

Ms. Bakilile's participation in the CALA program also helped her to understand the importance of continuous learning in personal and professional development. She learned that investing in personal growth benefits the individual and the organizations and communities they serve. As a result, she has developed a habit of regularly reflecting on her performance and setting new learning goals to enhance her leadership abilities, coaching and mentoring skills, and personal growth.

As the General Manager of G2L Company Limited, Ms Bakilile has applied the knowledge and skills gained from the CALA program to improve the company's performance and growth. She has created strategies to address the challenges facing smallholder farmers and the agricultural sector, such as climate change, limited access to finance, and fake inputs. Under her leadership, the company has implemented innovative initiatives, such as farmer training and access to finance. During ALP Ms. Bakilile learned that can use the same approach to implement on maize project to at least 2000 SHFs of maize who will produce the products specific to G2L.

Ms. Bakilile's experience at CALA has enabled her to become an effective leader and advocate for sustainable and inclusive economic development in Tanzania. She understands the importance of continuous learning and growth and encourages others to adopt a growth mindset to achieve personal and professional excellence.

Under her leadership, G2L Company Limited has successfully implemented

initiatives that have improved the livelihoods of hundreds of smallholder farmers. The company's innovative approach to integrating small-scale production with national and regional buyers and consumers of high-quality whole grains has set them apart. However, as a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME), G2L Company Limited has faced challenges securing funding.

Ms Bakilile's participation in CALA's Advanced Leadership program helped her develop new skills and strategies to challenges. She learned better communication skills and problem-solving abilities, enabling her to build a better team and achieve some of the company's goals. The program also helped her work more effectively with her team, and they now collaborate to achieve their common goals.

"With the right investments and policies, Tanzania's agricultural potential can be unlocked to benefit smallholder farmers and the entire value chain," she says. She adds, "As CALA graduates, I want to lead the charge to make this a reality. I want to be part of the business leaders rewriting the future of sustainable and inclusive economic development in Tanzania."

During her participation in the Agribusiness Dealroom event, Ms. Bakilile gained valuable insight that put G2L Company Limited's plans for a new venture to launch a baby food project that prioritizes nutrition into the right perspective. The project will require between US\$1.5 million to US\$4 million from banks or investors and will use at least 75% of maize, 5% of soybeans, and 20% of other nutritional crops to create instant baby food products.

Ms. Bakilile notes that G2L manages a fully capitalized and coordinated supply chain for processed food and dried agricultural commodities and has established a strong network of smallholder farmers, farmer associations, local agro-dealers, distributors, and dry commodity traders. The project is a significant milestone for G2L as it seeks to optimize production through economies of scale while enhancing structures that build value chain capacity and enable trading commodities.

Despite being an SME company with a turnover below US\$1 million, G2L Company Limited is optimistic about securing funding for their new project. Although most investors at the event were looking for more prominent companies, G2L engaged an investor that fits their portfolio and is hopeful that the relationship will result in funding.

As an emerging player in the food processing and agricultural commodities trading sector, G2L Company Limited's venture into the baby food market is a testament to its commitment to delivering high-quality products that prioritize nutrition. The launch of the baby food project will offer consumers a healthy alternative to processed foods, contributing to better health outcomes for children in Tanzania and beyond.

Ms Bakilile joined G2L Company Limited's Vuna Project in 2016 as the Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, primarily focusing on ensuring that the company's programs and interventions effectively supported smallholder farmers. Under her leadership, the Vuna Project implemented several initiatives, including farmer training and access to finance, that improved

the livelihoods of thousands of farmers.

In 2020, Bakilile was promoted to General Manager of G2L Company Ltd. she leads the company's strategic direction, builds partnerships with stakeholders, and drives innovation in agro-processing and trading.

Bakilile's dedication to promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development in Tanzania led to her selection as a participant in CALA 2020 cohort. The program brought together government, private sector, and civil society leaders. Bakilile was among nearly 80 participants from eight countries, including Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. The cohort was broadly represented across the three sectors, with 44% government, 31% private, and 25% civil society. Women leaders accounted for nearly half of the cohort.

As a firm believer in Tanzania's agricultural potential, Bakilile's mission is to unlock it through suitable investments and advocating for the right policies. The company she manages, G2L Company Ltd, seeks to connect smallholder farmers with local and international markets by focusing on agro-processing and trading. Bakilile's experience as the Monitoring and Evaluation Manager has made her responsible for overseeing the agro-processing and trading company's overall operations and growth.

In addition to her role as a General Manager, Bakilile is an experienced coach and mentor in various business areas, including finance, sales and marketing, human resources, logistics and supply chain, product development, engineering, and IT. Her expertise in these fields has helped her to develop effective strategies and plans that have contributed to the growth and success of the companies she has worked with. With her coaching skills, Bakilile has also helped to build the capacity of individuals and teams, enabling them to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

Bakilile says that G2L Company Limited has been making waves in the industry with its innovative approach to integrating small-scale production with national and regional buyers and consumers of high-quality processed food and whole grains.

"Our success lies in managing a fully capitalized and coordinated supply chain for processed food and dried agricultural commodities, which has established a strong supply chain network of smallholder farmers, farmers associations, local agro-dealers, distributors, and dry commodity traders of Paddy, Common bean, and Maize," says Ms Gaude Bakilile, the General Manager of G2L Company Limited.

G2L Company Limited has achieved a lot under the leadership of Ms Bakilile. However, despite their achievements, the company has faced challenges securing funding as a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME). This is a common challenge faced by many SMEs in Tanzania.

"What prompted me to join the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) Advanced Leadership program was the realization that I needed to overcome gaps in my company to increase productivity and revenue. After realizing this, I heard that CALA was offering a leadership program, so I decided to join and see what they had to offer," she said.

During the program, Ms Bakilile learned better communication skills and how to handle problems, which has helped her build a better team to achieve her company's goals. "After the leadership program, we can communicate better with our customers, handle pricing issues more efficiently, and have improved problem-solving abilities. We have set clear goals and made plans for the next five years, established new projects to attract investors, and improved our marketing strategies," she said.

The leadership program has not only helped Ms Bakilile improve her leadership approach but also helped her work more effectively with her team. "In my company, we now work as a team, and everyone understands I am the leader. We collaborate to achieve our common goal, and it's no longer a challenge for me to work with them," she said.

Despite the challenges facing SMEs in Tanzania, G2L Company Limited is determined to continue promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development in Tanzania. With Ms Bakilile's leadership, the company is unlocking Tanzania's agricultural potential through suitable investments and advocating for the right policies. They seek to connect smallholder farmers with local and international markets by focusing on agro-processing and trading. Their innovative approach to integrating small-scale production with national and regional buyers and consumers of high-quality processed food and whole grains has made waves in the industry.

One of the biggest challenges that G2L Company Limited faces is related to farmers and the private sector. For farmers, the challenges include climate change, fake inputs, and limited access to finance. These challenges make it difficult to get the raw materials and quality needed for their products. The private sector needs more access to working capital and lacks business skills. Through CALA, Ms Bakilile and her team developed new skills and strategies for working with farmers, identifying high-quality inputs, and securing financing for their projects.

The challenges facing G2L Company Limited are not unique to the industry. Climate change, access to finance, and fake inputs are ongoing challenges that require collaboration from all stakeholders in the value chain, including the government and private sector. Ms Bakilile emphasized the importance of collaboration and building connections to overcome these challenges.

Despite the challenges, G2L Company Limited plans to implement a new product for the market in the coming year. However, they still need help securing financing, weather predictions, and government support. Ms Bakilile is interested in mentoring others in the future. She advises CALA delegates to build connections, reduce the time it takes for daily activities, and consider geographical location when choosing groups.

Through CALA, Ms Bakilile and her team developed new skills and approaches to addressing their challenges in farming and the private sectors. They learned the importance of visual appeal and marketing in attracting customers and investors. CALA helped them develop new skills and approaches to overcome their challenges.

As G2L Company Limited continues to promote sustainable and inclusive economic development in Tanzania, Ms Bakilile is optimistic about the future. She believes Tanzania's agricultural potential can be unlocked with suitable investments and policies to benefit smallholder farmers and the entire value chain.

3.5 Enhancing Agricultural Policy Implementation in Tanzania: Editrudith Lukanga's Insights and Recommendations

Tanzania has a very promising yet challenging duality of policy-making and implementation in the agricultural sector, says Editrudith Lukanga, founder and Executive Director of Tanzania's Environmental Management and Economic Development Organization (EMEDO).

"While the country has robust agricultural policies in place, their translation into effective actions often falls short," she said. "This bottleneck primarily stems from the process of operationalizing these policies, which begins at the parliamentary level. Despite the careful planning and estimations by accompanying experts, these often face hurdles due to limited consultations."

Lukanga emphasized the need for a more inclusive policy development and implementation approach. "We find that the government-led discussions, largely confined to internal experts, may overlook some nuances of the issues at hand," she explained. "As non-governmental organizations working directly with communities, we wish for broader consultations that allow for a more comprehensive engagement. We can contribute more effectively by including non-state actors like us in planning."

Lukanga argues that implementing these policies often falls short due to financial constraints. "Presently, the execution of these agricultural policies is sub-optimal, with only a small percentage of the allocated budget being utilized," she shared.

She sees an opportunity in a more collaborative approach, where both government and non-governmental organizations work together to transform policies into impactful actions. "There is a clear need for us to work hand in hand with the government ministries and agencies to ensure the efficient implementation of these policies and plans," Editrudith highlighted.

Lukanga further outlined a critical challenge within Tanzania's agricultural sector — the lack of coordination among different stakeholders. "There is a notable absence of effective coordination among the diverse actors in the sector," she pointed out. "The ministry should extend beyond the government's perspective and synchronize efforts with actors across various sectors. We must establish coordination mechanisms involving the government, non-state actors, and food producers themselves through their organizations."

According to Lukanga, this fragmentation and competition can lead to misaligned objectives and inefficient use of the already scarce resources. "Currently, each organization follows its own strategic plan, leading to disjointed efforts rather than collective action. Instead of viewing non-state actors as competitors, the gov-

ernment should recognize and leverage the resources outside their system, including human and financial resources.”

She advocates for a more inclusive, appreciative, and collaborative approach to decision-making. “We need to operate collaboratively as a nation, discarding labels such as ‘non-state actors’ or ‘NGOs’. Through collaboration, we can achieve greater outcomes than we currently witness.”

Lukanga also expressed her belief in the power of grassroots leadership development. “Developing leaders at the grassroots level instil confidence in the entire system,” she stated. “Lack of confidence and leadership competency often culminate in silence and an inability to question the status quo. We can bolster the sector’s development by investing in transformative

leadership for change within the food systems.”

Lukanga further emphasized that leadership development could catalyze community-driven change. “With transformative leadership skills, individuals can trigger a transformation of the entire sector, leading to increased production and the elimination of unnecessary challenges. I have unwavering faith in the potential of community-driven change. Building community members as leaders can ignite a movement that works towards the sector’s best interests.”

Lukanga expressed that her decision to participate in CALA was driven by the program’s emphasis on transformational leadership and fostering collaboration across sectors.

“What prompted me to join CALA is its vision of investing in transformational leadership. Collaborating with

PROFILE

Editrudith Lukanga is a globally recognized leader in small-scale fishers’ organization and environmental management. She is the founder and Executive Director of the Environmental Management and Economic Development Organization (EMEDO), a prominent public interest organization dedicated to addressing environmental, social, and economic challenges in the Lake Victoria region of Africa.

With a strong commitment to advocating for the rights and welfare of small-scale fishers, Editrudith has been the co-president of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers for 10 years. Her influential role in the international arena extends to her position as the Vice Chairperson of the East Africa Platform of Non-State Actors in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (EARFISH). Additionally, she holds the position of Secretary General of the African Women’s fish processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET), where she actively supports women’s empowerment in the fisheries industry.

Driven by her passion for sustainable fisheries and poverty alleviation, Editrudith plays essential role as a member of the Tanzania National Task Team (NTT) responsible for implementing the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty alleviation (SSF guidelines). Through this role, she aims to ensure food security and uplift the livelihoods of small-scale fishers and fish-workers in her country and the continent. She is a co-founder, a con-

venor and a mentor for the Tanzania Women Fish-Workers Association (TAWFA) a national network of women in the fisheries sector in Tanzania.

In recognition of her expertise and leadership, Editrudith is a member of the Coordination Committee and Advisory Group of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSIPM) for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security. Her contributions also extend to the National Technical Advisory Committee of the Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project, where she provides valuable insights and guidance on environmental issues in the region.

Before her current engagements, Editrudith worked as a governance advisor with the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), where she gained practical experience in promoting effective governance and sustainable development.

Editrudith holds an MSc in Environmental Sciences and a BSc degree in Marine Biology and Microbiology from the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. She furthered her studies with a Postgraduate Diploma in Poverty Analysis for Socioeconomic Security and Development from the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, Netherlands. She is currently a PhD student on Sustainability Science at Brock University. Her educational background equips her with a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between environmental management, poverty reduction, and sustainable development.

With her extensive knowledge, experience, and leadership positions, Editrudith Lukanga continues to make significant contributions in advocating for the rights of small-scale fishers, promoting sustainable fisheries, and addressing environmental challenges in the Lake Victoria region and beyond.



individuals from the private sector, government, and non-state organizations, each with distinct perspectives and backgrounds presents a unique opportunity," she said.

She particularly appreciated CALA's approach to creating a united front among participants. "By being part of CALA, I feel equipped to regard us as a unified force working towards building the same future, thereby reducing conflicts over resources," Lukanga explained. "Bridging the gap among actors working in the same sector motivates me to be part of CALA."

However, Lukanga acknowledged that her CALA journey wasn't without challenges. "I initially expected a smooth and easy journey. However, I soon realized that commitment was crucial," she admitted. "But I deeply value the tools CALA provides. Even without realizing it, I find myself applying them."

Reflecting on her growth, she said, "Before joining CALA, I lacked confidence in collaborating with colleagues. Now, I approach conversations with ministry directors with self-assuredness. I recognize that I am a leader too, capable of discussing issues at the table. We can leverage our respective experiences and strengths, mine from the grassroots and theirs from the ministry level, to find innovative solutions to challenges."

Despite the demands of her various roles and responsibilities, Lukanga affirmed her belief in the value of the CALA program. "Juggling my multiple roles as a leader, organization head, and General Secretary of a continental organization at its nascent stage has not been easy. But with dedication and a clear vision, the CALA program is truly worthwhile," she noted.

Participation in the CALA program has profoundly impacted Lukanga's personal and professional trajectory. Notably, her leadership has been acknowledged through several accolades in the Lake Victoria region where she hails from. A standout honour is the EATV "Kinara Awards, and the Women Round Table Mwanamke Kinara Awards, a recognition of influential women. She was awarded in the category of "The Economy of Lake Victoria." She was awarded for her outstanding contributions to supporting women in SSF. Editrudith is currently a nominee for the prestigious Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Awards 2023; Category of "Life Time Achievers." These awards recognize and award efforts geared towards sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for food security and nutrition.

"CALA played an essential part in this acknowledgment, as it equipped me with the skills to effectively engage with donors and gather resources for women in fisheries," she expressed. "The critical thinking and problem-solving abilities I gained through CALA have enabled me to contribute meaningfully."

In 2022, recognized as the International Year of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Lukanga due to her substantial role played on the international stage, led to her election as a member of an International Steering Committee (ISC), where she assumed the vice-chair role. "This high-level involvement can be credited to CALA," she stated. "The program has offered me intellectual exposure and opportunities for professional advancement and has facilitated invaluable relationships and collaborations."

Although the journey through CALA demands commitment, Lukanga has found the impact on her personal and professional life extraordinary. "Through CALA, I have gained confidence, acknowledged my leadership potential, and made significant contributions. I'm now prepared to engage with anyone, at any level, aware that my voice commands respect," she shared.

Lukanga's participation in CALA has also amplified her professional visibility, leading to her selection as a permanent member of the Africa Europe Strategy Group on Ocean Governance which is led by the Africa - Europe Foundation. "This unexpected recognition astonishes me, and I'm deeply grateful to CALA for contributing to my growth and success," she noted.

"I found myself in a state of curiosity, pondering over the identities of the members of the Africa Europe Strategy Group on Ocean Governance. One of them has previously served as the Chair of the World Trade Organization, which is a significant role," Lukanga shares. "A few days ago, they sent me a reminder email, expressing their anticipation of my response, and shared that my nomination had been endorsed by both the African Union Commission and the European Union Commission. I accepted their offer without hesitation and am sincerely grateful for this recognition."

"My engagement with CALA has inspired me to enrol for a PHD and I am currently a PhD candidate on Sustainability Science," she noted. Lukanga appreciates the potential contribution CALA made to this recognition, stating, "I suspect that this opportunity is linked to CALA, as they indicated that my profile had been selected in their survey of experts." Her surprise and gratitude are palpable as she concludes, "I am thrilled to have been officially invited to join the Africa Europe Strategy Group on Ocean Governance as a permanent member. I can't help but feel that my involvement in CALA has played a part in this opportunity, as they noted the program and the roles we are pursuing. I'm left wondering how the Africa - Europe Foundation discovered me."

Lukanga reflects on how the CALA program has transformed her approach to leadership. She shares, "CALA has taught me the importance of putting others before myself and influencing through others. Leadership is not always about standing in the spotlight. As the Secretary-General for the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET), I actively ensure that others from our ten-member board, representing ten different African nations, have opportunities to participate in various meetings. Empowering these leaders to engage and contribute is a skill I honed through CALA - working collaboratively and embracing collective success."

Lukanga also notes how CALA had enhanced her problem-solving abilities, saying, "Previously, it was challenging for me when I contributed significantly to a project, and others claimed the credit. I've learned that as long as my efforts lead to sector transformation or broader societal benefits, it doesn't matter who gets the credit. The internal satisfaction of knowing my contributions far outweighs the need for external validation. Even when I have felt wronged or taken advantage of, I can maintain my composure and continue my work. This level of maturity I attribute to my experiences in CALA."

She recalls a poignant memory from her time in the CALA program: “We were working on our LLP from a vision perspective, and I wanted to focus on a fisheries project but my group members chose to work on sesame. Initially, I hesitated, thinking it wasn’t directly related to my field. However, our coach stressed that embracing our differences and working collaboratively was the essence of the program. This was a powerful lesson in patience and listening despite differing opinions.”

Lukanga advises future CALA delegates: “Commit fully to the program and make time for it. Follow the guidance and complete the courses on time, without leaving everything to the last minute. CALA requires commitment and is an investment in yourself – don’t take the opportunity for granted. Earn your certificate and embrace the experience positively. It is truly valuable.”

Lukanga, proud to be part of the inaugural CALA cohort, envisions a crucial role for herself in shaping the program’s future. She emphasizes, “Given that CALA is an investment by AGRA, it’s essential that we, as alumni, utilize the skills and knowledge we’ve acquired to help shape future transformative leaders and build robust food systems in our respective countries.”

Lukanga suggests aligning each country’s AGRA office strategy with CALA’s strategic focus areas to fortify food systems. “A targeted focus on youth employment and the organization of national-level forums to share experiences is crucial,” she adds. She reminds us that this journey requires “investment, time, and commitment to make a difference.”

Appreciating the program’s structure, Lukanga highlights the importance of mentorship: “For us in the first cohort, our mentors played a crucial role. Having patient mentors who provide guidance and encouragement is vital, especially for younger participants.”

She also advocates for an end-of-year evaluation for alumni to discuss their experiences, share improvements, and illustrate real-life examples of how they have applied CALA’s teachings. “Increasing CALA alumni visibility would also help elevate the program,” she says, “not just through brochures, but by showcasing the tangible impacts of CALA through our achievements. This program’s significance should be recognized even at the level of presidential forums.”



Juggling my multiple roles as a leader, organization head, and General Secretary of a continental organization at its nascent stage has not been easy. But with dedication and a clear vision, the CALA program is truly worthwhile.”

4.0

Kenya Agriculture: Diligently Sowing the Seeds of Transformation

Food Systems Champions

Annah Mukunya Mutinda serves as the Deputy Commissioner for Cooperative Development in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives- from the public sector, and Tei Mukunya, the CEO of Nature Locks, represents the private sector. Thule Lenneiye, is a former e Agriculture Transformation Coordinator in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries & Cooperatives. They all play a key role in driving agricultural transformation in Kenya.

Agriculture is the linchpin of Kenya's economy, providing sustenance and livelihood to a significant portion of its people. Yet, the sector is besieged with numerous challenges. These range from the underutilization of arable land to alarming malnutrition rates and escalating environmental pressures. However, through innovative leadership and the adoption of sustainable, inclusive strategies, there is optimism that these challenges can be effectively tackled, ushering in a new era of agricultural prosperity.

Kenya is graced with expansive areas of fertile land. Still, much of this invaluable asset remains underutilized due to various constraints, including inadequate access to modern farming techniques, capital deficits, and infrastructural shortcomings. Compounding this issue, roughly 12% of Africa's population is affected by malnutrition – a stark reminder of a faltering food system. The existing agricultural framework, accentuated by climate change impacts, has resulted in severe soil degradation and water scarcity. These challenges pose a considerable risk to food security and economic stability, especially in a context where agriculture is entwined with socioeconomic advancement.

The Kenyan government has launched the Land Commercialization Initiative Flagship Program to address these pressing issues. This ground-breaking initiative aims to lease underutilized land to private investors for agricultural activities, transforming untapped regions into productive farmland. Areas such as the Tana and Athi river basins, previously overlooked, are now being primed for involvement from private sector entities in crop and livestock farming.

Forward-thinking leaders in Kenya's agricultural sphere are advocating for strategic international partnerships and collaborations as critical accelerators of this transformation. Modernizing farming practices and adopting sustainable agricultural techniques are seen as key to maximizing land use. Moreover, empowering smallholder farmers is a priority, recognizing their potential as significant change agents in transforming the nation's food systems. Despite the formi-

dable challenges, there is growing optimism about the future of agriculture in Kenya. Many smallholder farmers are adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, employing technology and data-driven solutions to enhance food supply chains. These promising trends herald a potential paradigm shift in Kenyan agriculture, signalling the dawn of a new era.

In addition to these efforts, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the symbiotic relationship between food systems and environmental sustainability. Progressive leaders are fostering a culture of climate action and sustainability, recognizing their crucial role in establishing a resilient agricultural sector. This commitment includes championing the modernization and digitization of farming practices, which enhance productivity while ensuring environmental preservation. Moreover, the mobilization of financial resources to foster the transition of agricultural value chains towards more sustainable practices is being actively pursued. The knowledge and insights gained from innovative leadership programs serve as a robust platform to drive this transformation.

Yet, it's recognized that establishing a robust and sustainable agricultural sector requires a collective approach. Ensuring food security is a shared responsibility, necessitating collaborative efforts from governments, the private sector, civil societies, and individuals alike. The shared goal is to secure access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food for all. While Kenya's agricultural sector faces numerous challenges, the seeds of transformation are being diligently sown. With the steadfast commitment of various stakeholders, there is great promise for revitalizing the sector, enhancing food system development, and ultimately, fortifying food security in Kenya.

4.1 Anna Mukunya Mutinda: Championing Cooperative Development in Kenya

Kenya's agricultural future is ripe with promise. According to Anna Mukunya Mutinda, a committed and

PROFILE

Anna's journey in the cooperative sector began in 2018 when she was appointed as the Senior Assistant Commissioner for Cooperatives Development. In this role, she was responsible for policy formulation, dissemination, and capacity building for staff and members of the cooperative movement in Kenya. She played a key role in promoting the formation of cooperative societies to mobilize resources and enable members to benefit from economies of scale.

In August 2019, Anna was promoted to the position of Deputy Commissioner for Cooperative Development, where she continued to lead the development of the cooperative movement in Kenya. Her responsibilities included developing strategies and programs for strengthening value chains, formulating policies and guidelines to guide the cooperative movement, and facilitating capacity building for staff and members of the cooperative movement.

Under Anna's leadership, the cooperative movement in Kenya has made significant progress. She participated in the development of the National Cooperatives Policy and coordinated the review of model by-laws for different types of cooperative societies. Anna also played a key role in the selection, installation, and launching of digitization equipment in 25 coffee cooperative factories across Kenya.

Anna's commitment to cooperative development is driven by her belief in the potential of cooperatives to transform communities. She has a deep understanding of the challenges faced by farmers and small business owners in Kenya and believes that the cooperative approach can provide a solution to these challenges.



insightful agricultural leader and a graduate of the CALA Leadership Program, the country holds abundant opportunities. These opportunities are fueled by the robust and ever-growing demand for agricultural products, both within its borders and on the international stage. In her role as the Deputy Commissioner for Cooperatives Development at Kenya's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives, Anna is a passionate advocate for the small-scale entrepreneurs at the heart of the sector. Her commitment to their business growth and improved living standards is an intrinsic part of her professional ethos.

Participation in the CALA Leadership Program represented an important step in Anna's mission to create lasting change in the agricultural sector. She saw in CALA an opportunity to augment her leadership skills, thereby enhancing her capacity to champion the causes and needs of the agricultural community. Anna casts an optimistic eye on Kenya's agricultural sector, pointing to the burgeoning middle class with their ascending purchasing power and the established institutional mechanisms that facilitate agricultural exports. She notes the consistent demand for agricultural commodities throughout the year, hinting at the potential for creating value-addition opportunities within the sector.

Yet, Anna is not blind to the complex challenges inherent in Kenya's agricultural sector. The overwhelming reliance on rainfall for production, frequent bouts of drought, limited access to quality inputs and financial resources, as well as disorganized marketing structures and inadequate infrastructure pose significant obstacles. Issues like erratic pricing, gaps in information flow amongst value chain actors, and escalating operational costs further complicate the landscape. Anna's unwavering faith in the transformative potential of robust leadership echoes throughout Kenya's agricultural sector. Despite the myriad challenges, she steadfastly advocates for fostering leadership across all levels. The objective, in her words, is to "facilitate productive dialogues among stakeholders." By nurturing this network of leaders, Anna envisions a collective force capable of galvanizing resources for value-adding endeavors and creating bespoke financial packages for the different actors in the value chain. As Anna aptly encapsulates, "Leaders are the catalysts for policy development that can overcome the challenges facing the sector, ultimately propelling growth and ensuring sustainability." Participation in the CALA program prompted a significant shift in Anna's approach. She reflects, "Previously, I was more focused on addressing challenges at the farmers' level, but during the CALA program, I acquired more skills in collaborative leadership and more knowledge in looking at the sector from a system angle." This emphasis on collaborative leadership crystallized for her the value of partnerships and the rewards of communal effort. Anna also acquired a more nuanced understanding of the agricultural sector as an interconnected system, appreciating the interplay among different stakeholders in fostering sustainable growth. The program broadened her perspectives, honed her skills, and equipped her to better address the challenges in the agricultural sector.

Nonetheless, Anna acknowledges that exerting influence, especially outside her immediate sphere, has posed significant challenges. "I had a challenge of influencing, especially upwards and other stakeholders outside my domain," she admits, "I found it difficult to get others on board with my proposed changes, and I often struggled to get the support I needed to make an impact in the sector."

The CALA program, however, underscored for Anna the power of effective communication and the art of influence. Prior to her participation in the program, she found organizing meetings a challenge, with low turnout and attendance often being a norm.

Her participation in CALA revealed the key role follow-up plays in successful meeting organization. She explains, "From participating in the program, I gained more skills in communication and influencing others. During the program, I learned that follow-up is cru-

cial. The subsequent meetings that I have held have had very high turn-out. This I can attribute to sending invitations with a request to confirm receipt of the invitation and indication of availability. I make follow-up with the people I get no response from to ensure they got the communication. I usually send a reminder to the people one or two days before the meeting date."

Anna Mukunya Mutinda's enhanced communication skills, courtesy of the CALA program, have revolutionized her meetings, yielding increased attendance and active engagement from all stakeholders. The leadership acumen she has cultivated through the program empowers her to fuel change and development within the agricultural sector. Now, Anna stands better equipped to serve her community and steer the agricultural progression in Kenya.

The CALA Advanced Leadership Program conferred on Anna an enriched understanding and adeptness in influencing others. The key lesson is to consider the interests of the stakeholders she sought to influence. As she explains, "Through the sessions on influencing others, I learned that I have to ask myself 'what is in it for them' in whatever change I am proposing. This means I have to think from the perspective of the stakeholder I am trying to influence." This perspective-shift in her influencing strategy has amplified the impact of her

proposals, winning support and driving advancement in the sector.

Despite participating in multiple leadership programs throughout her career, Anna holds the CALA Advanced Leadership Program in special regard. "In my opinion, what distinguishes CALA from other leadership programs I have participated in is the systematic approach," she articulates. She praises the program's blend of theoretical instruction and real-world application, particularly through the Action Learning Project (ALP). The ALP allowed participants to apply their newfound skills to tackle authentic challenges within the agriculture sector, thereby gaining practical experience.

Anna also credits regular check-ins with facilitators and mentors, and the guiding hand of the coach, as instrumental in maintaining the course of the program. Moreover, the CALA program significantly expanded her professional network within the African agricultural community, fostering beneficial partnerships and knowledge exchange. Anna recounts applying her CALA-derived skills and knowledge to execute an Action Learning Project (ALP), where she successfully convened a diverse group of stakeholders to address financial accessibility for dairy farmers. The draft module for financing, developed as a result of these discussions, is earmarked for finalization and imple-

PROFILE

NatureLock Co-Founder and Executive Director, Tei Mukunya Oundo, is a trailblazer in the realm of health and nutritious food preservation, inspiring many aspiring entrepreneurs. Her company's product line reflects her unwavering commitment to this cause. Tei's relentless efforts to combat food loss and waste have earned her international recognition from industry luminaries such as Jamie Oliver (UK) and Selina Juul (Denmark).

Tei and her team at NatureLock Foods are developing nutritious pre cooked and dried home cooked meals Tei founded Azuri Health Ltd in 2010, with the goal of creating premium dried fruit and nutriporridge products Her entrepreneurial zeal and leadership acumen propelled Azuri to its successful growth and development, culminating in its transformation into the Kenyan/Dutch partnership now known as NatureLock Foods.

Tei holds an MBA from the United States International University Africa (USIU-A) in Nairobi, Kenya, and is a distinguished Borlaug Fellow of Michigan State

University. She is also a Cornell University Fellow in the SMART program and holds a Marketing Society of Kenya Practitioners Course Award of Excellence.

Tei has extensive training and consultancy experience, working for six years with development organizations such as GIZ, SNV, ACDA-VOCA, EU-CDTF, and USAID on capacity building, business development, and marketing for women and youth. Before founding Azuri, she developed value addition and value chain processes for farmer groups.

Tei began her corporate career immediately after her first degree in Economics at the University of Nairobi, as a management trainee at British American Tobacco, where she held various marketing roles, including trade marketing, brand marketing, and marketing operations for Kenya and the Horn of Africa markets.

Tei is an advisory board member of Africon GmbH in Germany and a director of Midas Golden Academy in Kenya. Tei's success story is an inspiration for young entrepreneurs who are passionate about creating a better future for their communities. Her unwavering dedication to the cause of fighting food waste and improving access to nutritious food has earned her international recognition and cemented her as a trailblazer in the field of health and nutritious food preservation.



mentation, thereby enabling farmers to invest in their businesses and stimulate growth in the sector. This achievement encapsulates how CALA has catalyzed positive change within her community and driven agricultural development in Kenya.

In addition to her work in cooperative development, Anna is a fervent advocate for gender equality and female empowerment within agriculture. Recognizing the vital but often under-resourced role of women in this sector, she tirelessly promotes female participation and leadership within Kenya's cooperative movement.

Anna's dedication to excellence and leadership have had far-reaching implications on the agriculture sector, both within and beyond Kenya. She has ignited progress and growth, emboldening small-scale entrepreneurs, aiding vulnerable communities, and championing sustainable development. As she looks ahead, Anna pledges continued commitment to cooperative development and gender equality within agriculture. She aims to broaden her expertise in these realms, aspiring for more senior administrative and policymaking roles to further facilitate positive change within the sector.

4.2 Tei Mukunya's Mission to Improve Access to Nutritious Food: From Dried Fruits to Dried and Delicious Instant Legume Stews

Overcoming hurdles and staying in the game are essential traits for any entrepreneur. Tei Mukunya Oundo, a graduate of The Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA), understands these challenges all too well. According to Tei, maintaining optimism is crucial for overcoming obstacles and persevering. As the CEO and Co-Founder of NatureLock Foods, Tei has demonstrated remarkable resilience in building successful agribusiness ventures. Her experience is a testament to the critical role that leadership and entrepreneurship play in transforming Africa's agricultural sector. Tei was part of the first cohort of CALA, an African-led initiative to develop capable, responsive, and collaborative leaders in Africa's agriculture sector. For Tei, CALA was an opportunity to think differently about her business and how to become a better leader. "CALA is what you make of it. If you put in little effort, you'll get little out of CALA," she says. It was a quest for me to think of doing things completely differently, and that's where the CALA program came in handy. I was starting a new business venture and needed to see how to become a better leader, and what tools I needed for the journey. NatureLock was created during the Covid pandemic, and I saw it as a transition from what I was doing before at my previous business Azuri Health. I took that inspiration and ran with it.

Tei's mission with NatureLock was to bring healthy everyday food to millions of people whilst tackling post-harvest loss challenges first in Kenya and then across Africa.

Tei and her team have now created their first product line, nutritious pre-cooked and dried legumes using green grams, cooked with onions, tomatoes, carrots and condiments like garlic and coriander to make a delicious stew that is then dried. These stews are a

solution for everyday use at home, for school feeding programs, catering kitchens, factories, and emergency relief.

Thanks to the CALA program, Tei was able to troubleshoot and improve her business. She started by conducting school trials to demonstrate the benefits of NatureLock's products and partnered with Tiny Totos, a daycare provider, to provide affordable and nutritious options for children.

As Tei looks to expand NatureLock's reach across Africa, she is grateful for CALA's impact on her leadership skills and the opportunities it has provided her to make a difference in her community. To her, CALA reminds her that great things can be achieved with resilience and perseverance.

Before founding NatureLock Foods, Tei established Azuri Health Ltd in 2010, where she was a pioneer in Kenya making premium dried fruits and nutriorridges which contributed to fighting post-harvest loss, particularly in the fruit sector. As a social entrepreneur, Tei built a network of 3,500 fruit farmers, working with development organizations such as GIZ, SNV, and USAID to improve smallholder farmer value chains.

Tei's career in agriculture began after starting her professional career at British American Tobacco, where she worked in marketing roles for East Africa and the Horn of Africa. With her extensive experience and expertise in the agriculture sector, Tei co-founded NatureLock Foods to positively disrupt the instant food market by preserving fresh produce into tasty, nutritious and affordable foods for all, whilst contributing to the reduction of post-harvest losses and promoting climate-resilient crops in Africa.

Her dedication to this cause is reflected in the company's commitment to preserving fresh produce naturally, without using chemicals, or preservatives.

Tei's passion for improving access to nutritious food has also led her to collaborate with various organizations to promote food security and nutrition. Her efforts have resulted in developing more nutritious foods for urban consumers and better prices for farmers, significantly impacting the agricultural value chain. Tei and her team at NatureLock Foods are revolutionising the supply chain and saving fresh produce that would have otherwise gone to waste and promoting new climate resistant varieties of legumes from Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (KALRO)

"Through the CALA program, we were able to troubleshoot in schools. So we started with dengu (green grams). The pros & cons of having a quick-to-cook stew that saves on time and fuel energy. The study was to establish, how useful the dengu or the beans were in replacement of the normal process it takes to prepare these meals in the kitchen. From 2hrs to 10 minutes"

Tei believes further research is needed to investigate consumer behaviour to improve diet choices. Farmers can benefit from bulking their produce to sell to companies like Naturelock, but they are often skeptical. Good examples of success like this are needed to deepen trust and can be used in other areas to improve consumer incomes and nutrition. Through Na-

tureLock Foods, Tei is revolutionizing the supply chain and fighting food waste in Africa, one dried legume stew at a time.

Martina Adeg, the Chief Field Manager of Tiny Totos organization, recommends Tei Mukunya Oundo and the CALA program for its value to their partnership with NatureLock Foods. As an organization that focuses on child outcomes in health and development, partnering with NatureLock was a natural choice due to the affordable options they provide in terms of legumes. This partnership has been especially beneficial for the parents who bring their children to daycare, as they do not have the time or resources to prepare nutritious meals at home. Tei's vision of making nutritious food more accessible and affordable to people in rural and urban areas has positively impacted daycare children and their families.

Irene Otieno, owner and manager of Reenie Tender Beginnings Daycare, also speaks highly of Tei Mukunya Oundo and the CALA program. According to her, the parents who bring their children to the daycare have benefited greatly from NatureLock Foods, as they are able to buy affordable and nutritious legumes from the daycare itself. Irene's experience with the CALA program was transformative, as it allowed her to realize her potential as a leader and equipped her with the necessary tools to make a difference in her environment. –

4.3 Thule Lenneiye: Passion For Reshaping the Future of Agriculture

Kenya, known for its fertile lands and vast landscapes, houses a substantial amount of unutilized land. These dormant assets could be harnessed for productive agricultural use, contributing to the nation's socio-economic development and bolstering food security. According to Thule Lenneiye, a deliberate, bold, and unwavering dedication is fundamental to achieving transformational change in food systems. She highlights the significance of backing smallholder farmers, as they hold a central position in catalyzing this transformation.

With her visionary leadership and innovative strategies, Thule is happy to play a role in unlocking these resources via promoting land utilization but also in creating meaningful international partnerships and collaborations that can fuel agricultural growth and transformation in Kenya.

The Kenyan Government has launched the Land Commercialization Initiative Flagship Program to stimulate economic activity and bolster agricultural productivity. As articulated by Thule Lenneiye, the then Agriculture Transformation Office Coordinator, this program is designed to lease under-utilized land to private investors for commercial agricultural activities. The aim is to not only drive productive usage of these latent resources but also to introduce modern farming practices and techniques, fostering a sustainable agricultural landscape.

Thule highlights the Government's active pursuit of investors and private sector involvement in crop and livestock farming, particularly within the Tana and Athi river basins. This strategic choice of location capitalizes on the resources of these regions and provides a unique opportunity for investors. She underlines that with the right partnerships and collaborations, such initiatives could prove instrumental in transforming Kenya's agricultural sector.

Thule is also cognizant of the challenges that our food systems have been grappling with. Particularly, some disheartening figures, emphasizing the urgency of the situation to transform the food system. "The current numbers highlight a grim reality," she says. "Approximately 12% of our African population is suffering from high malnutrition, unable to meet basic food consumption needs.

PROFILE

Thule Lenneiye, a dynamic leader in the agricultural sector, is making significant strides in transforming food systems, promoting climate action, and driving policy implementation in Africa. With her expertise in business development, operations management, and strategic partnerships, she has emerged as a driving force behind sustainable growth and innovation in the sector. Thule has mobilised stakeholders and spearheaded transformational projects through her leadership roles, including as the Agriculture Transformation Office Coordinator at Kenya's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives.

Lenneiye, a seasoned leader in the agricultural sector, mid year 2023 embarked on a new role as the East Africa Business Development Advisor at the AGRI3 Fund. This fund aims to mobilize USD 1 billion of financing by providing credit enhancement tools and technical assistance to transition agricultural value chains to more sustainable practices and combat deforestation. Thule's business development expertise and her passion for sustainable growth make her a valuable asset in driving transformation in the agricultural sector.

Thule Lenneiye recognizes the pivotal role of smallholder farmers in driving food systems transformation. She emphasizes the importance of supporting and empowering these farmers as central agents of change. Having undergone hands-on training and leadership development as a graduate of the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture's (CALA) Advanced Leadership Programme, Thule brings fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the sector. Her commitment to improving the agricultural sector and her passion for driving innovation and sustainable growth in Africa set her apart.



Such disconcerting statistics highlight the importance of the Kenyan Government's initiatives and the private sector, to foster robust and sustainable agriculture, which could go a long way in mitigating the devastating effects of such crises, thus ensuring food security for all, even in the face of severe droughts.

Thule points out the inextricable link between our food systems and the environment. "It is clear that our food systems are intricately connected with the environment," she underlines. Climate change, soil degradation, and water scarcity continue to escalate the challenges we face in food production and access. These challenges bear significant implications for livelihoods and food security in Africa, where agriculture is a critical driver of economic growth and development," she emphasizes.

Despite these daunting challenges, Thule also highlights the reason for optimism. "The growing momentum towards sustainable food systems is heartening. We are witnessing smallholder farmers adopting climate-smart agricultural practices and innovative solutions that utilize technology and data to improve food supply chains. These developments give us hope," she states.

However, she is clear that tackling food security is a collective responsibility and we must step up our efforts. "Food security requires collective effort. Governments, private sector, civil society, and individuals all have roles to play in ensuring everyone has access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food. We just need to do more!" And here more leaders are needed at all levels.

Thule, already recognized for her relentless dedication to transforming Africa's agricultural sector, sought to sharpen her skills further and broaden her knowledge by enrolling in the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture's (CALA) Advanced Leadership Programme. Her decision to join the programme was driven by her deep commitment to her field and her continuous pursuit of excellence.

The CALA Advanced Leadership Programme is designed to challenge and inspire leaders in the African agricultural sector. It is a wellspring of information, offering participants invaluable insights into the latest best practices, innovative strategies, and emerging trends in the industry.

She says the highly collaborative and tailored program enabled her to interact with other senior and rising leaders from various countries and diverse agricultural backgrounds. The exchange of ideas, experiences, and insights in this dynamic learning environment enriched her understanding of the sector's multifaceted challenges and the wide range of possible solutions.

The program also provided Thule with practical leadership training that further honed her strategic decision-making, negotiation, conflict resolution, and stakeholder management skills. She received personalized feedback and coaching, which helped her iden-

tify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

As a result of her participation in the CALA Advanced Leadership Programme, Thule emerged with enhanced capabilities that sparked innovative perspectives and ignited fresh ideas in her approach towards the sector. The skills and knowledge she acquired have enabled her to be more strategic and impactful in her role, catalyzing her ability to bring about positive change in the agricultural sector.

Thule's experience with the CALA Advanced Leadership Programme fortified her existing skills and instilled heightened creativity and dynamism in her work. It has influenced her leadership style, making her a more effective and inspiring leader, better equipped to drive transformation in Africa's agricultural sector.

Driving Policy Implementation

Thule's expertise extends beyond her commitment to smallholder farmers. She possesses in-depth knowledge and experience in policy implementation, particularly evident in her instrumental role in implementing the Agriculture Sector Growth and Transformation Strategy (ASTGS) and the Big 4 Agenda. Thule's leadership skills, technical expertise, and innovative ideas were crucial in mobilizing stakeholders and promoting the modernization and digitization of farming practices. Her unwavering commitment to achieving these policy goals has made her a key influencer in the agricultural sector.

Thule Lenneiye's dedication to climate action and sustainability resonates throughout her work. Under the ASTGS and the COVID-19 Food Availability response, she initiated transformational projects that addressed the urgent need for climate-resilient agricultural practices. Thule's vision for promoting modernization and digitization of farming practices among smallholder farmers increases productivity and contributes to food security in Kenya. Moreover, she advocates for the utilization of underutilized land, leveraging available innovations to attract private investors and generate employment opportunities while driving sustainable growth in the agricultural sector.

Thule's influence extends beyond her public sector roles. As the Managing Partner at Acility Africa, a consulting firm navigating the African market, she has provided invaluable advice and access to clients, enabling them to overcome regulatory hurdles and achieve their desired outcomes. Thule's involvement as a Non-Executive Director at The Udugu Institute has been instrumental in establishing the Innovation Baraza, a platform that connects innovators and entrepreneurs, fostering collaboration and market entry. Her negotiation skills and successful co-funding relationships with corporate partners have played a vital role in program development.

5.0

Uganda's Path to Resilience and Prosperity: Climate-Smart Agriculture

Food Systems Champions

Featuring Lawrence Tusimomuhangi, affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries; Narcis Tumushabe from Farm Inputs Care Centre (FICA) Limited; Rachel Ciconco Mbabazi, associated with the Rice Association of Uganda; and Rachel Ajambo, representing Kilimo Trust.

Uganda's agriculture sector is at a critical juncture, facing both opportunities and challenges as it strives to achieve sustainable practices and strike a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation. The sector holds immense potential as a significant source of food for the growing global population. However, numerous obstacles hinder its progress and need to be addressed urgently. One of the key challenges in Uganda's agriculture sector is the lack of coordination among various stakeholders. Limited collaboration between government agencies, private sector entities, civil society organizations, and research institutions impedes the efficient delivery of services and resources to the agricultural sector. To overcome this challenge, a comprehensive and integrated approach is required, emphasizing the need for increased coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders.

Climate change poses a significant threat to Uganda's agriculture sector. The adverse effects of climate change, including unpredictable rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and increased pest and disease incidence, undermine agricultural productivity and resilience. To address this challenge, it is essential to prioritize the implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices. These practices, such as sustainable land management, conservation agriculture, and agroforestry, can help mitigate the effects of climate change and build resilience in the sector. Another challenge is the limited availability of arable land for cultivation. Rapid population growth, urbanization, and land degradation have reduced the amount of fertile land suitable for agriculture. To overcome this constraint, innovative solutions such as vertical farming, hydroponics, and aquaponics can be explored to maximize land productivity. Additionally, promoting sustainable land use practices, including the protection of wetlands and forests, is crucial to ensure the long-term sustainability of Uganda's agriculture sector.

Resource constraints, including limited access to credit, inputs, and modern technologies, hinder agricultural development in Uganda. High production costs, inefficient supply chains, and inadequate infrastructure

further exacerbate the challenges faced by farmers. Addressing these constraints requires comprehensive strategies, including the provision of affordable credit and quality inputs, the improvement of rural infrastructure, and the promotion of mechanization and modern farming technologies. An emerging challenge in Uganda's agriculture sector is the disinterest among youth in engaging in agricultural activities. Many young people perceive farming as unattractive and associate it with low income and limited opportunities. To reverse this trend, targeted initiatives are needed to attract and retain youth in agriculture. These initiatives should focus on entrepreneurship training, capacity building programs, access to finance and markets, and the provision of mentorship opportunities. Creating an enabling environment that recognizes and supports the potential of youth in agriculture is essential for the sector's future growth.

Despite these challenges, Uganda's agriculture sector offers numerous opportunities for growth and prosperity. One of the most significant challenges and opportunities within the sector is to empower women to take on leadership roles and gain access to resources currently beyond their reach. By capitalizing on these opportunities, the sector can drive economic development, generate employment opportunities, and improve livelihoods for the population. Strengthening coordination and collaboration among stakeholders, adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, optimizing resource utilization, and engaging youth are key strategies to unlock the sector's potential. Public-private partnerships play a crucial role in mobilizing resources and attracting investments to Uganda's agriculture sector. These partnerships can facilitate access to finance, technology transfer, market linkages, and knowledge sharing. Encouraging collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society organizations will create a conducive environment for innovation, investment, and sustainable growth in the sector.

Furthermore, leveraging digital technologies and data-driven solutions can revolutionize Uganda's agriculture sector. Remote sensing technologies, and digital platforms can provide farmers with real-time

information on weather conditions, market prices, and best agricultural practices. This information empowers farmers to make informed decisions, optimize resource allocation, and improve productivity and profitability. By addressing the coordination gaps, implementing climate-smart practices, maximizing land productivity, overcoming resource constraints, and engaging youth, Uganda can unlock the full potential of its agriculture sector. Public-private partnerships, along with the adoption of digital technologies, will be instrumental in driving sustainable agricultural growth, ensuring food security, and contributing to economic development and environmental conservation in the country.

5.1 Lawrence Tusimomuhangi: Empowering Agricultural Professionals

Skill Enhancement Beyond Advisory Services

There are tremendous opportunities and challenges facing the agriculture sector in Uganda, which call for sustainable agriculture practices and the need to balance economic growth with environmental conservation, notes Lawrence Tusimomuhangi, a passionate agricultural leader and graduate of CALA's Advanced Leadership Programme. "The agriculture sector gives a lot of opportunity to the entire country's population as a source of food to the estimated 8BN people in the world. Therefore, the processes involved in food production right from production to consumption, have a multitude of jobs to cater for a vast majority who would be unemployed. The government is committed to supporting agriculture development to provide enough food," says Lawrence Tusimomuhangi, the Assistant Commissioner for Productive Entomology at the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF) in Uganda.

Despite the tremendous opportunities presented by the agriculture sector, Lawrence acknowledges the significant challenges. These include limited coordination among various sectors to improve service delivery, the effects of climate change, reduced arable land available for cultivation, a shortage of resources, high production costs, and a tendency for youth to shy away from agricultural activities.

A graduate of CALA's Advanced Leadership Programme for individuals engaged in delivering and implementing national agriculture priorities, Lawrence is committed to addressing the challenges facing the agriculture sector in his country. Lawrence's participation in CALA was motivated by the need to build networking and information sharing capacity, demonstrating his commitment to continuous learning and development as an agricultural leader.

Before participating in the CALA Advanced Leadership Program, Lawrence's experience was limited to technical advisory services in the agriculture sector. However, through the program, he gained

PROFILE

Lawrence Tusimomuhangi is currently serving as the Principal Entomologist at Masindi District Local Government. As an entomologist, Lawrence specializes in the study of insects and their impact on various aspects of human life and the environment.

Lawrence Tusimomuhangi is Principal Entomologist at Masindi District Local Government in Uganda. With a Bachelor of Science degree in Entomology from Makerere University, a Master of Science degree in Agro-ecology from Uganda Martyrs University, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Agriculture Extension Management from Hyderabad, India, Tusimomuhangi possesses a strong academic background in his field. With over 15 years of experience in entomology, Tusimomuhangi has made significant contributions to the agricultural sector. He has served as an entomologist for the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, and as a consultant for the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Lawrence holds a BSc in Zoology-Entomology from Makerere University and has also studied The Dynamics of Agro-ecosystems at Uganda Martyrs University.

Before joining the Ministry, Lawrence attended St. Paul's Seminary Rushoroza. Lawrence is responsible for coordinating, implementing, and monitoring all entomology-related activities within the Ministry. He is committed to addressing the challenges facing the agriculture sector in Uganda, including the effects of climate change, limited coordination among various sectors to improve service delivery, reduced arable land available for cultivation, a shortage of resources, high production costs, and a tendency for youth to shy away from agricultural activities.

In his current capacity, Tusimomuhangi spearheads the entomology program for Masindi District. His role encompasses providing technical guidance to farmers on effective pest management and crop protection strategies. Tusimomuhangi's commitment to empowering farmers and improving their livelihoods is evident in his passion for utilizing his extensive knowledge and skills. Tusimomuhangi has achieved remarkable milestones throughout his career, including the development of a comprehensive district-wide pest management plan. Furthermore, he has trained thousands of farmers on best practices in pest management and crop protection, resulting in a reduction in crop losses caused by pests. As a Principal Entomologist, Tusimomuhangi plays a pivotal role in the success of Masindi District Local Government. His expertise, coupled with his unwavering commitment to the betterment of the agricultural sector, makes him an invaluable asset.



a broader range of skills that extended beyond the technical aspects of agriculture. “My experience before CALA was only limited to technical advisory service. But with CALA’s Advanced Leadership Program, I gained and widened my skills beyond technical issues,” Lawrence stated.

The program provided Lawrence with the necessary tools to manage his technical expertise effectively. He learned how to advocate for the agriculture sector, network with other leaders in the industry, collaborate with stakeholders, and innovate to improve performance. As Lawrence put it, “I found that my technical skills needed management, advocacy, networking, collaboration, and innovation skills for improved performance.”

The CALA Advanced Leadership Program helped Lawrence develop a well-rounded skill set that has prepared him to tackle the challenges facing the agriculture sector in his country. By providing him with the leadership skills necessary to drive change, Lawrence is better equipped to address the limited coordination among various sectors, the effects of climatic changes, reduced arable land available for cultivation, and the shortage of resources that are currently impacting the agriculture sector in his country.

Participating in the CALA Advanced Leadership Program had a significant impact on Lawrence Tusi-momuhangi’s personal and professional development. He gained a wealth of knowledge and skills that have enriched his abilities as a leader. As he explained, “I have been enriched in capacities of team building, flexibility, conflict management, self-motivation, problem-solving, and strategic thinking for organizational development.”

Lawrence’s key takeaways from his experience with CALA include goal setting and time management, maintaining a positive work attitude, and being able to engage stakeholders effectively. CALA also influenced his leadership approach in the areas of effective communication, especially public speaking, and collaboration. He shared, “CALA has influenced my leadership approaches in the area of effective communication especially public speaking and collaboration.”

While participating in the program, Lawrence faced some challenges related to developing his Action Learning Project. However, he was able to overcome these obstacles by seeking guidance from friends at higher leadership levels and periodically consulting with his colleagues. He also faced challenges with priority setting, but he learned to use ranking and timely decision-making to determine what should come first. As Lawrence put it, “Priority setting was also my challenge, but with time, I was able to use ranking and timely decision on what should come first.”

CALA has distinct attributes that distinguish it from other leadership programs. According to Lawrence Tusi-momuhangi, CALA focuses on transformative and collaborative leadership, as well as building synergies among various stakeholders. As he puts it, “CALA has unique attributes from other programs because it focuses on transformative and collaborative leadership. It also promotes building synergies among various stakeholders.”

“Through his participation in CALA, Lawrence was able

to apply the skills and knowledge he acquired to create positive change in his community. For instance, he mobilized departmental staff for weekly meetings to communicate weekly achievements/tasks accomplished and to plan the next week’s agenda.

One memorable experience for Lawrence was identifying a critical challenge and developing a strategy to address it with his personal coach. Through this experience, he learned that leadership involves understanding oneself and the people around them. Lawrence’s experience with CALA has also influenced his perspective on the role of agriculture in Africa’s economic development. He now sees agriculture as a game-changer for economic empowerment and employment, emphasizing the need for networking and collaboration to achieve the desired standards of living.

CALA provided Lawrence with networking and negotiation skills for resource mobilization, confidence-building, and innovation skills that are helping him advance his professional career. He advises future CALA delegates that leadership revolves around networking, engaging, effective communication, and priority setting.

As a CALA alumnus, Lawrence is contributing to the program’s continued success by communicating the program to his friends and workmates, encouraging them to undertake the program. Additionally, through his participation in the African Green Revolution Forum, Lawrence interacted with different innovators in various businesses and realized that collaboration and networking are key to regional development.

Lawrence conducted a key study titled “Assessment of the Contribution of Beekeeping to People’s Livelihood: A Case Study of Masindi District,” which found that beekeeping has benefits such as commercial and financial gains, employment opportunities, and ecological and nutritional benefits. The study is significant because it sheds light on the contribution of beekeeping to people’s livelihoods and highlights the challenges that beekeepers face, and recommendations provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders interested in improving the beekeeping sector in Uganda.

Lawrence is passionate about beekeeping and has been advocating for more Ugandans to get involved in the sector. Currently, only about 1.2 million farmers are engaged in beekeeping in Uganda, and Lawrence believes that there is potential for more people to benefit from the opportunities the sector presents. Beekeeping has been identified as a priority area for agricultural development in Uganda, and increasing participation in the sector could contribute to poverty reduction, food security, and environmental conservation.

5.2 Empowering Africa’s Food Security: Narcis Tumushabe’s Vision for Agricultural Leadership

In Uganda, agriculture is intrinsically linked to gender equity. According to Narcis Tumushabe, a seasoned agricultural economist and entrepreneur from Uganda, one of the most significant challenges and opportunities within the sector is to empower women to take on leadership roles and gain access to resources

currently beyond their reach. He joined the The Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) program to gain knowledge and empowerment in managing agricultural enterprises. Already having made significant contributions to agricultural development in Eastern and Southern Africa for over two decades, he was hungry for more knowledge and skills from CALA, despite being an accomplished agricultural economist, manager, strategist, and leader.

"The need for knowledge and empowerment in managing agricultural enterprises led me to participate in CALA. I wanted to improve my skills and knowledge to make a meaningful impact in my community," he says.

He has played a vital role in empowering farmers and agribusinesses, driving economic growth and development in Uganda and several other African states. His experience with CALA met his expectations and exceeded them, leaving him feeling strongly empowered to make decisions that will lead to changes in agroecology in Uganda and the region.

"Managing people, planning for change, and systems thinking in problem-solving are key takeaways from my experience with CALA. I have applied these skills in my work and life, and they have helped me become a better leader," says Narcis.

The CALA program provides a platform for agricultural leaders to develop their skills and knowledge to drive change in Africa. As a CALA delegate, Narcis shared his experiences with the program and how it has influenced his personal and professional development. He said the program was practical and informative, with high success rates in introducing change and managing businesses.

One of the key takeaways from Narcis's experience with CALA was managing people, planning for change, and systems thinking in problem-solving. These skills have proven invaluable to him in his leadership role in the agricultural sector. Additionally, networking and appreciating the roles of different stakeholders were some of the challenges he faced before joining CALA,

and the program helped him overcome them.

"One of the specific knowledge and skills I gained from CALA that I had not acquired through other professional or educational experiences is the ability to think strategically and holistically about agricultural issues. CALA helped me understand the interconnectedness of different factors in agro-ecology and how to leverage this understanding to create positive change," Narcis said.

Narcis has applied the skills and knowledge gained from CALA to create positive change in his community and organization. During the project work as part of the course, he found it easy to deal with top managers in the Government ministries by applying some of the principles picked in the CALA program. As a result, he has gained respect and recognition as a resource person in the agricultural sector, leading two APEX organizations, including the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), where he serves as a director.

Narcis believes CALA stands out from other leadership programs due to its down-to-earth approach with real-life applications, particularly in African contexts. He also suggests that in-country study trips should be included in the program for more significant benefits.

"I feel strongly empowered to make decisions that will lead to changes in agroecology in Uganda and the region. CALA has equipped me with the skills and knowledge to tackle complex problems and create positive change," he says.

As a CALA alumnus, Narcis sees his role as an active participant in contributing to the program's continued success. His experience with CALA has empowered him to positively impact Africa's economic development through agriculture. His advice to future CALA delegates is to be open-minded and take advantage of the opportunity to learn, network and apply the knowledge gained from the program to create positive change in their communities.

PROFILE

Narcis knew from a young age that he wanted to make a difference in the world. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics, a Master's degree in Computer Science, a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Management, and various professional qualifications in different business and agricultural fields.

From 2010 to 2014, Tumushabe was the Chief Executive Officer of Farm Inputs Care Centre (FICA) Limited, one of the most reputable seed companies in East Africa. He led the company's restructuring in 2009 and grew it into a successful business in the sector. He is the Technical Director and Board Member of FICA, providing technical support to the company.

Throughout his career, Tumushabe has coordinated numerous donor-funded projects involving organizations in the agricultural sector, including the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), the Rockefeller Foundation, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), Agri-Business Initiative Trust (aBI Trust), Mercy Corps, and TechnoServe. He has led project teams and completed many projects successfully.



"Structuring working partnerships between the private and public sectors is crucial for the success of agriculture in Africa. CALA provides a platform for developing leaders who can bridge this gap and create win-win situations for all stakeholders," notes Narcis. He adds that the CALA Advanced Leadership Program was a good experience, with very practical and informative content and projects. Tumushabe learned a lot about managing people, planning for change, and systems thinking in problem-solving through the program.

"Having exposure through networking was a limitation before the course. Appreciating the roles of different stakeholders and how to deal with them was a big challenge. The benefits of attending the CALA include my improved capacity to manage the business and introduce change with a very high degree of success," says Tumushabe. Before attending the CALA program, networking and understanding the roles of stakeholders were challenging for Tumushabe. However, the program improved his capacity to manage his business and introduced successful changes.

"CALA is down-to-earth with real-life applications. Most other courses tend to concentrate on theories that sometimes may not apply in most African contexts. CALA has helped me build a strong network and connections within the African agricultural community," notes Tumushabe. He adds that instead of focusing solely on theories, the program's real-life applications allowed him to build a strong network within the African agricultural community.

"When doing the project work as part of the course, it became quite easy to deal with top managers in the Government ministries by applying some of the principles picked in the CALA program," says Tumushabe. The principles learned in the program helped Tumushabe deal with top managers in government ministries during project work. Additionally, the program broadened his perspective on the role of agriculture in Africa's economic development.

"CALA has influenced my perspective on the role of agriculture in Africa's economic development by showing me that there are many facets to this complex issue. Through networking, I have learned about different agricultural agendas in various contexts, and I can identify gaps in my own country's context," notes Tumushabe. CALA has significantly impacted Tumushabe's personal and professional development, and he wants to give back by helping others achieve the same level of success.

"CALA has impacted my career trajectory by giving me the skills and knowledge to become a respected resource in industry convenings. I am already lead-

ing two APEX organizations in the agricultural sector, including the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), where I am a director," says Tumushabe. With the skills and knowledge gained from CALA, Tumushabe is now a respected resource person in industry convenings.

"As a CALA alumnus, I see my role as contributing to the program's continued success by being an active participant. I can share my experiences and insights with future delegates, provide mentorship and support, and help promote the program to others who may benefit from it," notes Tumushabe. He highly recommends the CALA program to those looking to develop their leadership skills in the agricultural sector.

"Overall, my CALA experience was very positive, and I would recommend the program to anyone looking to develop their leadership skills in the agricultural sector. My only suggestion is to include in-country study trips in the program. This would allow delegates to see first-hand how agriculture is practised in different regions of their country," says Tumushabe.

Narcis' experience inspires future CALA delegates to pursue excellence through the program and contribute to Africa's economic development.

Exemplifying an exceptional blend of leadership and expertise, Narcis Tumushabe has been an instrumental force in galvanizing agricultural development across the African continent. His efforts in empowering farmers and agribusinesses, coupled with his visionary approach towards driving economic growth, have rendered substantial contributions to the evolution of the region. Notably, his participation in an array of innovative projects aimed at bolstering agricultural productivity and inflating smallholder farmers' income exemplify his commitment to transforming the African agricultural landscape.

One of Mr. Tumushabe's groundbreaking undertakings was his pivotal role in the "Up-scaling adoption of NERICA" project in South Sudan and Northern Uganda. This initiative, generously backed by ASARECA from 2009 to 2013, testified to his transformative leadership. Further, he masterminded the validation and dissemination of Highland Maize Varieties across Kenya and Uganda, an initiative which concluded with the successful release of five highland maize varieties across these nations.

His involvement in the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) project, a proactive effort towards developing drought-tolerant maize hybrids for farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa, further underscores his relentless dedication to enhancing African agriculture. Beyond his agricultural prowess, Tumushabe's competencies extend into the realm of information technology. His

“Strategic leadership in the agricultural sector is crucial. It's about establishing a framework for integration within the National Agricultural Technology Innovation Policy (NATIP) and communicating key messages to policy-makers and strategic stakeholders.”

track record boasts significant involvement in IT projects, including the development and maintenance of a Management Information System (MIS) for the Nutrition and Early Childhood Development Project in Uganda. His deployment of enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions for notable organizations such as Joint Medical Stores, National Housing and Construction Company Limited, and the New Vision Publishing & Printing Company marks him as a multifaceted expert.

Tumushabe's reputation as an eminent figure in the agricultural sphere is anchored on his comprehensive skill set. His exceptional communication abilities, precise attention to detail, and strong interpersonal skills underscore his effectiveness as an extraordinary team player. Coupled with his relentless pursuit of excellence, unparalleled analytical and problem-solving skills, and an unyielding work ethic, Tumushabe's unique capabilities make him a highly sought-after authority in agribusiness.

In addition to this, his passionate commitment to ensuring confidentiality and demonstrating personal responsibility render him a trusted consultant and advisor in the agricultural sector. Tumushabe's influence stretches across capacity building, investment, financial and marketing management, fostering startups, restructuring for growth, and much more.

Indeed, Narcis Tumushabe's vast experience, extensive expertise, and in-depth knowledge have been instrumental in shaping Africa's agricultural sector. Through his tireless efforts, he has fostered an environment of improved productivity, increased income for small-holder farmers, and enhanced economic growth and development in the region.

With over 19 years of experience in pivotal management positions, his wide-ranging expertise spans agricultural business management, investment, capacity building, and financial and marketing management. His transformative tenure as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Farm Inputs Care Centre (FICA) Limited saw him leading the company through a groundbreaking restructuring process. His strategic vision and relentless pursuit of excellence played a pivotal role in establishing FICA as a key player within the industry.

His leadership at FICA led to phenomenal growth and success, significantly contributing to agricultural development and food security. Under his guidance, the company implemented a comprehensive governance system, ensuring effective planning, monitoring, and evaluation of activities. Moreover, he built strong relationships with local communities, non-governmental organizations, and statutory agencies, promoting collaboration and sustainable agricultural practices.

His profound impact extends beyond FICA, as he has actively coordinated numerous donor-funded projects in collaboration with distinguished organizations such as ASARECA, CIMMYT, the Rockefeller Foundation, AGRA, CFC, Agri-Business Initiative Trust, Mercy Corps, and Technoserve. Through these initiatives, he has played a critical role in bolstering agricultural research, promoting technological advancements, and uplifting smallholder farmers across the region.

Mr. Tumushabe's diverse educational background, including a Master's degree in Computer Science and a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics, showcases his unique blend of technical and business exper-

tise. His ability to synergize ICT solutions with agricultural management practices has enhanced operational efficiency, contributing to the growth and success of the organizations he has served.

5.3 Driving Sustainable Change in Uganda's Rice Sector: The Pioneering Journey of Rachel Ciconco Mbabazi

Uganda boasts a bountiful agricultural landscape and holds vast untapped potential for growth. The rice sector shines brightly within its flourishing industries, presenting prospects for economic advancement and an enhanced quality of life. Spearheading the charge in this transformative endeavor is Rachel Mbabazi, an inspiring visionary and the Chairperson of the Rice Association of Uganda (RAU). She is also a graduate of the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture's (CALA) Advanced Leadership Programme. Through her unwavering dedication, strategic initiatives, and participation in diverse advocacy programs, Rachel has been reshaping the rice industry and paving the way for sustainable development.

Rachel's rise to leadership is rooted in her passion for advocating for favorable policies and supporting rice farmers. Recognizing the need for representation and assistance, she played a pivotal role in establishing the Rice Association of Uganda in February 2018. Her extensive experience in the agricultural sector and her commitment to the farmers' well-being made her the ideal candidate for the role of Chairperson. Since assuming this position, Rachel has dedicated herself to addressing the sector's challenges, identifying growth opportunities, and ensuring a fair playing field for rice farmers nationwide. "We established the Rice Association of Uganda due to significant policy changes in the rice sector. Prior to that, there were no specific representations for active rice farmers, although millers had formed associations for themselves. We recognized the need for an association that focused on the farmers' interests. Before my role as the Chairperson, I worked as a consultant for the largest commercialized farmer in Uganda, named. I provided policy consultation and support. Since then, as the Chairperson, I have been involved in policy formulation, implementation, and advocating for favorable policies for the rice sector," she says.

One of the key opportunities Rachel identified is the potential increase in rice consumption as income levels rise among Ugandans. With its convenience and nutritional benefits, rice has the potential to become a staple in households across the nation. As education levels improve and economic conditions continue to progress, the demand for locally produced rice is expected to soar, driving economic growth and enhancing food security.

"Uganda has the smallest rice consumption in East Africa. Compared to countries like Kenya and Tanzania, our population is smaller, and our per capita income is lower. However, as our income increases, the rice demand will likely rise. Rice is a convenient and easy-to-cook staple compared to other traditional dishes like ugali. Moreover, a local dish called kalo is made from millet, which is less convenient to cook. As more people become educated and income levels rise, rice consumption is expected to increase, presenting opportunities for the sector," Rachel says.

To date, the rice sector in Uganda faces its fair share of challenges. Historically, inadequate stakeholder engagement during policy formulation left farmers needing proper representation. Unsustainable farming practices and the necessity of preserving wetlands, which are vital for rice cultivation, further compounded the sector's challenges. Additionally, the unpredictability of rainfall patterns caused by climate change posed a threat to rice farming.

"One of the primary challenges is related to policies. Previously, policies were formulated without proper stakeholder engagement, leading to inadequate representation for farmers. Another challenge is the use of unsustainable farming practices. While we have wetlands in Uganda that are suitable for rice cultivation, they need to be protected to preserve clean water resources. Growing rice in wetlands requires careful management to prevent water contamination. Additionally, climate change poses a significant challenge. Rice farming has traditionally relied on predictable rain patterns, but climate change has made rainfall unpredictable. We need to adapt to managing flooding and droughts through irrigation and other techniques," she says.

Currently, the majority of rice production in Uganda, around 80%, relies on rainfall, she says. "However, there is a growing number of farmers using irrigation systems. To address the issue of limited access to wetlands for rice cultivation, we have also encouraged upland rice farming that requires irrigation. But overall, access to irrigation is still relatively low, and it's an area we are working to improve," she says.

To address these obstacles head-on, Rachel and the Rice Association of Uganda embarked on a mission to promote sustainable farming practices, protect wetlands, and advocate for policy reforms that truly reflect the needs of the farmers. By encouraging the adoption of responsible agricultural methods and raising awareness about the significance of wetland preservation, Rachel aims to ensure the long-term viability of the rice sector while safeguarding the environment.

Rachel's journey took an extraordinary turn when she had the opportunity to participate in the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) program. Initially considering it a mere leadership course, Rachel soon realized its profound impact on her personal and professional growth. The program not only emphasized essential skills like emotional intelligence but also provided practical modules on agroecology and climate change. Equipped with newfound knowledge and tools, Rachel emerged with a strengthened commitment to prioritizing environmental and socioeconomic factors in her work.

The CALA program's action-learning project had a transformative effect on Rachel. "Although I initially underestimated the program's value, thinking it was a simple course on leadership, I soon realized its significance once I started. The program covered various aspects, including emotional intelligence and practical modules such as agroecology and climate change. It was a turning point for me, enabling me to prioritize environmental and socioeconomic factors in my work. I now advocate for proper practices that benefit small-scale farmers and ensure their issues are addressed in policies," she says.

Engaging in a project related to fisheries, she discovered her ability to find solutions across diverse sectors, expanding her horizons beyond rice farming. CALA experience propelled her decision to pursue a master's degree in global energy and climate change, solidifying her capacity to address pressing environmental concerns in her work.

"One major takeaway of CALA was the action-learning project. It

PROFILE

Emanating a formidable blend of leadership, advocacy, and expertise, Rachel Ciconco Mbabazi stands as a leading figure in Uganda's development sector. As the Chairperson of the Rice Association of Uganda (RAU) and the daughter of the former Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi, her influence is steeped in a legacy of dedication to national progress. Mbabazi is a proud alumnus of Makerere University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Development Studies, augmenting her academic prowess with a Master of Arts degree in International Affairs from the globally respected University of Pennsylvania. Her professional trajectory spans over 10 years in the development sector, during which she held positions at globally renowned organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). Her varied experiences and insights gained from these roles enrich her approach to addressing development challenges. In her distinguished capacity as the Chairperson of the RAU, Mbabazi steers the association's vision towards nurturing the growth of the rice industry in Uganda. Her active participation in the National Rice Task Force further exemplifies her commitment, as she aids in crafting a robust national rice development strategy.

Unwavering in her pursuit of social justice, Mbabazi is a fervent advocate for women's empowerment and gender equality. Her fervor for the progress of Uganda's rice industry is unequivocal. Mbabazi firmly believes in the transformative potential of the rice industry as a catalyst for Uganda's economic growth. Committed to seeing the industry thrive, she collaborates closely with RAU and various stakeholders to ensure that the rice industry realizes its immense potential.



provided an opportunity to learn not only academically but also practically. I was able to engage in a project related to fisheries, an area I had no prior knowledge of. This experience helped me realize my ability to find solutions in various sectors. It also influenced my decision to pursue another master's degree in global energy and climate change instead of a Ph.D. Additionally, the program enhanced my skills and equipped me to have meaningful conversations with farmers, addressing their environmental and socioeconomic concerns effectively. Yes, CALA program was transformative for me," she says.

Rachel underlines that as Uganda's rice industry undergoes continuous transformation, she remains committed to her steadfast dedication and strategic initiatives aimed at making the sector prosperous. Her goal is to cater to the interests of farmers and consumers while upholding environmental integrity.

Rachel Ciconco Mbabazi, the Chairperson of the Rice Association of Uganda (RAU), and a development policy specialist with extensive experience in business, governance, and politics, has leveraged her participation in the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) program to drive significant change within Uganda's rice sector.

"The demand for rice is poised to rise as income levels increase. Rice, being a convenient and easy-to-cook staple, has the potential to become a favored choice among households. As educational opportunities expand and economic conditions improve, we anticipate a significant surge in rice consumption, opening up vast opportunities for the sector," she says.

However, the journey towards capitalizing on this demand is not without its challenges. "Unsustainable farming practices and insufficient stakeholder engagement during policy formulation have been persistent challenges in the rice sector. We have been actively advocating for the adoption of sustainable farming methods and raising awareness about the importance of preserving wetlands, which are vital for rice cultivation and the protection of clean water resources," Mbabazi elaborates.

Climate change, she adds, has further complicated the equation. "With erratic rainfall patterns, we are compelled to adapt and manage flooding and droughts through innovative irrigation techniques. While a majority of rice production still relies on rainfall, we are working towards increasing access to irrigation, particularly in upland areas, to enhance food security and reduce dependency on wetlands," she points out.

The CALA leadership program, Mbabazi asserts, has been a game-changer in her career trajectory. "It went beyond my initial expectations, delving into emotional intelligence and offering practical modules on agro-ecology and climate change. The program equipped me with the knowledge and tools to prioritize environmental and socioeconomic factors in my work, enabling me to become a stronger advocate for sustainable agriculture," she shares.

Her involvement in CALA's action-learning project was particularly transformative, inspiring her to seek solutions that transcend sector boundaries. "This eye-opening experience influenced my decision to pursue a master's degree in global energy and cli-

mate change, further enhancing my capacity to address pressing environmental concerns in my work," she says.

The CALA program has not only honed Mbabazi's skills but also empowered her to engage meaningfully with farmers. "It has been instrumental in shaping my role as a catalyst for positive change, enabling me to influence policies and practices that benefit small-scale farmers across Uganda," she expresses.

In her role as Chairperson of the RAU, Mbabazi has been leveraging her learning from CALA to effect significant change. "Uganda's rice sector has tremendous potential for sustainable development, and my leadership role within the Rice Association of Uganda allows me to drive meaningful change. By addressing challenges head-on, seizing opportunities, and empowering farmers, we are collectively shaping a future where the rice sector thrives, benefiting both the farmers and the nation as a whole," she adds.

She emphasizes that programs like CALA can create a substantial impact within the agricultural sector. "My journey stands as a testament to this, inspiring aspiring leaders to embrace opportunities and champion sustainable practices in their respective fields," she says.

Mbabazi sees her mission as ensuring that the voices of rice farmers are heard and their interests represented. "Through policy advocacy, promoting sustainable farming practices, and fostering stakeholder engagement, we are fostering an environment where rice farmers can thrive and contribute to the sustainable development of Uganda's rice sector," she emphasizes.

The CALA program has been instrumental in shaping Mbabazi's leadership approach in the rice sector, providing her with invaluable insights and skills that have broadened her horizons and enabled her to think beyond rice farming to explore innovative solutions that transcend sector boundaries.

"The CALA program has ignited a deep commitment to prioritizing environmental sustainability and socioeconomic factors in my work. It has reinforced my belief that addressing the challenges of climate change and ensuring inclusive policies are paramount for the long-term success and resilience of the rice sector in Uganda," she shares.

Her involvement in the CALA program has also fostered meaningful connections with farmers. "It has allowed me to engage with them on a deeper level, understand their concerns, and work towards addressing their needs effectively. This has been instrumental in shaping my role as a catalyst for positive change within the rice sector in Uganda," she adds.

She believes that the CALA program has provided her with the tools and knowledge to have a broader impact beyond the rice sector. "It taught me the importance of collaborating across sectors and finding innovative solutions that drive sustainable development. This experience has greatly influenced my approach to leadership and advocacy, allowing me to make a more significant difference in the lives of farmers and the agricultural community," she says.

"The CALA program has not only enhanced my knowledge but also empowered me to be an effective advocate for small-scale rice farmers. It has given me the tools to amplify their voices, address their concerns, and work towards creating an enabling environment that uplifts their livelihoods and contributes to the overall development of the rice sector," she adds. However, she adds it should have been a post graduate programme.

5.4 Climate Change and Agriculture: Rachel Ajambo's Call to Address Challenges for Economic Growth

A transformative power is embedded within agriculture, but its realization requires addressing the challenges posed by climate change, according to Rachel Ajambo, the Country Team Leader for Kilimo Trust

Uganda and the Team Leader for the Markets Policy and Analysis Unit. With unwavering conviction, she firmly believes in the immense potential for agriculture-led economic growth that lies within Uganda, East African and Africa at large.

According to Rachel, agriculture still remains a relevant vehicle to Africa's economic development and its potential to transform lives for all cannot be overlooked. "The CALA program illuminated this more for me and am sure for the other delegates as well," she says. She sees the growing population in Uganda, East Africa and the world as a huge opportunity for farmers to improve their economic fortunes.

"The largest opportunity for agriculture right now is the growing global population of more than 8 billion, all of whom require food. One of the most critical challenges in Ugandan agriculture is the impact of climate

PROFILE

Rachel Ajambo is a highly accomplished agribusiness expert and social economist, recognized for her proficiency in program management, agricultural markets development, and stakeholder relations management. With a career spanning 17 years, she has been instrumental in fostering transformational change within the agriculture sector, both nationally and regionally.

Her passion lies in crafting trade-based systems for agriculture and empowering agribusinesses through mentorship. Her extensive practical experience has involved collaborations with various national and regional organizations across East Africa, in countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, and Nigeria. There, she has significantly contributed to the advancement of agri-business and agri-trade markets through roles encompassing research, training, and data analytics.

For more than nine years, Rachel has played key leadership roles in several African nations, including acting as the Country Team Leader for Kilimo Trust. In this position, she has been fundamental in advancing the organization's goal to unleash the potential of the East African Community region's agriculture sector. Her duties encompass team management, program oversight, and stakeholder engagement.

As the Senior Program Officer for the Competitive African Rice Initiative in Tanzania, Rachel exhibited her broad knowledge in agricultural development, focusing on building the local rice value chain. Her responsibilities included performing value chain analysis and diagnostics, pinpointing opportunities for private sector involvement, and strengthening local institutions to support the value chain.

At Kilimo Trust, Rachel also served as the Program Officer for Value Chain Institutions and Services. In this role, she orchestrated the mapping of institutional environments for targeted value chains, undertook gap analysis in institutional service delivery, and devised and implemented sustainability mechanisms.

Rachel's noteworthy academic credentials include a Master's degree in Agribusiness Management and a Bachelors Degree in Forestry; both from Makerere University. These academic accolades, paired with her vast field experience, have made her an invaluable contributor to the various organizations she has worked with.

A cornerstone of Rachel's success is her adept management of multi-stakeholders paired with her knack for building sustainable value chain institutions and services. She also takes part in significant strategic projects, such as the development of the East Africa Rice Development Strategy 2022-2030, with the goal of transforming the East African Community (EAC) into a net exporter of rice. Passionate about the integration of smallholder farmers into the agriculture sector, Rachel is a fervent advocate for their inclusion, seeing it as vital for attracting investments, creating opportunities, and enhancing livelihoods in rural areas.

Emanating a formidable blend of leadership, advocacy, and expertise, Rachel Ciconco Mbabazi stands as a leading figure in Uganda's development sector. As the Chairperson of the Rice Association of Uganda (RAU) and the daughter of the former Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi, her influence is steeped in a legacy of dedication to national progress. Mbabazi is a proud alumnus of Makerere University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Development Studies, augmenting her academic prowess with a Master of Arts degree in International Affairs from the globally respected University of Pennsylvania. Her professional trajectory spans over 10 years in the development sector, during which she held positions at globally renowned organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). Her varied experiences and insights gained from these roles enrich her approach to addressing development challenges. In her distinguished capacity as the Chairperson of the RAU, Mbabazi steers the association's vision towards nurturing the growth of the rice industry in Uganda. Her active participation in the National Rice Task Force further exemplifies her commitment, as she aids in crafting a robust national rice development strategy.

Unwavering in her pursuit of social justice, Mbabazi is a fervent advocate for women's empowerment and gender equality. Her fervor for the progress of Uganda's rice industry is unequivocal. Mbabazi firmly believes in the transformative potential of the rice industry as a catalyst for Uganda's economic growth. Committed to seeing the industry thrive, she collaborates closely with RAU and various stakeholders to ensure that the rice industry realizes its immense potential.

change. The development of leaders at all levels within the agricultural sector is crucial to ensure the sustainable availability of safe food for all people," says Ajambo.

Rachel made the bold decision to enroll in the CALA Advanced Leadership Program, driven by her determination to enhance her leadership abilities in the field of agriculture. She recognized the pressing need to confront the mounting challenges facing her country and saw this program as a valuable opportunity to refine her skills.

"The primary goal of joining CALA was to refine my leadership skills as an agricultural professional and effectively address the emerging challenges in my country," Rachel explained.

Throughout her journey, both prior to and during the CALA program, Rachel encountered transformative experiences. The program shed light on the significance of agro-ecology and its profound relevance to her work, particularly within the context of the ongoing climate change crisis.

"The CALA program brought into sharp focus the concept of Agro-ecology and how this relates to my work specially in the era of climate change that we are experiencing. Several models on stakeholder management and enlisting community buy-in via communicating the right information to the right people at the right time could not be over stated," Rachel recounted.

"It illuminated various models for stakeholder management and highlighted the crucial role of community engagement. I learned the power of communicating the right information to the right people at the right time, fostering community buy-in and support."

"The real impact on my personal development has been the networks that I developed with fellow team members. Professionally, I acquired new knowledge that I did not have before, including concepts of Agro-ecology and Environmental Management and Sustainability (EMS)," Rachel expressed.

The program provided Rachel with an opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals who shared her passion for environmental sustainability. Through collaboration and engaging discussions, she formed deep and lasting friendships that became a source of support and inspiration. Furthermore, the program broadened her professional horizons by equipping her with valuable knowledge in Agro-ecology and EMS, enabling her to make a meaningful contribution to environmental management and sustainability efforts.

"A key takeaway from my experience with CALA is the recognition of the relevance of Agro-ecology to both sustainable environmental outcomes and value chain development," Rachel emphasized. Inspired by this insight, she applied her learnings to her professional work, particularly in a program she developed for northern Uganda in the Karamoja region that aimed to integrate regenerative agriculture and value chain development.

Rachel's program, which embodies the principles of Agro-ecology and EMS, has been approved and will be funded to be funded under the Green Growth Initiative of one of the leading donors in Uganda.. Through this

initiative, Rachel plans to implement the concepts of Agro-ecology and EMS, while continuously capturing valuable lessons along the way. Rachel's experience with CALA has not only deepened her appreciation for these concepts but has also led her to encourage her team to embrace and expand their knowledge in this field, fostering a more holistic approach to their work.

"The real value of the CALA program has been the networking opportunities provided that enabled me to connect to policy makers in Uganda. This is the one difference that sets CALA apart from other leadership programs. I look forward to the Alumni program that will broaden my networking opportunities in the African Agricultural community," she says.

Rachel faced various challenges before and during her time with CALA. One notable challenge she encountered was managing her exceptionally busy schedule, juggling her professional commitments alongside her responsibilities as the Winning Team coordinator for CALA. This situation demanded careful prioritisation and adept time management to ensure that she could effectively handle the pressures from both spheres.

"I faced the challenge of having jam-packed schedules in both my work and the CALA program. Being the Winning Team coordinator required me to give my full attention and dedication to the program's activities," Rachel shared. "To overcome this challenge, I had to quickly learn the art of prioritisation, ensuring that no balls were dropped in either area of my life. CALA taught me valuable skills in time management and effective multitasking, enabling me to navigate the demanding nature of my commitments successfully."

When comparing CALA to other leadership programs she had participated in, Rachel highlighted several distinguishing factors that set CALA apart. First and foremost, CALA's focus on agro-ecology and its connection to the agricultural sector in the era of climate change made it particularly relevant and unique. This emphasis allowed participants to delve deeply into the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainable agriculture, equipping them with practical knowledge and strategies to address these issues.

One of the memorable experience at CALA, was AGRF 2022 in Kigali where it was very clear that we all need to shift focus from productivity to food systems approach of implementing programs and projects. "My participation in the AGRF 2022 was facilitated by CALA and through this my perspective on agricultural development to ensure sustainability is to take a food systems approach," she said. "The Action Learning Projects were quite key but they need to be well resourced and given enough time for the results to be attained. For example our ALP results all came in after we had even graduated from the program"

6.0

Rwanda's Food System Approach: A Holistic Perspective on Agriculture for Sustainable Development

Food Systems Champions

Peter Ntaganda, is a consultant and formerly served as an Advisor to the Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI). Alphonsine Veasto Mutako, is actively involved in the public sector. Francois Nsengiyumva, the Managing Director of Kilimo General Business Ltd, represents the private sector. Belinda Bwiza, the Country Director of One Acre Fund, is from the civil society sector.

Rwanda's agricultural sector, despite its many challenges, is a beacon of potential. This potential is largely driven by the Rwandan Government's significant commitment to the development of agriculture. Investment in infrastructure, the creation of adaptable institutions, inclusive markets, and innovation and extension services are the initiatives that form a fertile ground for private sector investments. However, it's not all smooth sailing, the sector faces a series of obstacles including heavy reliance on rainfall, scarcity of land, shortage of capital, and the ever-present threat of pests and diseases.

Yet, nestled within these challenges are myriad opportunities waiting to be tapped. The agricultural landscape in Rwanda teems with diverse investment prospects, with areas such as dairy, poultry, meat processing, horticulture, aquaculture, and others offering untold potential. Strong leadership in the sector is fundamental in harnessing these opportunities and navigating through the complexities of the challenges. Leaders can enact strategic changes, kindle innovation, and promote resilience and sustainability, effectively strengthening the sector.

Furthermore, the government's significant investment in irrigation schemes holds great promise. With a combination of private and public initiatives, the government aims to foster collaboration with the farming community. These efforts are targeted at enhancing agricultural production and productivity, thereby boosting the national capacity for agricultural exports. This has a direct positive impact on the farmers' income and the country's foreign exchange earnings.

In addition to irrigation, the shift towards a food system perspective offers another significant opportunity. This is a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of agriculture and its wide-ranging impacts on communities and the environment. This comprehensive perspective encourages collabora-

tion among various actors within the food system, allowing for a more integrated approach to managing agriculture.

Rwanda's reputation for producing high-quality tea and coffee also presents an opportunity. The government is keen on leveraging this reputation to expand production while preserving the integrity of its quality brand. The diversification efforts of the government also extend to areas such as horticulture, meat, and cereals, indicating the broad spectrum of opportunities available.

However, to harness these opportunities and address the challenges, a strategic approach is necessary. The use of available data to drive reforms can provide a clear direction for decision-making, resource allocation, and interventions. Coupled with the development of strong agricultural leadership, this can drive substantial changes in the sector.

Additionally, addressing the lack of access to finance in agriculture can empower farmers to invest in modern technologies, quality seeds, and fertilizers, leading to increased yields. Strengthening market linkages by improving the connection between farmers and traders can ensure smooth transportation of agricultural products from farms to markets and facilitate the exchange of knowledge.

Significant investment in infrastructure and innovation can stimulate private sector investments and spur growth in various areas of the sector. Meanwhile, diversification efforts can open up new areas for growth, further fortifying the sector.

Promoting collaboration among various stakeholders can foster a more resilient and responsive sector. Strengthening extension services, in particular, can provide farmers with the necessary information and

skills to improve their farming practices and productivity. With these strategic actions, Rwanda can fully leverage its agricultural potential, overcome existing challenges, and drive sustainable growth in the agricultural sector.

6.1 Peter Ntaganda: Building Synergies and Bridging Gaps for Agricultural Advancement in Rwanda

In Rwanda's lush, green landscapes, a country renowned for its breathtaking beauty and remarkable progress, lies an agricultural sector; despite a lot of progress, it is grappling with many challenges. As the nation's farmers toil under the scorching sun, their endeavours are plagued by obstacles threatening their livelihoods and food security.

Peter Ntaganda, a seasoned professional and former Advisor to the Minister of State at the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) highlights the key hurdles faced by Rwanda's agricultural sector, paving the way for an introspective journey into the heart of these challenges.

"Firstly," Ntaganda asserts, "we rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture, which makes our food systems less resilient to the ever-growing menace of climate change. Farmers bear the brunt of these uncertainties as the skies become more unpredictable and rainfall patterns become erratic. Their crops wither under the scorching sun or drown in sudden downpours, leaving them vulnerable to devastating losses and food shortages".

Beyond the capriciousness of weather patterns, Ntaganda points out the dire issue of limited access to finance in agriculture, branding it as the least financed among all sectors. This glaring disparity paints a grim picture for farmers who lack the necessary resources to invest in modern technologies, quality seeds, and fertilizers. Consequently, their yields suffer, and they cannot break free from the cycle of subsistence farming.

"Limited financing," Ntaganda laments, "also exacerbates the problem of price fluctuations, leaving our farmers at the mercy of volatile markets. With little room for negotiation and a lack of bargaining power, they are forced to accept meagre returns for their hard work. Witnessing the countless hours of labour and dedication being undervalued is disheartening, ultimately pushing our farmers deeper into poverty."

One cannot explore the challenges within Rwanda's agricultural sector without addressing the weak market linkages and the absence of innovative markets. Ntaganda stresses that a disjointed distribution chain and inadequate infrastructure hamper the smooth flow of agricultural products from farms to markets. The lack of proper organization and coordination amongst farmers further compounds the problem, resulting in a fragmented and inefficient system failing to unlock the sector's full potential.

Moreover, Ntaganda underscores the limited connections between farmers and traders as a significant hurdle that needs urgent attention. "There is a

PROFILE

Prior to becoming an independent consultant in February 2023, Peter served as an Advisor to the Minister of State at the Ministry of Agriculture & Animal Resources in Kigali, Rwanda, where he worked for nearly 3 years. In this role, he contributed to policy-making processes, guided agricultural strategy development, and oversaw various initiatives aimed at enhancing the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of Rwanda's agricultural sector.

Before this, Peter was a Business Advisor at Agriterro from April 2017 to July 2020. In this role, he worked closely with agribusinesses and farmer cooperatives, providing them with business development advice, training, and support. He also played a key role in promoting innovative financing solutions for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the agricultural sector. At Agriterro, Mr. Ntaganda has also coordinated and consolidated activities and achievements of Agriterro in 7 countries within the Eastern and Southern Region and was a member of the HortInvest Management Committee leading the cooperative development component of the consortium.

From October 2016 to March 2017, Peter was a consultant at ICCO Cooperation. Here he developed an Agri-scoreCard - a tool used to assess agricultural businesses' feasibility, profitability, and sustainability. This work included advising on financial strategies and investment opportunities for agribusinesses.

Between August and December 2016, Peter worked with Zed Group Limited as a consultant evaluating MINAGRI's Rural and Agricultural Financial Services Strategy. His role was to review and assess the strategy's effectiveness and recommend improvements where necessary.

His other roles included working as a consultant on the Legal, Tax, Regulatory & Market Review of the Irrigation Equipment Leasing in Rwanda for Access to Finance Rwanda from June to October 2016 and a stint as a Professional in charge of Agriculture Finance and Agribusiness for the Ministry of Agriculture & Animal Resources from July 2012 to July 2015.

Peter started his career as a team leader in the 2011 National Manpower Survey for the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, where he led a team responsible for gathering and analyzing data related to employment and skills in both informal and formal sectors.

Peter Ntaganda is a dedicated and passionate professional with extensive experience in the agricultural sector. He has a track record of making significant contributions to policy development, agribusiness strategy, agricultural finance, and cooperative development. His work has significantly impacted Rwanda's agricultural sector and set a high standard for future initiatives. His leadership and expertise continue to inspire and guide others in the sector towards sustainable and inclusive agricultural development.

palpable disconnect between those who cultivate the land and those who bring the produce to the market. This disconnect not only limits the access of farmers to lucrative markets but also inhibits the exchange of knowledge and expertise. Bridging this gap is vital for fostering a symbiotic relationship between farmers and traders, enabling them to work hand in hand towards sustainable agricultural development”.

Yet, Ntaganda points out, amidst these challenges, there are also numerous opportunities waiting to be harnessed. Among the most promising is the move towards expanding access to irrigation. “The government is taking significant strides in investing in irrigation schemes,” says Ntaganda. “These schemes are a mix of private and public orientation, showcasing the government’s determination to foster collaboration with the farming community”.

He details how some of these irrigation schemes are open to investors, who can hire them to boost infield irrigation for their own investments, adhering to the conditions set forth by the government. This cooperative strategy can enhance production and productivity and build up the national capacity for agricultural exports.

“These initiatives have the potential to uplift the earnings of our farmers and bolster our country’s foreign currency earnings,” Ntaganda notes, underscoring the far-reaching impact of these irrigation initiatives. “Through increased production and productivity, we can grow our national capacity for agricultural exports, directly improving our farmers’ income and augmenting the country’s foreign exchange earnings.” Furthermore, Ntaganda stresses the potential in adopting a more comprehensive food system perspective. He explains that the government, in partnership with stakeholders and development partners, is beginning to view agriculture within the broader context of food systems.

“

Limited financing also exacerbates the problem of price fluctuations, leaving our farmers at the mercy of volatile markets. With little room for negotiation and a lack of bargaining power, they are forced to accept meagre returns for their hard work.”

“Adopting a food system perspective is another significant opportunity,” Ntaganda affirms. “This shift represents a more encompassing view of agriculture, recognizing its multifaceted interactions and effects on our communities and environments”, Ntaganda explains that opportunities to build stronger linkages and skills beyond the agriculture sector emerge by shifting towards this perspective. This approach promotes coordination and synergy among various actors within the food system, encouraging a more holistic, integrated approach to managing agriculture and its numerous ties to other sectors.

“This way of viewing agriculture fosters connections and collaboration among various stakeholders, effectively bridging the coordination gap that has traditionally hampered initiatives in the sector,” Ntaganda says. “By promoting synergy among actors within the food system, we create a more resilient and responsive sector capable of addressing the various challenges it faces.” Ntaganda highlights the importance of maintaining high-quality agricultural products as a critical opportunity for Rwanda. Known for its high-quality tea and coffee, the country strategically capitalises on its reputation to broaden its agricultural scope.

“Rwanda has built a solid reputation as a producer of high-quality tea and coffee”, Ntaganda says. “The government is leveraging this reputation to expand production while ensuring that the integrity of our quality brand is upheld. To make this possible, there’s an active initiative to mobilize more investors who can support farmers, thereby driving productivity upwards”.

This strategy aims to secure stable markets for Rwanda’s agricultural exports, contributing to the nation’s economic growth and stability. Additionally, Ntaganda speaks about the government’s diversification efforts, which extend beyond traditional commodities like coffee and tea.

“The government is keen on diversifying our agricultural sector. We are exploring areas like horticulture and other diversified commodities, such as meat and cereals,” he explains. “These initiatives present additional opportunities for Rwanda, and there’s a concerted effort by the government to fully partner with the private sector to harness these potentials”.

Ntaganda’s rich journey within the agricultural sector began in 2012 and spanned multiple roles and contexts in Rwanda and abroad. This afforded him valuable exposure to various perspectives and approaches in agricultural development. “I started my journey in the agricultural sector in 2012, and over the years, I had the privilege of being part of different areas of this sector,” he recalls. “I pursued studies in countries where significant advancements were being made, worked with civil society, private sector, NGOs, and eventually, found myself in a senior leadership role at the Ministry of Agriculture”.

In this role, Ntaganda engaged in national dialogues focused on organizing and coordinating the food system at a national level. These experiences led to his interest in the concept of CALA. “After participating in these national-level dialogues and consultations, the idea of CALA emerged,” he shares. “I was intrigued to delve deeper into the concept of food systems and how to institutionalize it beyond the scope of the min-

istry. I sought to foster synergies among various sector actors, including those from civil society and the private sector”.

This curiosity led him to join CALA, which provided a unique platform for practical learning, analysis, and implementation. Ntaganda analyzed the discussions from the national food system dialogue held prior to the 2021 UN Food System Summit. “CALA was compelling because it offered a practical program that transcended theory and emphasized implementation,” Ntaganda states. “It gave me the opportunity to engage in a more hands-on approach and helped me to better understand and address the real-world challenges facing our agricultural sector”.

Before his current role, Ntaganda worked as a member of the national food systems technical committee, an experience that reinforced his belief in the power of collaboration across various sectors, not just within the government. “Before discussing my present activities, I spent time as a member of the food systems national dialogues technical committee,” Ntaganda recalls. “This work allowed me to support the Ministry in conducting consultations for strategic planning, and it solidified my understanding that you don’t necessarily need to be in a governmental position to make significant contributions to the sector.” Through CALA, Ntaganda gained invaluable knowledge about prioritization, effective communication, active listening, delegation of power and authority, and influencing others to take ownership. It helped him see the bigger picture, that engaging people and motivating them to work voluntarily towards common goals can prove to be more effective than exerting authority.

While serving in the Ministry, he leveraged these skills to align the ministry’s priorities and engage people at various levels. “In my time with the Ministry, I was responsible for aligning our priorities,” Ntaganda shares. “CALA’s practical leadership skills came in handy as they allowed me to engage with people across different levels effectively”.

A particularly impactful project that Ntaganda recalls from his CALA days involved enhancing the commercialization of the maize value chain through effective use of contract farming. They organized workshops to facilitate dialogues amongst key actors and stakeholders, which resulted in the development of a contract farming tool for sustainable market linkages between farmers and buyers within the maize value chain. “One project that stands out was about enhancing the commercialization of the maize value chain through effective use of contract farming,” he says. “We organized consultation workshops where key stakeholders discussed how to make sustainable marketing linkages more effective within the maize value chain. This project was very well-received and led to the development of a contract farming tool that two key maize buyers tested with their supplying cooperatives”.

For Ntaganda, CALA is an excellent program, ideally suited for those with a passion for agriculture and clear career aspirations. He highlights the importance of a positive attitude, commitment to teamwork, and a thorough understanding of the African

PROFILE

Alphonsine Vedasto Mutako is an accomplished professional with extensive public-sector operations management experience, particularly in the agricultural sector. Currently, she serves as the Food Security Coordinator for the Rwanda-Burundi program at Mennonite Central Committee, a role she assumed on July 5th, 2023.

Alphonsine’s academic background is robust and directly applicable to her line of work. She holds a BSc in Agricultural Science and a Bachelor’s degree in Forestry and Nature Conservation, both awarded in 2011 by the Higher Institute of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry (ISAE), now known as the University of Rwanda. Further expanding her knowledge in the field, she obtained a master’s degree in Agricultural Economics and Rural Development from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

Before joining the Mennonite Central Committee, Alphonsine worked as the Operations Manager at the Rwanda Grain and Cereals Corporation Ltd, where her keen understanding of supply chain management, logistics, and quality control played a pivotal role in the smooth functioning of the organization. Her commitment to process optimization, streamlining operations, and maintaining quality and safety standards was invaluable.

Passionate about sustainable development in Rwanda’s agricultural sector, Alphonsine actively participates in initiatives to promote food security and improve rural livelihoods. Now in her role at the Mennonite Central Committee, she brings this dedication and expertise to ensure the food security of the Rwanda-Burundi region.

Her deep understanding of public sector dynamics, fostered by close collaboration with government agencies and regulatory bodies, is an asset in her current role. Alphonsine’s knack for effective communication allows her to engage various stakeholders, strategize solutions for industry challenges, and create a conducive business environment.

In addition to her professional commitments, Alphonsine actively participates in forums and discussions about agricultural development and public sector management. Her wealth of knowledge and experience in the field, coupled with a dedication to continuous learning and adaptation to industry trends and innovations, make her a valuable contributor in the drive towards sustainable agricultural development.



agricultural context. “I want to stress that CALA is an excellent program,” he affirms, “but it must align with the participants’ passion and career aspirations. Positive attitudes and a commitment to teamwork are crucial.” However, he also sees room for improvement in the program. For instance, he suggests designing a shorter version tailored for high-level leaders such as director generals in ministries and focusing on fostering the CALA alumni network for continuous connection and knowledge sharing.

“Tailoring a shorter program for high-level leaders could provide key insights into food systems and leadership skills in the agricultural sector without requiring them to go through the entire program,” Ntaganda suggests. “Enhancing the CALA alumni network is vital for continued connection and experience sharing among sector leaders”.

6.2 From Farm to Table: Alphonsine Vedasto Mutako’s Commitment to Sustainable Agriculture in Rwanda

Rwanda’s food systems landscape is brimming with potential, even in the face of limited natural resources. This is largely attributable to the Rwandan Government’s steadfast commitment to escalating the development of its agricultural sector,” asserts Alphonsine Vedasto Mutako. With a deep-seated interest in agricultural development, she keenly observes the vast possibilities and obstacles that pervade Rwanda’s agricultural landscape. Mutako is the immediate former Operations Manager of Rwanda Grain and Cereals Corporation Ltd. She took up a new role in July 2023 as the Food Security Coordinator for the Rwanda-Burundi program at Mennonite Central Committee, a Public-private partnership.

She says that substantial investments have been channelled towards infrastructure, the creation of adaptable institutions, inclusive markets, and innovation and extension services. These initiatives collectively construct a favorable atmosphere that stimulates private-sector investments. The sector teems with diverse investment prospects spanning areas such as Dairy, Poultry, Meat Processing, Horticulture, Aquaculture, Mechanization, crop sourcing, blockchain, Agro-tourism, the production of irrigation equipment, and cold chain logistics.

Yet, amid the plethora of opportunities, Rwanda’s agricultural sector is not exempt from hurdles. The sector relies heavily on rainfall, making it susceptible to climate perturbations. An underutilization of water resources for irrigation results in an erratic agricultural output that varies seasonally. Additionally, the sector contends with land scarcity, a dearth of capital, and rampant pests and diseases.

The development of agricultural leaders at all levels can play a significant role in addressing these challenges and maximizing these opportunities. Through effective leadership, challenges can be strategically navigated, innovative solutions can be developed to counter the existing issues, and the opportunities present in the sector can be harnessed for growth. Leaders can drive the adoption of best practices, foster a culture of resilience and sustainability, and encourage stakeholder collaboration to strengthen the sector. Before her involvement in the CALA program, Mutako

deeply desired to enhance her leadership skills within the agricultural sector and contribute meaningfully to her country’s food system transformation. This ambition prompted her to participate in the CALA program.

“I was promoted to participate in CALA by my desire to become a good leader in the agriculture sector and contribute to my country’s food system transformation.” Before CALA, she was deeply entrenched in operations management within the public sector, focusing specifically on agricultural development. This background served as a solid foundation on which to build her CALA experience. During her time in the CALA Advanced Leadership Program, Alphonsine was introduced to an enriching journey that amplified her agricultural leadership knowledge and skills.

“My CALA journey was a transformative experience that equipped me with invaluable knowledge and skills. It also provided a unique platform to connect with other African agricultural leaders, offering deeper insights into diverse agricultural landscapes, their specific challenges, and opportunities.” Before the CALA program, Alphonsine identified gaps in her leadership skills, including problem-solving, goal setting, and performance management. The CALA Advanced Leadership Program was a transformative journey, teaching her the power of collaboration and coaching skills in accomplishing goals.

“Before the program, I lacked leadership skills in leadership, including problem-solving soft skills, setting goals for success, and performance management, among others. During the CALA Advanced Leadership Program, I learned the power of collaboration in accomplishing goals and coaching skills.”

The CALA program significantly impacted Alphonsine’s personal and professional development. She acquired a wide range of leadership skills and strategies for managing performance, solving problems, and setting development goals as a leader. “The program impacted my personal and professional development in many ways. I acquired multiple skills in leadership, skills to manage performance, solve problems, and set goals for development in my daily work as a leader.”

One of the key takeaways from her CALA experience was the value of setting SMART goals. She has since integrated this approach into her workplace, establishing a practice of setting SMART goals for each department at the beginning of the year. “I have managed to establish the spirit of working on SMART goals for every department of my workplace and setting them early, ready to be measured in the course of the year.”

Before her involvement with CALA, Alphonsine Vedasto Mutako felt unprepared as a leader, lacking the knowledge and foundation needed to solve problems that arose in her work. CALA helped her overcome these challenges by providing her with the necessary tools and strategies to handle issues without confrontation, leading to a win-win situation in different contexts. “Before CALA, I was not really well organized as a leader because I was struggling to handle difficult matters due to lack of knowledge, I even had no basis to solve problems that were arising in my work. Now strategically, I tackle issues without confrontations and end up with a win-win situation in different parts.” The CALA program stood out from other leadership pro-

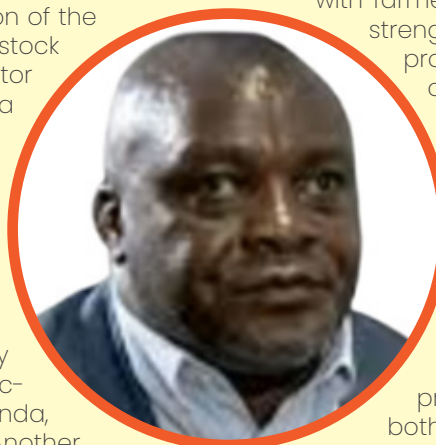
PROFILE

François Nsengiyumva is renowned for his significant contributions to developing the seed industry and fostering private sector engagement in Rwanda. He recognizes the government's introduction of seed policies as the catalyst to local seed production and consumption growth, transitioning Rwanda from a heavy dependence on imported hybrid seeds for staple crops. He also acknowledges the instrumental role played by organizations like the AGRA and its partners in translating these policies into law, thereby ensuring their successful execution.

As the CEO of KILIMO GENERAL BUSINESS (KGB) Limited and a former Chairperson of the Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock within the Rwanda Private Sector Federation (PSF), Nsengiyumva holds an influential role within Rwanda's agricultural scene.

While serving at the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, he was instrumental in the implementation of the Crop Intensification Program. This initiative, which significantly enhanced agricultural productivity and food security in Rwanda, flourished under his guidance. Another notable achievement was his coordination of the importation, auction, and efficient distribution of seeds and fertilizers throughout Rwanda. His hand in establishing post-harvest storage best practices and infrastructure notably enhanced the nation's management of Food Strategic Reserves. Nsengiyumva's collaborations with farmers, various stakeholders, and partners across ministries, local administrations, and the private sector have marked him as an active player in capacity building initiatives.

With an impressive background in agribusiness and hands-on experience in the execution of agricultural programs, François Nsengiyumva stands as a pivotal figure in Rwanda's agriculture sector. A proud graduate of CALA, François Nsengiyumva is an accomplished professional with a profound background in the private sector, a dedication to agricultural innovation, and a drive for business growth within Rwanda. As the Managing Director of Kilimo General Business Ltd, his influence shapes the company's strategic direction and fosters its success within the agricultural industry.



He directs all aspects of Kilimo General Business Ltd's operations, including business development, sales, procurement, and supply chain management. His visionary leadership and entrepreneurial spirit have successfully established the company as a significant contributor to the agricultural sector, delivering innovative solutions and services to farmers and stakeholders across the value chain. Passionate about agriculture, François Nsengiyumva's deep understanding of the sector fuels his commitment to fostering sustainable and inclusive growth. He continually looks for collaboration opportunities with farmers, cooperatives, and stakeholders to strengthen partnerships and improve the productivity and profitability of the agricultural industry.

Relying on his business management expertise, he is committed to optimizing operational efficiency and the implementation of best practices within Kilimo General Business Ltd. Quality assurance, customer satisfaction, and modern technological adoption are high priorities for him in his pursuit of streamlined processes and enhanced outcomes for both the company and its clients.

As a champion of private sector development, he engages with industry associations and business networks to advocate for policies and initiatives that support agricultural entrepreneurship and investment. His strategic acumen and influential voice make him a respected figure within the private sector, contributing to the establishment of a favorable business environment for agricultural enterprises.

With a solid academic background in business management, complimented by his comprehensive experience in the agricultural industry, François Nsengiyumva remains up-to-date with the latest trends, innovations, and market dynamics. He continually seeks professional development opportunities to drive sustainable growth for Kilimo General Business Ltd. Outside his professional life, François is dedicated to community development and social responsibility, supporting initiatives that promote education, empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods for Rwanda's vulnerable populations.

grams by broadening Alphonsine's African network. She connected with individuals from various countries and gained insights into different practices and food systems strategies from across the continent.

"CALA expanded my network, especially for the Africa network. Now I am connected to people from participating countries, I know what is done in different parts of the continent, I am aware of food systems globally and strategies in place from the platforms through

CALA and AGRA." Alphonsine applied the knowledge gained from CALA directly in her organization, using performance management strategies to guide staff and improve their understanding of the evaluation process.

"I applied the performance management knowledge to give orientation on how to enable the staff to perform in our company, opened files for the staff to assist them to understand the evaluation process." A mem-

orable lesson for her was the transformation agenda of food systems, which sparked her interest in sustainable agriculture and climate change. This influenced her perspective on the role of agriculture in Africa's economic development.

"Food systems transformation agenda has awakened my mind as a hot topic discussed during the CALA program. Agroecology consideration for sustainable agriculture and climate change has triggered my sense of contributing to community awareness on the importance of sustainable agriculture practices to feed the future generation of our continent." Participating in CALA positively impacted Alphonsine's career trajectory, with the certificate proving instrumental in securing jobs that require leadership and food security skills. She advises future CALA delegates to complete the courses and respect timelines for long-term benefits.

"I have experienced a significant positive impact through CALA, gaining valuable skills I am applying in my professional endeavors. I encourage all participants to diligently complete CALA courses and the ALP, respecting the timelines provided. By doing so, they will undoubtedly reap long-term benefits and express gratitude towards CALA. I have utilized the CALA certificate to apply for various job opportunities and have successfully secured important roles, particularly those emphasising leadership and food security expertise."

As a CALA alumnus, she is dedicated to disseminating knowledge and practising what she learned to develop her community. Alphonsine gained crucial skills such as problem-solving, enabling people to perform, performance management, and setting goals for success, which were not acquired in her previous professional and educational experiences. "I see my role as CALA alumni contributing to the program's continued success through disseminating the knowledge and practising what we learned to develop our communities is crucial to show the program's positive impact."

"Collaboration and coaching skills learned is another essential part of CALA best thing," Alphonsine says. She deeply valued and cherished the collaboration and coaching skills she acquired in the CALA program, recognizing them as fundamental pillars that shaped her transformative journey. Through the program's emphasis on collaboration, she learned the art of effective teamwork, understanding the power of synergy and collective effort in achieving meaningful outcomes.

6.3 François Nsengiyumva: From Policy to Practice – Empowering Rwanda's Agriculture Sector

"Challenges often mask opportunities," says François Nsengiyumva, the dynamic CEO of Kilimo General Business Limited, a leading seed company in Rwanda. He identifies two substantial hurdles in his country's agricultural sector: the lack of proximity extension services and the dearth of agricultural finance. But, in a twist of perspective, Nsengiyumva perceives these not as obstacles but as stepping stones for substantial growth and systemic change in Rwanda's agricultural realm.



PROFILE

Beyond her illustrious professional life as the Managing Director of One Acre Fund Tubura Belinda finds joy and fulfillment as a devoted wife and mother. Fueling her every endeavor is her undying passion for catalyzing inclusive economic transformation across the African continent

"Leadership can be a game-changer", Nsengiyumva argues, placing agricultural leadership at the nucleus of leveraging these opportunities. He believes influential leadership can prompt policy and environmental alterations, stimulate local production and consumption, and boost crucial extension services and agricultural finance improvements. "These aspects can trigger a revolution in Rwanda's agricultural sector," he affirms. Nsengiyumva's commitment to leadership development and thirst for continuous learning led him to join CALA. "I aimed to deepen my understanding of agriculture's transformation and fortify my country's food system resilience," he recounts.

His stint with CALA marked a significant turning point in his perceptions of agricultural productivity. Previously subscribing to the view that improved seeds and fertilizers were largely responsible for high productivity, he experienced a paradigm shift during the program. "My engagement with the courses on Problem Solving and Agro-ecological Considerations revealed a more sustainable path to enhanced productivity," Nsengiyumva notes.

The CALA program resonated beyond Nsengiyumva's personal ideologies, significantly influencing his business strategy and partnership contracts with farmers and agro-dealers. "The Problem-Solving course now informs my daily activities," he reveals, indicating how his learnings from the course are influencing his decision to open new pesticides and commodity trade departments in Kilimo General Business by the end of 2023.

Furthermore, CALA equipped Nsengiyumva with effective strategies to address a long-standing challenge: providing farmers with a comprehensive knowledge and input package to maximize yield. "Today, Kilimo General Business has adopted a new approach. We are deploying fully-equipped agronomists across various production zones," he shares.

Nsengiyumva holds CALA in high regard, distinguishing it from other leadership programs primarily due to the inspiring sessions facilitated by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRF). "These sessions enriched my learning journey and broadened my network within the African agricultural community," he asserts.

Reflecting on his transformative journey with CALA,

Nsengiyumva recounts a profound shift in his business philosophy. "From being a businessman with a primary focus on profit, I now see myself as an agent for socio-economic transformation, particularly for rural farmers," he confesses. He underscores the role of agro-ecological considerations in achieving sustainable productivity and insists on agriculture's potential to drive Africa's economic development.

Nsengiyumva considers CALA "a journey blending learning and practice, bringing about tangible changes in business planning and execution." To future CALA delegates, he advises, "Embrace the journey. It illuminates a clear path to transform a business inclusively and sustainably."

As a CALA alumnus, Nsengiyumva envisions contributing to the program's continued success. "By sharing my success stories and advocating for engaging interactions, I hope to inspire and guide future participants," he shares. His belief in the transformative potential of agriculture in Africa's economic trajectory remains unwavering, prompting him to provide regular feedback to government institutions to shape transformative agricultural policies and programs.

Looking back at his growth through CALA, Nsengiyumva acknowledges the program's significant role in bolstering his problem-solving abilities, influencing others, and appreciating agro-ecology's place in agriculture transformation. Reflecting on his CALA journey, he says, "Every day, there are new lessons based on what we should build for a better future." This statement perfectly echoes the continuous learning ethos of the CALA program.

6.4 Belinda Bwiza: Championing Social Justice and Gender Equity in Farming Communities

Action learning projects can act as a catalyst for finding innovative solutions to long-standing challenges. Belinda Bwiza, a participant in the Rwanda CALA cohort and the Managing Director of One Acre Fund Tubura, highlights its impact on her organization.

"During the ALP meetings, we exchanged ideas on how to start using data available to drive reforms in the sector," noted Bwiza, then Deputy Country Director, One Acre Fund, during CALA participation.

"These discussions are now encouraging our organization to explore additional ways to support and cross-share data across different ecosystems."

During the ALP meetings, a vibrant exchange of ideas took place, with participants actively exploring the potential of accessible data to revolutionize our approaches and accelerate positive change. Bwiza emphasizes that the discussions were thought-provoking, encouraging deep reflection on how data-driven initiatives can address challenges and unlock new opportunities within their sector.

By leveraging accessible data, organizations can enhance their decision-making processes, optimize resource allocation, and fine-tune their interventions. It makes it possible for a future where data-driven solutions are at the forefront, enabling organizations like

One Acre Fund to better serve the communities they work with and drive sustainable impact.

Belinda is at the helm of One Acre Fund Tubura. Belinda is defying the traditional boundaries that often separate finance from social justice. Utilizing her proven financial track record, she is tenaciously driving a mission that advocates for both gender equity and farming communities. As part of One Acre Fund, a social enterprise, Bwiza's work symbolizes her commitment to creating meaningful change.

"My professional background in finance and business initially dictated the direction of my career. However, with time, I realized the need to align my work with a deeper purpose and sought to create impact beyond just personal growth," Bwiza stated. After her experience with the Ontario government, she realized the importance of policy and governance in addressing social issues, sparking a desire to bring her skills to her home country, Rwanda.

"I see myself as a facilitator," Bwiza said, describing her role at One Acre Fund. Her primary task is to ensure the actualization of the organization's vision and strategy. With her role having evolved significantly over time, she currently focuses on enhancing the impact of the organization on individual farms by diversifying their portfolio and ensuring the delivery of a superior customer experience. Bwiza revels in the joy of witnessing the transformative impact of their work on individuals and communities. "What I cherish most about my work is being part of the One Acre Fund family and serving smallholder farmers," she expressed.

Her decision-making process has been tested and refined throughout her career, particularly during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. "I focus on gathering all relevant information, understanding the root cause of a situation, and then make a decision that can alleviate the problem or spark innovation. The pandemic was one such situation that pushed us to rethink our approach and adapt," she shares.

Recognizing the hardships faced by farmers during the COVID-19 pandemic, she steered One Acre Fund to prioritize food security over loan repayments. "This decision posed a financial risk for the organization but ultimately deepened the farmers' trust in One Acre Fund. Today, we serve over 750,000 families in Rwanda directly," she shared.

"A good leader is a visionary who can identify problems, strategize, innovate, and effectively communicate the desired end state," Bwiza shared her thoughts on leadership. She also emphasized the importance of continual growth and development for leaders, sharing her strategy of seeking new challenges and networking with leaders and experts in her field.

Bwiza is a strong advocate for gender equity. "Having more women in senior leadership roles is exciting. They represent possibility and promise for upcoming professionals and strengthen organizations by fostering diverse perspectives," she stated. One Acre Fund runs a mentorship program to support the growth of women leaders. "I mentor at least three female staffers every year. Such interactions have encouraged some of my mentees to pursue personal and career goals," Bwiza shared.

Bwiza mantra revolves around self-improvement. "Whatever you want to achieve in your life starts with you. Understand your motivations and weaknesses, and then you will learn how to be the best version of yourself," she said. She advises budding leaders, especially women, "Invest in yourself. Uncover your strengths and proactively seek opportunities that align with your passion and interests. Additionally, build strong networks. It is essential to connect with people who challenge you, connect you to opportunities, and inspire you."

Bwiza's conviction is rooted in the belief that finance and social justice can effectively intersect. "The world often views finance and social justice as distant realms. But I firmly believe they can intertwine to bring about meaningful change," she declares. As the driving force behind the One Acre Fund in Rwanda, Bwiza's role is ever-evolving, always centered on increasing the organization's impact. She elucidates, "Our focus is to diversify our offerings and deliver an exceptional customer experience. We are constantly trying to deepen the organization's impact per farm. Our ultimate goal is to deliver more farmer impact through our network that is present in every district in rural Rwanda."

Bwiza has always strongly advocated gender equity in the workplace and the community. "Women in leadership roles represent an untapped potential that

can bring fresh perspectives and innovative solutions," she suggests. To cultivate the growth of more women leaders, she actively takes on mentorship roles within the One Acre Fund. "It's fulfilling to guide and support the next generation of women leaders, helping them navigate their paths while creating a more inclusive work environment," she notes.

Bwiza reveals her adventurous side and her love for dance, travel, and skydiving. She also understands the need to unwind and take time for herself. "Music, TV shows, and books are my favorite ways to relax," she says.

The mantra Bwiza lives by underlines the importance of self-improvement and self-awareness. "Everything begins with oneself. It's crucial to understand our motivations and weaknesses. Only then can we work towards becoming the best versions of ourselves," she advises. For those who are early in their leadership journey, especially women, Bwiza has a few words of wisdom. "Invest in yourself, discover your strengths, and seek opportunities aligned with your passions. Building strong networks is equally important as they can open up opportunities and inspire personal growth," she asserts.

7.0

Malawi: Envisioning a Brighter Agricultural Future for Malawi

Food Systems Champions

Fannie Gondwe, the Executive Director of Perisha Agro and Packaging Enterprise, is actively involved in the private sector. Pamela Kuwali, serving as the Executive Director of ActionAid Malawi, represents the civil society sector. Readwell Musopole holds the position of Deputy Director of Planning in the Ministry of Agriculture, contributing to the public sector's efforts. Tayani Vincent Banda, a Senior Development Planning Specialist (Macro & Real Sector) at the National Planning Commission (NPC), also works with in the public sector.

The agricultural sector of Malawi possesses a potential vitality and robustness that could act as a linchpin for the country's economic advancement. However, this potential remains unrealized due to the presence of intricate and deeply-rooted challenges. To design efficacious strategies that could metamorphose the agricultural scene in Malawi and lay the foundation for long-lasting economic prosperity, it is crucial to delve deeper into the nuances of these hurdles and opportunities.

Starting with the societal perception of agriculture, the discipline has traditionally been viewed as a fallback profession for individuals who lack formal education. This limiting belief hinders the involvement of younger generations and stunts the exploration of innovative avenues within the sector. Agriculture is often undervalued and underappreciated, thus discouraging ambitious individuals from exploring this field. If this narrative can be reshaped to emphasize the potential for a prosperous livelihood and significant economic contribution, it may lead to a rejuvenation of interest and engagement, opening the floodgates for entrepreneurial creativity and innovative investment.

Another entrenched issue within Malawi's agricultural ecosystem is the politicization of the sector. Agricultural priorities and policies are often swayed by short-term political gains rather than driven by a visionary, strategic plan for long-term sustainable growth. This short-sighted approach stagnates the developmental initiatives that could result in a significant enhancement of the sector's growth and sustainability. It is crucial to extricate the agricultural strategy from political manoeuvring and refocus on comprehensive, long-term, and evidence-based planning that values sustainability as much as immediate growth.

Access to reliable and critical information is a notable impediment to the progress of the agricultural sector. A centralized source of agricultural intelligence, encompassing data about profitable value chains, market dynamics, and optimal investment strategies, is currently lacking. This deficit stymies farmers from evolving beyond traditional farming practices and im-

pedes them from tapping into potentially more fruitful avenues. Developing an accessible and robust information system could revolutionize the sector, leading to more informed decision-making, efficient farming practices, and increased profitability.

The predominance of traditional farming methods is another complex challenge facing Malawi's agriculture. With a workforce largely reliant on outdated agricultural practices, and a noticeable absence of modern technologies, the sector is marked by low productivity, despite having abundant fertile lands. The incorporation of modern agricultural technologies and practices can dramatically increase efficiency and yield, thereby driving the sector towards economic viability.

The lack of coordination and shared vision amongst the primary stakeholders, including the government, the private sector, and development partners, poses another stumbling block. This disjointed approach results in persistent inefficiencies and a fragmented strategic vision, thereby throttling the sector's overall development.

Despite these intricate challenges, Malawi's agricultural sector teems with untapped opportunities. Malawi's rich natural resources, including fertile soils and abundant water, combined with a large, albeit traditional, agricultural workforce, provide a robust base for the sector's growth. By implementing astute policies and strategic investments, these resources can be harnessed to induce a significant transformation of the sector.

Market development offers another ripe opportunity. The casual commercialization of agriculture, wherein cooperatives are nurtured and farm-level development is promoted, holds enormous potential. This potential remains largely untapped and could become a major driver for the sector's growth.

Additionally, Malawi's agricultural products hold a considerable potential for exports, offering another key avenue for growth. Strategic guidance and support for farmers to access international markets could cata-

pult the sector's profitability, increase the country's foreign exchange earnings, and spur job creation.

Technology and innovation present another significant opportunity. The integration of cutting-edge technologies into agricultural practices can usher in a new era of productivity, efficiency, and growth. Through digital innovation and mechanization, farming in Malawi could transform from a low-yield, labor-intensive sector into a high-output, technology-driven industry.

Furthermore, including marginalized communities, such as women and youth, in the agricultural conversation can contribute to a more equitable and dynamic agricultural landscape. Their inclusion can bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and additional manpower, strengthening the sector's resilience and sustainability.

The agricultural sector of Malawi, while confronted by numerous challenges, holds immense potential for growth and development. By understanding the complexities, harnessing the inherent opportunities, and developing comprehensive, forward-looking strategies, Malawi can unlock the full potential of its agricultural sector. The sector could then serve as a formidable engine of economic growth and sustainable development, driving the nation towards a prosperous future.

7.1 Fannie Gondwe: A Visionary's Crusade for Agricultural Transformation in Malawi

Imagine a country with rich soils, vast farmlands, and a bustling populace. Welcome to Malawi, a land poised for a remarkable agricultural revolution. Fannie Gondwe, the dynamic founder and managing director of Perisha Agro and Packaging Enterprise, is committed to being at the centre stage of the metamorphosis.

Nestled in the vibrant city of Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi, Perisha Agro and Packaging Enterprise is a beacon of hope. Its mission? To revolutionize the dietary landscape by promoting locally sourced biofortified foods, enhancing the nutritional status of women and children under five. With a portfolio that boasts a variety of products, from orange fleshed sweet potato flour to cassava flours, this enterprise is reshaping the contours of Malawi's agribusiness sphere. With every seed sown, Gondwe is cultivating crops and fostering a robust ecosystem that places nutrition, sustainability, and community at the heart of food production. Here is her story in her own words:

My enterprise was born, driven by the ambition to promote the consumption of locally fortified biofortified food products. Perisha Agro and Packaging Enterprise, a champion of seed multiplication and value addition, specializes in an array of offerings that include orange fleshed sweet potato flour, orange maize flour and cassava flours, and a diverse range of other nutrient-rich food items.

But like any other journey, ours had its share of hurdles. The major challenges we encountered were procuring reliable processing equipment and sourcing packaging materials. With the equipment being relatively locally expensive, importing it from overseas presented its own challenges due to the substantial costs involved. Similarly, acquiring packaging materials re-

quired us to rely on suppliers from afar, such as South Africa, Dubai, and China.

To overcome these challenges, I firmly believe in the power of collaboration and partnerships. We already engage with smallholder farmers, forming a symbiotic relationship where they grow the raw materials that we require. In return, we provide them with a stable market and fair price for their produce. We can accomplish higher efficiency by intensifying these partnerships and improving our supply chain management. Our agricultural industry has potential, including multiple value chains like sweet potato, cassava, and horticulture. Collaborative efforts can magnify individual success and contribute significantly to the growth of Malawi.

Now, shifting focus to the agricultural landscape in Malawi, there exist significant opportunities in terms of expansive land and fertile soil. Around 70-80% of the workforce in Malawi comprises smallholder farmers, and agriculture contributes to approximately 80-90% of the country's GDP. However, the sector is faced with several challenges. One major hurdle lies in the perception that agriculture is primarily for individuals who lack formal education. It is imperative to shift this mindset, and programmes like CALA play a crucial role in enlightening leaders, executives, and other stakeholders. By passing on the knowledge gained from CALA, these enlightened individuals can transform farming practices, facilitate the commercialization of agriculture on a larger scale, and address issues such as the dearth of mechanized equipment and irrigation systems. Implementing CALA initiatives will empower us to surmount these challenges and elevate the agricultural sector in Malawi. As a leader, it is my responsibility to support others, including the office staff and smallholder farmers we collaborate with. Smallholder farmers form an integral part of our business model as they provide the raw materials for our processing operations.

I was fortunate to participate in the CALA program. This experience brought about a significant transformation in both my personal and professional life. It provided me with invaluable learning opportunities, one of which was the introduction to a structured coaching system. This system provided support during times of crisis and acted as a collaborative platform to brainstorm solutions.

One of the defining moments in the program was when I had to deal with an unexpected challenge. A grant we received was abruptly put on hold, forcing me to reconsider recruiting two new staff members. With the help of my peers in the CALA program, I was able to navigate this crisis by offering the new hires internship positions instead of regular employment until the grant resumed.

Our coach, a lady, was exceptional in her program management and ensuring that we all stayed on track. She consistently sent reminders and encouraged us to share our experiences and insights. This collaborative approach, involving our team of five and the coach, allowed us to collectively address challenges and find solutions.

Through CALA, I gained invaluable insights and skills that I can share with the farmers. This knowledge empowers them to produce higher quality crops, adopt

sound agricultural practices, overcome challenges related to harvest losses, and comprehend concepts related to marketing and finance. CALA has also enhanced our ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with farmers, fostering a mutually beneficial partnership. By providing support and implementing the teachings of CALA, I have witnessed positive changes among the farmers. They have become more honest, adhering to the terms of our contracts, and we have been able to improve our procurement and marketing processes. This transformation is a direct result of the knowledge and support gained through CALA. Inspired by the program, I implemented a more effective leadership approach within Perisha Agro and Packaging Enterprise. This approach involved categorizing my workers according to their specific roles and helping them understand their individual contributions, leading to more efficient work processes. This, in turn, fostered a sense of responsibility and increased productivity in my team.

Moreover, the CALA way of doing things has the potential to revolutionize the agricultural sector in Malawi and the larger African continent. The CALA way has the ability to empower emerging leaders in the field of agriculture and provide them with the necessary tools and knowledge to foster development and growth. By applying the lessons I learned from the CALA program, we can catalyze our efforts in advocating for policy changes that favor smallholder farmers and agro-based enterprises.

CALA fosters extensive networking opportunities. Thanks to the program taught way of doing things, I have established partnerships with NGOs, fellow SMEs, and other stakeholders. These connections have expanded our market reach, enabling us to sell our products regionally. Notably, one partnership that materialized thanks to CALA is our collaboration with a legume project in Lusaka, Zambia, and the University of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Although our business primarily focused on root and cereal crops, CALA's influence motivated us to explore the legume sector. This decision led to the production of blended flours and ultimately secured a contract for supplying corn soya blend, a product we hadn't ventured into previously. CALA's capacity building and networking support have propelled our business forward, augmenting our leadership, communication, and information-seeking skills. It's a great reminder that we have great opportunities like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). AfCFTA, in my view, presents an unprecedented opportunity for us. With the potential to unite us as Africa, or even the Southern Africa region, we can engage in cross-border trade without being burdened by levies and trade barriers. The AfCFTA promises economic growth and allows us to highlight the enormous potential of African agriculture on the global stage.

I am grateful for the CALA program, which has equipped me with the tools to lead my enterprise with greater confidence and strategic foresight. I look forward to the exciting journey ahead in our mission to uplift Malawi's agricultural sector and improve nutritional well-being across the country.

At Perisha Agro and Packaging Enterprise, we are determined to contribute towards achieving Malawi's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By promoting the production and consumption of biofortified foods, we

PROFILE

Fannie Gondwe is a dynamic leader at the helm of Perisha Agro and Packaging Enterprise, a pioneering eco-inclusive agribusiness venture, founded in 2015. The company operates across two sites, totaling 120 hectares and specializes in seed multiplication of nutrient-rich crops such as orange-fleshed sweet potato vines, cassava cuttings, groundnuts, and soya.

Beyond sustainable agriculture, the eco-inclusive venture processes an array of products like orange-fleshed sweet potato flour and puree, orange maize flour, High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF), cassava starch, and cassava kondowole flour. Under Fannie's leadership, Perisha Agro's primary mission is to improve the nutritional status of women and children by encouraging the cultivation and consumption of nutrient-rich foods. This approach promotes healthier communities and provides smallholder farmers with a sustainable, profitable market for their produce. Thanks to strategic partnerships with renowned organizations like the FAO, CGIAR, numerous NGOs, and the private sector, Perisha Agro is implementing expansion plans and contracting farmers to grow crops that they will buy and process. Venturing into live-stock farming, the company also started rabbit farming with plans to launch value-added rabbit meat products by 2019.

Fannie pursued her MBA at the Eastern and Southern Africa Management Institute (ESAMI), where she specialized in finance and corporate governance. Her strong academic background, combined with her business acumen, has been instrumental in driving Perisha Agro's success. Through Perisha Agro, Fannie's impact on Malawian society has been significant. Thousands of households have directly benefited from the company's operations, and numerous smallholder farmers have gained a sustainable livelihood through the company's out-grower farming system. Moreover, Fannie's commitment to women's empowerment has positively influenced the lives of many women who were previously unable to participate in the traditional economy. Her work, leveraging business as a tool for social change, sets a powerful example for entrepreneurs worldwide.

are directly contributing to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Furthermore, by providing employment opportunities and offering fair prices to our farmers, we contribute to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Looking ahead, I see a promising future for Perisha Agro and Packaging Enterprise and for Malawi. We aim to expand our footprint and establish Perisha as a household name in Malawi and beyond. We also aim to collaborate with more smallholder farmers, contribute to the growth of local communities, and

ensure the availability of nutritious, locally-produced food for all. With the right partnerships, resources, and support systems, we can unlock the immense potential of the agricultural sector in Malawi. I want to inspire other women in the agricultural field. To them, do not be afraid of challenges. Embrace them as they come. There will be times of hardship, but these moments define us and make us stronger. In the words of Malala Yousafzai, "I raise up my voice—not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard...We cannot succeed when half of us are held back." Let us all work together to better our society and our country.

7.2 Pamela Kuwali: Advocates for a Strategic Shift in Agricultural Practices to Drive Economic Transformation

"Malawi is poised for a significant transformation in its agricultural sector, holding a wealth of untapped potential. We are fortunate to have fertile lands, ample water resources, and comprehensive policies in place," asserts Pamela Kuwali, Executive Director of ActionAid Malawi. The key lies in the effective execution of these policies. Despite the challenges, there is reason for optimism, demonstrated by the government's successful mobilization of financial resources to support various agricultural projects. These initiatives, currently underway, hold the promise of substantially shaping the future of Malawi's agricultural sector.

She notes that the path to agricultural development is not devoid of hurdles, with the elephant in the room being policy execution. The most pressing issue is the politicization of agricultural priorities. The spotlight tends to fall on areas that deliver immediate political returns, thereby sidelining the medium to long-term strategic actions that are crucial for sustained agricultural growth.

To leverage Malawi's vast agricultural potential, it is imperative to shift focus towards strategic plans—medium and long term (instead of short term political gains) that not only promise substantial growth but also lay the foundation for a robust and resilient agricultural sector. "However, the road to development is not without its obstacles. The prime issue that Malawi contends with is the politicization of agricultural priorities. This has resulted in an undue emphasis on issues yielding short-term political benefits, leaving behind the need for medium to long-term strategic plans to expedite the agricultural sector's growth.

Kuwali highlights the critical role of collective efforts and leadership in facilitating transformation. According to her, the journey towards agricultural prosperity requires champions of change at every level, from the highest echelons of government to district officers, and then community actors. "There is a distinct need for a shared vision and understanding of our goals and the path towards realizing them," Kuwali asserts. Despite the commendable efforts by district officers and the Ministry of Agriculture, progress is often hindered by a lack of political commitment.

In her view, there is a marked disparity in government support, with undue emphasis on tax collection while efficient service delivery, a cornerstone for a well-functioning tax system, is frequently neglected. In order to ensure Malawi's collective prosperity, Kuwali insists on

the importance of achieving equilibrium between tax collection and service delivery. Achieving this balance is fundamental to safeguarding the development of the agricultural sector, thereby facilitating sustainable growth and transformation.

Furthermore, Kuwali envisions a more comprehensive approach to agricultural policy in Malawi. She suggests an expanded focus that encompasses other key areas of development. "Market development, for instance, is an area that, in my view, currently receives insufficient attention in our policy," she points out. By addressing such areas, she believes Malawi can further unlock the vast potential of its agricultural sector.

Kuwali, bringing attention to Malawi's agricultural production methodologies, notes they still largely draw from traditional practices, thus underscoring an urgent need for modernization and mechanization. Moreover, she highlights the value of 'casual commercialization', an aspect she believes is currently underserved. "Casual commercialization entails nurturing cooperatives and promoting the development of farms," Kuwali explains. "These initiatives are crucial steps towards empowering our agricultural sector, yet they tend to be overlooked." Simultaneously, she sheds light on the numerous export market opportunities lying in wait for Malawi. However, she identifies a conspicuous gap – the lack of strategic guidance for farmers to effectively leverage these opportunities. In her view, farmers are often bereft of the critical information they need to access and thrive in these markets.

Kuwali gives an example that encapsulates this issue, "Consider a prospective farmer who wants to explore farming. Currently, there isn't a centralized source where they can glean insights about the most profitable value chains, understand the dynamics of the supply chain, or identify optimal investment strategies." She sees this lack of information as a key inhibitor that perpetuates traditional farming practices, thus stymieing the exploration of potentially more lucrative opportunities. This includes the potential shift from predominant crops like maize and soya to alternative crops that could offer better returns.

Kuwali emphasizes that there needs to be a strategic shift in agricultural practices in Malawi. "We need to reach a point where farmers can decide that they don't necessarily need to grow maize to have food. We could prioritize other value chains, so as long as they can market their produce and earn sufficient income, they would be able to buy what they need. The issue is that there isn't a concrete strategy to guide such a transition," she notes.

If other more profitable value chains were prioritized, and farmers could effectively market their produce and earn a sufficient income, they could buy the food they need instead of being solely reliant on what they grow. However, she notes that there's currently no concrete strategy to guide such a transition. She questions who will define these strategies and prioritize outcomes for the next few years. She suggests that the government could play a significant role in formulating and communicating these strategies, but they should also bring other stakeholders on board, such as the private sector and development partners, to invest in and help implement these plans. Yet, Kuwali observes a current lack of coordination and clarity of

PROFILE

Pamela Kuwali is a highly committed and passionate advocate for sustainable agriculture as well as social and economic justice. She has made significant contributions to the development sector in Malawi through her various roles and responsibilities. Kuwali started her career in 2002 as a Public Diplomacy Specialist at the United States Embassy in Malawi where she worked on an array of development oriented public diplomacy programs including the International Visitor Program, the US Speaker Program, the Fulbright and the Hubert Humphrey Programs.

In 2011, Kuwali joined the United Nations World Food Programme, where she served as the head of Policy, Donor/Government Relations, and Public Information. Her work at the World Food Programme allowed her to engage with policy issues related to food security and contribute to efforts aimed at addressing hunger and malnutrition.

Following her tenure at the World Food Programme, Kuwali joined the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs as a senior program manager for governance. In this role, she focused on promoting good governance practices and strengthening democratic institutions.

In 2017, Kuwali was appointed as the National Director of Cisanet, a network of civil society organizations working towards social justice and good governance in Malawi. At Cisanet, she played a crucial role in shaping agricultural policies and promoting

inclusive and sustainable agricultural practices. Her strategic leadership and coordination were instrumental in advancing the organization's goals but also positioning CISANET as a reliable institution for agricultural policy advocacy.

As the Executive Director of ActionAid Malawi since March 2022, Kuwali continues her commitment to empowering women and girls, promoting economic justice, and combating climate change through a robust Climate Justice Campaign. Under her leadership, ActionAid Malawi implements sustainable development programs that have a lasting impact on marginalized communities. She ensures that the organization remains accountable to its stakeholders and aligns its work with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Kuwali's advocacy for sustainable agriculture extends beyond her professional roles. She emphasizes the importance of agricultural entrepreneurship, increased irrigation use, agro-processing, livestock farming advancements, and sustainable agricultural practices. She recognizes the need to educate farmers on climate change adaptation, agroecology and the significance of investing in agricultural research and technology. Kuwali has pursued education and professional development opportunities to enhance her leadership, public policy, agriculture, and development knowledge and skills.

She attended the University of Birmingham, where she earned a Master of Science degree in Public Administration and Development from 2007 to 2009. Her studies at Birmingham provided her with a solid foundation in understanding the complexities of public administration and its relationship to development. In addition to her master's degree, Kuwali has also participated in various leadership programs and fellowships. She completed the Leadership for Women in Public Policy program powered by Vital Voices at the Harvard Kennedy School from July 2018 to September 2019. This program focused on empowering women leaders in public policy and equipping them with the necessary skills to drive change in their communities. Furthermore, she attended the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture program powered by AGRA, where she studied Agricultural Business and Management from September 2021 to December 2022. Before her postgraduate studies, Kuwali obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Administration from Chancellor College, University of Malawi, where she studied from 1995 to 1999. During her time at Chancellor College, she was an active member of the Society of Government and Politics, engaging with like-minded individuals and fostering her passion for public administration and governance. (You can also add that I have a range of certifications in Public Diplomacy obtained from the Foreign Service Institute in Washington DC obtained during my time with the US Embassy).

Beyond her professional endeavors, Pamela is a devoted Christian, mother, and wife. She actively participates in her church as a member of the women's guild and a Sunday school teacher. She enjoys socializing, reading inspirational books, and listening to praise and worship songs during her spare time.



vision, leading to a continuation of traditional practices. These practices, she suggests, aren't beneficial as the world is rapidly changing.

"We currently lack such coordination and clarity of vision. Consequently, we continue to follow traditional practices, which aren't helping because the world is rapidly changing. As we accumulate challenges without addressing them, the need to adopt new, innovative methods grows more critical."

The CALA program struck a chord with me on multiple levels – the hands-on learning labs, the collaborative projects, the personalized coaching, and the enlightening courses were all invaluable aspects," reflects Kuwali. As a leader, she extracted a key lesson from her CALA journey, which now forms the cornerstone of her *modus operandi*: a strategic approach to problem-solving. Whenever she encounters an issue, her first instinct is to clearly identify the problem. "Understanding the problem, its nature, and nuances is a critical first step," she emphasizes. Next, she assesses its solvability – is this a problem within her realm of control? Upon establishing that it's a challenge she can tackle, Kuwali then delves into the resources required to address it. Questions like 'Do we need funding?', 'Is additional manpower required?', 'What kind of support is needed, and how do we secure it?' from her strategic roadmap. This meticulous dissection of the issue at hand allows her to craft an effective action plan, propelling her towards the desired outcomes.

Participating in CALA led her to an epiphany – resources are not solely monetary. "Support can materialize in various forms – through forging connections, rallying a team around a common vision, and so forth," Kuwali states. This broadened understanding of resources and how to leverage them has profoundly influenced her leadership approach, leading to a more introspective and strategic style.

CALA played a monumental role in shaping my career trajectory," begins Pamela Kuwali. At the time she joined the program, she was engaged with CISANET. The methodologies imparted by CALA were seamlessly integrated into her work, leading to significant achievements such as the successful organization of a high-level policy conference. The presence of the Vice President as the guest of honor and the director of USAID as a keynote speaker, at an event she organized, significantly boosted her confidence and validated her capabilities.

"The CALA experience also fueled my aspiration to helm an international organization," she shares. Pursuing this dream, she managed to secure a leadership position at a prominent NGO in Malawi even before completing the CALA program. The program was a treasure trove of memorable experiences. The invigorating question sessions, the sense of camaraderie with like-minded leaders, and the physical participation in the AGRF in Rwanda were particular highlights. The wealth of knowledge gained from the online courses was equally invaluable. "The program introduced me to numerous leadership concepts and resources that were previously unknown to me," Kuwali notes.

She acknowledges her past participation in similar programs, such as the women leadership program with online sessions and guest lectures. Yet, she considers the personal coaching offered by CALA as a dis-

tinctive feature. "Coaching, though essential, can be costly and often remains unexplored by many leaders. CALA provided this service, making it a unique experience." Time management emerged as a challenge, especially during group projects. With participants engaged in demanding jobs, meeting project deadlines was a test of commitment and team synergy. However, amidst the challenges, the opportunity for networking presented itself as a significant advantage. "The program facilitated the strengthening of existing relationships and the forging of new ones, particularly during the AGRF and learning lab sessions," she recounts, emphasizing the importance of networking in her CALA journey.

7.3 Tayani Vincent Banda: Developing agricultural leaders entails fostering a shared mindset among policymakers, farmers, researchers, and other key stakeholders

Malawi's agriculture sector possesses immense potential for growth and development, but it also encounters significant challenges that impede its progress. Tayani Vincent Banda, a Senior Development Planning Specialist at Malawi's National Planning Commission, highlights the importance of enhancing productivity and considering agriculture as a business. Banda emphasizes the urgent need to cultivate agricultural leaders at all levels to effectively capitalise on these opportunities and address the challenges.

Banda, a macro and real sector specialist at the Commission, recognizes that Malawi's agriculture sector is teeming with untapped potential. The opportunity lies in leveraging advancements in technology, improving infrastructure, and adopting innovative farming techniques to boost productivity. By capitalizing on these opportunities, the sector can not only meet domestic food security needs but also contribute to the nation's economic growth through exports and job creation.

However, Banda highlights the challenge of coordination within the agriculture sector, but he was quick to note that the institution of the Agricultural Productivity and Commercialisation Pillar Coordination Group under the Malawi 2063 implementation framework promotes a unified and synchronized approach among various stakeholders, as lack of coordination could easily hamper progress and hinder the sector from reaching its full potential. In order to overcome this challenge, Banda firmly believes in the crucial role played by agricultural leaders at all levels.

Developing agricultural leaders entails fostering a shared mindset among policymakers, farmers, researchers, and other key stakeholders. It involves equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools to navigate the dynamic agricultural landscape and make informed decisions. By nurturing a cadre of capable leaders, Malawi can ensure better coordination, effective policy implementation, and the alignment of resources and efforts towards common goals.

Banda further emphasizes that investing in agricultural leadership development will yield numerous benefits. It will lead to improved communication and collaboration among stakeholders, allowing for the seamless

sharing of expertise, best practices, and innovations. Additionally, it will enhance the sector's resilience in the face of external shocks, such as climate change, by promoting adaptive strategies and sustainable practices.

The Senior Development Planning Specialist also underlines the significance of inclusivity in agricultural leadership development. By empowering women, youth, and marginalized communities, Malawi can tap into a diverse pool of talent and perspectives, fostering innovation and social equity within the sector.

When asked about the motivation behind his decision to participate in CALA, Banda expressed his belief that the program would greatly enhance his role in coordinating the agricultural sector at his workplace. He explained, "I believed that participating in CALA would enhance my role in agricultural sector coordination at my workplace."

Reflecting on the impact of the CALA program on his personal and professional development, Banda highlighted the significant positive changes he experienced. He explained, "The CALA program has helped me gain more confidence and develop the ability to work with people of diversified personalities, exposures and professions." Banda further elaborated on the valuable skills he acquired, stating, "Through the various workshops, training sessions, and interactions with fellow participants, I have learned to be patient, attentive, and value everyone's unique contributions."

The CALA program proved instrumental in equipping Banda with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of leading in the agriculture sector. It provided him with the confidence to effectively relate with individuals from diverse backgrounds, enabling him to foster productive relationships and collaborations. Banda's newfound professional temperament and at-

PROFILE

Tayani Vincent Banda, a highly accomplished International Development Expert, is spearheading transformative change in the agricultural sector of Malawi. With over a decade of experience managing technical and policy relations, Tayani has taken on key roles in various sectors, including Agriculture Development, Mining and Energy development, National budgeting process, Nutrition, Environmental Management, and Relief & Disaster response. Currently serving as a Senior Development Planning Specialist at the National Planning Commission, Tayani is playing a pivotal role in shaping the future of agriculture in the country.

Recognized for his exceptional expertise in agricultural technical and policy leadership advisory, Tayani has been instrumental in the formulation and reviewing national agricultural policies and strategies. His involvement in major initiatives such as Mega-farms planning, structured markets for commodities, and the Affordable Inputs Program (AIP) restructuring highlights his commitment to driving sustainable agricultural growth and rural development.

One of the critical milestones in Tayani's professional journey has been his participation in CALA/AGRA Fellowship. As a CALA/AGRA Fellow, he completed a comprehensive 16-month leadership development program focused on agriculture in Africa. During this fellowship, Tayani mastered a range of planning skills and tools, including Risk Assessment, Environmental and Social Action Plan, Stakeholder Prioritization, Influencing Others, Value Chain Mapping, and Active Listening.

Tayani's extensive experience managing development partner relations has positioned him as a strategic advocate for international organizations and bilateral relations. His collaboration with institutions such as the World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), European Investment Bank (EIB), African Development Bank (AfDB), India, Centre for Global Development (CGDV) USA, and The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), UK has provided him with valuable insights into global best practices and innovative approaches in the agricultural sector.



With a master's degree in International Development from Northumbria University and a bachelor's degree in Social Sciences (Economics & Marketing Psychology) from the University of Malawi, Tayani combines theoretical knowledge with practical expertise in his pursuit of sustainable development. His proficiency in project and program review, budget formulation and analysis, resource mobilization, and organizational planning enables him to drive impactful initiatives aligned with national development plans. His knowledge and expertise in qualitative and quantitative data analysis makes him come with a full circle in providing critical policy and programme analysis.

Banda's dedication to agricultural transformation and his unwavering commitment to advancing real sector growth make him an invaluable resource in Malawi's agricultural landscape. His ability to navigate complex challenges, build strategic partnerships, and effectively communicate with diverse stakeholders has positioned him as a catalyst for change in the sector. By leveraging his expertise and leadership, Tayani is playing a pivotal role in driving sustainable agriculture, improving food security, and promoting rural development in Malawi.

tentiveness have allowed him to understand and appreciate different viewpoints, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive, harmonious and collaborative professional relationship.

Banda, a CALA program participant, underscored the program's powerful impact on his leadership style. Banda specifically emphasized the transformative effects of the program's teachings on "active listening" and "approaching others without prejudice and seeing other people's intelligence and strengths."

Such realization not only led to a personal epiphany but also held tangible benefits for the team dynamics and performance. Banda added, "These discoveries have now become invaluable to our team, enriching our team dynamics and performance."

These remarks by Banda highlight the tangible, real-world impact of the skills taught in the CALA program, providing a potent testament to the program's effectiveness. On applying skills and knowledge gained from CALA, Banda shared a compelling example of how he has learnt to accommodate diverse views. "I was able to apply the skills I acquired from CALA in being accommodative to different perspectives that others hold, with an aim to achieve a common goal. In the past, I would be upset by their contrasting views, but now, I value their inputs and leverage their strengths," Banda noted.

Reflecting on his time with CALA, Banda shared the valuable lessons and transformative experiences he acquired throughout the program. Addressing the hurdles he initially faced, Banda said, "Before and during my time with CALA, I grappled with challenges related to time management. However, the fellowship taught me prioritization techniques that greatly helped me overcome this challenge."

When discussing the uniqueness of CALA compared to other leadership programs, Banda emphasized the program's exceptional approach of involving experts from various backgrounds to tackle development challenges. "What sets CALA apart is its unique methodology of convening experts from diverse backgrounds and spheres of work to address development issues. This fusion of perspectives has been incredibly enriching," Banda explained. He further noted, "CALA has also been instrumental in expanding my network and connections within the African agricultural community."

Banda also spoke on how CALA has shaped his understanding of agriculture's role in Africa's economic development. "CALA has reinforced my understanding that agriculture sits at the heart of development. It is a provider of food, raw materials for industries, and a user of outputs from other sectors. Its role in propelling economic development is crucial," Banda stated.

Speaking to the influence of CALA on his career trajectory, Banda said, "CALA has paved the way for new opportunities in collaborative work aimed at advancing agriculture." He added that his advice to future CALA delegates is to fully utilize the courses and learning opportunities available, as they offer immense value without forgetting to form lasting networks.

On the role of CALA alumni in the program's continued

success, Banda noted that he sees himself as a link between his home country and relevant agricultural development bodies like AGRA, contributing to the program's ongoing success.

7.4 From Challenges to Success: How CALA Equipped Readwell Musopole for Effective Leadership in Agriculture

According to Readwell Musopole, the Deputy Director of Planning at the Ministry of Agriculture in Malawi, the agricultural sector holds immense potential for growth and prosperity. However, to unlock this potential, it is crucial to address the significant challenges that stand in its way.

"Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy, but it faces significant challenges," Readwell acknowledged. "Low production and productivity, dependence on rainfall, changing climate, limited market information, and poor infrastructure are some of the key obstacles we need to overcome."

Recognizing the importance of effective leadership, Readwell emphasized the need to develop agricultural leaders at all levels to address these challenges. He believed that with well-coordinated leadership, they could drive the agriculture transformation agenda, leading to rapid economic growth.

Readwell envisioned a future where agricultural leaders would spearhead initiatives to boost production and productivity. They could enhance efficiency and yield by promoting innovative farming techniques, providing training and support to farmers, and improving access to modern technology. Agricultural leaders would focus on implementing climate-smart solutions to address the dependence on rainfall. This could include promoting water conservation practices, advocating for the use of efficient irrigation systems, and supporting farmers in adapting to changing climate patterns.

To overcome the challenge of limited market information, agricultural leaders would work towards establishing robust market information systems. Providing farmers with real-time data on market demand, prices, and trends enables informed decision-making and enhances market access for farmers. Furthermore, addressing the issue of poor infrastructure would be a priority for agricultural leaders. They would advocate for improved road networks, storage facilities, and transportation systems to reduce post-harvest losses and facilitate the smooth flow of agricultural products to markets.

Through the development of agricultural leaders, Readwell believed that Malawi could realize its agricultural potential and drive rapid economic growth. By coordinating efforts, leveraging expertise, and implementing strategic initiatives, they could overcome the challenges and create an environment conducive to agricultural development.

"Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy, but it faces significant challenges. Low production and productivity, dependence on rainfall, changing climate, limited market information, and poor infrastructure are some key obstacles we must overcome. Devel-

oping agricultural leaders at all levels is essential to address these challenges. With well-coordinated leadership, we can drive the agriculture transformation agenda, leading to rapid economic growth,” he notes. Musopole has been actively involved in coordinating the implementation of the agriculture investment plan in his country. His commitment to driving the development of the agricultural sector at various levels, including institutions and non-state actors, fueled his desire to participate in CALA

When asked about his motivation to join CALA, Readwell explained, “My involvement in coordinating the implementation of the agriculture investment plan at various levels, including institutions and non-state actors, motivated me to join CALA. I saw it as an opportunity to enhance my leadership skills and contribute to the coordinated development of the agricultural sector.”

Recognizing the importance of effective leadership in driving agricultural development, Readwell sought to broaden his knowledge and skills in order to serve his role better. CALA presented a platform where he could learn from experts, exchange experiences with fellow agricultural leaders, and gain insights into innovative approaches and best practices in the field. He says: “My involvement in coordinating the implementation of the agriculture investment plan at various levels, including institutions and non-state actors, motivated me to join CALA. I saw it as an opportunity to enhance my leadership skills and contribute to the coordinated development of the agricultural sector.”

The CALA program profoundly impacted Readwell Musopole’s personal and professional development. It transformed his perspective on leadership and equipped him with valuable skills to apply to various aspects of his life. Reflecting on his experience, Readwell shared, “CALA helped me realize that a leader should not be someone who knows it all, but rather someone who values the inputs from team members. It taught me that everyone can be a leader and influence at any level.” CALA gave him a new understanding of leadership as a collaborative effort, where diverse perspectives and contributions were essential for success.

One of the critical areas where CALA influenced Readwell’s personal and professional growth was his communication and interpersonal skills. The program emphasized the importance of active listening, which enabled him to truly understand his team members and stakeholders’ ideas and concerns. By practicing active listening, he created an environment where everyone felt heard and valued, fostering stronger relationships and promoting a culture of open communication. CALA also focused on team building, emphasizing the significance of fostering a sense of camaraderie and collaboration among team members. Readwell learned effective strategies for building cohesive teams and leveraging individual strengths to achieve shared goals. By implementing these team-building techniques, he witnessed a positive shift in productivity and collaboration within his department.

The program provided training in coaching and mentoring, which empowered Readwell to guide and support his team members in their professional growth. He encouraged their autonomy and development by adopting a coaching approach, allowing them to thrive and contribute their best to the organization. This coaching mindset benefited his team and improved his leadership effectiveness. The impact of CALA extended beyond the professional sphere. The skills Readwell acquired, such as active listening, team building, and coaching, positively influenced his personal relationships as well. He found that by applying these skills in his personal life, he could foster stronger connections, resolve conflicts

PROFILE

Readwell Musopole is a passionate advocate for sustainable agriculture and food security, currently serving as the Deputy Director of Planning at the Ministry of Agriculture in Malawi. With a remarkable tenure of 25 years in this role, Readwell has been a driving force behind the strategic planning and development of policies and programs aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and improving livelihoods in the country. Readwell completed his Bachelor of Social Science degree in Economics at the prestigious University of Malawi, Chancellor College. His academic journey from 1991 to 1994 laid a solid foundation in economic principles, equipping him with a deep understanding of how they can be harnessed to drive positive change within the agricultural sector.

Since March 1998, Readwell has been an invaluable asset to the Ministry of Agriculture, demonstrating exceptional leadership and expertise in his role as Deputy Director of Planning. He has spearheaded the formulation and implementation of innovative agricultural development plans, fostering collaboration with diverse stakeholders and ensuring the efficient allocation of resources to achieve the ministry’s objectives. His dedication and insights have played a pivotal role in advancing food security and sustainable agriculture practices in Malawi. Throughout his career, Readwell has made significant contributions to the agricultural landscape in Malawi. By prioritizing sustainable agricultural practices, he has contributed to increased food production, improved farmer livelihoods, and the preservation of natural resources.



more effectively, and create a more harmonious and supportive environment.

"CALA helped me realize that a leader should not be someone who knows it all but rather someone who values the input from team members. It taught me that everyone can be a leader and influence at any level. Through CALA, I gained valuable skills such as active listening, team building, and coaching, which I applied to my work and personal life. These skills have improved relationships and productivity and created a more open work environment." Musopole had a specific example of how CALA influenced his leadership approach, demonstrating the power of engagement and collaboration in improving work quality and relationships.

He shared the example: "One specific example is how I changed my approach to working with a subordinate who consistently presented poor quality work. Instead of simply giving written instructions, I engaged in discussions to ensure clarity and agreed on deadlines. This approach improved the relationship and motivated the officer to improve the quality of work. It was a lesson in the power of engagement and collaboration." In the past, when faced with a subordinate who consistently delivered subpar work, Readwell realized that simply giving written instructions and setting deadlines was not effective. He recognized that there was a need for more meaningful communication and engagement to address the underlying issues and motivate improvement.

Drawing on the skills and insights gained from CALA, Readwell decided to take a different approach. Instead of dictating instructions, he initiated discussions with the subordinate to understand the challenges and areas where improvement was needed. By actively listening to their perspective, he gained a deeper understanding of the underlying issues that may have contributed to the poor work quality.

Through these discussions, Readwell ensured clarity in expectations, provided guidance, and agreed upon realistic deadlines. He encouraged the subordinate to voice any concerns or seek clarification whenever necessary, creating an environment of open communication and mutual understanding. By actively engaging in these conversations and collaborating with the subordinate, Readwell strengthened the relationship and fostered a sense of partnership. This approach motivated the officer to improve the quality of work and empowered them to take ownership of their responsibilities. Musopole faced a significant challenge of the lack of coordination within the agricultural sector before and during his time with CALA. However, the program played a vital role in helping him overcome this challenge and drive more efficient and cohesive efforts within his team.

Reflecting on this, Readwell shared, "One challenge I faced was the lack of coordination within the agricultural sector. CALA helped me understand the importance of cohesive coordination teams and clear leadership." This lack of coordination had resulted in fragmented efforts, limited information sharing, and a heavy reliance on individual leaders. Through the CALA program, Readwell gained insights into effective leadership practices, emphasizing the significance of strong coordination teams and clear leadership structures. He recognized that relying solely on one person

could lead to inefficiencies and hinder the overall progress of the agricultural sector. With this understanding, Readwell applied the lessons from CALA to address the coordination challenge. He focused on building a strong coordination team that could effectively collaborate, share information, and align efforts towards common goals.

By establishing clear roles and responsibilities within the coordination team, each team member had a defined area of expertise and accountability. This helped streamline decision-making processes and ensure that all aspects of the agricultural sector were adequately addressed. Musopole shared how his time with CALA has shaped his perspective on the role of agriculture in Africa's economic development. He said, "CALA has underscored my belief that leadership is key in advancing agriculture and spurring economic growth in Africa. Although agriculture is already acknowledged as a crucial sector, it requires organized leadership to transform it and yield the benefits we need truly. CALA has equipped me with the necessary tools and viewpoints to contribute to this transformation."

Reflecting on the transformation brought about by his experience with the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA), Readwell Musopole, the Deputy Director of Planning at the Ministry of Agriculture in Malawi, offered, "CALA has enhanced my confidence as a practitioner, enabling me to engage with and sway stakeholders for mutual success. It has significantly bolstered my career trajectory."

He gave insightful advice to future CALA delegates: "Forge teams and trust them to deliver on goals. Collaboration, active listening, and empowering others are key components of effective leadership in agriculture." Speaking on his role as a CALA alumnus, he added, "I can contribute to the program's ongoing success by sharing my experiences, offering recommendations to new recruits, and actively participating in the CALA community. By disseminating insights and lessons I've learned, I can aid future participants in navigating their own CALA journeys and effecting meaningful change in the agricultural sector." He distinguished CALA from his past professional and educational encounters and said, "CALA equipped me with a unique set of skills and knowledge. It emphasized coaching, active listening, and team-building, all crucial in boosting my leadership abilities. The practical learning experiences, such as the Agricultural Leadership Project, underscored the importance of taking action on the ground rather than being swamped in paperwork."

He shared, "I'm immensely grateful for the coaching and support provided throughout my CALA journey. Despite being new to e-courses, the instructors' quality and depth of instruction were exceptional. CALA has been a transformative experience, and I look forward to continuing to contribute to the program's vision of driving change in Africa's agricultural sector."

8.0

Ghana's Agricultural Resurgence: Overcoming Challenges, Unleashing Opportunities

Food Systems Champions

Mark Kebo Akparibo, the Executive Secretary of TELE-BERE – Forest and Farm Producer Organisation, represents the civil society sector. Victoria Amodfi Antwi, CEO of Success For People Microfinance, is a prominent figure in the private sector. Francis Dogbese, serving as the Municipal Director of Agriculture in the Department of Agriculture, Kwahu West Municipal Assembly, represents the public sector.

The agricultural landscape in Ghana is rich with potential, promising significant contributions to the nation's economic development, food security, and nutritional needs. Yet, this latent capacity is juxtaposed with a myriad of complex challenges that require thoughtful and innovative solutions. Unearthing this potential necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the pressing issues plaguing the sector, and the cultivation of dynamic strategies to harness the plentiful opportunities within.

An overarching issue that pervades the agricultural sector in Ghana is the lack of robust leadership, equipped with the necessary blend of skills, knowledge, and attitude to drive transformative change. The shortage of such skilled leadership often precipitates misdirected strategies and inefficient resource allocation, impeding attempts to tackle vital problems such as food security and nutrition. To surmount this challenge, concerted efforts are required to develop leaders through comprehensive training programs that foster critical thinking, innovation, collaboration, and a deep understanding of the agricultural landscape. Such initiatives can be instrumental in catalyzing sectoral transformations, shifting the agricultural paradigm towards a more prosperous and sustainable future.

The agricultural sector in Ghana also wrestles with an array of practical issues, encompassing limited financial accessibility, insufficient storage facilities, hurdles in market reach, and the urgent necessity for climate resilience. While these issues present formidable challenges, they simultaneously open the door for ground-breaking solutions and innovation. The key lies in reframing these obstacles as catalysts for transformation and growth. Strategically devised solutions, led by strong and visionary leadership, can exploit these challenges as opportunities for innovation, fuelling holistic sectoral advancement.

Innovative financial models, for instance, can help bridge the financial accessibility gap, stimulating entrepreneurship and investment within the sector. Development of efficient storage and logistics infra-

structure can improve market access and reduce post-harvest losses, thereby enhancing profitability. Concurrently, the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices can improve resilience, ensuring sustained productivity in the face of a changing climate.

One of the significant ecological challenges in Ghana's agriculture is soil fertility depletion, largely caused by over-reliance on chemical fertilizers and unsustainable farming practices. This problem warrants a shift towards more sustainable solutions such as the adoption of microbial fertilizers. These environmentally friendly alternatives can restore soil fertility and contribute to the sector's sustainability, preserving productivity and food security for future generations.

In spite of the challenges, Ghana's agricultural sector abounds with opportunities, fortified by its wealth of natural resources and a considerable agricultural workforce. Leveraging these resources through strategic planning, fostering skilled leadership, endorsing sustainable practices, and promoting innovation can turn these challenges into stepping stones towards success. Such an approach can trigger a significant shift within the sector, propelling it towards sustainability and prosperity. Ultimately, this will lead to meaningful contributions to Ghana's economy and significantly enhance food and nutrition security for the population.

8.1 Lack of Soft Skills among Leaders Hampers African Agriculture's Potential, Says Mr. Francis Dogbese

The potential for agriculture to address food security and nutrition challenges in Africa is immense. However, this opportunity is hampered by a critical challenge – a lack of knowledge, skills, and attitude among sector leaders. Mr Francis Dogbese, the Municipal Director of Agriculture for the Department of Agriculture in Kwahu West, Ghana, recognized this challenge and identified the need for more effective leadership in African agriculture.

To equip himself with the necessary soft skills to complement his hard skills, Francis applied to participate in the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture –CALA’s Advanced Leadership program. This flagship program aims to empower sector leaders with the skills and knowledge they need to drive change in agriculture and nutrition security in Africa. With a cohort of nearly 80 participants representing government, private sector, and civil society from eight African countries, the program offered a unique opportunity for Francis to network, collaborate, and learn from other sector leaders across the continent.

By participating in the CALA program, Francis has positioned himself as a delivery champion in African agriculture. He sees this as a key step towards driving change and achieving food security and nutrition goals in Ghana and across the continent. With enhanced knowledge, skills, and attitude, Francis is poised to significantly impact the sector and contribute to addressing one of Africa’s most pressing challenges.

Mr. Dogbese’s participation in the CALA program has not only impacted his personal and professional growth but also has the potential to drive change in the African agriculture sector. The program seeks to address the critical challenge of sector leaders lacking knowledge, skills, and attitude, particularly in soft skills that complement their hard skills. Mr. Dogbese’s experience in the program highlights the success of this approach.

The Action Learning Project that Mr. Dogbese worked on with his team, Team Sustainability Ghana, aimed to provide an alternative to the National Flagship Program, Planting for Food and Jobs. This project allowed Mr. Dogbese to implement his newly acquired leadership skills in a real-life scenario. The project’s success is a testament to the impact of the CALA program in empowering sector leaders to bring about the desired change in the agriculture sector.

Mr. Dogbese’s experience in the program demonstrates the program’s potential to create a diverse and inclusive network of sector leaders from the government, private sector, and civil society. The significant representation of women leaders in the program and Mr. Dogbese’s acknowledgement of their potential to lead the sector highlights the importance of gender equity in agriculture.

The CALA program’s focus on soft skills is a unique approach to leadership training in the African agriculture sector. The program enables sector leaders to have difficult conversations and work effectively in a team by equipping them with

these skills. This approach is essential in an industry that requires collaboration across various sectors and stakeholders to achieve the desired outcomes.

Mr. Dogbese’s participation in the CALA program has positioned him as a delivery champion in African agriculture. His ability to work in a team, have difficult conversations, and implement a successful Action Learning Project is a testament to the program’s value. The program’s impact is not only limited to individual sector leaders like Mr. Dogbese. It can also potentially drive change in the African agriculture sector, leading to the continent’s much-needed food security and nutrition goals.

“The CALA program offered me an opportunity to build my knowledge, skills, and attitude in soft skills while enabling me to network with like-minded individuals from across the continent,” says Mr. Dogbese. “During the program, I had the opportunity to participate in learning labs, coaching sessions, and AML courses that helped me shape my leadership abilities, have difficult conversations, and work effectively as a team leader,” he adds.

The action learning project that Mr. Dogbese worked on with Team Sustainability Ghana was a game-changer for him. The project sought to provide an alternative to a National Flagship Program, Planting for Food and Jobs. Through it, Dogbese was able to demonstrate his ability to work in a team, plan and execute programs successfully. The experience also taught him the importance of political commitment and teamwork in bringing about the economic development that Africa needs.

Despite facing time management challenges during the program, Mr. Dogbese persevered and graduated successfully, boosting his confidence and realising his resilience and ability to take on any challenge. The program also helped him develop solid networks across the continent, which he now uses as a tool to get his job done effectively at the Department of Agriculture.

Since completing the program, Mr. Dogbese has been able to apply the skills he learned to his work as the Municipal Director of Agriculture in Kwahu West Municipality. He has led his team more efficiently and effectively, resulting in the successful implementation of planned programs. Mr. Dogbese encourages future delegates to take the program seriously, especially the coaching sessions and action learning projects, which contribute significantly to shaping them.

The lessons learnt during the ALP Imple-



The Action Learning Project that Mr. Dogbese worked on with his team, Team Sustainability Ghana, aimed to provide an alternative to the National Flagship Program, Planting for Food and Jobs. This project allowed Mr. Dogbese to implement his newly acquired leadership skills in a real-life scenario.

mentation, AMI courses, learning labs, and the game changer series have been instrumental in my growth as a leader in my organization. Thanks to the skills I acquired during the program, I have provided effective leadership that has ensured the efficient and effective implementation of planned programs.

When I started the program, I worried about managing my time effectively and delivering the required work deliverables. However, I am grateful for the opportunity to have gone through and graduated successfully. The experience has made me realize my resilience and ability to stretch and take on any challenge that comes my way.

CALA's focus on developing agricultural sector champions has equipped me with the skills needed to support national flagship programs that bring about economic transformation on the continent. Through the program, I have built solid networks across Africa, which has been a powerful tool in getting my job done at the Department of Agriculture.

"One of the most valuable skills I learned during the program is how to have difficult conversations. This skill has been particularly helpful in solving complex issues in my organization and community. It has made me a more efficient leader who can confidently tackle any challenge," Mr. Dogbese says.

Attending the Leadership forum in Kigali, Rwanda was a memorable experience for me. I had the opportunity to meet and interact with sector leaders from across the continent who are committed to transforming agriculture. The forum highlighted the importance of teamwork and political commitment in bringing about economic development.

CALA has significantly impacted my career as the Municipal Director of Agriculture in Kwahu West Municipality. The program has made me a more efficient and effective leader, and I am more passionate than ever about contributing to the growth and transformation of agriculture in Africa.

As a CALA alumni, Dogbese has committed to making time to contribute to all alumni programs and make statements such as promotional materials to market AGRA and CALA. He believes that agriculture has a crucial role to play in Africa's economic development, and he hopes that future delegates will be supported to implement the action learning project in their communities so that staff and key stakeholders can have a feel of it and own it.

Mr. Dogbese's experience with the CALA program is a testament to the importance of investing in developing the soft skills of sector leaders. Doing so will enable them to lead more effectively, plan and execute programs successfully, and ultimately bring about the economic transformation that Africa desperately needs.

As a seasoned agricultural professional with over a decade of experience in promoting sustainable agriculture, food security, and thriving agribusiness through research and technology development, effective extension services, and other support services for farmers, traders, processors, and other stakeholders for improved livelihoods.

As the Municipal Director of Agriculture at Kwahu West

Municipal Assembly, Nkawkaw in the Eastern Region of Ghana, he is responsible for planning, monitoring and evaluating planned programs which includes Government Flagship Programs, collects relevant data to inform policy decision, develops action plans and budgets, provides professional advice to the Municipal Assembly on agricultural related issues, ensures the development and capabilities, skills and knowledge of staff at the Department, appraise direct reports and undertake any other duties that may be assigned.

With a strong passion for enhancing the agricultural sector in Ghana and Africa as a whole, Mr. Dogbese believes that adding value to farm produce is necessary to increase returns on investment and ensure food security in the municipality. He encourages farmers in Ghana to join groups aligned with the commodity they produce to increase their bargaining power and to consume locally grown produce to ensure that farmers remain in business.

Mr. Dogbese was recognized as a semi-finalist for the 2015 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, a flagship program of President Obama. He was also a semi-finalist for the 2016-2017 Community Solutions Program, a program of the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and administered by IREX for the best and brightest global community leaders working in transparency and accountability, tolerance and conflict resolution, environmental issues, and women and gender issues.

As a Fellow of the 2016 MBC Africa Young Fellows Program (2nd Cohort), Mr. Dogbese is equipped to address technical and management gaps limiting agriculture SME growth through the capacity building of targeted young leaders from business schools, agricultural colleges, and other professional sources.

Mr. Dogbese is a resilient and efficient leader, with a track record of providing effective leadership that has ensured the efficient and effective implementation of planned programs. He attributes his growth as a leader to his experience with different programmes including CALA, i.e. ALP Implementation, AMI courses, learning labs, and the game changer series.

His passion for agriculture has led him to acquire knowledge and skills in various areas such as financial management, stakeholder engagement, and agribusiness consulting. He holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Agribusiness from the University of Queensland, Australia.

As a member of the Conference of District Directors of Agriculture (CODDA), Mr. Dogbese has participated in various programs and initiatives aimed at transforming agriculture in Ghana. He also serves as the Secretary of the Eastern Regional Conference of District Directors of Agriculture (ER CODDA) Fundraising Committee. With his diverse experience and passion for promoting sustainable agriculture and food security, Mr. Dogbese is a valuable asset to the Ghanaian agricultural sector.

8.2 Victoria Amoafi Antwi, CEO of Success For People Microfinance, Shares How CALA Transformed Her Leadership Approach

According to Victoria Amoafi Antwi, the CEO of Success For People Microfinance in Ghana, the agricultural sector in the country faces a range of pressing challenges. These include limited access to finance, inadequate storage facilities, difficulties in reaching markets, and the urgent need for climate change adaptation. However, Victoria believes that these challenges also present significant opportunities for growth and innovation.

Victoria emphasizes, "While Ghana's agricultural sector grapples with access to finance, storage facilities, market accessibility, and climate change adaptation, it's important to recognize that these challenges can serve as catalysts for transformative solutions." She firmly believes that addressing these challenges requires effective leadership at all levels within the agricultural sector.

Victoria explains, "Developing strong agricultural leaders is crucial to addressing these challenges and seizing the opportunities they bring. Leaders can drive innovation, advocate for policy changes, promote sustainable practices, and foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing networks. These leadership qualities are essential for propelling the agricultural sector forward."

By viewing challenges as opportunities and fostering capable agricultural leaders, Victoria envisions a future where Ghana's agricultural sector can overcome its obstacles and thrive in the face of adversity.

By viewing challenges as opportunities and fostering capable agricultural leaders, Victoria envisions a future where Ghana's agricultural sector can overcome its obstacles, thrive in the face of adversity, and contribute significantly to the country's economic development and food security. As Victoria eloquently states, "In the midst of challenges lie immense opportunities for growth and innovation. With strong leadership and a resilient mindset, the agricultural sector can not only overcome obstacles but thrive, creating a sustainable and prosperous future for Ghana."

When asked about her motivation to join CALA, Antwi explained, "The opportunity to develop my leadership skills, network with other practitioners from the continent, learn from their best practices, and contribute towards a sustainable agriculture sector." These reasons highlight her desire for personal growth, the chance to connect with like-minded professionals, the value of knowledge sharing, and her commitment to advancing sustainability in the agricultural sector.

Sharing her experience before and during the CALA Advanced Leadership Program. Prior to CALA, she relied on position power and was a passive listener. However, through the program, Antwi gained active listening skills and learned to use various sources of influence like assertiveness, logic, likeability, and compromise.

The CALA program helped her shift her approach to leadership, as she explained, "Before CALA, I primarily relied on position power and didn't actively listen. However, the program taught me the importance of active listening and utilizing different sources of influence. I now incorporate assertiveness, logic, likeability, and compromise to enhance my leadership effectiveness."

By embracing these new skills, she became a more

adaptable and influential leader. Her experience highlights the transformative impact of the CALA program in equipping leaders with the tools necessary to navigate challenges and drive positive change in the agricultural sector.

Reflecting on how the CALA Advanced Leadership Program influenced her personal and professional development. She emphasized the profound impact the program had on both aspects of her life, stating, "CALA provided me with essential tools to address challenges I face as a leader and as an individual. It equipped me with the skills necessary to overcome obstacles effectively."

She further highlighted the program's contribution to her interpersonal skills, particularly in developing sensitivity and empathy towards others' emotions. She explained, "CALA helped me cultivate a greater sense of sensitivity and empathy, enabling me to connect with my team members, colleagues, and stakeholders on a deeper level. This fostered better relationships and collaboration."

The CALA program also played a significant role in shaping Victoria's professional growth. She expressed, "By acquiring the tools and knowledge provided by CALA, I became a more effective and well-rounded leader." She emphasized how the enhanced leadership capabilities gained through the program positioned her to navigate complex situations with greater competence and drive positive change within her organization and the broader agricultural sector.

On key takeaways she gained from her experience with the CALA Advanced Leadership Program and how they have influenced her leadership approach. She identified several valuable insights from CALA that have had a significant impact on her work and life.

"CALA provided me with a road map to managing agricultural sustainability, change management strategies, and leadership in promoting transformative agroecology," Antwi explained. These key takeaways have shaped her leadership approach by enabling her to adopt a more holistic and sustainable perspective when addressing challenges in her professional and personal life.

Victoria provided a specific example of how CALA has influenced her leadership approach: "With the insights gained from CALA, I have been able to implement more sustainable practices within my organization. For instance, we have introduced innovative methods for resource management and have incorporated agroecological strategies to enhance sustainability in our operations."

The CALA program has empowered her to approach leadership from a broader perspective, considering the long-term sustainability of her organization and the agricultural sector as a whole. By applying the road map provided by CALA and implementing transformative agroecological practices, she has been able to drive positive change within her organization and contribute to a more sustainable future.

About challenges she encountered both before and during her participation in the CALA Advanced Lead-

PROFILE

Victoria, the CEO of Success For People Microfinance in Ghana, is a visionary leader driving the transformation of financial services for small businesses and individuals. With her commitment to professional growth and dedication to her community, she has become a champion of microfinance and a beacon of female leadership in Ghana.

Victoria's leadership in the private sector is commendable. Under her guidance, Success For People Microfinance has emerged as a trusted pillar in Ghana's economic landscape, supporting local businesses and promoting financial stability. Her strategic vision and commitment to empowering entrepreneurs, women and agribusinesses have helped drive sustainable growth and economic development in the communities she serves.

Victoria's journey serves as an inspiration, par-



ticularly for young women in Africa who aspire to create positive change. Her success demonstrates that with determination, hard work, and a focus on serving others, one can make a significant impact. As a female leader in a traditionally male-dominated sector, she challenges societal norms and paves the way for future generations of women to break barriers and achieve their goals.

In a world that increasingly values diverse voices and leadership styles, Victoria stands out as a trailblazer in the financial sector. Through her work, she not only leads a microfinance institution but also redefines what it means to be a female leader in finance. Her resilience, innovation, and dedication to empowering others serve as a testament to the potential of committed and visionary leaders to drive meaningful change in their societies.

ership Program. One significant challenge she faced was balancing her numerous responsibilities and demanding job schedule alongside the commitments of the CALA program.

Antwi explained, "Balancing my various responsibilities and a demanding job schedule with the CALA program was a challenge for me." Juggling professional obligations and personal commitments while fully engaging with the program presented a real obstacle.

However, she emphasized that the CALA program was instrumental in helping her overcome these challenges. She noted, "The program provided me with the necessary support and flexibility to navigate these obstacles." The program's support and understanding enabled her to manage her responsibilities effectively and fully participate in the program's activities.

Through the CALA program's accommodating approach, she was able to successfully overcome the challenge of balancing her commitments and make the most out of her learning experience.

Victoria's ability to conquer this challenge highlights the program's commitment to empowering leaders by providing the necessary support and flexibility to accommodate their professional and personal circumstances. CALA's approach ensures that participants can fully engage with the program and derive maximum value from their learning journey.

When asked about the distinguishing factors of the CALA Advanced Leadership Program and its impact on her network within the African agricultural community, she expressed her opinion.

"In my view, what sets CALA apart from other leadership programs is its case-based approach. The program utilizes real-life cases to demonstrate how tools and concepts are applied, giving CALA a practical and unique touch," Antwi explained. This emphasis on practical application allows participants to directly relate the learnings to their own experiences and chal-

lenges, making the program highly relevant and valuable for leaders.

She further highlighted the significance of CALA in expanding her network and connections within the African agricultural community. She stated, "CALA has contributed to my network by providing opportunities to connect with fellow practitioners from different countries. Through these connections, I have been able to learn from their experiences and best practices, gaining valuable insights for my own work."

When asked to describe a specific instance where she applied the skills or knowledge gained from the CALA Advanced Leadership Program to create positive change, she shared an example from a management meeting.

She explained, "During a management meeting, one of the managers expressed concerns about a policy and suggested a review. Drawing upon the issue tree technique that I learned from CALA, I was able to delve deeper into the problem. This approach enabled me to identify and diagnose the actual underlying issue, leading to the development of an effective solution."

By utilizing the problem-solving framework acquired from CALA, she was able to analyze the situation thoroughly and address the root cause rather than merely addressing the surface-level concern. This approach allowed her to create positive change within her organization by implementing a solution that tackled the core issue at hand.

Her experience demonstrates the practical application of the skills and knowledge gained from CALA. By utilizing the problem-solving tools provided by the program, she was able to drive positive change and implement effective solutions in her organization.

When reflecting on the impact of her CALA experience on her career and business trajectory, Victoria Amoafi Antwi, the CEO of Success For People Microfinance

in Ghana, shared valuable insights. She explained how CALA transformed her approach to leadership and provided her with essential tools for success.

"My experience with CALA has taught me the importance of utilizing various sources of influence, such as assertiveness, logic, likeability, and compromise, rather than relying solely on position power," she noted. By broadening her range of influence strategies, she has become a more effective leader capable of navigating diverse situations.

She emphasized the significance of active listening skills and other valuable tools acquired through CALA. These tools have allowed her to engage more effectively with others, understand their perspectives, and collaborate towards common goals.

Offering advice to future CALA delegates, Antwi stated, "Fully engage in the courses, complete assignments, and apply the case-based knowledge to your work environments." By actively participating and applying the practical knowledge gained from CALA, future delegates can enhance their leadership journey and drive positive change in their own contexts.

Victoria recognizes the invaluable nature of the skills and tools acquired from the CALA program, which have had a profound impact on her career and business trajectory. She encourages future delegates to fully embrace the program, immerse themselves in the learning experience, and leverage the case-based knowledge to excel as leaders.

Emphasizing her role as a CALA alumni and its contribution to the program's continued success. She stated, "As a CALA alumni, I believe it is essential to share my experiences and the significant impact the program has had on my leadership and career." Victoria is dedicated to inspiring and encouraging future delegates to enroll in the program, highlighting its transformative potential.

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In my view, what sets CALA apart from other leadership programs is its case-based approach. The program utilizes real-life cases to demonstrate how tools and concepts are applied, giving CALA a practical and unique touch.

She further emphasized the importance of a dedicated forum for CALA alumni, stating, "There should be a platform where alumni can continue learning, share experiences, and benefit from each other's best practices." Such a forum would foster ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange, enhancing the program's impact and ensuring its continued success.

When discussing the influence of CALA on her perspective regarding the role of agriculture in Africa's economic development, she highlighted, "CALA provided valuable insights into the unsustainable practices in the agricultural sector and highlighted the role agriculture can play in Africa's food security and economic development." She recognized the need to create practical innovations for soil, water, and biodiversity management to enhance production and resilience within local communities.

She also shared her appreciation for the specific knowledge and skills gained through CALA. She stated, "CALA provided me with skills in managing my emotions, active listening, and agroecological strategies and innovations." These unique and invaluable skills have enhanced her leadership capabilities beyond what she had acquired through other professional or educational experiences.

Reflecting on her CALA experience, Antwi expressed her appreciation for the executive coaching sessions with Olivia, stating, "I would like to highlight the amazing experience I had during the executive coaching sessions with Olivia. The opportunity to share personal and professional challenges and receive guidance using the program's tools was truly phenomenal."

She acknowledged the invaluable support she received during these sessions, emphasizing the significance of sharing her personal and professional challenges. The guidance provided, utilizing the tools offered by the program, proved instrumental in her growth and development as a leader.

8.3 Tackling Soil Fertility Challenges: Mark Kebo Akparibo's Commitment to Ghana's Agriculture Sector

"Soil fertility depletion is a significant challenge we grapple with in Ghana's agricultural sector," Mark Kebo Akparibo, the Executive Secretary of TELE-BERE, a Forest and Farm Producer Organisation in Ghana, points out. According to him, this prevalent issue has been a constant source of concern among agricultural professionals in the country, stirring a sense of urgency to find sustainable and effective solutions.

"One solution we are keenly exploring is the use

of microbial fertilizers," he suggests. Akparibo strongly believes in the potential of these bio-based fertilizers to enhance soil fertility, positioning them as an ecological, sustainable alternative to traditional chemical fertilizers that are often implicated in environmental degradation.

In Akparibo's view, the adoption of microbial fertilizers could significantly curb soil fertility depletion, ensuring agricultural productivity in the long term. "Innovation in sustainable farming practices is crucial to the future of our agricultural sector," he emphasizes. His perspective underscores the importance of pursuing sustainable practices to safeguard the robustness of Ghana's agriculture for future generations.

When asked why he decided to join the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) program, Akparibo had a clear answer: "CALA offers an unparalleled opportunity for professionals in the agricultural sector. With its hands-on training and the chance to connect with industry actors, it stood out as an extraordinary chance for growth and learning."

Reflecting on his experiences during the CALA program, Akparibo described the journey as incredibly exciting. "I was fortunate to partake in a diverse range of activities. Online training, mentorship sessions, learning labs, all of these played a crucial role in my learning process," he shared.

However, one aspect of the program stood out for him significantly: the Action Learning Project (ALP). "The ALP was a truly enriching experience," Akparibo said. The focus of his ALP was dynamic kraaling – a practice designed to enhance soil fertility. This project allowed Akparibo and his team to engage with community representatives, leading to invaluable insights and recommendations that could help scale the initiative's results.

"Through CALA and the ALP, I've gained a wealth of knowledge and experience that I am eager to apply in Ghana's agricultural sector," Akparibo concluded, underlining the transformative impact of the CALA program on his professional journey in agriculture.

PROFILE

Mark is a passionate development practitioner dedicated to creating positive change in Ghana's agricultural sector. With a solid academic background and over a decade of experience, Mark has emerged as a dynamic leader driving sustainable development initiatives. His focus on Non-Timber Forest Products Development, Forest and Farm Producer Organisations (FFPOs), and Community-Based Village Savings Schemes has made him a valuable asset in promoting pro-poor wealth creation in Northern Ghana.

Mark's journey began with a combined major in Economics and English at the prestigious Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. Building on his academic foundation, he further honed his skills through a Certificate in Civic Leadership from Arizona State University in the United States. This experience expanded his understanding of effective leadership and provided him with valuable insights into community development.

Mark's commitment to sustainable development led him to found Tele-Bere, a member-based Forest and Farm Producer Organisation (FFPO). Serving as the Founder Executive Secretary, Mark spearheads efforts to improve the livelihoods of forest and farm producers in the region. Through Tele-Bere, he focuses on strengthening and building the capacity of these producers, empowering them to organize effectively around products, markets, and policy engagement. The organization's emphasis on Village Savings and Loans (VSL) has proven instrumental in driving financial inclusion, particularly among women and youth.

Recognizing the untapped potential of Non-Timber Forest Products, Mark founded Nayoko Innovations

Ghana. This social venture and development consulting firm aims to harness the economic potential of these products to catalyze pro-poor wealth creation in Northern Ghana. Through business development services and agricultural value chain optimization, Mark envisions a future where these products become significant drivers of sustainable economic growth.



Mark's exceptional leadership skills have earned him opportunities to collaborate with various organizations and institutions globally. As the Country Representative for ProGlobal Partners, he served as the authorized representative in Ghana, providing counsel, guidance, sales support, and relationship management. Additionally, his participation in the Echoing Green Foundation's Professional Development Internship in New York City expanded his network and exposed him to best practices in social entrepreneurship.

Mark is not only passionate about his own professional growth but also about imparting knowledge and skills to others. As a trainer on Village Savings and Loans Methodology and Market Analysis and Development Methodology, he has played a pivotal role in equipping individuals and communities with the tools they need for sustainable development. His dedication to capacity building and empowerment has made a lasting impact on numerous individuals and communities in Northern Ghana. Mark's outstanding contributions have been recognized through numerous prestigious awards and fellowships. As a recipient of the Earnest Fellowship on Human Rights Protection and the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, he has gained valuable exposure and built strong networks of like-minded individuals. These recognitions have further fueled his drive to bring about transformative change in his community.

When asked about the impact of CALA on his personal and professional growth, Akparibo expressed profound appreciation for the program's influence. "CALA has truly been a boon for my emerging professional journey," he said. "It has provided me with numerous learning avenues, including the opportunity to apply my knowledge in real-world contexts."

The program has not just enriched his theoretical understanding, but it also facilitated practical field experiences. "It's one thing to understand concepts, but applying them on the ground through action learning projects offers a whole new level of insight," he shared.

Beyond the academic and practical perspectives, Akparibo also highlighted the emphasis CALA places on networking and collaboration in the agricultural sector. "One of the key takeaways from the program was understanding the importance of delivering key agricultural inputs and establishing networks with industry stakeholders," he stated.

Akparibo affirmed that the CALA program had been instrumental in fostering his professional development and personal growth in the sector. He pinpointed the Action Learning Project (ALP) as a highlight of his experience with CALA. He elaborated, "In the village of Kapalnaayili, situated in the Tolon District of Northern Ghana, I had a chance to work with colleagues on a practical project. We utilized dynamic kraaling as a method to enhance soil fertility. This project was not only a fantastic application of what I had learned but also an opportunity to exercise collaborative leadership skills. Working closely with community leaders was an invaluable experience, allowing us to widen the impact of our objectives."

However, his journey with CALA was not without its challenges. "One of the difficulties I faced was learning to harness the power of networking and coordinating diverse perspectives towards a common goal. Collaborative leadership, while immensely rewarding, can also be complex," he confessed.

Despite these hurdles, the CALA program proved to be instrumental in his growth. Akparibo noted, "CALA provided crucial lessons on overcoming these challenges, particularly in the implementation of the Action Learning Project. These insights were instrumental in guiding me to successfully navigate the complexities of project contexts."

When asked about the unique aspects of the CALA program, Mark Kebo Akparibo quickly pointed to the Action Learning Project. He explained, "CALA truly stands apart from other leadership initiatives due to its focus on practical, hands-on experience through projects chosen by participants themselves. The ability to apply learning in real-time scenarios is a major distinguishing factor of the program."

He further underscored the significance of this experiential learning approach, stating, "This immersion in practical work bolsters the effectiveness and impact of the program, making it a truly unique experience for emerging leaders in the agricultural sector."

When discussing how he applied his newly gained skills and knowledge from CALA, Akparibo mentioned, "One of the most impactful ways I've leveraged the training from CALA is through stakeholder dialogue and collaborations." He further highlighted an impactful instance of this by stating, "A prime example of this application is my involvement in arranging the implementation of solar-powered irrigation systems within local communities in the Upper East Region of Ghana. This initiative takes advantage of the abundant sunlight we receive to facilitate year-round agricultural production."

Akparibo's time with CALA seems to have been truly transformative for him, particularly when it comes to lessons on collaboration and leadership. He stated, "One of the most valuable insights I gained from my CALA journey was the power of collaborative leadership. As the lead for Team Sustainability Ghana during our Action Learning Project, our success was largely due to our embracement of the principles of collaboration. It was the blend of this approach and our hands-on work with community participants that proved so effective."

Regarding the impact of the program on his career and business, he said, "My experience with CALA has been influential in my business trajectory. Currently, my business, Tele-Bere Green AgroFarms, collaborates with various partners to deliver small, solar-powered irrigation systems to smallholder farmers in the dry savanna regions of Ghana. I would advise future CALA delegates to take full advantage of the networking opportunities, collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, and use the knowledge they acquire to drive meaningful change in the agricultural sector."

Discussing his role as a CALA alumnus, he emphasized, "As a graduate of CALA, I envisage myself actively working with my fellow cohort members to build a strong foundation for an alumni network. I believe such a network will foster more collaboration in Africa's agricultural sector, thereby ensuring the continued success and impact of the CALA program."

When asked about the influence of CALA on his view of agriculture's role in Africa's economic development, he responded, "CALA has given me a deep understanding of the crucial role agriculture plays in Africa's economic progress. It underscores the potential influence leaders can have in shaping Africa's food systems and working collaboratively towards creating more resilient and sustainable food systems."

He highlighted the specific skills he gained from the program: "CALA furnished me with critical knowledge and skills in collaborative leadership, stakeholder engagement, and problem identification and analysis. The combination of these unique skills and the hands-on experience through the Action Learning Project sets CALA apart from any other educational or professional experience I've had."



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