



GLOBAL
FLAGSHIP
INITIATIVE
FOR FOOD
SECURITY



Hosted by:



Supported
by:



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

Members Newsletter

Issue #4

14 July 2026

Welcome to the Members newsletter!

Welcome to our monthly members newsletter. Through this newsletter, you will be able to stay updated on past and upcoming Flagship engagements, our newest members, member achievements, webinars, and more!

Got any **feedback or want to be featured** in our upcoming newsletters? Please contact: lina.khoury@croptrust.org

Want to stop receiving the newsletter? Please send an email to the abovementioned address.

Important Updates

You can still let us know if you are attending UNCCD COP17 in August and/or UNGA81 in September by filling out this form: <https://forms.gle/DFvsfxwaeM5SLgAh6>

Please contact us for inputs and suggestions for our annual meeting at UNGA81 (21-22 September 2026)

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Welcome, important updates, and upcoming member events
- 2 Welcoming our Newest Members!
- 3 The Initiative in Action
- 4 Our Upcoming Engagements
- 5 Members Spotlight
- 6 Written Piece: Civil Society at the Table: The Third Partner in Food Systems Transformation
- 7 Meet GFIFS Team!



Welcoming our Newest Members!



Enabel's Engagement with the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security

Enabel is the Belgian agency for international cooperation. Together with our partners, we develop and implement solutions to address pressing global challenges, including climate change, social and economic inequalities, demographic pressures, and issues of peace and security.

Supporting the transition towards sustainable food systems is a key priority for Enabel. We are committed to promoting food systems that can nourish a growing population while protecting natural resources and biodiversity, strengthening resilience to climate change, and creating decent economic opportunities for women and men, particularly young people, across food value chains.

Partnership and innovation are at the core of our approach. We believe that transforming food systems requires close collaboration between public and private actors, civil society, research institutions, and local communities. By fostering innovation and scaling effective solutions, we can collectively accelerate progress towards food security and sustainable development.

We are therefore delighted to join the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security. We look forward to building new partnerships, and working together to achieve greater impact for people, communities, and food systems worldwide.

Follow Enabel's work by checking out their website: <https://www.enabel.be/>
OR check out their LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/enabel/>



Welcoming our Newest Members!

AKADEMIYA2063
The Expertise We Need. The Africa We Want.



AKADEMIYA

AKADEMIYA2063 is a pan-African nonprofit research organization headquartered in Kigali, Rwanda, with a regional office in Dakar, Senegal, advancing evidence-based transformation across Africa. Established to strengthen policy research and technical capacity for implementing the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the African Union's primary policy framework for agricultural transformation, food security, nutrition, and wealth creation, the organization supports African countries in advancing the ambitions of Agenda 2063, "The Africa We Want."

Grounded in the conviction that robust knowledge and evidence systems are essential to sustainable development, AKADEMIYA2063 works with African governments, regional institutions, development partners, research organizations, the private sector, and civil society to generate the data, analytics, and policy intelligence needed to inform decision-making and accelerate implementation. By integrating rigorous research with policy advisory services, capacity strengthening, knowledge sharing, and strategic communications, the organization turns evidence into practical solutions that strengthen institutions, improve livelihoods, and drive inclusive economic transformation.

This systems-based approach is delivered through advanced digital tools—including economic modeling, artificial intelligence, and interactive digital platforms for data and knowledge—and through **seven flagship continental initiatives**: the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS), the African Growth and Development Policy (AGRODEP) Modeling Consortium, the Malabo Montpellier Panel, Africa Agriculture Watch (AAgWa), the African Mitigation and Adaptation Review (AfMAR), the Africa Trade Outlook Portal (AfTOP), and the Food System Crisis Observatory and Response (FS-COR) mechanism. Together, these interventions generate policy intelligence, strengthen national capacities, and foster mutual learning to support evidence-based decision-making across Africa.

In line with its mission, AKADEMIYA2063 supports the implementation of the Kampala CAADP Declaration through its **Kampala CAADP Series**—a comprehensive policy deployment package that integrates diagnostics, evidence, toolkits, and tailored knowledge products to help countries accelerate delivery of the Kampala Agenda. The series equips policymakers and development partners with actionable recommendations, implementation pathways, and platforms for dialogue and peer learning, enabling countries to translate continental commitments into measurable national outcomes.

As a member of the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security, AKADEMIYA2063 brings its expertise in evidence generation, policy planning, knowledge systems, and strategic partnerships to strengthen sustainable food systems, advance mutual learning, and accelerate investments that enhance food security, resilience, and inclusive development across Africa, working alongside governments, development partners, and other stakeholders.

Dr. Debisi Araba
Managing Director, AKADEMIYA2063

Reach out to: lbutake@akademiya2063.org , daraba@akademiya2063.org ,
kglatzel@akademiya2063.org , spatel@akademiya2063.org.

The Initiative in Action

Building Momentum: New Partnerships, Growing Impact

by Dr. Conrad Rein

Recent weeks have marked an important milestone for the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security, with the continued expansion of our global coalition and implementation partnerships. We are proud to welcome the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Enabel – the Belgian Agency for International Cooperation, and the COMESA Business Council as new members of the Initiative. Together, these partnerships significantly strengthen our ability to mobilise expertise, investment, private sector engagement, and implementation capacity to accelerate resilient food systems and food security worldwide.

These new partnerships do more than expand our coalition – they reinforce the Initiative's role as a platform that brings together UN agencies, European development partners, Arab Coordination Group institutions, governments and the private sector to translate commitments into implementation. UNIDO strengthens cooperation on agro-industrial development and resilient value chains, Enabel creates new opportunities to connect European development cooperation with financing partnerships, including through its collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, while the COMESA Business Council reinforces our commitment to mobilising private sector investment and regional value chains as key drivers of sustainable food systems and economic transformation.



Alongside this expansion, the Initiative continued to deepen strategic engagement with governments, development finance institutions and international organisations through the Bilbao Bootcamp on Territorial Innovation, the Islamic Development Bank Annual Meetings, the OPEC Fund Development Forum and the Hamburg Sustainability Conference. These engagements reinforced the growing recognition that food security is not only a humanitarian imperative, but also a strategic investment in resilience, economic development and regional stability.

Across these discussions, the Initiative promoted science-based, investment-ready solutions capable of translating global commitments into measurable impact.

A particular focus during the reporting period was supporting Syria's recovery, where discussions with the European Commission and international partners explored how revitalising the agricultural sector can strengthen food security, restore rural livelihoods, stimulate economic recovery and contribute to long-term stability. At the same time, the Initiative continued to strengthen cooperation with Arab Coordination Group institutions and development finance partners to mobilise investment and accelerate implementation across the IGAD region and other priority geographies. The Cameroon implementation model continued to be showcased as a practical example of how coordinated partnerships, blended finance and science-based approaches can generate investment-ready solutions with tangible benefits for smallholder farmers.

Recognising that young people are central to the future of resilient food systems, the Initiative also convened a global youth consultation in preparation for UNCCD COP17, bringing together young leaders from around the world to develop a shared set of recommendations for governments, international organisations and development partners. The resulting Youth Statement calls for greater investment in youth-led solutions, stronger youth participation in decision-making, improved access to finance and technology, and increased support for locally led, science-based approaches to land restoration, food systems transformation and climate resilience. It will help shape the Initiative's engagement at UNCCD COP17 and reinforce our commitment to ensuring that young people are active partners in transforming food systems and building climate resilience.



As preparations gather pace for UNCCD COP17 and our Annual Members Meeting during UNGA81, the Global Flagship Initiative continues to build strong momentum. A mapping of members' planned participation indicates that around 45% of the Initiative's membership is expected to be represented in Mongolia during the week of 24 August, creating an exceptional opportunity to strengthen collaboration, showcase collective action and accelerate implementation.



We look forward to seeing many of you in Mongolia in August. If you have informed us that you will be attending UNCCD COP17, we will be in touch shortly to coordinate meetings, side events and opportunities to engage throughout the week. Planning for our Annual Members Meeting during UNGA81 is also progressing well, and we will share further details on the programme and opportunities for engagement as preparations continue in the coming weeks.

Youth Consultation Webinar on Expectations for UNCCD COP17

In preparation for the 17th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP17), on 30 June 2026, we hosted a youth consultation webinar to gather perspectives, priorities, and recommendations from youth leaders working across food systems, agriculture, land restoration, climate action, environmental conservation, indigenous and local communities, and civil society. The consultation also provided an opportunity to identify locally led solutions and recommendations that may inform the Local2030 Coalition's Road to Abu Dhabi engagement process in preparation for the 2026 UN Water Conference.

The youth statement has been finalised and shared with all of our members, the youth that participated in our webinar, as well as the leadership of UNCCD. The UNCCD leadership will be invited to react to and engage with the statement. This is an important step toward ensuring that youth voices help shape the global conversation on sustainable land management, food security, and resilience. We would like to thank all of those who participated in the webinar and provided their valuable contributions.



Upcoming Engagements

Upcoming webinar

We will be hosting a follow-up webinar to our Youth Consultation on expectations for UNCCD COP17 held on 30 June 2026. The second webinar will expand on the outcomes of the first, and will explore Triple COP cross-cutting themes, with four main themes including:

- Land as Inheritance
- Access to Finance
- Food Systems Resilience and Sovereignty
- Youth Inclusion

Make sure to follow us on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/global-flagship-initiative-for-food-security/> for updates on the webinar and when it will be taking place.

Members Spotlight

Taylor Geospatial Advances Innovation for Food Security with 13 Projects

Taylor Geospatial, a member of the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security, has launched thirteen projects under its Geospatial Innovation for Food Security (GIFS) program. These include three flagship projects supported by Taylor Geospatial and ten pilot projects supported with co-investment from Amazon Web Services. The effort illustrates a visionary commitment to combining artificial intelligence with geospatial technology, methods, and models to advance agricultural sustainability, food system resilience, and food security worldwide.



Flagship Projects: From Proof of Concept to Operational Tools

Three 18-month flagship projects funded at \$550,000 each are moving toward operational use. In Afghanistan, the World Food Programme and REACH are upgrading the PULSE platform to forecast supply chain disruptions using GeoAI. A multi-university collaboration (ASU, UMD, WashU, NASA Harvest, FEWS NET) is creating an early warning tool for food instability in regions like Ukraine and Sudan. Finally, the University of Missouri and Agricultural Extension are developing plant-available soil moisture models to advance nitrogen management.

Pilot Projects: Building the Next Layer of GeoAI Capacity

Ten pilot projects are translating research into practice by prototyping tools for supply chain resilience and climate-adaptive farming. Key efforts include crop-shifting models for Kenya (UMD/NASA Harvest/ICPAC), opportunity crops and crop-shifting models in Zambia and Kenya (CIAT), and cashew yield forecasting in Ghana (University of Ghana). Example global tools include Earth Genome's "Digital Food Twin" for simulating market shocks and UrbanKisaan's foundation model for seasonal suitability predictions.

A Growing Portfolio of Open Tools for a Shared Mission

Through these projects, the GIFS program will deliver open-source tools, datasets, models, and frameworks, to create a solid foundation on which organizations worldwide can build. We invite Flagship members to engage by contributing regional data, becoming early adopters to shape tool development and deployment, or providing further investment and partnership to scale these prototypes for global impact.

How Flagship Members Can Engage

To explore any of these opportunities, contact the GIFS team at:

gifs@taylorgeospatial.org

OR Visit:

taylorgeospatial.org/gifs

Members Spotlight

World Food Forum the Gambia Youth Chapter Organises the Sustainable Gastronomy Week 2026 with the theme “Celebrating Food Heritage”



On 19th June 2026, the World Food Forum (WFF) Gambia Youth Chapter, in collaboration with the Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI),

successfully commemorated Sustainable Gastronomy Week 2026 with a vibrant multi-stakeholder event that celebrated Gambian culinary heritage and promoted sustainable food systems and healthy, locally rooted diets.

The event brought together over 60 participants, including government representatives, FAO officials, nutrition experts, chefs, entrepreneurs, students, youth leaders, and development partners, all united around one common goal: showcasing the richness of Gambian food culture and highlighting the untapped potential of FINDI (Fonio) as a nutritious, climate-resilient indigenous grain.



Throughout their addresses, speakers emphasised the importance of rediscovering and promoting The Gambia's indigenous foods, preserving local culinary traditions, strengthening sustainable food systems and positioning Gambian cuisine on the global stage.

A major highlight of the event was the spotlight on FINDI (Fonio), one of West Africa's oldest indigenous grains, which demonstrated its versatility through a variety of traditional Gambian dishes prepared by participating chefs and culinary entrepreneurs.

All meals were prepared using nutritious, locally sourced ingredients, reinforcing the importance of supporting local farmers while promoting healthier food choices. The event showcased a rich selection of locally produced foods and beverages through collaborations with private sector partners. This also created an important platform for dialogue among government institutions, development partners, the private sector, academia and young people on the future of sustainable food systems in The Gambia.



The World Food Forum Gambia Youth Chapter remains committed to empowering young people to become champions of sustainable agrifood systems. By celebrating indigenous foods like FINDI (Fonio), promoting local innovation, and fostering cross-sector partnerships, the Chapter continues to contribute towards building healthier communities, preserving cultural heritage, and creating a more sustainable food future for The Gambia. Together, we can transform our food systems by valuing what grows locally, celebrating our culinary traditions, and empowering youth to lead the change.

Written Piece - Civil Society at the Table: The Third Partner in Food Systems Transformation

Written by: Partners of the Americas

For decades, the story of development finance has been told as a partnership between two players: the **public sector**, which sets priorities and supplies concessional capital, and the **private sector**, which brings investment at scale. **Civil society** has always been present in that story — but too often written in at the margins, valued for community access yet rarely seated where the decisions that direct capital are actually made.

The Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security offers a chance to tell a better story: one in which the public, private, and civil society sectors sit together as genuine partners. As the landscape of development funding shifts and traditional resources grow scarcer, the need for resilient, well-financed food systems has only become more urgent. Meeting it will require real investment at scale — and a partnership model that works. The three-way approach is not a nicety. It is how bold commitments become lasting local impact.

Civil society organizations bring something no financial instrument can manufacture. Consider what we do:

We are community anchors and amplifiers of local voices, rooting initiatives in the priorities of the farmers, women, youth, and Indigenous communities a project ultimately depends on. We are ethical stewards, conducting social risk assessments and safeguarding accountability. We are capacity builders, strengthening the local institutions and cooperatives that must sustain programs over time. We are policy linkers, connecting grassroots realities to national and global frameworks. And — most underappreciated of all — we are finance enablers and de-riskers.

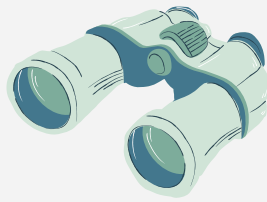
That last role deserves emphasis. A guarantee or a first-loss tranche absorbs financial risk after it materializes. Civil society reduces the probability that risk materializes at all — by ensuring projects are trusted, understood, and genuinely governed where they operate. That is the cheapest and most durable de-risking available, and only a trusted local actor can provide it.



The value civil society brings is often preventive and diffuse, which makes it easy to overlook. But recognition alone changes little. If these contributions are praised and not resourced, the model falters. When coordination, safeguards, and accountability are funded as the essential program functions they are — rather than treated as overhead to be minimized — everyone's investment goes further.

This matters especially as we broaden our view of what a "return" means. Food security offers relatively legible returns, but many vital investments — in health, education, resilience, and the environment — deliver value that is social, environmental, and educational before it is financial. Those returns compound over time into a more productive, healthier, more stable society, which in turn creates the durable markets that private capital seeks. The right question is not whether there is a return, but what kind — and how patient we are willing to be to realize it. Civil society is uniquely positioned to surface and steward exactly these long-horizon returns.

Looking Ahead



Looking ahead, we see an even bolder possibility. The same capabilities that make civil society an effective de-risker — legitimacy, governance, proximity to the community — are the capabilities of a principal. Over time, civil society can move from enabling finance to helping hold it: leading programs and participating directly in how development is financed. That moment is still emerging, and the path is incremental — but the groundwork begins now.

“**Partners of the Americas is proud to help co-coordinate civil society engagement in the Flagship, and we welcome the chance to build this model together. *We have prepared a white paper exploring these ideas in depth, available on request to any partner who would like to continue the conversation.***”

The third partner is ready. Let's make room at the table.

Explore Partners of the Americas' work: <https://partners.net/>

Follow Partners of the Americas on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/partners-of-the-americas/posts/?feedView=all>

Meet the GFIFS Team



Lina Khoury, 25
Dutch /Jordanian



I started at GFIFS in March 2026 as a Global Engagement Trainee, and have been supporting Flagship activities such as maintaining partnerships, planning and hosting events and webinars, and developing this monthly newsletter (among others)! I recently graduated from the MA Food Studies: Policies for Sustainable Production and Consumption at the American University of Rome. Previously I completed my BSc at University College Venlo - Maastricht University, building an interdisciplinary curriculum with a focus on food science, food studies, sustainable development, and political science. Growing up in Jordan to Dutch and Palestinian parents, I developed a strong sense of justice and will to help others. My involvement in volunteer work, activism, and natural curiosity further solidified this passion. Throughout my academic journey, I discovered my interest for rights and justice within the food system. During my Masters studies, I delved into the impact of crises on food systems, focusing on conflict areas, with my thesis focusing on how power dynamics, donor priorities, and political constraints in food systems governance impact meaningful food systems transformation and food security (reach out to lina.khoury@cropprtrust.org if you would like to know more).

I find the role that the Flagship plays in bringing together various stakeholders in food security to be very essential. Especially in a world that is continuously becoming more divided, where laws and morality are becoming a second thought (if at all), and the most vulnerable are being left behind, I believe that creating synergies between stakeholders and reminding them of the common goal of reaching zero hunger is essential to mobilise true change. Without working together, food insecurity levels will only deteriorate.

Favourite food: Magloobeh (recipe linked!) - lit. "upside down" in English (a traditional Palestinian dish with layered rice, lamb, and vegetables served upside down - hence the name)

Favourite place: Wadi Rum, nature reserve in Jordan- the calmness and beauty is unbeatable (Fun fact: movies such as Dune and the Martian were filmed there because of its resemblance to Mars!)



Ruby Celia Weiling, 21
German/Irish



Favourite food: Watermelon

Favorite Place: Milan, Italy:
(Fun fact - Milan has two apartment towers covered in 900+ trees - a vertical forest!)

I am a second-year Geography and Sustainable Development student at the University of St Andrews, with a foundation at Central Saint Martins in fashion communication. This experience has shaped my approach to sustainability at the intersection of creativity, culture, and systems change. Volunteering in Costa Rica, working on a local farm and in marine conservation, sparked a deeper interest in agriculture and its role in sustainable food systems.

Having interned at the Flagship for two summers and now serving as Co-Chair of the Youth Workstream, I have had the opportunity to focus on bringing youth voices into conversations shaping our food systems. I also represented the Flagship as a Youth Representative for the World Food Forum, contributing to global consultations on youth involvement in agrifood systems. I'm especially passionate about the involvement of youth and women in food security, and I have spent the past year involved in the initiative's collaborative, multi-sector approach.

Outside of the Flagship, I'm Head of Sustainability for the St Andrews Charity Fashion Show, and I am exploring how sustainability, policy, and creative industries align.

What draws me to the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security is that their work recognises that food security is not a purely technical challenge. Instead, it is shaped by culture, power, gender, and voices of those most affected, which are often left unheard. The Flagship sits at the intersection of policy, people, and systemic change, addressing livelihoods, land, climate, and equity. The Flagship's multi-sector, collaborative approach and commitment to centering youth and women reflect what I believe is necessary for genuine social and environmental sustainability.