

# Small-scale African farmers use radio to send a message of optimism and caution to world leaders at Food Systems Summit

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OTTAWA, CANADA, September 20, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Small-scale farmers in sub-Saharan Africa are impacted disproportionately by climate change, poverty and undernutrition, yet a report released today shows many remain optimistic about the future of farming. Of the thousands of farmers taking part in the four-country survey, two-thirds believe their children can succeed in farming, though many cautioned that food systems will need to change in order to make living incomes possible.

[On Air Dialogues: Listening to Rural People](#), released today by Farm Radio International (FRI), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Vision Canada, and the Canadian Food Security Policy Group (FSPG), includes data gathered over three weeks in June 2021 by six radio stations in four African countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda). Thanks to interactive radio shows and innovative mobile phone polling, farmers were able to directly voice their concerns and share their proposed solutions when it comes to global food systems. In response, 3,494 participants left 11,854 answers and 2,648 audio messages.

Today's release is timed to bring the voices of rural small-scale farmers in sub-Saharan Africa to the UN Food System Summit on 23 September – an event that includes global leaders, scientists, academics, policy advisors and UN officials - but few of the world's poorest food producers.

“There's growing global recognition that solutions can only be sustainable and relevant if they reflect people's local realities and experiences. But leaders often struggle with how to access the opinions of people, especially in remote areas. Radio, combined with new technologies, is a powerful tool that is too often overlooked,” said H el ene Papper, IFAD Director of Global Communications and Advocacy. “With direct input from so many rural farmers, we now have greater insight into their challenges, and how we can support their strong desire to stay in their communities and build a future for their families in agriculture. These are the voices that global leaders gathering for this week's Food Systems Summit need to hear, and act upon.”

“Small-scale farmers working on plots less than two hectares produce over 30 percent of global food and yet there are significant barriers to their participation in global discussions and decision-making processes,” said Kevin Perkins, FRI spokesperson. “This report helps change that. Our goal was to create a platform for rural people, especially women and youth, to share their concerns and solutions for a healthier, more sustainable, productive, and equitable food

system.”

Oscar, a small-scale farmer from Tanzania was among those who took part in the survey. His comment points to one of the many inequities that exist across food systems. “Our crops are bought at a very low price,” he said. “The businessmen and middlemen buy our crops at their prices and not at farmers’ prices.”

Respondents like Oscar called for better access to loans and credit, inputs, better markets, and more information, as well as better training on farming techniques and business management. Women farmers, in particular, emphasized the need for access to loans, credit, and financial support as vital for their success.

"This is particularly critical for women smallholder farmers, who produce more than half of all the food that is grown yet continue to face discrimination resulting in limited decision-making power, access to and control over productive resources that limit their participation in local food systems," said Angeline Munzara, World Vision International spokesperson. "Listening to their voices and solutions to transform the food system is essential to ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all."

Additional findings:

- Many respondents noted specific concerns about the effects of chemical pesticides and fertilizers on the safety of food, and emphasized the benefits of agro-ecological approaches and basing food production around local farming systems;
- More than 90% of respondents felt there was something they could do in their community to cope with climate change. Fewer than 1 in 12 said the only way to cope with climate change would be to move away from their homes;
- Compared to men, women were more concerned about household nutritional intake, were more likely to consider loans and credit as key to farming success, and relied more strongly on informal networks such as friends and neighbours for information.

On Air Dialogues: Listening to Rural People is an official submission to the Food Systems Summit (FSS) which takes place on Thursday, 23 September. Under the leadership of Secretary-General António Guterres, the FSS is the culmination of 18 months of engagement with governments, food producers, civil society and companies on how to transform the way we produce, process and consume food. The FSS is intended to produce actionable commitments from heads of state and other leaders.

Note to editors:

Visit <http://dialogues.farmradio.org/> to read the report, explore the results, and listen to the voices of farmers.

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IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, we have provided US\$23.2 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached an estimated 518 million people. IFAD is an international financial institution and a United Nations specialized agency based in Rome – the United Nations food and agriculture hub.

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