GLOBAL FOOD TALKS

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GLOBAL FOOD WEEK 2025

الأسـبـــوع الـعـالـمـي لـلـغـذاء

21-23 OCTOBER
ADNEC CENTRE ABU DHABI

ABU DHABI INTERNATIONAL FOOD EXHIBITION

ABU DHABI DATE PALM EXHIBITION

ABU DHABI COFFEE HUB

AGRITECH

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POST-EVENT REPORT 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Food Talks (GFT) represent a flagship dialogue platform under the umbrella of the Global Food Week (GFW) — an international gathering dedicated to advancing transformative action across the global food ecosystem. Convened in Abu Dhabi under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister, and Chairman of the Presidential Court, GFW embodies the UAE's vision of positioning itself as a global hub for sustainable food security and innovation.

The Global Food Talks serve as the intellectual nucleus of Global Food Week, providing a strategic platform for policymakers, industry leaders, innovators, and experts to exchange perspectives and forge collaborative frameworks that shape the future of food systems. The sessions are structured around three principal pillars:

Food Security and Resilience – examining global strategies, cross-border collaborations, and policies that enhance food system adaptability and ensure supply chain continuity.

Innovation and Technology – spotlighting advancements in AgriTech, biotechnology, and alternative proteins that are redefining production efficiency, food quality, and sustainability.

Sustainability and Impact – highlighting global best practices, partnerships, and community-led initiatives that drive measurable environmental stewardship and social value creation.

Through high-level discussions and policy-driven engagement, the Global Food Talks bridge the gap between vision and implementation. Delegates gain access to actionable insights on emerging technologies, investment opportunities, and policy mechanisms that underpin resilient and inclusive food systems.

Beyond its role as a dialogue forum, GFT functions as a catalyst for global collaboration, connecting government agencies, private enterprises, research institutions, and development organizations. It encourages multi-stakeholder engagement that translates commitments into tangible outcomes aligned with the principles of sustainability, innovation, and equity.

UAE MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP

Dr Loubna Zaitouni
Senior Legal Affairs Specialist
Ministry of Economy and Tourism, (UAE)

H.E. Dr Abdulla Humaid Saif Al Jarwan
Chairman, Department of Energy, (UAE)

H.E. Dr Amna bint Abdullah Al Dahak
Minister of Climate Change and Environment, (UAE)

Maryam Al Mualla
Head of Project Development
Ministry of Economy and Tourism, (UAE)

H.E. Dr Farah Al Zarooni
Assistant Undersecretary for Standards and Regulations Sector, Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology, (UAE)

KEY ORGANISATIONAL PARTICIPATION

هيئة أبوظبي للزراعة والسلامة الغذائية
ABU DHABI AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Dr Tareq Ahmed Mohamed Al Ameri, Acting Director General, opened GFT with a keynote on the Emirate's agricultural modernisation agenda. ADAFSA showcased its integrated approach to food security and innovation through multiple sessions:

Dr Mohammed Aman Mulki shared ADAFSA's research on climate-smart agriculture and molecular breeding.

Khamis Al Shamsi presented a fireside chat on the Alternative National Service Programme for the Food Security Sector, demonstrating the Authority's crisis-preparedness initiatives.

Asma Abdi Mohamed Shah highlighted international cooperation for livestock health as Head of the WOAH Collaborating Centre for Quality Management.

ADAFSA scientists Dr Saad Al Masari, Dr Ihsan Juma, and Dr Mohammed Gamal contributed to panels on honeybee development and precision nutrition, showcasing UAE expertise in applied agricultural research.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

FAO served as a strategic partner for Global Food Week 2025, marking its 80th anniversary through high-level engagement at the Global Food Talks.

Dr Ahmad Mukhtar, FAO Representative Ad Interim to the UAE, delivered the Opening Keynote, outlining FAO's priorities in sustainable food systems, data-driven policymaking, and climate-smart agriculture. He also moderated the panel "Power Plays: Venture Capital vs Sovereign Funds in Agri-Food Investment," highlighting finance and innovation in agricultural resilience.

FAO's technical officers — Dr Markos Tibbo and Dr Michela Morese — participated in panels on livestock health, climate adaptation, and sustainability, reinforcing FAO's leadership in science-based policy support and international collaboration.

مكتب أبوظبي للاستثمار
ABU DHABI INVESTMENT OFFICE

Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO)
ADIO played a strategic role in showcasing the Emirate's investment framework for agri-food innovation. During the session "Plate to Prosperity — The Food Sector's Role in Economic and National Security," Mohamed Ali Al Kamali, Chief of Trade and Industry, outlined how ADIO's AgriFood Growth and Water Abundance (AGWA) cluster supports food security through capital mobilisation and technology adoption. ADIO also supported the Proteins Alternative (PALT) initiative to accelerate regional innovation in sustainable protein production.

ADNEC مجموعة GROUP

ADNEC Group organised Global Food Week 2025 in strategic partnership with ADAFSA. Its role extended beyond logistics to curating a comprehensive ecosystem where policy, innovation, and trade intersect. The company oversaw the expansion of international delegations, sectoral pavilions, and business-to-government matchmaking platforms that anchored the Week's success. Through its organisation, ADNEC cemented Abu Dhabi's status as a global centre for food-system transformation.

UAE FOOD & BEVERAGE BUSINESS GROUP
Inspiring Sustainable Wellbeing

UAE Food & Beverage Manufacturers Group (F&B Group)

Serving as the Knowledge Partner for the Global Food Talks, the UAE F&B Business Group played a defining role in curating the event's thematic direction, ensuring that discussions reflected the most pressing challenges and opportunities across the global food value chain.

WELCOME ADDRESS

H.E. Dr. Amna bint Abdullah Al Dahak
Minister of Climate Change and Environment, UAE.

H.E. Dr. Amna bint Abdullah Al Dahak opened the Global Food Talks with a forward-looking address that connected the UAE's traditions of hospitality and stewardship with its role as a global advocate for sustainable food systems. Speaking before delegates from 75 countries, she underlined that food security is inseparable from environmental stability, innovation, and shared accountability.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Positioning the UAE as a Catalyst for Sustainability

Dr. Al Dahak noted that hosting Global Food Week shortly after the World Conservation Congress reflects Abu Dhabi's emergence as a hub for global sustainability dialogue.

She stressed that food security lies at the convergence of climate change, supply-chain fragility, and economic volatility, requiring integrated, science-based responses.

Innovation and Local Capacity as the Core of Food Resilience
She highlighted the UAE's strategy to harness innovation and technology in addressing agricultural challenges. Initiatives such as the National Agriculture Centre and the UAE Agricultural Exhibition in Al Ain were cited as practical measures to strengthen local production, raise efficiency, and enhance the market presence of Emirati produce. These efforts link local empowerment with global collaboration to build long-term resilience.

Integration and Collaboration as Policy Principles
The Minister described the UAE's model as one built on integration — uniting policy, enterprise, and community participation. Global Food Week, she noted, exemplifies this by translating dialogue into coordinated action. Food security, she said, must emerge from "collaborative innovation" that connects research, investment, and governance.

> "We cannot speak of a sustainable future without sustainable food security and we cannot secure-food without protecting our resources and our planet."

WELCOME NOTE

H.E. Dr. Abdulla Humaid Saif Al Jarwan
Chairman, Department of Energy, UAE.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Dr. Abdulla Humaid Saif Al Jarwan outlined the fundamental interdependence between energy, water, and food systems — a theme that has become central to the UAE's sustainable development strategy. Delivering the Welcome Note for the Global Food Talks, he emphasized that addressing global food security requires an integrated approach to managing resources, driven by data, innovation, and shared governance.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The Energy–Water–Food Nexus

Dr. Al Jarwan grounded his remarks in a simple but powerful observation

No food security without water, and no water without energy.

He described the food–energy–water relationship as a single, interdependent system that demands unified planning and governance.

Citing projections that over 30 percent of the world's population currently lives in water-scarce regions — a figure that could rise to 40 percent by 2030 — he stressed the urgency of coordinated action across sectors.

Integrated Resource Management and Abu Dhabi's Leadership

He outlined Abu Dhabi's Integrated Water Strategy, built on three pillars

Supply Security: ensuring resilient water access through investment in sustainable infrastructure.

Efficiency of Use: promoting modern irrigation and reduced waste.

Economic Viability: aligning resource management with cost effectiveness and environmental outcomes. Dr. Al Jarwan highlighted that the Department of Energy works in close coordination with the Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA) to ensure that energy, water, and food policies are designed and implemented together under a unified framework.

Innovations Driving Efficiency

He presented tangible examples of Abu Dhabi's technological innovation:

Mobile desalination plants and modern irrigation networks that reduce losses and improve output.

Recycled-water systems that channel treated water into agriculture.
Solar-powered model farms integrating smart systems for productivity and sustainability.

Dr. Al Jarwan also introduced the "EDWE" platform, an AI-powered monitoring and advisory tool developed by the Department of Energy.

Using satellite imagery and ground sensors, it provides real-time data on soil moisture and vegetation to optimize irrigation decisions.

The platform has already delivered more than 10 percent savings in both water and operational costs, supporting the UAE's broader food-security objectives.

Concluding his address, he urged governments, international organisations, the private sector, and civil society to align efforts around three shared priorities: Expanding the use of data and artificial intelligence in food–energy–water management.

Doubling water-use efficiency through smart irrigation and recycling.
Scaling investment in clean technologies and renewable energy solutions that reinforce agricultural productivity.

OPENING ADDRESS

Dr. Tareq Ahmed Mohamed Al Ameri
Acting Director General, Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA), UAE

Dr. Tareq Ahmed Mohamed Al Ameri opened the Global Food Talks by framing them as a working platform where decision-makers, business leaders, researchers, and innovators can jointly shape the future of food systems. He underscored Abu Dhabi's growing role as an international center for food-system innovation and sustainability, extending appreciation to the UAE leadership for its vision in advancing global food security.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

A Platform for Action, Not Ceremony

Dr. Al Ameri positioned the Global Food Talks as more than an annual gathering a space for practical collaboration between government, academia, and the private sector.

He noted that the global food system faces converging pressures from climate change, population growth, and resource constraints, making this exchange of expertise and best practices critical to achieving lasting resilience.

Abu Dhabi's Role in Global Food Governance

He highlighted Abu Dhabi's emergence as a hub for agrifood policy and innovation, crediting the UAE's leadership — particularly the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan — for providing the political and institutional backing that enables progress. The emirate's expanding research base, investment climate, and regulatory clarity, he said, make it a model for how cities can lead the transition toward sustainable food production.

The Private Sector as a Strategic Partner

Dr. Al Ameri emphasized that the private sector is not a beneficiary but a cornerstone of food security. Companies involved in production, logistics, and technology bring both capacity and expertise essential to building efficient, adaptable supply chains. He called for stronger partnerships that mobilize private investment and translate innovation into measurable results for food sustainability.

Innovation, Policy, and Balance

He explained that ADAFSA's collaboration with ADNEC Group in organizing Global Food Week reflects the authority's intent to connect policy frameworks with market realities. By sharing research outcomes, emerging technologies, and operational insights, the Talks aim to advance competitiveness while preserving natural resources — a balance he described as essential to long-term food security.

OPENING KEYNOTE

Dr. Ahmad Mukhtar
FAO Representative ad interim to
the United Arab Emirates

Dr. Ahmad Mukhtar opened his address on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) with gratitude to MOCCAE, ADAFSA, and ADNEC Group for convening Global Food Talks 2025.

Moving away from statistics, he delivered a reflective and compelling call for renewal in global food systems — one grounded in science, solidarity, and shared human purpose.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

A Moment of Reckoning and Renewal

Dr. Mukhtar described today's food systems as standing **"at the crossroads where the old rhythms of agriculture meet the tremors of climate change, conflict, and consumption."**

Climate extremes, supply-chain shocks, and unsustainable production models, he noted, have destabilized global food supply. Yet he framed this as a moment of possibility - an opportunity for renewal led by regions that have turned adversity into innovation, such as the UAE and the wider GCC.

UAE and GCC as Models of Transformation

He cited the UAE's journey toward food sovereignty as a case study in turning constraints into catalysts. Through vertical farming, AI-powered forecasting, and investment in alternative proteins, the UAE has demonstrated that innovation can flourish even in arid conditions. Across the GCC, examples such as Qatar's hydroponic expansion, Oman's aquaculture programs, and Kuwait's food-waste reduction initiatives illustrate a regional "tapestry of resilience" woven from technology, policy, and tradition.

FAO's 80-Year Legacy and Future Agenda

Marking FAO's 80th anniversary, Dr. Mukhtar described the organization's evolution as "a sentinel upon the ramparts of hunger," committed to ensuring that no child sleeps unfed. He emphasized FAO's dual mission — supporting nations in policy development and field implementation — and highlighted new partnerships with the UAE to establish a Centre of Excellence for Agri-Food Systems Transformation. The center will provide analytical tools, share best practices, and create a collaborative innovation space for both public and private sectors.

Principles for the Future of Food Systems

In closing, Dr. Mukhtar distilled his message into five guiding principles:

Food security is not a privilege but a promise that must reach every farmer, child, and ecosystem.

Invest in Agri-Tech for planetary peace, not only for profit.

Advance nutrition governance as a foundation of human dignity.

Build circular food systems where waste becomes valuable and scarcity drives innovation.

Honor the soil beneath our feet - as every sustainable decision begins with respect for natural resources.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Farming on the Frontlines

Implementing Climate-Smart Agriculture Now

SESSION OVERVIEW

The opening panel explored the transformation of agriculture under the pressures of climate volatility, water scarcity, and population growth. Industry and institutional leaders outlined how the shift toward climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is no longer conceptual it is a practical, data-driven framework for survival. The discussion highlighted irrigation innovation, regenerative practices, advanced genetics, vertical farming, and inclusive policy reform as the foundations of a resilient food future.

MODERATOR

Rowdha Alsayegh
Founder and Creative Director, Rowdha SAY

SPEAKERS

Arnoud van den Berg
Group CEO, Al Dahra Group

Hassan Halawy, CEO, Elite Agro

Dr. Mohammed Aman Mulki
Molecular Breeding, ADAFSA

Tristan Fischer, CEO, Fischer Farming, UK

Michela Morese, Office of Climate Change Biodiversity and Environment, FAO, Italy

CORE INSIGHTS

Precision irrigation, soil regeneration, and data analytics are the key levers of resilience in arid regions.

Scaling CSA depends on clear policy signals, modern regulation for new crop technologies, and accessible finance.

Collaboration - between science, policy, and farming communities-is the catalyst for sustainable productivity.

Global climate goals are unattainable without agri food solutions

Michela Morese
(Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment, FAO, Italy)

Climate change has made farming less predictable. Irrigation remains our strongest hedge against uncertainty and our tool for higher yields without expanding farmland

Arnoud van den Berg
(Group CEO, Al Dahra Group)

Regenerative and no-till practices are not just environmental choices they are economic ones. They protect the soil, cut costs, and strengthen productivity for generations

Hassan Halawy
(CEO, Elite Agro)

We can now predict promising drought- and heat-tolerant varieties before they reach the field — but innovation must move faster than regulation

Dr. Mohammed Aman Mulki
Molecular Breeding, ADAFSA

Vertical farming complements traditional agriculture it's about resilience, not replacement

Tristan Fischer
CEO, Fischer Farming, UK

Panel Discussion:

PANEL DISCUSSION

From Global to Local

How Multinationals Shape Impact Through Localization and Collaboration

SESSION OVERVIEW

This panel examined how global companies are translating international sustainability frameworks into local impact within the UAE's food ecosystem. Drawing on experiences from both industry and government, the discussion emphasized that true localization means partnership—between multinational corporations, policymakers, academia, and SMEs—to align competitiveness with national sustainability priorities.

MODERATOR

Dina Mongy
Director of Corporate Affairs
and Sustainability, Nestlé MENA

SPEAKERS

Maryam AlMualla
Head of Section Project Development
New Economy, Ministry of Economy and Tourism

Leila Naguib Alsayegh
Corporate Affairs Manager, Mars
zvvcv vcvvFF

CORE INSIGHTS

Localization is not a scaling down of global strategies but the intelligent adaptation of global standards to local needs.

Government and industry collaboration in the UAE operates through a "bottom-up" model- where regulators enable, rather than dictate, innovation.

Data transparency, shared accountability, and early engagement between stakeholders are

the foundations of effective public–private cooperation.

The UAE Food Cluster serves as a working model for aligning trade, innovation, and sustainability under a unified national vision.

Multinationals are essential partners in the UAE's food ecosystem. They bring the expertise and global perspective needed for knowledge transfer and innovation

Maryam AlMualla
Ministry of Economy & Tourism

Our Mars Sustainable Generation Plan aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, but accountability starts locally. Every market must translate global principles into measurable impact

Leila Naguib
Mars

FIRESIDE CHAT

ADAFSA's Alternative National Service Program for the Food Security Sector

SESSION OVERVIEW

This fireside chat detailed how ADAFSA's Alternative National Service Program professionalizes civilian readiness for food security. Launched to ensure business continuity in critical food and logistics facilities, the program has evolved from an Abu Dhabi initiative into a nationwide system that trains and deploys Emirati conscripts across strategic supply chains, production sites, and logistics nodes.

MODERATOR
Shaikhah Mohamed Alabdouli
Strategy & Policies, Communications and Community Engagement, ADAFSA

SPEAKERS
Khamis Alshamsi
Director, Alternative National Service Programs Development, ADAFSA

PROGRAM MILESTONES

Origin & mandate: Established in 2017 by Decision No. 35 to perform alternative national service at the Abu Dhabi Food Security Center (now ADAFSA).

Scale-up: Expanded from ~8 partners / ~16 sites to ~28 partners across all emirates; conscripts active at training sites nationwide.

Coverage: Full operational coverage of strategic stock commodities and associated logistics companies.

Human capital: >2,300 conscripts qualified for vital roles in food security and logistics.

Domains added: Integration of crop and livestock production sites; conscripts now embedded in farms and processing facilities.

Accreditation: Official accreditation secured for a new Professional Diploma in Agriculture & Food Safety (first-of-its-kind globally within alternative service); pilot roll-out next cycle.

Digital backbone: Operations run on the Jahiziya readiness platform with process automation and digitized personnel data.

IMPACT AND CASE STUDIES

Continuity under stress: At Al Dahra (KIZAD) rice mill, conscripts sustained ~70% of plant operations during a continuity exercise; several process improvements originated from conscript proposals.

Technical problem-solving: A conscript (Dr. Mohammed Al Darmaki) resolved a UHT pasteurization line failure at Al Ain Farms without OEM intervention—saving time and significant cost; formally recognized by the company.

Process efficiency: During a final exercise at DP World, a conscript redesigned spare-parts procurement and handling, improving turnaround and reducing spend.

GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIPS

Co-designed with the National Service & Reserve Authority; built through structured partnerships with private operators of

strategic stocks and logistics. International benchmarking with the USA, UK, and Canada informs SOPs and continuity doctrine.

WHY IT MATTERS

The program converts national service into a specialized civilian capability that safeguards food security, builds a skilled workforce, and gives operators a reliable continuity reserve. Its blend of training, accreditation, digital readiness, and private-sector embedding is a replicable model for other essential sectors.

Moderator

Shaikhah Mohamed Alabdouli
Strategy & Policies, Communications and Community Engagement, ADAFSA

Khamis Alshamsi
Director, Alternative National Service Programs Development
ADAFSA

ROADMAP 2026–2028

2026

First national simulation exercise for alternative service; deeper automation and AI analytics for conscript data and comms.

2027

Full deployment of e-learning training units (four functional curricula) via Jahiziya; Professional Diploma recognized as a program output feeding skilled nationals into critical facilities.

2028

Sectoral expansion beyond strategic stocks to broader supply-chain segments, aiming for end-to-end logistics coverage.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Power Plays

Venture Capital vs Sovereign Funds in Agri-Food Investment

SESSION OVERVIEW

The panel examined how different capital types shape agri-food innovation and resilience. Venture capital (VC) brings speed and risk appetite to early technologies; sovereign funds (SWFs) provide patient scale for national priorities.

The discussion focused on enabling policy, blended finance, technical assistance, and the "triple-helix" model (government–academia–industry) to move ideas from pilot to bankable operations.

MODERATOR

Dr. Ahmad Mukhtar
FAO Representative ad interim to the UAE

SPEAKERS

H.E. Dr. Obaid Al Zaabi
Board Chairman, AAAID

Søren Nørrelund Kannik-Marquardsen
Minister Counsellor, Food/Agriculture/Fisheries, Royal Danish Consulate General)

Samer Muhammed Kirresh
Economic Advisor & Senior Investment Specialist, ADAFSA)

CORE INSIGHTS

VC vs SWF is not a contest but a capital stack: VC de-risks early innovation; SWFs scale proven models aligned to food-security goals.

Policy clarity and PPP frameworks unlock both VC and SWF: predictable licensing, transparent pipelines, and Abu Dhabi's PPP Law No. 2 of 2019 were cited as anchors.

Blended finance (guarantees, co-investment, concessional layers) and data-driven impact metrics are critical for bankability and crowding-in private capital.

Technical assistance must travel with money: incubation, farmer capability, and on-the-ground support reduce failure rates, especially beyond greenfield megaprojects.

Triple-helix ecosystems (e.g., Denmark's cluster model) shorten time from lab to market; different capital types enter at different stages.

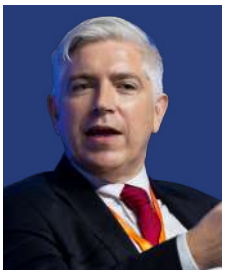
Financial inclusion for farmers/startups requires new instruments (digital credit, guarantees) so capital can reach viable but collateral-poor borrowers.

VC speaks innovation and speed; sovereign investors seek impact and alignment with national priorities. A clear, predictable environment attracts both

Samer Muhammed Kirresh
ADAFSA

Agriculture finance is specialized finance. Capital must be paired with technical assistance and on-the-ground capability—or greenfields fail

H.E. Dr. Obaid Al Zaabi
AAAID



If the technology is bankable, investment follows. Denmark's triple helix government,academia, industry was built to make it bankable

Søren N. Kannik Marquardsen
Royal Danish Consulate General

PANEL DISCUSSION

Strengthening Livestock Health and Food Security through International Collaboration among Collaborating and Reference Centres

SESSION OVERVIEW

The panel showed how cross-border networks of collaborating centres, reference laboratories, and research institutes convert science into frontline animal-health action: faster diagnosis, harmonized surveillance, emergency response, and policies that protect livestock, public health, and food security.

Concrete case studies covered camel disease investigation, South–South vaccine production for PPR, pandemic-ready respiratory networks, and region–Africa partnerships focused on transboundary risks.

MODERATOR

Dr. Tariq Taha
Technical Officer, WOAH

SPEAKERS

Asma Abdi Mohamed Shah
Head, WOAH Collaborating Centre for Quality Management, ADAFSA, (Specialist, ADAFSA)

Dr. Markos Tibbo
Senior Livestock Development Officer
FAO Subregional Office for GCC & Yemen

Dr. Bernard Faye
Emeritus Scientist, CIRAD; International Camel Expert

Dr. Sophie von Dobschütz
Team Lead, Global COVID-19 & Other Coronaviruses Programme, WHO

CORE INSIGHTS

Networks make capacity real: pairing field investigation with lab confirmation, joint publications, and trained personnel.

South–South & triangular cooperation move countries from importing solutions to producing them (e.g., vaccines), with spillovers to neighbours.

One Health is operational: influenza, MERS, and SARS-CoV-2 platforms already knit human–animal–environment data into decisions.

Camels and trade corridors are high-mobility systems; collaboration with Horn/West Africa labs is essential for the Gulf's risk management.

Data sharing is the currency: without timely sequences and metadata, global risk assessment and vaccine updating falter.

MODELS HIGHLIGHTED

Field-to-lab camel investigations (ADAFSA with Ethiopia) linking epidemiology, diagnostics, and publication.

South–South vaccine production playbook (FAO–CIRAD–Pakistan → Sudan) to localize supply for eradication targets (PPR).

Respiratory pathogen networks (WHO GISRS/OFFLU/COVID-NET) as standing One-Health infrastructure for early warning, diagnostics, and vaccine/therapeutic updates.

Regional camel health platform ("Cabinet" network): 9 countries; >500 trainees; shared training modules and a parasitology diagnostic kit; current focus on cross-border camel movement.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Formalize South–South twinning with Horn/West Africa labs for camel & small-ruminant diseases (shared SOPs, ring trials, joint missions).

Boost sequence/data sharing (timeliness, metadata standards) from animal and wastewater surveillance to re-power global assessments.

Exercise cross-sector simulations (WOAH–FAO–WHO) for camel/RVF/PPR scenarios tied to trade routes and ports.

Accredit and scale training: expand ADAFSA's modules (quality systems, biosafety, molecular diagnostics) across GCC labs; measure competency uptake.

Policy hooks: pre-agreed sample sharing & IP frameworks, and fast-track import permits for reference reagents to cut outbreak turnaround times.

FAO designates reference centres to translate science to policy to practice and South-South cooperation is the engine

Dr. Markos Tibbo
FAO

Decades of the GISRS influenza network and OFFLU show how animal human collaboration guides vaccine strain selection and preparedness

Dr. Sophie von Dobschütz
WHO

International collaboration between collaborating centres and reference labs is central to global animal health—it's how knowledge, samples, and methods actually move

Asma Abdi Mohamed Shah
ADAFSA / WOAH CC

CIRAD's model is science only through partnership—our camel work exists because we work in-country

Dr. Bernard Faye
CIRAD

PANEL DISCUSSION

Using AI to Predict Supply & Demand Shocks

SESSION OVERVIEW

Predictive AI is shifting food systems from reactive firefighting to proactive planning.

Speakers showed how models fed by weather, crop, trade, logistics and consumer data are already cutting lead-times, waste and costs-while new UAE initiatives aim to make Abu Dhabi a global hub for AI-in-ag.

MODERATOR
Dr. Sami Carouba, Nikai Group

SPEAKERS
Josef Schmidhuber, Pure Harvest
Regina Schmidt, UN WFP
Fatema AlMulla, UAE Presidential Court
Hany Shalaby, Nestlé

WHAT STOOD OUT

Retail & logistics: AI ETAs, route re-planning and demand signals now guide inventory and transport—moving teams from "where is my cargo?" to "how do we pre-empt the delay?".

Controlled-environment ag: Data quality + retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) synthesize sector intel; multi-agent reinforcement learning is being tested to optimize climate set-points vs yield/energy/water.

Humanitarian ops: AI forecasting compresses crisis response from days to hours, improves demand accuracy and frees budget for beneficiaries.

UAE ecosystem: A dedicated Institute for AI in Agriculture at MBZUAI and a CGIAR AI Hub in Abu Dhabi will pair research (models, compute, governance) with productization for smallholders (e.g., Ag-LLM).

Scaling what already works: AIM for Scale packages proven tech (e.g., AI weather services) with finance, policy and delivery partners so tools reach farmers—not just pilots.

APPLICATIONS & RESULTS MENTIONED

WFP "SCOUT" platform:
>90% demand-forecast accuracy in pilots; response time reduced from ~1 week to hours; single-region savings ≈ US$2M (one commodity).

Nestlé GCC:
AI vessel/road ETA prediction, dynamic re-routing, temperature and driver-fatigue monitoring; AI demand sensing for weather-linked categories (ice cream vs hot drinks) and local tastes (e.g., flavor launches).

Pure Harvest:
RAG pipeline to mine industry feeds; yield-forecast LSTM/TFT models built on cleaned sensor/operations data; MARL exploration for climate-energy-water optimization.

UAE initiatives:
MBZUAI Institute for AI in Agriculture; CGIAR AI Hub (Abu Dhabi); Ag-LLM targeted for COP30; AIM for Scale innovation packages (incl. AI weather services) to reach smallholders at breadth.

ACTION POINTS

Invest in data pipelines (clean, labeled, shareable) before model shopping; quality data was the common success factor.

Pair forecasting + re-planning: link AI ETAs/demand to inventory policies, alternate routes, supplier switches and promo levers.

Build human-in-the-loop: growers, dispatchers and planners need interpretable scenarios (best/base/worst) not black boxes.

Localize last-mile delivery of insights: push advisories via channels farmers actually use (SMS/IVR/radio), in local languages and calendars.

Governance by design: model benchmarking, safety, bias checks and secure compute-baked into the UAE institute/CGIAR hub plans.

RAG lets us turn thousands of sector updates into due diligence intelligence-who's investing, where failures occur, and what's trending in controlled-environment agriculture

Josef Schmidhuber
Pure Harvest

We're building the Institute for AI in Agriculture at MBZUAI and hosting the CGIAR AI Hub in Abu Dhabi—research upstream, farmer-facing products downstream

Fatema AlMulla
UAE Presidential Court

We operate beyond human scale 120+ countries, 10,000 suppliers. AI turns scattered data into >90% demand forecast accuracy, scenario plans, and cut reaction time from a week to hours-saving millions we can redirect to people in need

Regina Schmidt
UN WFP

We moved from reactive tracking to predictive logistic AI flags delays and proposes alternate routes

Hany Shalaby
Nestlé

FIRESIDE CHAT

Edible Wraps & Compostable Packs

Reinventing Food Packaging

SESSION OVERVIEW

This fireside chat highlighted the urgent transformation of food packaging under sustainability mandates. With plastic bans advancing and climate goals tightening, innovators are reengineering packaging using natural, renewable, and compostable materials derived from crops, seaweed, and food waste. The conversation shed light on how Avani and others are creating scalable, plant-based alternatives—balancing performance, cost, and end-of-life sustainability.

MODERATOR

Meera Krishnadas
Head, Food Safety Audit Dept, SGS (UAE)

SPEAKERS

Peter Avram
CEO & Managing PartneAvani Middle East LLC (UAE)

KEY INSIGHTS

Evolution of Sustainable Materials

The packaging sector's shift began with bioplastics like PLA (corn or potato starch) and PHA (fermentation-based polymers), followed by bagasse (sugarcane residue), bamboo fiber, and PBAT blends. These materials are 99% compostable and generate 25–35% less CO_2 emissions than conventional plastics, without using fossil fuels.

Circular Design in Practice:

Avani's philosophy emphasizes responsible use over mass replacement. Rather than simply swapping plastic with bioplastic, the company helps clients reduce consumption—for instance, by promoting opt-in straws and lids, or sourcing sugarcane bagasse, which is nearly carbon neutral and biodegradable without leaving microplastics.

Compostability and Waste Segregation

True sustainability requires end-of-life planning. Home-compostable materials can join organic waste streams, while industrially compostable items need specialized facilities. Peter emphasized the need for cooperation between manufacturers, clients, and waste collection systems, ensuring compostables are properly handled and reused as resources.

Local Manufacturing & UAE Leadership

The UAE's proactive sustainability agenda—through plastic bag bans, upcoming restrictions on single-use items (effective Jan 1), and promotion of local production—is fostering new domestic capacity for eco-friendly packaging. Local manufacturing reduces import emissions, adds in-country value, and supports circular economy targets post-COP28.

Challenges and Greenwashing Risks

Despite progress, costs, limited composting infrastructure, and misleading claims remain

barriers. Avram cautioned against "greenwashing"-marketing non-certified plastics as "100% eco-friendly" or "recycled"-and urged adherence to certified compostability standards (EN 13432, ASTM D6400) and transparent labeling.

Edible Wraps — Innovation with Limits

Edible films made from seaweed, coffee husk, or cassava starch showcase creative progress but face scalability, hygiene, and storage constraints. They work well in niche contexts like cones or dry snack wraps but require strict food-grade environments, making them costly and climate-sensitive.

Emerging Focus Areas

Expanding industrial composting infrastructure across GCC nations.

Integrating compostable packaging streams with organic waste management systems.

Strengthening certification and traceability frameworks to eliminate misleading claims.

Promoting public awareness and corporate responsibility to ensure correct usage and disposal.

Encouraging home-compostable innovations and biopolymer blends suited for arid climates.

Sustainability in packaging isn't a material swap—it's a system transformation. Biopolymers like PLA, PHA, and bagasse are already viable, but their success hinges on shared accountability responsible design, local production, transparent labeling, and coordinated waste management. In the UAE and beyond, the shift toward truly circular packaging is accelerating, setting a regional example of how policy, innovation, and ethics can align to protect the planet

"Plastic is here to stay—it's how we use it that matters. We must use it wisely and ethically, not excessively."
Peter Avram CEO & Managing Partner
Avani Middle East LLC (UAE)

Moderator **Meera Krishnadas**
Head, Food Safety Audit Dept
SGS (UAE)

Peter Avram
CEO & Managing Partner
Avani Middle East LLC (UAE)

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Building Resilience in Food Manufacturing

In his keynote address, Saleh Lootah shared an insightful reflection on how the UAE's food manufacturing sector has evolved to become a model of resilience amid global turbulence. He began by recalling the disruptions that have defined recent years — from the COVID-19 pandemic and Red Sea logistics challenges to the Ukraine–Russia conflict - and how these events exposed vulnerabilities in global food systems. Despite such shocks, the UAE's food supply chain remained one of the least affected globally. This, he noted, was the result of strong leadership, strategic foresight, and well-established systems that anticipate risks before they arise. Lootah highlighted that the UAE's ability to respond quickly and effectively comes from a national culture of preparedness and collaboration.

He also underlined the nation's diversity and unity as key strengths. With over 200 nationalities living and working together, the UAE has built an ecosystem of shared ambition, trust, and innovation. Events such as Abu Dhabi Food Week and Gulfood were cited as evidence of the UAE's growing influence as a global meeting point for manufacturers, investors, and innovators in the food and beverage space.

A major part of the keynote focused on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA) — which he described as a vital tool for driving local manufacturing and exports. By enabling companies to produce in the UAE and access new global markets, CEPA serves as a catalyst for strengthening regional supply chains and attracting international investment. Lootah then outlined the goals of the Food Cluster Economy Initiative, launched by the Ministry of Economy, which represents a new model of partnership between government and the private sector

“Our leadership anticipates challenges and builds systems that can face tomorrow’s crises, today.”

SALEH LOOTAH
Chairman, UAE Food Cluster
and UAE F&B Business Group

The initiative focuses on three key objectives:

Making the UAE the preferred global hub for food manufacturing.

Encouraging investment and export growth from UAE-based companies.

Building a connected ecosystem that links farming, logistics, retail, banking, and policy.

He explained that the initiative’s first priority is to “fix the house from within” — by enhancing communication across the value chain, harmonizing regulations between Emirates, and nurturing local talent to lead the sector’s next stage of growth. Once internal systems are aligned, the UAE will strengthen its international presence by connecting with other global food clusters across Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

Closing his speech, Lootah expressed optimism about the road ahead. He emphasized that while transformation takes time, the momentum, synergy, and collaboration visible today mark the beginning of a new chapter for the UAE’s food manufacturing ecosystem — one defined by innovation, resilience, and global competitiveness.

FIRESIDE CHAT

Standard for a Sustainable Future

Shaping Global Food Systems Through Innovation and Regulation

SESSION OVERVIEW

The session brought together two distinguished Emirati voices to discuss how standards, regulation, and innovation are shaping the global food systems of tomorrow. Opening the dialogue, Rowdha Alsayegh emphasized the pride in seeing Emirati women like Dr. Farah AlZarooni represent the UAE internationally with such excellence and leadership.

Dr. AlZarooni began by reflecting on the UAE's growing global influence in the field of standardization, noting that the country's election to the board of international standardization organizations marks both an honor and a major responsibility. Representing the UAE on this global platform allows the nation to actively shape the dialogue around trade, safety, and sustainability standards—setting an example for the region.

She described standards as the "passport for goods," explaining that harmonized international regulations allow products to move seamlessly across borders without redundant certification or testing. By aligning with international systems—particularly through the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA)—the UAE enables faster trade, reduces cost barriers, and invites global investors to operate within its borders. This, she noted, not only benefits producers but strengthens the regulatory framework as a whole

Dr. AlZarooni also highlighted how international standards are vital to achieving sustainability goals. Frameworks such as ISO 14001 and other environmental management systems provide a roadmap for minimizing ecological impact, managing carbon footprints, and optimizing water use. By harmonizing sustainability standards globally, countries can act in alignment toward climate resilience and responsible production. Discussing advanced technology, she explained how AI, blockchain, and digital traceability tools are revolutionizing food safety and transparency. AI enables early detection of crop diseases, while blockchain creates trust and traceability from "feed to fork," ensuring every step of the value chain—from production to logistics—is monitored and verified in real time.

These technologies, she said, align perfectly with the UAE's vision under the Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology, which was deliberately founded to integrate innovation into every layer of policy and industry.

Addressing challenges, Dr. AlZarooni acknowledged that cost and resistance to change remain key obstacles to adopting international standards, particularly among small and medium enterprises (SMEs). However, she emphasized the ministry's "Open Door Strategy", which engages the private sector early in the regulatory process-turning them from regulation-takers into regulation-makers. This collaborative model ensures that new policies are practical, transparent, and mutually beneficial.

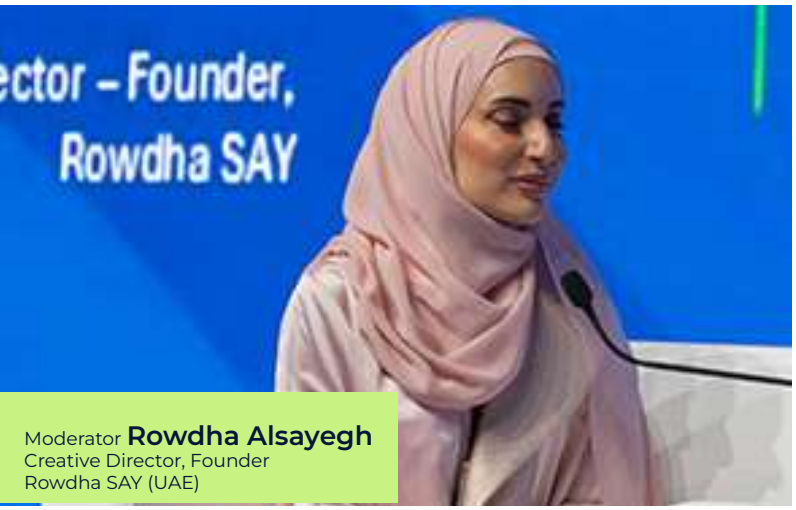
She also outlined the ministry's support mechanisms for SMEs, including public–private partnerships, capacity-building programs, and Green ICV incentives, which reward companies for sustainable practices.

The UAE's approach, she stressed, is not about enforcement alone but about enabling readiness—helping every stakeholder to align with global best practices at their own pace.

Looking ahead, Dr. AlZarooni described the future of global standards as "Smart X" — an era of machine-readable, transferable digital standards that will drastically reduce verification time and costs across industries by up to 70%. This initiative, being developed jointly by the ISO and IEC,

will reshape standardization by merging data-driven systems, IoT, and big data analytics.

"A standard is the passport for goods it allows products to move smoothly across borders and connect markets globally.



Moderator **Rowdha Alsayegh**
Creative Director, Founder
Rowdha SAY (UAE)

H.E. Dr. Farah AlZarooni
Assistant Undersecretary for the Standards and Regulations Sector Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology (UAE)

FIRESIDE CHAT

Data-Driven Delights

Turning Consumer Insights into Winning Products

SESSION OVERVIEW

The discussion centered on how data and consumer insights are transforming the way food companies innovate, connect with customers, and support national food security goals. Opening the conversation, Mariam Mualla framed data as “the new bridge of trust” between producers and consumers - a way to understand people’s evolving needs, lifestyles, and values at a deeper level.

MODERATOR

Mariam Mualla
Head of Project Development Section, New Economy Department, UAE Ministry of Economy and Tourism

SPEAKERS

Hassan Safi
Group Chief Executive Officer
Al Ain Farms Group (UAE)
Specialist, ADAFSA)

Hassan Safi began by recalling Al Ain Farms’ legacy - a company born from the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed to nourish the nation through quality and care. Today, he said, data continues to carry that same vision forward, allowing the company to listen more closely to consumers and respond to their needs with precision and empathy.

Explaining Al Ain Farms’ approach, Safi described a 360° consumer insight process that integrates multiple data sources — from macroeconomic trends and e-commerce analytics to retail feedback and consumer focus groups. This framework, known internally as Revenue Growth Management, connects value, price, and pack size to create products that align with both market demand and consumer emotion.

He illustrated this with the launch of the UAE’s first sugar-free, lactose-free Greek yogurt and sugar-free juice range, inspired by data showing a growing preference for guilt-free indulgence. By turning insight into action, these products became household favorites — proving that emotional understanding, backed by solid data, drives real business success.

Safi also spoke about how nostalgia and emotion play a central role in food decisions. The return of milk in glass bottles, despite higher costs and shorter shelf life, became a success because it evoked authenticity and trust among consumers. “Food,” he said, “is deeply personal — it’s about habits, memories, and the experiences people carry.”

When asked how Al Ain Farms balances data with intuition, he noted that data doesn’t always agree with itself, and sometimes instinct matters. A prime example was when sales data suggested discontinuing lactose-free milk — but a closer look revealed the issue wasn’t the product, but its visibility and timing. Once addressed, sales rebounded, proving that the key is not how much data you have, but how you interpret and act on it

The discussion also explored the intersection of data and sustainability. Safi emphasized that Al Ain Farms uses analytics to measure environmental impact and optimize operations. Their packaging sustainability matrix assesses the carbon footprint of every format, helping the company transition to recyclable materials like rPET without compromising quality. He also announced a new partnership with NAMA, a national initiative to halve food waste by 2030, under which Al Ain Farms will share data and co-develop strategies to reduce waste.

Looking to the future, Safi outlined how AI and predictive analytics will shape the next phase of food innovation. Al Ain Farms already uses predictive models within SAP to manage inventory and forecast demand, but the goal, he said, is to move from being reactive to proactive — anticipating shifts in consumer preference before they appear in sales data. He also highlighted collaboration with Khalifa University to bridge academia and industry, giving young innovators practical experience in solving real-world challenges through data and technology.

"Alternative proteins and lab-grown food won't replace what we have; they'll complement it. The goal is balance, not substitution."

Moderator **Maryam Al Mualla**
Head of Project Development Section
New Economy Department, UAE
Ministry of Economy and Tourism

Hassan Safi
Group Chief Executive Officer
Al Ain Farms Group, UAE

PANEL DISCUSSION

How AI is Cutting Food Waste Before It Starts

SESSION OVERVIEW

The session opened with the scale of the challenge:

an estimated 1.05 billion tons of food wasted annually worldwide, accounting for significant economic loss and 8–10% of global greenhouse-gas emissions, with 61% of waste in the UAE occurring at household level.

Against this backdrop, the panel examined how artificial intelligence can shift food systems from reactive loss management to proactive prevention across retail, foodservice, supply chains, and households.

MODERATOR

Angelo Djaffardjee
UAE Food & Beverage Manufacturers Group)

SPEAKERS

Dr. Loubna Zaitouni
Ministry of Economy & Tourism, UAE

Sam Clever
CEO, NOSTRA UAE

Bilal Kha
Partner, EY

From the technology perspective, the discussion emphasized that prevention begins with instrumentation. Networked IoT devices capturing temperature, humidity, stock movements, and kitchen process data create the foundation for AI-driven forecasting, shelf-life risk scoring, and dynamic menu or purchasing adjustments. Visual analytics—up to and including 3D digital twins of the value chain—were presented as practical tools for managers to identify loss hotspots and intervene in real time. Entry costs for mid-sized operations were presented as manageable, with rapid payback through reduced shrink and better alignment of procurement to demand.

On adoption, organizational factors were highlighted as the principal barrier: perceived complexity, capex concerns, and entrenched operating routines. The recommended approach was to deploy tightly scoped pilots at specific value-chain nodes (e.g., replenishment, markdowns, routing, production planning), measure results rigorously, then scale. Particular attention was given to forecasting during seasonal and event-driven peaks—such as Ramadan—where small accuracy gains materially reduce waste and cost.

The panel concluded with a pragmatic roadmap: (i) start with available data and a minimal sensor stack, (ii) implement pilots with clear waste and ROI metrics (kg/value diverted, CO_2 avoided, forecast accuracy, adoption rates), (iii) integrate redistribution pathways so near-expiry inventory is re-routed to charities or secondary uses before becoming waste, and (iv) pair business adoption with household-level behavior change through community programs and default-easy tools. The consensus was that AI already delivers measurable reductions; the imperative is rapid, coordinated scaling across enterprises and homes.

Households account for most waste; sustained reduction requires community nudges and simple defaults at home

Dr. Loubna Zaitouni
Ministry of Economy and Tourism, UAE)

AI turns previously invisible loss points into specific, real-time actions managers can take

Sam Clever
CEO, NOSTRA UAE

Adoption is a mindset shift. Prove value, earn trust, then scale

Bilal Khan
Partner, EY

PANEL DISCUSSION

Plate to Prosperity

The Food Sector's Role in Economic and National Security

SESSION OVERVIEW

The session framed food as strategic infrastructure—core to economic diversification, social stability, and national resilience.

The discussion focused on three levers: balancing local production with trade, mobilizing finance and intelligence for targeted investment, and embedding sustainability into growth.

MODERATOR

Robert Kupstas
Founder & CSO, Ocean Harvest

SPEAKERS

Jens Michel
CEO, AD Food Hub

Nadine Gbossa
Director of Food Systems Coordination, IFAD

Abhay Bhargava
Managing Director & Regional Leader
Frost & Sullivan Middle East

From a market-structure perspective, the UAE's high import dependence necessitates a dual track
expand competitive domestic output while maintaining efficient, transparent import routes. The AD Food Hub model—digitally native, logistics-integrated, and price/flow transparent—was highlighted as a route-to-market enabler that reduces spoilage, preserves nutritional value, and builds investor confidence through data visibility.

On financing and data, the panel underscored the value of "financial intelligence"
mapping where public and private capital actually flows across food systems versus stated priorities. This evidence base helps governments align budgets with goals (e.g., climate resilience, nutrition, SME upgrading) and gives investors clarity on risks, incentives, and national capabilities.

IFAD's work shows that youth- and SME-led agri-enterprises can capture a large share of growth if offered fair access to finance and markets, particularly in regions with abundant arable land.

For technology and sustainability, speakers converged on outcome-oriented innovation—digital traceability, cold-chain integrity, smart forecasting, circular solutions

(waste-to-feed/energy), and protected cultivation—paired with policy guardrails. Traceability mandates and common standards were cited as accelerants for accountability (emissions, labor, nutrition) and for scaling solutions that reduce loss across production, transport, and consumption.

The panel's operational takeaway:
build resilience by (i) instrumenting the chain (data, sensors, digital twins) to cut waste and cost; (ii) directing capital to high-impact nodes identified by transparent investment maps; (iii) institutionalizing mutual accountability so commercial ROI and public benefits (climate, jobs, food access) reinforce each other; and (iv) sustaining an import export balance that ensures access through shocks while domestic capacity scales.

Food security isn't autarky; it's assured access-through a balanced mix of competitive local supply and reliable trade

Jens Michel
CEO, AD Food Hub (UAE)

Technology must serve circular outcomes—maximizing nutrition while minimizing resources and waste

Abhay Bhargava
Managing Director & Regional Leader
Frost & Sullivan Middle East (UAE)

Map the money before moving it: financial intelligence shows whether investments match priorities like climate resilience and nutrition

Nadine Gbossa
Director of Food Systems Coordination, IFAD (Benin)

PANEL DISCUSSION

Sustaining the Buzz

UAE Efforts & Success Stories in Honeybee Development

SESSION OVERVIEW

The session highlighted how the UAE is building a resilient beekeeping ecosystem in a harsh desert climate-linking science, practice, and youth engagement to protect honeybee health and elevate local honey

MODERATOR

Dr. Fouad Lamghari
Fujairah Research Centre

SPEAKERS

Dr. Saad Al Masari, ADAFSA

Dr. Zuahira Mahara Al Naqbi
Youngest Emirati beekeeper

Dr. Ihsan Juma, ADAFSA

ADAFSA's decade-long research program (initiated in 2015) addressed the root causes of seasonal colony collapse: Varroa destructor pressure, Nosema, forage scarcity, extreme heat, and bee-eater predation.

The team pursued four parallel tracks: year-round husbandry and heat-stress protocols to reduce die-offs;

A structured breeding program and artificial insemination to establish locally adapted lines;

Identification and scheduling of UAE forage to bridge nectar gaps. Structured knowledge transfer to beekeepers through training and protocols.

Outcomes include dramatic improvements in colony survival and the dissemination of thousands of locally bred queens to practitioners

On genetics, researchers evaluated multiple Apis mellifera races and lines for suitability, then produced an "Emirati" line by controlled mating, prioritizing traits such as heat tolerance, productivity, and parasite resilience.

ADAFSA and national partners run hands-on workshops, register and mentor beekeepers, and standardize annual management calendars for the UAE's climatic rhythm.

Results are visible in competition success abroad and in improved local honey quality—particularly the region's prized sidr honey, which the panel noted compares favorably with global benchmarks.

Community and youth are the movement's engine. The Beekeepers Foundation's youth programs and international competitions are cultivating a new cohort of skilled, sustainability-minded beekeepers; Mahara Al Naqbi's early journey exemplifies this path from classroom training to productive hives.

Looking ahead, the UAE will host Apimondia 2027, offering a global platform to showcase arid-zone innovation, women and youth leadership, educational outreach, and desert-adapted science—positioning beekeeping as a contributor to biodiversity, pollination services, and national food security.

Resilience in our climate is a two part equation: adapted genetics and disciplined, season-specific management

Dr. Saad Al Masari

My first two hives became my first harvest. With my family's support, I learned, practiced, and fell in love with beekeeping

Mahara Al Naqbi

Ten years ago, colonies were failing twice a year; today our year-round protocols and timings have pushed survival to stable, sustainable levels

Dr. Ihsan Juma

Youth are not the future of beekeeping—they're the present. With training and mentorship, they raise hives and standards

Dr. Zuahira

Regional Overview of Food Security & Nutrition

Dr. Ahmad Mukhtar presented a "soft launch" preview of FAO's forthcoming Arab Region report from the State of Food Security and Nutrition series, framing food through a systems lens—where climate change, urbanization, globalization, and politics shape supply chains, food environments, choices, and ultimately diets and human outcomes.

The situation (data year 2024 unless noted)

Undernourishment: ~77.5 million people in the Arab region; prevalence ~15.8%, trending worse than the global average.

Food insecurity: ~40% of the population—about 198 million—faced moderate or severe food insecurity; ~77 million severe, with protracted conflicts a major driver.

Nutrition burdens: Child overweight ~6.9% (above global average); ~1 in 3 adults obese, implying large, long-run health and productivity costs.

Affordability of healthy diets: US$4.26 PPP per person per day; since 2019 the cost has risen 36.5%, while real incomes have not kept pace. ~186 million people cannot afford a healthy diet.

Financing (latest validated 2021): Broad agri-food sectors (agriculture, food, forestry, fisheries) received ~US$28.4B across public outlays, bank credit, and some FDI—yet hunger has risen.

Interpretation: Production is increasing, but access—not physical availability—is the binding constraint. Climate shocks, conflict, and weak enabling environments depress investment and disrupt distribution. Financing also mismatches: large investors seek big tickets; smallholders need small, accessible instruments.

What needs to change:
De-risk and blend capital: Scale guarantees, climate finance, results-based finance, social impact bonds, and even debt-swap models for agri-food.

Innovate vehicles: Intermediary funds that blend equity, concessional finance, and insurance/assurance to crowd in private capital (e.g., FAO's Transformational Impact Partnership (TIP) concept).

Enable in practice, not on paper: Policies must function in markets—simplify procedures, improve regulatory predictability, and ease access for domestic SMEs as well as foreign investors.

Focus ahead: The 2026 thematic deep-dive will target supply-chain resilience—mapping vulnerabilities and practical risk-management strategies.

Despite technology on display outside these halls, about 700 million people are still hungry globally-and 3 bln. cannot afford a healthy diet.

DR. AHMAD MUKHTAR
FAO Representative ad interim to the UAE

PANEL DISCUSSION

Securing Supply Chains Amid Conflict & Climate Risk

UAE Efforts & Success Stories in Honeybee Development

SESSION OVERVIEW
The panel addressed how climate volatility, conflict, and pandemic-era shocks are reshaping food supply chains—pushing firms toward diversified sourcing, localized buffers, and data driven visibility from farm to shelf.

MODERATOR
Amath Pathé, AFSF

SPEAKERS
Dr. Francis Borges, Advanta Seeds

Alena Kavalchuk, AD Coop

Mahdi Alhindawi, Injazponik

Scott Chambers, Seafood Souq

Retail & Distribution (AD Coop)
Weekly S&OP risk reviews spanning commercial, operations, and marketing; supplier service levels tracked and fed back.

Critical basket: ~7,000 must-have SKUs monitored daily; central DC safety stock ≈ 30 days to cushion disruptions

Data transparency: Vendor portal shares store/DC inventory, shelf availability, and OOS signals to align supplier planning.

Localization: New private label ("Yalla") produced by UAE manufacturers to reduce import exposure.

Public partnership: Managing Abu Dhabi citizens' food program (subsidized essentials) in 50 stores and via the TAM app—retail as a delivery rail for food security.

Seafood Traceability (Seafood Souq)
A US$2T global sector with 2,300+ species, historically opaque; ~25% of seafood wasted before reaching plates.
Traceability framed as a prerequisite to sustainability:
interoperable digital provenance (e.g., SFS Audit) verifies origin across wild-capture and aquaculture, linking exporters, importers, HORECA, and retail.

Demand pull: Large hotel/retail commitments cascade expectations upstream—quality, service, price and verifiable origin.

Controlled-Environment & Urban Production (Injazponik) Vertical farming as a nearshored buffer for high-loss, time/temperature-sensitive crops (e.g., strawberries, herbs).

R&D focus: maintaining 22°C flat-year climate via insulated glazing, coatings, solar, advanced controls, and AI; next steps include rob yotics and drones.

Call for problem-first targeting: use logistics loss data to prioritize top-10 crops for local vertical solutions, then expand.

Seeds & Upstream Resilience (Advanta Seeds):

Geographic spread in seed production to hedge regional climate/conflict shocks. Continuous germplasm innovation (weather, pest, nutrition traits) plus forecasting, IoT, drones to stabilize yields.

Value-chain co-design

Sunflower oils (high-stearic, high-oleic) as sustainable room-temperature solid fats for plant-based and bakery uses.

Corn-for-ethanol with high starch (conversion) while keeping DDGS high protein and low aflatoxin for feed.

Emphasis on public–private testing, registration, and access to speed deployment country-by-country.

Cross-cutting Themes

Diversify & localize: nearshoring critical lines; private labels made locally; controlled-environment production for fragile items.

Measure to manage: shared data, real-time dashboards, digital provenance, and routine risk councils.

Blended resilience: physical buffers (inventory, DCs) + digital foresight (AI/alerts) + institutional partnerships (government programs).

Culture & incentives: transparency as a market norm—trust as currency alongside price and quality.

Seafood is a US$2 trillion industry with 2,300+ species complex and traditionally opaque. Traceability is the precursor to sustainability

Scott Chambers
Seafood Souq

Our shelves must stay full, prices fair, and food safe whatever the disruption. We track supplier service weekly and hold 30 days of central stock for our critical items

Alena Kavalchuk
AD Coop

Seed is the foundation of food security. We spread production across geographies and continuously innovate germplasm to match each region's climate and pest pressures

Dr. Francis Borges
Advanta Seeds

Vertical farms can neutralize summer heat by holding a flat 22°C environment. Startwith the top-loss crops from logistics data, solve those first, then scale

Mahdi Alhindawi
Injazponik

PANEL DISCUSSION

The Role of Renewable Energy in Advancing Global Food & Agriculture Security

SESSION OVERVIEW

The panel examined how renewables can hard-wire resilience into food systems under intensifying climate, geopolitical, and supply-chain pressures.

Consensus: renewable energy (RE) is no longer an add-on—it's a core enabler of productive, climate-smart agriculture, especially when paired with data, cold chains, financing models for smallholders, and cross ministerial policy design.

MODERATOR
Najla Alzarooni, IRENA

SPEAKERS
Wilson Matekenya
Decentralized RE Solutions

Stephen Scalet
Trends Research & Advisory

Giedrė Viskantaitė
IRENA Coalition for Action

KEY THEMES & INSIGHTS

Why energy matters to food security

Agriculture and food systems account for a significant share of global emissions; energy use and losses across the chain are pivotal levers.

RE enables reliable irrigation, on-farm processing, and especially cold chains, directly cutting post-harvest loss (e.g., Wilson noted ~40% milk loss without effective cooling).

From mitigation to productivity & resilience

Scalet on-farm energy is a small slice of global energy, but RE delivers outsized gains through efficiency, cost stability, and fuel-security—and catalyzes new business models (off-grid biorefineries, circular practices).

Decentralized solutions as a game-changer

Emphasis on off-grid / mini-grid systems, solar-powered pumps, and modular cooling; appropriate-tech data tools (basic sensors, climate-smart scheduling) deliver quick wins without over-engineering.

Policy & governance gaps

Fragmentation across Agriculture–Energy Finance–Environment ministries slows uptake. The panel urged Nexus-based frameworks and joint budgeting to align targets, funding, and standards.

Financing the last mile

Barriers: high capex for smallholders, weak local supply chains for O&M/spares, limited awareness.

Needed: concessional lines, risk-sharing, own-to-lease / pay-as-you-go for farmers & co-ops, standardized agrivoltaics finance, and bankable templates.

Guardrails for “food vs. power” trade-offs Viskantaitė: prioritize synergies (dual land use, e.g., agrivoltaics) and ensure community consent; RE must enable food production, not displace it.

PRACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES (NEAR-TERM)

Cold-chain first: Solar/RE-powered milk and horticulture cooling hubs at collection points; bundled with efficient appliances to slash losses.

Solar irrigation packages: Pre-validated pump-plus-service bundles with water-use protocols to avoid over-extraction.

Decentralized processing: Micro biorefineries and agro-processing units (oil pressing, milling, drying) on RE mini-grids to add value locally.

Agrivoltaics pilots: Shade-tolerant crops under PV, co-designed with farmers; measure water-use efficiency, yields, and farm income.

Fit-for-purpose finance: Lease-to-own for co-ops, off-balance-sheet cooling as a service, results-based grants tied to loss-reduction KPIs.

Capacity networks: Farmer-centric training on RE O&M, basic data use (harvest scheduling, cold-chain SOPs), and market linkages.

Risks & How to Mitigate
Policy fragmentation → Establish an inter-ministerialWater–Energy–Food Ecosystems tasking with joint targets and budgets.

Capex & affordability → Concessional debt + guarantees; standard PAYG/lease models; tie repayments to harvest cycles.

O&M breakdowns → Local technician training, spare-parts distribution, service SLAs embedded in contracts.

Water overuse with cheap power → Pair solar pumps with allocation rules, metering, and agronomic advisory.

Land competition → Prioritize dual-use (agrivoltaics), siting on non-arable land, and transparent community consultations.

We need energy at every stage of agriculture- from irrigation to cold storage to processing.Without it, food production will remain inefficient and wasteful

Wilson Matekenya
Decentralized RE Solutions

Renewable energy isn’t just technical; it’s strategic - it changes the entire structure of the food value chain and opens new space for entrepreneurship and innovation

Stephen Scalet
Scientific Advisor
Trends Research & Advisory (UAE)

Renewables in agriculture are not a luxury — they are essential for both climate adaptation and food system resilience

Giedrė Viskantaitė
Associate Program Officer
IRENA Coalition for Action (UAE)

AGENDA

DAY ONE

10:00 OPENING CEREMONY

10:10 WELCOME ADDRESS

10:20 WELCOME NOTE

10:30 OPENING ADDRESS

10:40 OPENING KEYNOTE

10:50 OFFICIAL EXHIBITION OPENING

11:00 PANEL DISCUSSION
Farming on the Frontlines Implementing Climate-Smart

12:00 PANEL DISCUSSION
From Global to Local
How Multinationals Shape Impact Through Localization and Collaboration Exploring how multinational companies localize global sustainability and innovation strategies to align with UAE policy, enable public-private partnerships, and strengthen competitiveness.

12:30 FIRESIDE CHAT
ADAFSA's Experience in Developing and Managing the Alternative National Service Program for the Food Security Sector

13:00 PANEL DISCUSSION
Power Plays: Venture Capital vs Sovereign Funds in Agri-Food Investment Dissecting the balance between innovation-driven venture capital and long-term sovereign funding in shaping the global food economy.

13:40 PANEL DISCUSSION
Strengthening Livestock Health and Food Security Through International Collaboration

15:10 PANEL DISCUSSION
Using AI to Predict Supply & Demand Shocks

15:50 FIRESIDE CHAT
Edible Wraps & Compostable Packs: Reinventing Food Packaging

DAY TWO

10:00 MC OPENS

10:10 KEYNOTE SPEECH
Building Resilience in Food Manufacturing

10:20 FIRESIDE CHAT
Standard for a Sustainable Future: Shaping Global Food Systems Through Innovation and Regulation

10:40 FIRESIDE CHAT
Data-Driven Delights: Turning Consumer Insights into Winning Products

11:00 PANEL DISCUSSION
How AI is Cutting Food Waste Before It Starts

11:40 NETWORKING BREAK

12:00 PANEL DISCUSSION
Plate to Prosperity: The Food Sector's Role in Economic and National Security

12:40 PANEL DISCUSSION
Sustaining the Buzz: UAE's Local Efforts and Success Stories in Honeybee Development

13:20 PANEL DISCUSSION
The Rise of Precision Nutrition & Personalized Meals

14:50 **PRESENTATION**
Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition

15:10 PANEL DISCUSSION
Securing Supply Chains Amid Conflict and Climate Risk

15:50 PANEL DISCUSSION
The Role of Renewable Energy in Advancing Global Food and Agriculture Security

16:20 CLOSING REMARKS

SPEAKERS

H.E. Dr. Obaid Al Zaabi
AAAID

H.E. Dr Abdulla Humaid Saif Al Jarwan
Chairman, Department of Energy, (UAE)

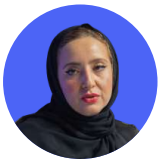
Maryam Al Mualla
Head of Project Development
Ministry of Economy and Tourism, (UAE)

H.E. Dr Farah Al Zarooni
Assistant Undersecretary for Standards and Regulations Sector, Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology, (UAE)

H.E. Dr Amna bint Abdullah Al Dahak
Minister of Climate Change and Environment, (UAE)

Dr. Mohammed Aman Mulki
Molecular Breeding
ADAFSA

Alena Kavalchuk
AD Coop



Dr Loubna Zaitouni
Senior Legal Affairs Specialist
Ministry of Economy and Tourism, (UAE)

Hassan Halawy
(CEO, Elite Agro)

Dr. Bernard Faye
CIRAD

Regina Schmid
UN WFP

Hany Shalaby
Nestlé

Fatema AlMulla
UAE Presidential Court

Michela Morese
Office of Climate Change Biodiversity and Environment
FAO, Italy

Asma Abdi Mohamed Shah
ADAFSA / WOAH CC

Samer Muhammed Kirresh
ADAFSA

Leila Naguib
Mars

Tristan Fischer
CEO, Fischer Farming, UK

Arnoud van den Berg
Group CEO, Al Dahra Group

Scott Chambers
Seafood Souq

Dr. Zuahira

Mahara Al Naqbi

Dr. Saad Al Masari

Giedrė Viskantaitė
Associate Program Officer
IRENA Coalition for Action (UAE)

Dr. Ihsan Juma

Jens Michel
CEO, AD Food Hub (UAE)

Abhay Bhargava
Managing Director & Regional Leader
Frost & Sullivan Middle East (UAE)

Søren N. Kannik Marquardsen
Royal Danish Consulate General

Wilson Matekenya
Decentralized RE Solutions

Dr. Markos Tibbo
FAO

Dr. Sophie von Dobschütz
WHO

Josef Schmidhuber
Pure Harvest

Nadine Gbossa
Director of Food Systems Coordination, IFAD (Benin)

Stephen Scalet
Scientific Advisor
Trends Research & Advisory (UAE)

Dr. Francis Borges
Advanta Seeds

Mahdi Alhindawi
Injazponik

Khamis Alshamsi
Director, Alternative National Service Programs Development
ADAFSA

Shaikhah Mohamed Alabdouli
Strategy & Policies
Communications & Community Engagement, ADAFSA

POST EVENT REPORT 2025

GLOBAL FOOD TALKS
حـــوارات الـغـــذاء الـعـالـمـيـــة

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21-23 OCTOBER
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