

Remarks by Mamadou Biteye, OBE
Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation Africa Regional Office
At the AGRF panel session on post-harvest management and ensuring quantity, quality and standards for market
Thursday, 7th September, 2017, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Acknowledgements

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

Although many of you are already authorities in agriculture, and have previously worked with the Foundation, allow me to share with you a brief history of the Foundation's work in post-harvest management, and especially our current work.

In January of last year (2016) we launched our YieldWise initiative at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos. YieldWise is a \$130m 7 year initiative that is working with private, public and nonprofit actors involved in the food supply system to cut their food loss and waste by half.

Many of us are aware of the state of the agriculture and food security sector via your different sectors, the main one we are trying to address is the fact that one-third of the world's available food never makes it from farm to table.

One third...let's think about that for a minute.

That is enough food to feed all the 1.2 billion hungry or undernourished people on the planet - and it is a practice that is unsustainable given that the world's population is expected to rise by 2 billion (to 9 billion) by 2050.

Food loss and waste have negative impacts far beyond food insecurity. Loss and waste reverberate across supply chains, where the cost of this hidden waste is still unaccounted for on corporate balance sheets.

The economic development and global competitiveness of agriculture-dependent nations such as many in Africa – and the livelihoods of farmers – suffer when crops and food exports don't make it to market. They squander limited land and water resources, and harmful greenhouse gas emissions increase.

That's why food loss and waste is an urgent global crisis affecting all of us – people, planet, and profits – from the health and livelihoods of the world's most vulnerable people to the bottom lines of the largest multinational corporations.

Because food loss and waste is an all-inclusive problem, eliminating it requires an all-inclusive solution that looks across the global food system to identify where the biggest losses occur and provide incentives for solving the problems at the root.

Additionally, at the heart of our YieldWise strategy is a focus on behavior change, from how smallholder farmers grow and store their crops to how companies account for food loss and waste across their supply chains.

An efficient, productive food system with minimal loss is our goal – and one that is well within reach.

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We see a great opportunity to streamline the supply chain from farm to market in Africa, where up to half of some crops are lost to inefficient harvesting, handling, packing, storage, processing and transportation time to market.

Getting proven technologies – many of them simple – to smallholder farmers, while creating new paths to market for their crops is key to our strategy.

We have the privilege of having private sector players like Coca Cola and Dangote on board as key partners; part of our focus is also on linking small and big businesses that can mutually benefit from diversified sources for products and enhanced markets.

Real impact will require cross-sector collaboration and each sector has powerful motivations to engage, leveraging our \$130 million investment multiple times over. Through the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, governments have pledged to cut food loss and waste in half by 2030 and have the opportunity to grow their economies while doing so.

And for us at The Rockefeller Foundation, we see this work as the next chapter in our proud legacy of building global food security; we are committed to ensuring that food systems are resilient and that humanity has adequate food to thrive, while respecting the limits of our planet's ability to provide.

Thankfully, the technology and resources exist to feed 7 billion – and even 9 billion, which is the expected global population in the next 25 years. By getting this right we can achieve three goals together: business can increase profits and economies can grow while we also provide food for more people and protect the planet.

Specifically for Africa, the YieldWise initiative focus is on three countries: Kenya (to reduce loss in the mango value chain), Nigeria (to reduce loss on the tomato and cassava value chains) and Tanzania (to reduce loss in the maize value chain).

We chose these geographies because they so starkly illustrate the problem we want to solve: up to half of these crops in these areas are lost to inefficient harvesting, storage, processing and time to market.

Accordingly, The Rockefeller Foundation and our partners are devoting our energies to streamlining the supply chain from farm to market, putting proven—often very simple—technologies in the hands of smallholder farmers.

Our goal with respect to these smallholders, who are such an important part of their local cultures and economies, will always be twofold: to help them increase their yield and to clear the way for them to create new paths to prosperity—for themselves and for their communities.

We take great pride in YieldWise as being the first global solution to food loss and waste that works across the entire food system: from farm to store to table and beyond. Each step along the way is linked inextricably to the others, and in order to reach our goal we will need the continued buy-in of all of you,

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and participation of actors from the public sector, the development world, the business community, and beyond.

Besides what YieldWise is focusing on, we all have a role we can play, depending on our strengths. Whichever actor you are in the value chain, you can throw your strength behind this effort.

- Any practice that reduces the number of produce handling steps, usually helps minimize losses. Field packing (selection, sorting, trimming, and packaging) of produce at the time of harvest can greatly reduce the number of handling steps in preparation for marketing.
- Mobile field packing stations with adequate shading are used for those fruits (such as grapes and strawberries) and vegetables (such as broccoli, cauliflower, and green beans) that do not require washing as part of their preparation for marketing.
- Ensure worker hygiene and sanitation practices during production, harvest, sorting, packing, and transport play a critical role in minimizing the potential for microbial contamination of fresh produce.
- Organization, training, supervision, and motivation of the harvesting crew to achieve maximum efficiency while maintaining effective quality control (selection of proper maturity, discarding unmarketable units, and avoiding physical damage).
- Scheduling harvesting during the cooler part of the day, protecting the harvested commodity from the sun, and expediting transport to the packinghouse to reduce losses in quality due to high temperatures.
- Reducing physical injuries during harvesting and transport to the packinghouse by ensuring that buckets, field boxes, bins, and gondolas used are clean and have smooth surfaces; by grading roads to eliminate potholes and bumps; and by restricting speed of transport vehicle to a level that will avoid free movement of the commodity.
- Cooling and cool storage facilities; Temperature management is the most important tool that we have to extend shelf-life of fresh horticultural commodities after harvesting the produce.
- Alternative distribution systems, such as direct selling to the consumer (roadside stands, produce markets in cities, local farmers' market in the countryside, etc.) should be encouraged. Production should be maintained as close to the major population centres as possible to minimize transportation costs.

Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, with that background, we are honoured to have you here to dive farther into the issue of how we can save more of our harvest, and ensure food gets from there to tables. Some of the panelists are our parents in this initiative – we are working closely with AGRA in Tanzania with maize farmers – they, and AgroZ and others can share first-hand how it is working on the ground.

This AGRF is also an opportunity to take stock of our collective responses to the calls for action outlined in United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Malabo Declaration (2014), both of which focus on halving postharvest losses by 2030 and 2025 respectively. This is also a chance to reflect on how we have made good on our pledges at last year's event in Nairobi.