

African agribusiness expert announced as new CEO of US nonprofit Partners in Food Solutions

Zimbabwean national Mandla Nkomo becomes the first African to lead the 15-year-old organization that matches corporate volunteers with African food companies.

MINNEAPOLIS , UNITED STATES, March 1, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- An expert in agribusiness development will become the first African CEO of nonprofit Partners in Food Solutions, which provides African food companies with voluntary technical assistance from major multinationals along with other services like access to financing.

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Mandla Nkomo, incoming CEO of Partners in Food Solutions

Mandla Nkomo, a Zimbabwean national, will take the helm after current CEO and co-founder Jeff Dykstra steps down in July. Partners in Food Solutions was created in 2008 to connect African food processing companies with volunteers from major agri-food corporations such as General Mills, Cargill, and Smucker to share their technical expertise to solve business challenges.

Nkomo, who will be based in South Africa, joins Partners in Food Solutions from CGIAR, the world’s largest publicly funded agricultural research organization, where he was chief growth officer for the CGIAR Excellence in Agronomy Initiative. He brings more than 20 years’ experience across both public and private sectors, having worked in South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, the US, the Netherlands, the UK, and Zimbabwe.

“I’m delighted to be joining Partners in Food Solutions at such a critical moment. Food systems transformation is now an imperative on the African continent. Strong and capable local food companies will be instrumental to the future of African food security and economic growth, which makes our mission all the more vital,” said Nkomo.

“Partners in Food Solutions has an impressive track record of helping African companies overcome challenges related to food safety, product development, quality and efficiency, all of

which help to unlock growth and scale for a new generation of agricultural entrepreneurs.”

Food companies locally adding value to the crops of smallholder farmers has been described as the [missing link](#) in Africa’s agri-food system, with potential to create new markets for the crops of millions of farmers and replace the \$60 billion in food imports each year. If every link in the value chain is working, Africa can not only feed itself but also help feed the world.

According to the latest [annual report](#) from Partners in Food Solutions, volunteers providing remote virtual assistance helped African food processing companies boost their revenue by 20 percent on average in 2023. Companies also saw their workforces grow by 11 percent and reported a 50 percent increase in their farmer supply chain.

Partners in Food Solutions reported record demand for technical assistance in 2023, with nearly 700 services provided to African client companies.

“We’re thrilled to be welcoming Mandla Nkomo to Partners in Food Solutions as we reach new heights in our efforts to support the growth of the African food companies,” said Ken Powell, chair of the Board and former CEO of General Mills.

“Mandla’s positive leadership style and background in agricultural science, combined with his long experience in the agribusiness and development sector, means the future of Partners in Food Solutions is in great hands.”

Donna Bowater
Marchmont Communications
donna@marchmontcomms.com



Mandla Nkomo joins Partners in Food Solutions from CGIAR, bringing more than 20 years’ experience across both public and private sectors.

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