



Date
10 February 2026

Time
10.30–12.30

Info
Plenary Hall, open to all delegates

Moderator
Melissa Bell
Senior International
Correspondent, CNN

CENTRE STAGE EVENT

Young Entrepreneurs at the Heart of Transformation: From Vision to Impact

Youth entrepreneurship is emerging as a driving force in revitalizing rural economies and food systems, particularly in developing countries where demographic shifts and unemployment remain pressing challenges. Rural youth face structural barriers such as limited access to finance, markets, and support systems, yet they also bring innovation, energy, and digital skills that can accelerate transformation in agriculture and food value chains. Scaling catalytic investments in youth-led agri-food enterprises has the potential to create quality jobs and improve the livelihoods for millions of rural men and women.

Event Highlights

This session will highlight opportunities for investing in the next generation of rural youth and their enterprises. It will feature two Youth-Leader dialogues between senior policy makers, business leaders and inspiring young entrepreneurs to showcase success stories and discuss strategies to overcome barriers, and present Calls to Action developed by youth to spur rural youth employment and entrepreneurship, and enhance food security, economic growth and stability.

Panellists

High-level speakers

- Alvaro Lario, President of IFAD
- Tony O. Elumelu, Group Chair, Heirs Holdings and United Bank for Africa, and Founder, Tony Elumelu Foundation
- Johann Saathoff, Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany
- Juan Antonio Rivas, Senior Vice President and Global Head – Sustainable Business Development, Olam Food Ingredients (OFI)

Young Entrepreneurs

- Ms Cecilia Sejekam Wajai, Administrative Manager of the Bosque de las Nuwas Association, Perú
- Ms Clara Kamlomo, Amazing B Projects Founder, Lilongwe, Malawi
- Ms Didiki Fanai, Manager, Dairei Banana Food Processing, Khumtung, India
- Mr Hubert Stephy Tchuigoua, Founder of Family Green Corporation, Cameroon
- Ms Lakmini Weerakkody, Founder and Managing Director, Lak Nature International, Sri Lanka
- Mr Mamadou Diop, Programme Officer, Youth, Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux – CNCR, Senegal
- Mr Morgan Mwamuye, Bahari Haven Founder, Kenya
- Ms Sabrina Ounis Faiza, Founder and Manager of Desert Fish, Algeria
- Ms Sara Perez, Secretary of the Cooprobaloque Oversight Committee, as part of the Inclusive and Resilient ProRural programme, Dominican Republic

Pre-Governing Council Youth Consultation

In the lead-up to the Governing Council a Youth Consultation was organized on 21 January 2026 to gather youth perspectives and inform the development of key priorities for youth and Calls to Action to be shared with IFAD and its Member States during the Governing Council. The consultation involved over 50 youth leaders and representatives from youth-led and youth-serving organizations, including IFAD's Rural Youth Alliances, WFF Youth Policy Board members, YPARD, WFO, GYBN, YOUNGO, GIYC, and CSAYN, IPAF and FAFO.¹

The themes discussed during the Youth Consultation and around which Calls to Action were developed include: (i) *Decent Employment and Opportunity in Agrifood Systems*; (ii) *Youth Entrepreneurship, Finance and Ecosystems*; (iii) *Access to Land, Resources, Assets and Infrastructure*; (iv) *Skills, Innovation & Digital Transformation*; (v) *Youth Agency, Representation & Policy influence*; and (vi) *Climate Resilience, Sustainability & Youth-led Innovation*.

¹ IFAD's Rural Youth Alliances, World Food Forum (WFF) Youth Policy Board members, World Farmers' Organisation (WFO), Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), Official Children and Youth Constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (YOUNGO), Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), Global Youth Indigenous Caucus (GIYC), Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network (CSAYN), Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) and the Steering Committee of the IFAD Farmers' Forum (FAFO).