

## Speakers' bios

**Kobenan Kouassi  
Adjoumani**



Mr Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani has served as Minister of State and Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development in Côte d'Ivoire since 2019.

Before being appointed Minister of State, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, he was in charge of the Ministry of Animal and Halieutic Resources from 2002 to 2005 and again from 2011 to September 2019.

Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani is a member of the Political Council of the Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP), for which he also acts as principal spokesperson, and since 2022 he has been Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Cacao Initiative, Côte d'Ivoire – Ghana.

**Alex Assanvo**



Alex Assanvo is the first Executive Secretary of the Côte d'Ivoire Ghana Cocoa Initiative (CIGCI).

Before his appointment, he was Director of Corporate Affairs for Europe and Africa at Mars. Alex Assanvo began his international development career with the German development agency, GIZ, as a Rural Development Expert between 2002 and 2006 in Dakar, Senegal.

He moved on to Fairtrade Labelling International (FLO), in Germany in 2006 as Head for Africa and the Strategic Lead for Cocoa and Cotton. He later joined the Sustainability and Procurement team at Kraft Foods, now Mondelez International, from October 2011 to 2013 as the Cocoa Development Manager in charge of the Cocoa Life Programme.

### **Irene Annor-Frempong**



Irene Annor-Frempong is an experienced research and innovation practitioner. She is the Lead on the AU-EU FNSSA International Research Consortium in FARA and the immediate past Director of Research and Innovation. She was the Coordinator of the EU-H2020 LEAP4FNSSA project and served as a Commissioner of the CGIAR Commission on Sustainable Agricultural Intensification (CoSAI) between 2020 and 2021. A thought leader with over 20 years research experience, Irene has coordinated many continent-wide research and capacity development projects including the CAADP 'Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa' framework and has worked in research institutes and universities in a number of African and European countries. She has played significant roles in advancing the AU-EU Research and Innovation Partnership through the Platform for Africa-Europe Partnership on Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD), the 'Long-term Europe Africa Platform for Food Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture' (LEAP4FNSSA), the DeSIRA pillar 2- CAADP xP4 projects and the AU-EU High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) Working Group on FNSSA. She is currently a member of the foresight4food Steering group and served on the Steering group of the World Bank Africa Centres of Excellence (ACE) program and the Consultative Advisory Group on Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET), among others. Irene holds a PhD from the Veterinary School, University of Bristol, UK. and an M Sc. in Animal production science from Wageningen University and Research.

### **King-David Amoah**



King-David Amoah is a very resourceful, result-oriented with documented contributions in providing superior results. He is the president of The Farmers Organisation Network in Ghana; the Executive Director of the Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural development (ECASARD); a member of the National Steering Committee for Aflatoxin Control; Chairman of the National Steering Committee (NSC) of the Small Grant Program of the UNDP (Ghana); a Member of the Board of the National Biosafety Authority of Ghana; a Member of the Bono East Regional Peace Council and Chairman of the Nursing & Midwifery Training College, Yeji.-Ghana. King-David Amoah has over 25 years working experience with Farmers and FBOs and also with NGOs.

**Ousmane Badiane**



Executive Chairperson of AKADEMIYA2063, Ousmane Badiane, Distinguished Fellow of the African Association of Agricultural Economists, recipient of the Africa Food Prize in 2015 and member of the World Academy of Sciences, is the Executive Chairperson of AKADEMIYA2063. He has over 30 years of experience, as academic and a practitioner, in international development. As the Director for Africa at the International Food Policy Research Institute, he was instrumental in developing and guiding the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

As Lead Specialist for Food and Agricultural Policy at the World Bank, he served as advisor to the Vice President for Africa and originated projects with funding ranging from US\$5 million to US\$150 million. Between research and development finance, Ousmane Badiane taught Economics of Development in Africa at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies for many years.

Ousmane Badiane received PhD in agricultural economics from the University of Kiel in Germany. He is also recipient of a Doctorate Honoris Causa from the University of KwaZulu Natal.

**Christopher Brett**



Christopher Brett was appointed as the Lead Agribusiness Specialist with the World Bank in November 2016 and joined the Agriculture and Food Global Agricultural Practice, now based in Rome. He has a Master's Degree in Management for Agricultural Development from Cranfield University in the United Kingdom. He has forty years' experience of working within the public, private and voluntary sectors in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Prior to working with the World Bank, he worked for 9 years as the Global Head of Sustainability and Partnerships for a large multi-national agricultural supply chain management company. As part of the senior management team, Chris supported the company's transition from a trading-based company to a global agri-business supply chain management company.

### Marco Camagni



Marco Camagni is the Lead Global Technical Specialist in Producers Organizations and Rural Development at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

His work is focused on providing technical support and guidance on how to analyse, develop, strengthen or partner with rural institutions, in a perspective of inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.

At the Fund, Marco Camagni previously worked as Country Director for the Southern Cone region (Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay) based in the Lima IFAD's sub-regional office for 4 years, where he also encumbered ad interim the position of Head of the Lima office and Country Director for Peru and Bolivia.

Before moving to Peru, he worked for 5 years for the Latin America and the Caribbean Division, including 3 and half years based in Central America, and then for 11 years at IFAD Headquarters in Rome first as Country Programme Manager in the Latin America and Caribbean Division in charge of IFAD's operations in Haiti, Dominican Republic and Belize, and subsequently as Senior Technical Specialist in the area of rural markets and enterprises, value chain development and public-private partnerships.

Prior to joining the Fund, Camagni worked for two years at a company that provided management consulting to small and medium-sized enterprises in Italy. He holds a master's degree in Development Economics from University of Sussex, United Kingdom, and several specialisation trainings on value chain development and rural finance. He speaks English, Spanish, French and Italian.

### Leanne de Bassompierre



Leanne de Bassompierre is an international communications specialist who works extensively in the cocoa sector. A multilingual former foreign correspondent for Bloomberg and France 24, she is an experienced broadcaster with a popular weekly slot on South African talk radio called 'Live with Leanne', exploring life in Africa and more recently India, where she is now based. As a journalist, Leanne de Bassompierre has covered presidential elections in at least six African nations and has been published broadly for over 20 years. She has accompanied the Ivory Coast Prime Minister as a special communications advisor and has managed teams of up to 30 reporters for South Africa's premier media outlet Eyewitness News. Leanne de Bassompierre now owns Zivia Communication et Conseils, which is transcontinental communications agency doing PR and advisory work for a variety of West African clients, specifically focused on encouraging sustainable cocoa farming and fair price indexes.

## Qu Dongyu



Qu Dongyu, who took office on 1 August 2019 as Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, has spent his life working on how to make sure the world is fed.

Born in 1963 to a rice-growing family in China's Hunan Province, Qu Dongyu studied horticultural science at Hunan Agricultural University and then plant breeding and genetics at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. He later added environmental science to his knowledge portfolio while earning a PhD at Wageningen University, in the Netherlands.

He then progressed through a range of national and international activities, engaged simultaneously in science and management, all during a time when China's reform and opening-up process led the country to dramatically reduce poverty and hunger in a country with 20 percent of the global population, 9 percent of the world's cultivated land, and where over 90 percent of the rural population is engaged in small holder farm operations working less than 3 hectares.

His vision is founded on the belief that freedom from hunger is a basic human right, and that in the 21st century we have the capability to eradicate chronic food insecurity. While challenges loom, Qu Dongyu's cardinal principle is that "problems can also be the source of progress".

Before coming to FAO, Qu Dongyu served as China's Vice Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, where one of his achievements was to promote inclusive and innovative development and make sure information and communication technologies (ICT) were available in rural areas so that more than 400 million farmers could use their smartphones as a new farming tool.

That vision has been consistent across a professional career that includes periods in central and local government, in and leading research institutes, and as a human resources leader at the China Three Gorges Project Development Corporation, a \$40 billion investment project.

Among his national initiatives has been to improve reporting of wholesale prices for agricultural products in China and foster the establishment of more than 100 specialty production areas geared to making local comparative advantages work to the benefit of local farmers. As Vice Governor of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, one of China's landlocked and poorest areas, Qu Dongyu formulated action plans aimed at poverty reduction, disaster reduction and prevention, women empowerment, agritourism and mutual learning platforms designed to boost trust between ethnic groups.

Qu Dongyu says he represents the combination of an "Asian soul" and a "global mind". Recognized for scientific innovation as a young scholar, he has for 30 years been involved in international exchanges and orchestrated major events including the World Potato Congress, the International Rice Congress and the International Conference on Plant Protection, and participated in multilateral initiatives such as the World Trade Organization and the G20 as well as numerous bilateral initiatives involving Asia, Africa and Latin America. He has also directly helped design flagship South-South Cooperation projects with FAO and the World Bank.

**Martin Fregene**



Dr. Martin Fregene is Director of Agriculture and Agro-Industry at the African Development Bank. He is a plant geneticist with 27 years of experience in crop improvement and agricultural policy.

He developed the first molecular genetic map of cassava and started the first molecular breeding program of cassava. He began his career at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1991 and was a recipient of a Rockefeller Foundation post-doctoral fellowship on genetic mapping in 1993 at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in Cali, Colombia.

In 2008, he joined the BioCassava Plus project at the Danforth Center, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and rose to the position of Project Director. He was Chief Technical Adviser to the Minister of Agriculture in Nigeria 2012 - 2015. He joined the African Development Bank in 2017 as Adviser to the Vice President for Agriculture, Human and Social Capacity Development, becoming Director in January 2018.

**Martin Frick**



Dr. Martin Frick has been the Director of the WFP Office for Germany, Austria and Liechtenstein since November 2021. Previously, he was the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Food Systems Summit 2021 and Executive Director of the UNFCCC Secretariat, which oversees the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement. Also as climate chief of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and later as program director of the Kofi Annan Foundation, he helped develop the climate justice narrative. As German Ambassador to the United Nations in Bonn, Martin Frick was involved in founding the UN's "Sustainability Hub". He has a doctorate in law.

**Andrea Ghia**



Andrea Ghia is a Civil Engineer with +20 years of experience able to follow a project from the design to the project management. Over the years he has also gained experience in the administrative management field. He has been living in Ghana since 2023 and works in the sector of electromechanical supplies and installations. Since 2018, he is board member of the European Chamber of Commerce of Ghana and from 2022 responsible for the improvement of the Agri-business platform developed together with the EU Delegation in Ghana.

## Viwanou Gnassounou



Executive Business and Development Policy Advisor. Former Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) – Department of Sustainable economic development & Trade; Organisation of ACP States (April 2015-April 2020). Viwanou Gnassounou, from Togo, is an economist and financial expert with 25 years of experience in development policy formulation and management, aid programming, project management, sectoral strategies design and implementation, business management and trade negotiation and cooperation. Since September 2020, as head of VR Advisors, Viwanou Gnassounou has led missions to support private investors on the African and Caribbean markets, as well as facilitating policy dialogue (high-level dialogue on sustainable cocoa; high-level session of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AU-EU Ministerial Conference on Agriculture); for the International Trade Centre and the Kingdom of Eswatini (establishment of government-business relations); for the Republic of Vanuatu (support for the strategy to adopt a resolution on climate justice at the United Nations General Assembly); signing of an economic pact between the cocoa industry and the governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. As ASG of the OACPS, Viwanou Gnassounou coordinated and provided leadership on strategy, policymaking, development, and implementation of instruments in the areas of Trade, Private sector development, Agricultural Value Chains, Infrastructure, sustainable industrialization and Climate change & environment. He also led resource mobilization initiatives for implementation of the policies and actions, supervised the ACP Office in Geneva and the ACP-EU Center for Agricultural cooperation (CTA). He led the process of setting up of the new Business ACP entity. Finally, Viwanou Gnassounou has worked closely with Member States in the preparation for and conduct of the negotiations of the New ACP-EU Post 2020 Partnership Agreement. He specifically led the Secretariat team providing support to the ACP Technical Negotiation Team on Inclusive Sustainable Economic Growth and Development component of the New ACP-EU Post 2020 Partnership Agreement. From April to November 2015, Viwanou Gnassounou was also responsible for the management of the Department of Political Affairs and Human Development of the ACP Group. Before joining the ACP Management Team in April 2015, he was co-manager of a Consulting firm, which provides support in the areas of development policies. He also set up and managed an agricultural products industrial processing company based in Togo. Viwanou Gnassounou has previously served as an Expert and Manager in commodity trade and management policies at the ACP Secretariat for 10 years (2003-2013). Prior to that, Viwanou Gnassounou participated in setting up PlaNet Finance (now Positive Planet) in Paris, France, where he served in various positions from 1998 to 2002, including the latest of Director of Knowledge Management and Business Development Services. Viwanou Gnassounou holds a Master's degree in Economic Analysis and Policy, a Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies (DEA) in Development Economics (MPhil equivalent), and a Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures Spécialisées (DESS) in Economic Development and Development Project Management (MSc equivalent) from the Centre for Research and Studies in International Development at the Université d'Auvergne, France. He is fluent in English, French and Mina (Togo), with basic knowledge of German.

**Ron Thomas Hartman**



Ron Hartman is IFAD's Director for Global Engagement, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization. He is responsible for leading IFAD's global engagement and multilateral relations including with the private sector; south-south and triangular cooperation, resource mobilization and funds management. Prior to his current position, Ron Hartman served as IFAD Country Director and Representative at its South East Asia and the Pacific sub-regional office in Jakarta. With over 25 years of professional experience, including over 18 years with the United Nations, Ron Hartman has acquired an extensive managerial and operational experience in over 25 countries. He has specialized knowledge in promoting sustainable socio-economic development and poverty reduction, public policy and partnerships. In 2011, Ron Hartman was awarded the IFAD Presidential Award for outstanding performance.

**Martin Heydon**



Martin Heydon T.D. is Minister of State with special responsibility for Research and Development, Farm Safety and New Market Development at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. He was appointed to this role in July 2020. He is a T.D. for the Kildare South constituency, first elected in 2011.

Martin Heydon was Chairman of the Fine Gael Parliamentary Party from 2016 to 2020. He previously served as a member of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture and was a member of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action which produced the cross-party report on Climate Action 'Climate Change: A Cross- Party Consensus for Action'. He has also served on Oireachtas Committees on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural, and Gaeltacht Affairs, and Petitions.

Martin Heydon is a native of South Kildare and lives on his family farm with his wife and four children. He is a past pupil of Kildalton Agricultural College.

**Arwyn Jones**



Arwyn Jones is currently leading the EU Soil Observatory at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, which is providing scientific support to a range of EU soil-related policy areas. In particular, this focuses on the development of the EU Soil Strategy, the proposal for a Soil Law and the EU's Soil Mission. Extensive knowledge of the soils functions and degradation processes as well as coordinating the LUCAS Soil Module, which provides harmonised assessments of soil characteristics across the EU. He was lead editor and co-author of the JRC's Soil Atlas of Africa. Currently, he is involved in the SOILS4AFRICA Project, which is establishing a baseline of soil condition for continental Africa. He is co-leading an exploratory research project to establish a Soil Health Dashboard for Africa. He has a PhD in the use of remote sensing to map soils and landforms in the northern Sahara desert and was a member of an expedition in 1987 to map equatorial glaciers on the Ruwenzori Mountains. He has worked for the European Commission since 1993.



### **Agnes Kalibata**



Dr. Agnes Kalibata has served as the President of AGRA since 2014, where she leads the organization's efforts with public and private partners to ensure a food secure and prosperous Africa through inclusive, sustainable agricultural growth, improving the productivity and livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers in Africa. From 2019-2021, Agnes Kalibata also served as the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the 2021 Food Systems Summit, a catalytic process at the start of the Decade of Action to improve food systems around the world to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Paris Agreement. Prior to joining AGRA, Agnes Kalibata was Rwanda's Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) from 2008 to 2014, where she drove programs that moved her country from a food insecure to a food secure status and became a reference point for other countries that sought to deliver agriculture transformation. She also sits on various boards, councils and commissions including the Global Commission on Adaptation, the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, the Global Panel for Agriculture & Food Systems for Nutrition, the Global Agriculture & Food Security Program (GAFSP), the Food Systems Stewardship Board of the World Economic Forum, the Malabo-Montpellier Panel, the Architecture for REDD+ Transactions and the Global Commission on Climate Overshoot, the Advisory Committee of the Presidency of CoP28, among others.

Agnes Kalibata has a distinguished track record as an agricultural scientist, policy maker and thought leader, and holds a doctorate in Entomology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is recipient of many prestigious awards.

### **Magda Kopczynska**



Deputy Director-General within the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, since 1/1/2023.

She is in charge of the Directorate for Outreach, Research & Geographical Indications and the Directorate for Legal, procedural and inter-institutional affairs.

After joining the European Commission in 2006, to work in the Directorate-General for Internal Market and Services, she was appointed Head of Unit for Clean Transport, Urban Transport and Intelligent Transport Systems - between May 2009 and June 2011. In July 2011 she became Head of Unit dealing with Maritime Transport policy and Logistics, until taking up the post of Director for Sustainable and Innovative Mobility in the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport in May 2014. From October 2016 until the end of 2022, she worked as Director for Waterborne Transport.

**Peter Kullgren**



Peter Kullgren is the Swedish minister for Rural Affairs since 2022. His areas of responsibility include rural areas, food, land-and water-based industries. Peter Kullgren was born in 1981 and lives in Karlstad. He is married and has one child.

Peter Kullgren was party secretary of the Christian Democrats from 2018 to 2022. From 2017 to 2018 he was the election campaign leader and Deputy party secretary of the Christian Democrats.

Peter Kullgren was Municipal commissioner and chair of the Karlstad Municipal Executive Board from 2014 to 2017, Municipal commissioner and vice chair of the Karlstad Municipal Executive Board from 2010 to 2014 and Group leader, Karlstad Municipal Council from 2005 to 2017.

**Changwe Kumalinga**



Changwe Kumalinga currently serves as CFO of Good Nature Agro, a legume seed and commodity company, and oversees their financial operations in Zambia, Malawi and the USA. He has over 15 years of professional work experience in the fields of Finance, Investments, Tax Accounting, Business Development, Business Consulting, Agriculture, Retail/Commercial/Corporate Banking, Bank Operations, Sales and Human Resources. Changwe Kumalinga is a solution strategist and holds a dual masters from the USA, an MBA with a concentration in Finance; and a Masters in Investments (Securities Analysis and Portfolio Management). Additionally, he holds a Bachelors in Finance and Economics from the USA as well. Changwe Kumalinga currently serves as Board Member of Zazu and previously served as Board Secretary for the American Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Zambia. Changwe Kumalinga has a huge passion for rural smallholder farmers in Africa and believes that they have the potential to feed the world, given the right investments and focus. He advocates for smallholder farmers daily, with the mission of getting rural smallholder farmers out of poverty and into the middle class.

**Alvaro Lario**



Alvaro Lario is President of the International Fund of Agricultural Development (IFAD). A seasoned international development finance leader, he has more than 20 years of experience across academia, private sector asset management, World Bank Group and the United Nations, including as Associate Vice-President of Financial Operations at IFAD.

Under his stewardship, IFAD became the first United Nations Fund to enter the capital markets and obtain a credit rating, enabling the IFAD to expand resource mobilization efforts to the private sector.

Before joining the Fund in early 2018, he was the Treasury Capital Markets Lead and Principal Portfolio Officer at the International Finance Corporation, part of the World Bank Group, where he focused on local capital markets development and emerging markets investments.

Alvaro Lario received a PhD in Financial Economics from the Complutense University of Madrid after completing a Master of Research in Economics at the London Business School and a Master of Finance from Princeton University.

**Francesco Lollobrigida**



Francesco Lollobrigida was born in Tivoli (Rome) in 1972. He is married with two daughters and has degree in law.

In 2012, he was among the founders of the now governing right wing party Fratelli d'Italia. His engagement in the public administration began in 1996. After serving as city councilor in the metropolitan area of Rome for four years, he joined Rome Provincial Council, where he worked for several years as vice-President of the Budget Committee. He was then elected in the Lazio Regional Council, and appointed councilor for mobility and transport.

In 2018, he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies with Fratelli d'Italia, becoming the Parliamentary Group leader of the party. During the same legislature, he also served as member of the Parliamentary European Policies Committee.

He was re-elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 2022, and appointed Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests within the new Italian Government chaired by President Giorgia Meloni.

### **Muriel Mambrini Doudet**



Research Director, recently appointed at the French Institute of Research for Sustainable Development (IRD) as director of Research & Programs Evaluation. IRD supports an original model of equitable scientific partnership and interdisciplinary, citizen, sustainability science committed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Formerly at the Management Board of the French institute for research in agriculture, food and environment (Inrae), her mission was to design the framework serving the actors of the innovation ecosystems to accelerate the agroecological transition. She went from the exploration of the potential of living labs at national, European and International levels, to the creation of think tanks to work on the new terms of social contracts for a more sustainable world. This builds on her research aiming at laying the foundations for a "science of science management" for open science and innovation. she alternates between practice and theory. On the one side, she combines her backgrounds in livestock nutrition and genetics, innovation management and epistemology, to build tools for accelerating the expected shifts of paradigms. On the other side, she is engaged in science administration, leading large interdisciplinary research endeavors, at INRAE (former head of the largest research center), for the French government (former director of the Institute of Advanced Study for Science and Technology), for Universities as current director of the Doctoral School for Interdisciplinary Frontier Research (unique worldwide). Having identified a long time ago that adapting the evaluation process and systems of science quality is key, she happily joined IRD with the intent to contribute shaping an evaluation process fit to sustainability science. Knight of the French Order of Merit, member of the French Academy of Agriculture.

### **Mohamed Manssouri**



Mohamed Manssouri is the Director of the FAO Investment Centre. He is an agricultural economist and an expert in agricultural and rural development, food security and poverty reduction. He previously occupied various positions in the Investment Centre as Service Chief and as Senior Advisor.

Prior to joining FAO, he was Country Director with IFAD, where he led the development and management of various country investment strategies and programmes in West and Central Africa, including Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Ghana, Niger, Republic of Congo. He developed several regional strategies and policy initiatives in rural finance, community-driven development, conservation agriculture and the West Africa Rural Policy Hub. He also led the preparation of IFAD's Knowledge Management Strategy and other organizational change initiatives. He lectured at the University Roma III's Master's on Human Development and Food Security. He holds a BSc and an MSc from the Paris Institute of Technology for Life, Food and Environment Sciences in France (AgroParisTech). Native speaker of Arabic and French, he is fluent in English, Spanish and Italian.

### **Andrés Montero Aparicio**



Andrés Montero Aparicio holds a PhD on Agricultural Engineering (sp. Agricultural economics), with more than 20 years' experience working both in private and public organisations. He is Senior Advisor at the Department of Economic Affairs at the Cabinet of Spanish Prime Minister and Assistant Professor at the University Carlos III of Madrid on environmental economy.

He has been Co-chair and is member of the Strategic Working Group on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) of the SCAR committee.

He has as well been the Technical Coordinator of two Focus Groups launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of Spain: on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems and on Digitization for the agrifood and forestry sectors, and the rural areas which provided a key contribution to the development of the Spanish Digitization Strategy for the Agrifood and Forestry sectors and the rural areas, which is now being rolled out.

### **Carla Montessi**



Carla Montesi is currently Director at the European Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA). She is responsible for the Directorate "Green Deal and Digital Agenda", covering policy areas such as climate change, environment, sustainable energy, agri-food systems, transport, technology and digitalisation.

Previously in DEVCO, Carla was Director for "Planet and Prosperity" (2018-2021) and Director for Western and Central Africa (2014-2018). Prior to 2014, she was Director at the DG for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

A former lawyer specialised in European affairs at the College of Europe in Bruges, Mrs. Montesi's earlier career encompassed diverse responsibilities in the field of EU external policy for development and cooperation, both at Headquarters and in EU Delegations in Africa, as well as experience in the Cabinet of EU Commissioner Emma Bonino for External Policy and Humanitarian Affairs.

### **Elizabeth Mpofu**



Elizabeth Mpofu is a practicing farmer and a founding member and former chairperson of Zimbabwe Smallholders Organic Farmers Forum (ZIMSOFF), which has 19,000 members, of whom 13,000 are female, who farm ecologically. She is a board member of East & Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF) and a former board member of Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA). From 2013 to 2021, Elizabeth Mpofu was General Coordinator of La Via Campesina, the international peasant movement which is a coalition of 164 organizations in 73 countries around the world, representing about 200 million peasant, landless, indigenous, and other farmers. She speaks in many arenas on behalf of the coalition to promote food sovereignty. In 2016, she was appointed Special Ambassador for Pulses in Africa for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). She was featured in the 2018 special edition of Farming Matters on agroecology.

**Reuben R. Mtolo Phiri**



Reuben Mtolo Phiri is the Minister of Agriculture of Zambia since September 2021. He was elected to the National Assembly of Zambia in 2011 for Chipata Central and reelected in 2021. He was the party whip since 2011 and served on the committee for privileges and absences. . Reuben Mtolo Phiri is an agricultural economist by profession.

**Ildephonse Musafiri**



Dr. Ildephonse Musafiri is the Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources in Rwanda since March 2023, prior to that he was the Minister of State for the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources. Over the past 6 years, Ildephonse Musafiri was the Executive Director of the Strategy and Policy Council (SPC) in the Office of the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Formerly a member of the board of directors of the National Bank of Rwanda for four years from 2018, he is also an Honorary Senior Lecturer at the University of Rwanda, College of Business and Economics, where he previously served as Lecturer and Head of the Economics Department. His research has focused on development economics and policy, particularly the analysis of poverty and inequality, agricultural growth, and food policy.

Earlier in his career, he worked for World Vision Rwanda as a Community Capacity Strengthening Officer.

Ildephonse Musafiri earned his Ph.D. in agricultural economics from the University of Bonn (Germany) and a M.Sc. in applied economics from the University of Rwanda. He is fluent in English, French, and Kinyarwanda, and has a working knowledge of German.

## Bongiwe Njobe



Bongiwe Njobe has over 38 years of work and leadership experience in the public, non-governmental and corporate sectors in South Africa, on the African continent and beyond. She qualified as an Agricultural Engineer (MSc Agric Ing) in Plovdiv, Bulgaria in 1983. Her first decade of work was at the farm level – as an assistant manager on farms in Morogoro, Tanzania, and then in Lusaka, Zambia. She subsequently worked in several roles firstly as an expert and coordinator in land and agricultural policy development at the Agrarian project in Johannesburg, then as a programme manager supporting institutional development in scientific research at historically black universities across South Africa at the Foundation for Research Development, then as Director setting up the School of Agriculture and Rural Development at the University of Pretoria and in 1995 she went on to serve as a senior manager in the first democratic South African government. Her second decade was in the public sector where she was Chief Director: Natural Resources Management and Quality Control as well as a Deputy Director General: Programmes and Planning. She was appointed Director General of the National Department of Agriculture, in South Africa, and served from April 1997 – February 2004. In that role she was responsible for the development and implementation of agricultural policy and programmes in South Africa, agricultural trade negotiations and agricultural projects within South African bilateral agreements. Between 2005 and 2022 she held several private sector leadership roles including - two food manufacturing consumer goods companies (The South African Breweries Limited (a subsidiary of SABMiller) and Tiger Brands Limited then as an independent agricultural consultant on strategy development and institutional reform. In 2018 she joined the FirstRand Bank, where she provided oversight of the FirstRand Foundations and developed and led the evolution of strategic social investing approaches aimed at addressing poverty and inequality. She retired from FirstRand in July 2022. She has previously served on several advisory panels and as a non-executive member on the boards of various companies and several NGOs in South Africa, on the continent, and internationally. Currently, she sits on the board of the Old Mutual Foundation, and the Rhodes Food Group – where she chairs the Social and Ethics Committee. In June 2023 she was elected Chairperson of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). Bongiwe Njobe also holds a postgraduate -diploma in Strategic Project Management from Liverpool University, as well as certificates in Agribusiness Finance for Non-Financial Managers from the Centre for Food and Agriculture Business - at Purdue University, Monitoring and Evaluation in Programme Management from the University of Cape Town. Bongiwe Njobe is a Fellow of the Inaugural Class of the Africa Leadership Initiative-South Africa and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network.

### **Kolyang Palebele**



Kolyang Palebele is an agro-pastoralist and expert in rural and community development of Chadian nationality born on November 24, 1964, in Gamba / Fianga MKE.

He is the President of the National Consultation Council of Rural Producers of Chad (CNCPRC) and Advisor to the Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Council (CESC). He is the President of the Platform of regional farmers Organizations of Central Africa (PROPAC) and the President of the Board of Directors of the Pan African Farmers Organization (PAFO).

### **Kati Partanen**



Kati Partanen is a farmer and forest owner from Finland. She's also a member of the Board in the WFO (World Farmers Organisation) and in MTK (Central Union of Agriculture Producers and Forest Owners, Finland). She has studied agricultural economics in Helsinki University and has graduated as M.Sc. in Agriculture. She also works as a senior lecturer of Farm Economics in Savonia University of Applied Sciences. In their farm they produce wheat, rye, oats and barley, peas, buckwheat, and rapeseed. An important part of the farm is also forestry.



**Luis Planas Puchades**



Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (2018-present)  
MP for Cordoba in Lower House of Parliament (2019-present)  
Secretary-General of European Economic and Social Committee (2014-2018)  
Councillor for Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment of Regional Government of Andalusia (2012-2013)  
Permanent Representative of Spain to the European Union (2010-2011)  
Spanish Ambassador to Morocco (2004-2010)  
Chief of Staff of the Vice-President of the European Commission, Manuel Marín. Head of relations with the Mediterranean, Latin America and Asia (1996-1999)  
Councillor for the Presidency of the Regional Government of Andalusia. MP for Regional Parliament of Andalusia. Member of Upper House of Parliament. Member of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union (1994-1996)  
Councillor for Agriculture and Fisheries of the Regional Government of Andalusia (1993-1994)  
Member of the European Parliament (MEP) (1986-1993)  
MP for Cordoba in Lower House of Parliament (1982-1987)  
Member of the mission of experts for pre-accession to the European Commission (1982)

**Kerstin Rosenow**



Kerstin Rosenow is Head of Unit 'Research & Innovation' in the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development at the European Commission where she is responsible for agricultural research under EU research programmes. Her unit provides the secretariat for the Horizon Europe R&I Mission "A Soil Deal for Europe". Previously, she was Head of Unit in the EC Research Executive Agency (REA) where she managed the implementation of the project portfolio for Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2 (food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime, and inland water research and the bioeconomy). She has been working in the EC for over 18 years after covering a managerial position in the German administration (Representation of the State of Hessen to the EU). For DG AGRI she coordinated negotiations with pre-accession and candidate countries and the preparation of the 2014-2020 CAP legislative framework. She studied law, politics and administration in Marburg, Grenoble and Bruges.

**Josefa Leonel Sacko**



AU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment.

Josefa Sacko, from Angola, is a leading African Agronomist. Prior to her election, she was Special Adviser to two Ministers in Angola: the Angolan Minister of Environment where she also served as Ambassador responsible for Climate Change. As advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Josefa Sacko oversaw Food Security, Eradication of Hunger and Poverty Reduction. She was also elected the Secretary General of Interafrican coffee organization, with a special mandate to represent the economic interest of the 25 African Coffee producers, management of the Secretariat and present the recommendation. Josefa Sacko speaks fluent Portuguese, French, English, Spanish and Lingala

**Annick Sezibera**



Annick Sezibera was born on December 6, 1977 in Burundi, married and mother of 2 children, specialist in management and administration of Cooperatives, Farmers Organisation and companies steered by farmers groups. She is the Executive Secretary of the Confederation of Associations of Agricultural Producers for Development, CAPAD in acronym. This a Burundian woman who has been working for the promotion and development of FOs since the 2000s when she was still at school. She is passionate about sustainable family farming oriented by innovations supported by farmer know-how so that the farmers are in position to masters their profession and are able to escape poverty. She regularly contributes to the orientation of agricultural policies and the implementation of programs and always aligns herself with the interests of peasants. Annick Sezibera is currently Director General of SOCOPA (Commercial company for the transformation and marketing of agricultural products), and since 2017 Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of SOCOPA (Commercial Company for the Processing and Marketing of Agricultural Products). From August 2004 to December 2008 she was President of the Board of Directors and legal representative of the Confederation of Associations of Agricultural Producers for Development (CAPAD). Annick Sezibera is a Former President and active member of the Association of Solidarity between Women of the MUHA commune in Bujumbura Town Hall. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne in France, an International Certificate in Leadership from INSEEC U-California (USA) and IFG EE Paris (France), a diploma in General Medicine from the University of Ngozi in Burundi. Annick Sezibera speaks English, French and Kirundi.

### **Rob Vos**



Rob Vos is Director of the Markets, Trade, and Institutions Division (MTID) at the International Food Policy Research Institute since September 2017. He is also coordinator of the Food Security Portal. Previously, he was, among other things, Director of Agricultural Development Economics at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). He has also served as FAO's director for social protection, rural employment, and gender equality and as coordinator of FAO's strategic program for rural poverty reduction. Rob Vos holds honorary professorships at the International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University, The Netherlands, and at FLACSO, Ecuador. He has published widely on sustainable development issues, including food security, climate change, trade policy, inequality and poverty, financing for development, poverty and social policy analysis, and macroeconomic and general equilibrium modeling for development policy.

### **Janusz Wojciechowski**



EU Commissioner for Agriculture.

Member of the European Commission since 1 December 2019, responsible for Agriculture. Lawyer; Attorney. Janusz Wojciechowski grew up on a farm in Rawa Mazowiecka, a rural community in the Łódzkie region in central Poland. He holds a Master's degree in law, having graduated from the University of Łódź Department of Law and Administration. His professional career as a judge spanned different levels up to membership of the Supreme Court of Poland. From 1995 to 2001 he held the important post of President of the Polish Supreme Audit Office. From 2001 to 2004, he represented the Łódzkie constituency as a Member and also Vice-Marshall of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland – the Sejm. From June 2004 until May 2016, he served three terms as a Member of the European Parliament. He sat as a Member of the European Parliament's Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals from his first term and from 2014 to 2016 he was President of the Intergroup. From May 2016 to November 2019, he was a Member of the European Court of Auditors. Janusz Wojciechowski has been the author and co-author of five comments on the Polish Penal Code, as well as the author of more than 100 articles and publications on criminal law in various Polish legal magazines. He also writes on socio-legal issues.

### Kaveh Zahedi



Kaveh Zahedi is the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP). He oversees ESCAP's programmes on energy, environment, natural disasters, finance, trade, transport, social development, and statistics, all in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He also supervises ESCAP's institutes on ICT for Development (Incheon), disaster information management (Tehran), agricultural mechanization (Beijing), statistics (Chiba) and technology transfer (Delhi). He helps to run the UN Regional Cooperation Platform, facilitates collaboration with UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams and oversees implementation of the UN regional reform process.

Prior to this, Kaveh Zahedi worked at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) including as its Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific and as Deputy Director of the Division of Economy, overseeing work on green economy, resource efficiency and climate change. As Climate Change Coordinator he led the development of the first organization-wide climate change programme, and regularly headed the UNEP team for the UNFCCC climate talks. He also led the formation of major UN partnerships such as the UN-REDD Programme (with FAO and UNDP), Ecosystem Based Adaptation Programme (with IUCN and UNDP), the Climate Technology Centre and Networks (with UNIDO), and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition. Over two decades Mr. Zahedi has worked for the United Nations in Kenya, Mexico, Europe and Thailand.

Before joining the United Nations, Kaveh Zahedi worked at an NGO as project manager for agricultural and micro credit projects in Latin America and the Middle East. He holds a Master's degree from the Fletcher School, Tufts University, USA, and a BSc first class degree in Economics & Geography, from University College London.