Global Donor Platform for Rural Development

IFAD
Investing in rural people

CFS 54 SIDE EVENT (SE18)

Investing Smarter: A Return for Investment Case for Agrifood Systems

Wednesday 21 October 2026 | 13:30-14:45 (CEST)
Ethiopia Room (C289), FAO HQ and online via Zoom

Concept Note

Lead Organizers

Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD)
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Co-Organizers

The Netherlands; Global Affairs Canada; Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Agrinatura/Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences; AGRA; Agri-PDB Platform

Abstract

Amid constrained ODA, rising scrutiny of public expenditure, and competing priorities, agrifood systems offer a wide range of benefits, and the case for investing in them should reflect their full value. This side event presents emerging insights from GDPRD's work on unpacking the multidimensional returns of agrifood systems investments and their wider strategic benefits. Bringing together the latest available evidence on agrifood system investment impacts, the work examines economic and productivity gains, fiscal and macroeconomic effects, stability and trade, climate and resilience benefits, and social outcomes, including nutrition, gender equality and poverty reduction. It considers how these benefits interact and accrue over different time horizons to strengthen the case for sustained investments in agrifood systems. The discussion will focus on operationalizing this evidence into decision-relevant investment narratives, the role of financing instruments and policy support in enabling additionality and leverage, and alignment with global food security governance, including CFS guidance in investment and budgeting processes.

Objectives

- Present a multidimensional and policy-relevant investment case for agrifood systems (through a ROI framing paper guided by a GDPRD Technical Advisory Group) that captures economic, fiscal, strategic, social and environmental returns across short-, medium- and long-term horizons.
- Highlight priority investment areas and financing approaches that deliver transformational, cross-sectoral returns for partner countries and donors, drawing on emerging evidence from diverse institutions and regions.
- Facilitate an interactive dialogue among stakeholders to translate the ROI narrative into actionable donor guidance that strengthens agrifood systems resilience, nutrition outcomes and long-term policy alignment.

Relevance to CFS Work

This side event supports the mandate of the CFS by strengthening how evidence on food security and nutrition is translated into investment and budgeting decisions. While CFS policy products offer robust normative guidance across food systems domains, their uptake is often constrained by the absence of a coherent investment and ROI narrative that resonates with finance ministries and other public expenditure decision-makers. This event addresses that gap by presenting a structured way to articulate agrifood systems returns in economic, fiscal, social and strategic terms.

The event directly supports CFS priorities on resilient food systems, affordability of healthy diets, reducing inequalities, and strengthening food security in protracted crises by improving the ability of policymakers to justify sustained investment in agrifood transformation. It also enhances coherence between CFS guidance and broader global financing debates, including multilateral development bank reforms and coordinated responses to the food crisis. This integration helps ensure that CFS policy products translate into actionable investment choices and long-term structural change.

Linkage to CFS Policy Products

Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition; Policy Recommendations on Reducing Inequalities in Food Security and Nutrition; Policy Recommendations on Strengthening Urban and Peri-Urban Food Systems; Policy Recommendations on Strengthening Collection and Use of Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Data

Provisional Agenda	
13:30-13:35 (CEST)	**Welcome** **Opening Remarks** GDRPD's work on ROI and Technical Advisory Group. ● **Thijs Woudstra**, *Head of Food and Nutrition Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands; GDPRD Co-Chair and Champion of the ROI in Agrifood Systems Workstream*
13:35-13:45 (CEST)	**Keynote and Scene Setting** What ROI means in agrifood systems and why a multidimensional lens is needed. ● **Máximo Torero Cullen**, *Chief Economist, FAO*
13:45-14:00 (CEST)	**Building the Investment Case for Agrifood Systems** Findings and insights on a policy-relevant ROI framework for agrifood systems through GDPRD's work on a ROI framing paper guided by its Technical Advisory Group. ● **Jim Woodhill,** Senior Advisor, GDPRD ● **Mandakini Surie**, Senior Advisor, GDPRD
14:00-14:30 (CEST)	**Panel Discussion** Sharing experiences to highlight priority investment areas and financing approaches that deliver transformational, cross-sectoral returns for partner countries, donors and investment partners. ● **Johan Swinnen**, *IFPRI (TBC)* ● **Stineke Oenema**, *Senior Policy Advisor Food Security and Nutrition, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands (TBC)* ● **Isabel Szollosy**, *Advisor, Food Systems and Nutrition Division, International Assistance Partnerships and Programming Branch, Global Affairs Canada* ● **Carin Smaller**, *Executive Director, Shamba Centre for Food & Climate (TBC)* ● **Thierry Latreille**, *Lead Global Technical Advisor, Agri-PDB Platform* ● **Alice Ruhweza**, *President, AGRA (TBC)*
14:30-14:40 (CEST)	**Interactive Q&A with the audience** Moderated discussion with participants.
14:40-14:45 (CEST)	**Closing Remarks** Main takeaways, next steps and engagement opportunities. ● **Ron Hartman**, *Director, Global Engagement, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)*

Focal Points

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