

● Equity and sustainability in international partnerships: experiences and perspectives from FSNet-Africa

As the risks and negative impacts of global challenges (such as food and nutrition insecurity) rapidly increase, the imperative for research and innovation to make an impactful contribution to sustainability is increasingly urgent. Partnerships that span boundaries (of geography, discipline, and sector) have high potential as mechanisms for real-world impact but require intentional focus and investment of resources (time, financial and human) in order to ensure that they are equitable and sustainable.

This panel session will use the case of the Food Systems Research Network for Africa (FSNet-Africa) to consider a diversity of perspectives on how to establish and sustain truly equitable boundary-spanning partnerships that can contribute to developmental impact through research.

Panellists will share their own experiences, by presenting challenges, opportunities and modalities for establishing equitable, sustainable partnerships (i) between institutions in the Global North and South, (ii) between academic and non-academic partners with shared interests, (iii) between research managers and academics within organisations, (iv) between research-performing organisations and funders.

The session will showcase the practical strategies that FSNet-Africa has adopted to monitor and understand the quality of its partnerships (that span across two continents, six African countries, 11 universities and five national networks). Panellists will also share their perspectives on how multi-stakeholder projects can be leveraged as a mechanism for operationalising and strengthening high-level strategic partnerships.

Through the session the panellists aim to challenge preconceived notions about what works and how to approach impactful research partnerships.

Presenters:

- Prof Claire Quinn, University of Leeds (United Kingdom)
Claire is an environmental social scientist with over 20 years of experience working on interdisciplinary projects in Africa, Europe and Asia. Her research advances understanding of social-ecological systems focusing on: 1) smallholder livelihood vulnerability, adaptation and resilience; and 2) knowledge and governance for climate smart agriculture. She is interdisciplinary in her approach, drawing on theories and methods from both the natural and social sciences. Her research has improved our understanding of the role of natural resources in smallholder livelihoods, of institutions in shaping livelihoods and adaptation to climate change, and has advanced practice in stakeholder engagement and knowledge exchange.
- Dr Melody Mentz-Coetzee, University of Pretoria (South Africa)
Melody is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship (University of Pretoria, South Africa). She has worked for a number of years as an independent monitoring and evaluation consultant undertaking projects at national, pan-African, and international levels. She focuses on theory-based mixed-methods evaluations and the evaluation of higher education initiatives, research capacity building, and leadership, with an emphasis on gender and agriculture in the context of development in Africa.
- Ms Louise Heery, University of Leeds (United Kingdom)
Louise is Head of Global Research Development at the University of Leeds where she leads a strategic approach to the UK Government's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). Her role focuses on highlighting external challenges and priorities identified by NGOs, policy-makers, companies and overseas HEIs, to researchers across the University. She works with researchers to embed challenge-led perspectives within major strategic research and innovation initiatives and plays a key role in supporting the internationalisation of multi-disciplinary research and innovation development.

- Dr Petronella Chaminuka, Agricultural Research Council of South Africa (South Africa)
Petronella is the Acting Head of Impact and Partnerships and the Economic Analysis Unit of the Agricultural Research Council of South Africa. Because of her PhD training in multi-disciplinary research at Wageningen University, Petronella has an interest in a number of research topics, including economics of research and technology policy, poverty and livelihoods analysis, and land-use modelling. She has more than 20 years' international work experience in research, teaching, postgraduate student supervision and mentorship, and consultancy services. She is currently serving as a Global South Scaling Advisor for Science on the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) scalingXchange project.
 - Dr Tshildzi Madzivhandila, FANRPAN (South Africa)
Tshildzi is the CEO of FANRPAN, with over 20 years' experience in research, policy analysis, and monitoring and evaluation, focusing on the food, agriculture, and natural resources sectors. He holds a PhD degree in Economics from the University of New England, Australia, specialising in public policies and programme evaluation. He is a member of various professional associations, including the Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa (AEASA), the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), and the Pool of International Experts for the Food and Business Applied Research Fund of the Dutch Research Council's science division.
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