



# 2023 IFAD INNOVATION DAY

The **2023 IFAD Innovation Day** took place on Wednesday 28 June at IFAD headquarters in Rome. Below are short session summaries and quotations from the speakers at each session.

## OPENING REMARKS

Alvaro Lario, President of IFAD, inaugurated the 2023 IFAD Innovation Day, which was followed by high-level representatives from IFAD's Member States, the United Nations, and the private sector. The speakers reiterated the importance of innovation and investing in innovation.



*"IFAD's mandate is to transform rural economies and food systems to make them more inclusive, productive, resilient and sustainable. To that end, we invest in the millions of rural people and we embrace many kinds of innovations to deliver more development impacts quicker, better and smarter."*

**Alvaro Lario**  
President of IFAD

*"When donors like Norway, partners like IFAD, and authorities in developing countries combine their forces, we make a real difference to people on the ground. There is no commercial farming without investment."*

*"The Kingdom of Norway supports IFAD's mission by increasing their financial contributions during the ongoing IFAD13 replenishment; and encourages other Member States to be ambitious in supporting our common goal: establishing sustainable food systems that leave no one hungry."*

**Her Excellency Anne Beathe Kristiansen Tvinnereim**  
Minister for International Development of the Kingdom of Norway



*"The Government of Colombia has enhanced efforts to support innovation in five main strategic areas: (1) Bio-economy and territory; (2) Zero hunger; (3) Energy transition; (4) Health autonomy; and (5) Science for peace, which are part of the National Development Plan. The Government also seeks to leverage on public-private partnerships to support technological development and innovation for food security with a community-based and sustainable approach. We are a long standing and strong IFAD member and partner. The Government of Colombia supports IFAD's mandate to focus in working and investing in the well-being of rural people."*

**His Excellency Yoseth Ariza Araújo**  
Vice Minister of Talent and Social Appropriation of Knowledge of the Republic of Colombia  
By delegation of Her Excellency Yesenia Olaya Requene, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of the Republic of Colombia





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"In Finland, when we talk about Innovation we also need to talk about digitalisation in development policy. We try to combine different models that would bring in the private sector and see what the government can be of assistance. This is perfectly combined in IFAD's work taking into account small farmers and agricultural businesses that support communities, with a focus of the role of women and youth in projects."

## **Titta Maja-Luoto**

**Director General, Department for Development Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Finland**



"For WFP partnerships and innovation is one of the top three priorities. WFP prioritises innovation and technology as enablers of change within the strategic plan.

We are very happy to be partnering with IFAD's Change Delivery and Innovation Unit working hand in hand sharing practical experiences, lessons learned and good practices in a collegial way; embracing failure, adopting a test, learn and adapt approach to innovation and sharing."

## **Caroline Legros**

**Deputy Director, Innovation and Knowledge Management Division, World Food Programme (WFP)**



## **FINANCING INNOVATION FOR RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

This session brought together representatives of the offices of innovation and digital transformation of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IFAD and the World Food Programme (WFP) Innovation Accelerator to discuss how strategic vision, partnership, innovative procurement, and prize competition could help to scale up innovation.

"Innovation Challenges provide a safe space where innovators have the headspace and resources to identify, test, learn from experimentation, adapt and scale up ideas that deliver a positive and transformational impact in the lives of poor rural people."

## **Gladys H. Morales**

**Senior Officer, Global Head of Innovation, IFAD**







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*"Our goal is to set up an innovation function that fits into the DNA and culture of WFP. We support field offices finding start-ups that solve problems on the ground and support innovators in WFP in a human-centric way."*

**Hila Cohen**  
Deputy Head, WFP Innovation Accelerator

*"Whilst initially focusing on internal innovations we quickly pivoted to meet demands from member countries. Our new Innovation procurement framework allows us to quickly test whether start-ups solutions is suitable whilst maintaining a low risk approach."*

**Marc Lepage**  
Technology Innovation Specialist, Asian Development Bank



*"Creating partnerships at implementation level with service providers seeking out the dynamic expertise enables FAO to catalyse innovation at grassroots levels. Working with stakeholders themselves allows us to work through a participatory approach with communities in rural and small holder farmer communities using the Farmer Fields School together with behavioural sciences and design thinking to test innovations at ground level!"*

**Cortney Price**  
Lead for Behavioural Science, Office of Innovation, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)



*"Innovation has been a continuous process of learning and growth. The intricacy of partnerships should not diminish the significance of this journey. Collaborating with the private sector is becoming increasingly essential for realizing our goals, and the choice of financing is a critical factor in this endeavour."*

**Sara Mbago**  
Regional Director, East and Southern Africa Division, IFAD







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## FUNDING EVIDENCE-BASED INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES: THE CASE OF THE FUND FOR INNOVATION IN DEVELOPMENT

After an introduction about the work of the Fund for Innovation in Development (FID), the speakers of this panel delved into why evidence-based solutions are needed in the field of rural development, sharing their experiences and perspectives.



*"As most of you know, agricultural development is a sector that innovates and is a sector that is continuously in need of innovation because the environment changes. The natural environment, the economic environment, the challenges are different each time. And, therefore, innovation is crucial to the advancement of our objectives."*

**Tanguy Bernard**  
Professor of University of Bordeaux and Director of Bordeaux School of Economics

## MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS TO SCALE UP INNOVATION

The panel has given the floor to stakeholders - representing the (donor) government (Germany), the technical assistance (NORAD), the private sector (Venture Well) and the International Financial Institution (IFAD) - discussing how to work together to scale up innovations that deliver results for poor rural people.

*"We are keen to see not just what innovation can do on a small scale but what we can do in terms of optimal impact. Two things we like to pursue are efficacy – does the innovation work to solve the problem that the user has put in front of us – and effectiveness to see when we scale up that innovation are we truly able to get the same effectiveness. To reach this at IFAD, we are committed to putting resources, people and technology. We are responding to the needs of the user, the needs of scale and financial sustainability – because we know that most innovations fail if they do not meet those standards and criteria."*

**Jyotsna Puri**  
Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department, IFAD







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*"Innovation days bring together talented minds, a say and influence on developing innovation and possibilities to develop innovations to help us fight the global food crisis. At the centre of Germany's strategy is to promote concepts which help to attract private investors willing to invest."*

**His Excellency Joachim Bleicker**  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the International Organizations in Rome

*"We underestimate what it takes to scale innovation. We as a collective have been too focused on seed funding without thinking of the full innovation cycle and the support that is needed from a complex ecosystem of actors."*

**Erik Feiring**  
Assistant Director, Department for Partnerships and Shared Prosperity,  
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation



*"For Venture Well, to take the idea to scale it is necessary to build the technology in form of a prototype but also how it will scale and how it is possible thinking from the outset."*

**Phil Weilerstein**  
President and Chief Executive Officer, VentureWell

*"Incorporating innovation storytelling is crucial for capturing attention, establishing emotional connections, and influencing decision-making. It is essential as we collaborate globally to address urgent issues like climate change, food systems, and conflicts that we prioritize including the voices of those directly impacted. New technologies like blockchain and virtual reality offer immersive environments that enhance storytelling and provide an opportunity to highlight knowledge from small-holder farmers and rural communities. This inclusive approach leads to more informed policy-making and sharper solutions."*

**Hélène Papper**  
Director, Global Communications and Advocacy Division, IFAD



*"IFAD has a key role being a convener of partners, an assembler of finance (guaranteeing financial sustainability), being locally integrated knowing what the community needs (storytelling), the ability to convince private investor to see this as viable investment (through de-risking, profitability) but as long-term benefits through these innovative solutions and technologies."*

**Dina Saleh**  
Regional Director Near East, North Africa and Europe Division





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## IFAD INNOVATION CHALLENGE PITCH EVENT

Teams from IFAD's Innovation Challenges have pitched for resources and partners to help them scale up their solutions, and showcased the results of testing and piloting. To know more about the teams, LandMonitor, Behavioural Mindset Avanzar, DiGi Climate Risk, and GeoScan, which are currently looking for scale-up opportunities, please click [here](#), or write to [innovation@ifad.org](mailto:innovation@ifad.org).

During the Pitch event, the teams received requests for connections and questions from the audience about additionality, and of the importance of making data operational. The full story about why these innovations are relevant to small-scale farmers is available [here](#).

*"Why is it important to use the [Behavioural Mindset] Toolkit? It will help [IFAD] teams to become behavioural science champions, map potential behavioural barriers, and has a potential to increase IFAD effectiveness "*

### **Rosamaria Dasso**

**Behavioural Insights and Knowledge Expert, Latin America and the Caribbean Division, IFAD**



*For the first time in IFAD's portfolio in the Philippines there is going to be a project that has an entirely dedicated component only for land issues based on LandMonitor's recommendations*

### **Michelle Calcatelli**

**Resource Mobilization and Partnerships, International Land Coalition**

*There are two things I can say with absolute confidence about private-public partnerships for innovation: one, they are complex and require constant nurturing and two, they require a large host of willing, obsessive even, innovationists; people who believe that a single innovation can make a difference in this world.*

### **Marc De Sousa**

**Lead Regional Technical Specialist, Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division, IFAD**



*With GeoScan, we introduced a new way for geographic targeting in IFAD [...]. Our lesson learned is we took a [systemic] approach, considering not only technology and data, but also governance, leadership, standards, security, and also capacity building.*

### **Lyubomir Filipov**

**GIS Consultant, Information and Communications Technology Division, IFAD**





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## INNOVATING FOR WELL-BEING: EXPLORING THE LATEST INDICATORS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

This session delved into the latest development in terms of indicators for Indigenous Peoples and explored how we can leverage this knowledge across IFAD's diverse portfolio, and beyond. The indicators of Indigenous Peoples are a vital tool to capture the multifaceted dimensions of well-being among Indigenous Peoples and safeguard their rights. The panellists shared their experience in developing indicator frameworks for Indigenous Peoples, the challenges in developing and monitoring the indicators, and how to co-create indicators and data to inform policy processes such as the Coalition on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems.



*"To develop indicators that are relevant for Indigenous Peoples, we needed to follow best practices, with a core internalisation of a human rights-based approach and ensure that Indigenous Peoples as right holders lead the process in every stage."*

**David Berger**  
Advisor on data generation and analysis  
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

## COLLABORATE TO INNOVATE AND IMPACT AT SYSTEMIC LEVEL

In this session, the speakers argued on why strategic collaborations represent the key to a sustainable future, exploring three models of innovation management by showcasing Food CLIC, Coopen, and Federated Innovation.



*"Innovation and sustainability in the agri-food sector are indeed the real keys, the turning point for humans and the Earth. Collaborative innovation involving and empowering rural people and entire value chains, providing new tools and solutions while ensuring a solid infrastructure, could be the bedrock upon which we could build a solid future."*

**Giacomo Cavalli**  
Relationship Manager, Cariplo Factory





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## COFFEE WITH THE PRESS PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT AND SCALABILITY

This open doors session enabled journalists and speakers to interact to discuss the role of partnerships in financing and scaling up innovation.

*"In a world of ever-increasing climate variability and weather extremes Earth Observation can provide timely information to manage better scarce resources like water or respond to floods and heatwaves. The partnership between ESA and IFAD allows to align development financing instruments with the latest space technology to adapt to climate change and support the green transition worldwide."*

**Benjamin Koetz**

**Head of Sustainable Initiatives Office, European Space Agency**



*"Generation Z and Generation Alpha are the most aware about how to tackle climate change, global change, and food security. So, what can we do? We need to remove the barriers."*

**Pierfrancesco Torrisi**

**Founder and Head of Partnerships, Global Action, Italy**





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## CLOSING REMARKS

In the final session, panellists recalled the different innovative approaches presented throughout the day, pointing out that innovation is happening everywhere, and that many efforts are needed to make sure that all the information, evidence and experience collected are well managed. The importance of strategic partnerships among UN agencies and other organisations in scaling up innovation was also highlighted, as well as the key role played by science and technology to achieve better production, nutrition and life for all of us, thus aligning to the Sustainable Development Goals.



*"Innovation is more than creating ground-breaking technologies. It's also about fostering an environment that encourages creative thinking, collaboration and the freedom to experiment. Risk-taking is becoming an integral part of IFAD's DNA. We aim to create safe spaces, such as the IFAD Innovation Challenge, that incentivize teams to learn, explore and develop ideas freely. Not every idea will succeed. But we can learn from setbacks and failures as they plant the seeds for future success."*

**Guoqi Wu**

**Associate Vice-President, Corporate Services Department, IFAD**

*"It is great to see how IFAD is mainstreaming innovation across its practices ensuring that combining strengths you can do a lot more. At CGIAR we are here to work with, for and through partners, overcoming hierarchy and encouraging South-South collaboration. We need to learn how to embed ourselves better into the territorial ecosystems to understand how capacities work better to communities and youth to upscale."*



**Juan Lucas Restrepo**

**Global Director, Partnerships & Advocacy, CGIAR  
Director General, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT**

*"At FAO we are committed to harness the power of innovation to address the complex and interconnected challenges that are facing rural communities, especially small-scale producers, indigenous people, women, youth and other underrepresented actors of the agro food system. Because of the complexity of these challenges, transformative partnerships and coalitions of development partners are key to accelerate and scale needed to have impact. It is nice to see IFAD, WFP and FAO coming together and sharing their experiences and looking for opportunities to work together."*



**Ismahane Elouafi**

**Chief Scientist, FAO**