ANDE WEST AFRICA
Regional Conference, Session Recaps
2021
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About Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs

The Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) is a global network of organizations that propel entrepreneurship in developing economies. ANDE members provide critical financial, educational, and business support services to small and growing businesses (SGBs) based on the conviction that SGBs will create jobs, stimulate long-term economic growth, and produce environmental and social benefits. Ultimately, we believe that SGBs can help lift countries out of poverty.

About our Sponsors

Creative Metier
Creative Metier is a Capacity Development Provider that works with impact networks, leaders, and organizations to drive locally-led, inclusive, systemic change and address the critical human capital challenges of organizations seeking to further social and economic development. Creative Metier also offers services to investors and funders in strategic planning, research into markets, organization and skills development for their teams.

Center for International Private Enterprise
The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) is one of the four core institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy and an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. CIPE was founded on the principle that economic freedom and political freedom are linked - a strong private sector needs a flourishing democracy to work, and vice-versa. CIPE’s work centers on building strong democratic institutions to create an enabling environment for business and entrepreneurship to flourish.
English Session

Digital Transformation Event

LEVERAGING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO IMPROVE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DELIVERY

In 2020, many Business Development Services (BDS) providers saw their ability to provide services to SGBs disrupted by the COVID-19 crisis. An ANDE survey of its members’ responses to the COVID-19 crisis found that BDS providers, particularly those in developing economies, faced severe liquidity crises and program stoppages. Thus, they needed support to survive and adapt by introducing new COVID-19 related programming for SGBs. This panel session drew on the experiences of the discussants and participants to examine digital transformation strategies, pitfalls and recommend tested technologies and successes for small and growing businesses.

LEAD DISCUSSANTS:

Femi Taiwo, LEAP Africa (Moderator)
Raliat Sunmonu, Accion
Nneka Okekearu, Enterprise Development Centre
Jane del Ser, Catalyst Fund Inclusive Digital Commerce

DISCUSSION:

Digital Transformation for Small Growing Businesses in the emerging and developing markets - Why and How?

With the current infrastructure gaps on the continent (mobile penetration, data cost), how can organizations leverage digital transformation in optimizing their businesses?

• First, businesses need to understand the different components of digital transformation: partnerships, culture, tools, processes, and the products offered to the customers, as these influence the digital infrastructure gaps.

• It is also fundamental to fully understand your business model, customers, and business environment for the digital transformation journey. This would help identify the specific digital transformation component relevant to your business needs and customer challenges and guide you to optimize.

• Digital Adaptation is key to actualizing digital transformation, and this means we should be able to adapt to and implement transformative strategies while understanding our current reality and constraints. For instance, not everyone can run a completely virtual model of operations. For some organizations, it is more realistic to adopt a hybrid approach.
How can Small and growing businesses (SGBs) prioritize their digital transformation needs in the short term while also keeping a long-term view or horizon?

• First, there is a need to ensure that the digital transformation strategy aligns with the organization's overall vision.
• Take stock of the internal operations and strategic objectives and identify the most efficient ways to bring in resources to help achieve our short-term goals.
• It is also fundamental to identify the business’ most pressing needs, e.g., cash flow, platform, inventory, or people and include them without disrupting the process.

How useful is data in deciding and navigating your digital transformation journey?

• Data gives evidence that the features around your product or innovation serve a need that the customers value.
• Data capturing and mapping customer behaviours is crucial to developing your customer base.
• Capturing data helps you understand and accurately capture the organization's pain points, the challenges, and the opportunities for your digital transformation journey.
• Whether working with startups or thinking about our organizational design and journey and digital transformation, data is crucial as it helps define where the intervention is and the progression towards the goal.
• Data collection and analysis are essential processes, and so organizations must leverage the right tools to gather insights effectively and ensure that the technical human resources to analyze and transform data into intelligence are available.
• Data helps to address the different gaps in the organization, for instance, to drive product development, solve challenges faced by the customer, improve the existing processes in the organization, and make critical decisions on the market expansion.
• In addition to internal tools and human resources, organizations need to leverage external partners to have a more holistic view of the ecosystem.
• As part of the digital transformation journey, founders or managers need to share relevant company data with their employees to develop a collaborative culture.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

• Digital transformation is not necessarily a destination but a journey.
• There is no digitally-enabled transformation without data.
• In designing an approach to the digital transformation journey, organizations need to be inclusive and user-centric, carrying along the team, customers, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders. Digital transformation is more successful when an organization understands the context in which they operate and the customers whom they serve.
• Building a resourceful team and a collaborative culture is crucial to leveraging technology and digitalization for sustainability and market expansion.
• There is a need to develop business cases around digitization for the sustainability and growth of the business in West Africa.
DAY 2 Opening Plenary

Building Back Better Post COVID-19: Mobilizing Corporate Partnerships to Enhance Support for the Small and Growing Business (SGB) Ecosystem in West Africa

This discussion focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the entrepreneurial ecosystem in West Africa. With a critical focus on women entrepreneurs, decent jobs, climate and the environment. The session provided insights and answered how we might enhance the growth, capacity, and finance of the SGBs sector in West Africa Post COVID-19. The panelists discussed the need for climate change action and collaboration in West Africa, highlighting the socio-cultural challenges that have kept these issues from being prioritized. They called for key stakeholders in the Ecosystem: investors, SGBs, Government to lead and promote action in tackling these issues locally.

LEAD DISCUSSANTS:

Charles Anyanwu, Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (Moderator)
Osayi Alile, Aspire Coronation Trust
Peter Bamkole, Enterprise Development Centre of the Pan-Atlantic University
Ebenezer Arthur, Wangara Green Ventures

DISCUSSION:

Given the constraints caused by COVID-19, how can intermediary organizations be more effective, and how can SGBs position themselves to take advantage of the new opportunities brought about by the pandemic?

- More than ever before, this is a time to innovate and do things differently. SGBs as well need to be encouraged to think more innovatively and technologically.
- Stay up-to-date on relevant investment and business development opportunities across Africa and share the same with the SGBs in the network.
- There is a need for more partnership and collaboration as organizations can no longer function in isolation. There is a need for openness to learning from our mistakes and that of others, taking calculated risks and encouraging staff to create solutions to internal challenges.
- Flexibility in learning and pivoting is a fundamental requirement for organizations as more disruptions will come up in the future, and businesses need to be prepared.
- Businesses need to digitize their operations and localize some services and value chains.
• Organizations also need to align with the local and global problems like climate change and security, given how disruptive these can be. In addition to a digital transformation, there must also be a green transition: making decisions and taking actions that promote a healthier environment and climate.

• SGBs find it difficult to sustain debts, and therefore, financing instruments and deal structures must be flexible and adapted, e.g., quasi-equity instruments, moratorium periods, patient capital.

• Beyond financial support, SGBs also need to be supported to develop concrete business continuity and crisis management plans.

What has been the shape of partnerships since the pandemic began?

• An emerging theme is corporate partnerships, as there is growing recognition from the corporate world of social issues and a desire to collaborate with social impact/development institutions.

• There has also been an increased appreciation for non-financial support, especially regarding technological development/digitalization support tools, business model restructuring and networking.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

• More than ever, organizations need to become creative and embrace the flexibility of work.

• Disruptions are inevitable, and the earlier we prepare ourselves and position ourselves for the next disruption, the better we will be.

• Post-pandemic, debt should be thought about very critically.

• There is no solution outside of your spectrum.

• Technology is no longer the future, it is the present, and we must learn to utilize this.

• Adaptability is key.

• Look outside your space for funding.

• Innovative thinking is what leads to solutions.

• Remember the mental health of your team.
Keynote Presentation

Fireside Chat with Affiong Williams, CEO REEL Fruit

Affiong Williams is the CEO and Founder of ReelFruit, the largest fruit processing, packaging, and marketing company in Nigeria. The company, founded in 2012, retails a range of dried fruit and nut snacks through various channels, including over 450 Supermarkets, Airlines, Schools, Hotels, and concluding export sales via Amazon.com. During her keynote address, she shared her entrepreneurial journey in the West Africa entrepreneurial ecosystem and how she has navigated the support systems (including investment, business development support, market access) for growth and expansion.

MODERATOR:

Nelson Amo, Innohub

AFFIONG’S BACKGROUND

ReelFruit is an award-winning brand, winning both an international Women in Business Competition in the Netherlands. Forbes Magazine has also recognized Affiong as one of the most promising ‘30 under 30’ entrepreneurs in 2015. Affiong is passionate about agribusiness and looking at innovative, market-driven solutions to add value to local produce, given Nigeria’s unique agricultural landscape. Affiong Williams obtained a post-graduate diploma in Business Administration from Wits Business School, Johannesburg, South Africa. In 2018, she participated in the Stanford SEED Transformation Program– Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Economies. She worked for four years for Endeavor Global, a global non-profit that catalyzes economic development by supporting small to medium enterprises in developing markets. Affiong is passionate about unearthing the job and wealth creation potential of agribusiness and global trade. Affiong is passionate about Entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Politics and is an avid runner, completing over 15 marathons and raising funds for charity in the process.

DISCUSSION:

What is the connection between your appetite for running a marathon and the kind of speed with which you are running your business?

Marathon running is a lot like life, it is one step before the other, and it is long-distance. When REEL Fruit was launched, it offered a new product (dried fruit as a snack) in the Nigerian market. Like in a marathon, it has taken time, stamina, patience, and dedication to continue to build something for the long term.
What is the connection between your appetite for running a marathon and the kind of speed with which you are running your business?
Marathon running is a lot like life, it is one step before the other, and it is long-distance. When REEL Fruit was launched, it offered a new product (dried fruit as a snack) in the Nigerian market. Like in a marathon, it has taken time, stamina, patience, and dedication to continue to build something for the long term.

Was there any expressed or inherent fear of possible rejection given that you were the first in the market?
Being a first-mover certainly came with its challenges. For instance, at the beginning of the business, we used to get many product returns because people did not know about the product, it had been on the shelf for too long, or customers were unsure about it. We have had to work through some fears and difficult times to get to where we are now.

Did you at any point feel like giving up?
Yes, there was a lot of anxiety and concern about whether I had picked the right business line in the past because it took a long time for the customers to accept the product. There were concerns about whether we could scale the business, and these concerns made me want to quit, but having a robust support system in my family and my employees has been a source of motivation. I have also had to build the tenacity to problem-solve and the mindset of living to fight another day, which has helped extend my staying power.

How did you scale: What were the struggles and setbacks on your scaling journey?
We focused on building a brand and contracting with manufacturers to support our production before worrying about scaling and getting a factory. This has changed the story of our business as we can show investors our history of demonstrated growth. Growth takes time, and over time we have been able to understand the sector, which was instrumental for us with raising Series A funding, our first institutionalized investment that will allow us to scale up and build a commercial factory.

What kind of funding were you able to secure before Series A?
When I started, I put in all my savings, took loans from family and friends, won some grants, and then focused on angel networks. It is not easy to raise institutionalized capital, so what I found successful was raising small amounts and demonstrating how far the money will go in terms of revenue, distribution, or people. One other helpful thing is having a solid team. We have been able to build out a team of managers and operate with strong processes. This helps investors see that we can face challenges head-on.

How have you successfully scaled across the border, what were the challenges you faced and how have you dealt with them?
Selling internationally has not been difficult - the major problem we have is how to scale. As we delve into the export market, we need to sell larger quantities that require producing more. Still, we do not have the capacity yet, and so we need to expand our factories.

What is the plan for Sub-Saharan Africa?
For selling in Sub-Saharan Africa, the challenges have been around the difficulty of moving goods, regulatory and cost barriers that make it difficult to sell to reach the entire market.
How did COVID-19 impact your business, and how did you ensure sustainability?
The pandemic and inflation within the Nigerian economy has affected transportation both with the high costs and the difficulty for farmers to move goods across the country. However, we have also been able to leverage technology, and this has opened up a new customer segment and been a huge growth area.

Breakout Sessions: Round 2

Bridging the Gender Gap in Crisis Times: Adapting a Gender-Lens Approach to Program Development

Women entrepreneurs in West Africa face challenges given the socio-cultural factors that influence their experiences, including gender biases, cultural norms around domestic responsibilities to family, among others that prevent them from fulfilling their business ambition. The shift to the virtual space provides flexibility and increased participation of women entrepreneurs, and many intermediary organizations are adjusting their programs in this regard. This session explored how stakeholders in the African ecosystem can adopt a gender lens approach, improve program accessibility for women entrepreneurs and utilize data for inclusive development.

BREAKOUT SESSION LEAD DISCUSSANTS:

Brenda Wandera, African Management Institute
Patricia Maina, African Management Institute
Adenike Adeyemi, Fate Foundation
Anna Domingo Riu, International Finance Corporation (IFC)

DISCUSSION

What are the critical factors that have widened the gender gap during COVID-19, and how are those factors affecting women entrepreneurs?

• Several reports from Africa and worldwide have been on how COVID-19 has amplified many challenges that women entrepreneurs face daily. Some of these challenges existed before the crisis, for instance, access to finance. However, the pandemic-related restrictions on financing have posed even more significant barriers to the operations and financial stability of women entrepreneurs.
• There are several reasons why COVID-19 impacts SGBs, some of which are that women-led businesses are smaller in size. There are high levels of informality in some sectors and countries where women entrepreneurs operate. This has posed a challenge and barrier for some of these businesses even to access some available support services.
• Also, there is a concentration of women-led businesses in some heavily affected sectors in the crisis, such as trade, manufacturing, hospitality, and tourism.
• Another factor is the increase in care responsibilities; for example, kids not attending school due to closures has given more care responsibilities, especially to women, and less time to dedicate to their businesses or access business development support.

What are some of the current opportunities available to support the growth and development of women entrepreneurs during this time, especially the women in rural areas who are hit hardest by this crisis?
• Virtual programs with their flexibility, resources, tools, and courses to support businesses are helping to bridge the gap and provide opportunities, especially to women in rural settings. However, because of issues around internet connectivity, virtual learning platforms need to improve their accessibility by allowing users to download resources to be used offline.
• There have also been programs to support women entrepreneurs with their operations and digital transformation processes.

How can organizations adopt a better gender lens approach to address some of the needs and challenges of women entrepreneurs?
• First, organizations need to adopt a gender lens approach to program design from the planning to recruitment, implementation to support services, and impact reporting.
• Situating the gender approach in program design means that you can consider the specific needs of female-led businesses to make the program more inclusive. There also needs to be equity of access, treatment, and outcomes.
• There is also a need to leverage data to understand the participants and consider demographics, sector, digital situation, and business stage beyond gender.
• Programs should include skill development support, e.g., communication, financial literacy and technical skills.
• Intermediary organizations also need to partner with experts in gender issues to develop their capacity and design more effective programs.

How can we increase women's participation in development programs?
• Women entrepreneurs need to be involved in the design of such programs.
• There must be a consideration of the means of disseminating information on opportunities for women-led businesses to ensure that these women are being targeted. Multiple means of dissemination should be used, and key influencers and stakeholders should be involved.
• Entrepreneurial Support Organizations developing programs for women entrepreneurs will greatly benefit from existing guides such as the Gender-Responsive Training Methods: A Guidance Note that contains a supplement on the gender-inclusive considerations for the design, implementation and evaluation of programs taking into account individuality, family, and country.
• There is an increasing need to develop entrepreneurship networks among women entrepreneurs, which is crucial to increasing market access to consumers.
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Virtual learning has positively impacted women in rural communities, giving them the flexibility to learn and build capacity while playing multiple roles.
- It is essential to leverage the gender lens approach and gender mainstreaming in designing and implementing inclusive, accessible, and impact-driven programs.
- Ensuring equity among the mentorship community is key, as representation is necessary for inclusive development.
- In designing programs for female entrepreneurs, intermediaries need to create holistic curriculums comprising peer learning, network building, and improvement modules and activities. Designing programs that consider personality traits, family/care responsibilities, demographics, culture, and traditional norms is fundamental for women entrepreneurs’ holistic support.
- In providing support for female entrepreneurs, intermediaries need to consider the different sectors, needs, and demands and customize our programs appropriately.
- Data is key to inclusive development. Intermediaries need data to support women adequately, understand their pain points, and provide solutions.
- There is a need to leverage partnership and collaboration for extensive reach and holistic support.
- Policy advocacy and institutionalized gender mainstreaming would lead to unprecedented and holistic change for women and women entrepreneurs across the board.

Exploring a Storytelling Framework Approach to Impact Measurement and Management

Storytelling can be explored as an effective means to measure impact qualitatively. However, many social impact organizations do not compellingly tell their impact story. In 2020 ANDE, ACT Foundation and Entrepreneurship to the Point (ETTP) released a report on the Impact Measurement and Management Landscape in Nigeria and Ghana. Only 42.86 participants shared their impact stories. This Masterclass took a deep dive into storytelling as a crucial tool for change and leveraging the power of storytelling for entrepreneurship development.

FACILITATORS:

Shawn Theunissen, Entrepreneurship to the Point
Khutjo Langa, Entrepreneurship to the Point
DISCUSSION:

What is the Social Impact Storytelling Framework?
It is a framework that showcases storytelling as an essential component of impact measurement and management framework or strategy. It underscores how we speak about the impact of our programs to beneficiaries, donors, and other stakeholders.

What is storytelling?
• An Individual narrative is like a fragment of data that provides a perspective at one point in time from a particular point of view. You get the essence when personal stories provide qualitative information.
• Stories provide insights into processes to show impact, atmosphere, innovation, and support numerical data.
• Data from storytelling has been used to identify issues to support project development and facilitate reflections on experiences.
• In understanding storytelling as a framework of an essential component of the social impact, you need to realize that there are two things involved, people and experiences.
• Storytelling lends itself to a participatory change process because it relies on people to understand their own experiences and environments.
• Stories can be used to focus on particular interventions while also reflecting on the array of contextual factors that influence outcomes.
• Stories can be shared to target different audiences, from your funders to policymakers, media to the general public.
• By leveraging storytelling, you can demonstrate change in the outcome level from a beneficiary perspective.

Social Impact Story Map
• The first step is to define the story's purpose, as stories can be used for various purposes: to educate, pleasure, solve problems, communicate differences in your organization or call for action.
• Link it to your primary metrics embedded in your theory of change aligned to the organizational impact objectives that you would like to communicate to all your stakeholders.
• Select a beneficiary that exemplifies the achievement of primary impact metrics. This provides a human story your target audience can connect with.
• Status quo challenges:
  • i. What did the life of your beneficiary look like before the program?
  • ii. What were some of the beneficiary' goals and aspirations?
  • iii. What were some of the challenges or obstacles that the beneficiary was facing?
• Breakthrough: How did your program help the beneficiary overcome their obstacle?
• Impact or the call for action:
  • i. How did the program or initiative impact people's lives, and what has been accomplished?
  • ii. What lessons can be learned from the story?
  • iii. What action can your audience take to advance the cause?
• Sharing your social impact story: Share your story on platforms where your key audience can engage with your story.
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

• It is of utmost importance to tell stories through the data that we collect.
• Stories transform data into reality.

Adopting a Network Approach to Deepen Engagement, Strengthen Inclusion and Drive Economic Growth

This discussion drew on Creative Metier’s research in Eastern and Western Africa to demonstrate the potential of a network approach to deepen impact, support inclusion, and economic growth.

BREAKOUT SESSION LEAD DISCUSSANTS:

Wangechi Muriuki, Creative Metier
Carol Annang, Invest in Africa
Bamidele Seun Owoola, Welcome2Africa
Edwin Zu-Cudjoe, Social Enterprise Ghana

DISCUSSION:

Reflections and experiences on the Network Approach and potential in deepening engagement and increasing impact, particularly drawing on the converge model’s learning and current and ongoing research.

• In using the Network Approach, it is essential to understand and articulate the interests of the different members of the network. Understanding them makes it easier to facilitate the right services or partnerships required for them to excel.
• For example, the Africa Partner Pool, a network of small and growing businesses in Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal, has been able to facilitate access to finance and market, improve peer learning, and provide opportunities for the exchange of goods and services.
• The five basic principles of the Network Approach include: having a clarified purpose as an organization, convening members regularly, cultivating trust, coordinating activities, and the need for a committed network leader.
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Networks can accelerate growth and impact.
- Networks thrive with clearly defined objectives and a desire to identify and proffer solutions to member needs.
- The visibility of networks can be increased through partnerships and collaboration with government institutions, media, research organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Networks can leverage digital, traditional and social media platforms to showcase member activities.
- Networking has the power to transform if it is done in a structured way.
- Research and data are crucial to visibility and network strengthening.

Breakout Sessions: Round 3

Utilizing Insights to Inform Decision Making and Drive Change

COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of rapid insight gathering and learning to make informed decisions and drive change as the needs and expectations evolve quickly. This panel discussion explored insights in entrepreneurship and identified the critical decision points that ensure an insight-driven organization’s development to promote change.

BREAKOUT SESSION LEAD DISCUSSANTS:

Maphefo Sipula, Entrepreneurship to the Point
John Scicchitano, Pangea Africa
Desigan Chetty, Entrepreneurship to the Point

DISCUSSION

What are insights, and why is it important to utilize insights to inform decision-making and drive change?

- Insights are the underlining answers to foundational questions of your business model, including what your target market is, who your customers are, your competitors, investors, potential donors, and what their requirements are.
- Insights help an organization gain an accurate and deep understanding of a defined phenomenon. If we know the root cause of a challenge, we will be able to solve that particular challenge and see our impact on society.
Why is it important for us to build insight-driven organizations?

- It is important to be an insight-driven organization because every society has social, economic, and political challenges.
- It is valuable and essential for any entrepreneur to start with some reasonably clear observation and then dig deeper into the particular market insights and price margins, total cost, and resources.
- Data plays a vital role in informing insights; however, you need to be objective about the data and the problem.

What are those other key considerations that one should take when formulating their insights?

- Partnership and collaboration can help entrepreneurs gain insights. Entrepreneurs have a somewhat limited ability to research academic work, but collaboration across the stakeholder matrix can help to distil insights and make them actionable.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Data plays a vital role in informing insights by identifying specific trends or patterns.
- Insights are the underlining answers to foundational questions of your business model, including what your target market is, who your customers are, your competitors, investors, potential donors, and what their requirements are.

What Instruments Can Support Innovation that Target SGBs in the Agricultural Sector?

Small and growing businesses (SGBs) in West Africa that fall within the agricultural value chain would benefit from an investment in innovation that could lead to new technologies, organizational arrangements, and marketing approaches. These innovations have to balance economic, environmental, and social needs. This session does a deep-dive into innovations and research around Sustainable Agriculture Intensification (SAI) in Africa. It examines preliminary findings from the study of such instruments led by the Commission on Sustainable Agricultural Intensification (CoSAI).

BREAKOUT SESSION LEAD DISCUSSANTS:

Dr. Djibril Thiam, AgrobioServices
Dr. Brigid Letty, Institute of Natural Resources
Anna Samake, MBC Africa
Yvonne Ofosu-Appiah, Wangara Green Ventures
CASE STUDY: APPROACHES AND INSTRUMENT STUDY BY THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE INTENSIFICATION (COSAI)

A range of approaches and financial instruments have been used to stimulate and support innovation in agriculture and resolve interlocking constraints to uptake at scale; for example, innovation platforms, results-based payments, value chain approaches, grants and prizes, incubators, participatory work with farmer networks. The Approaches And Instruments Study aims to develop lessons and guidance based on this evidence to aid innovators and investors in choosing funding approaches and instruments to support innovation in SAI for different contexts and objectives.

Preliminary Set of Instruments
- Challenge Funds
- Innovation funds
- Prizes and Awards
- Insurance for Innovation
- Innovation, Incubators, and Accelerator Hubs
- Farmer Research Networks
- Living Labs
- Farmer Field Schools
- Brokerage and intermediaries
- Result based Funding

Preliminary Findings
- Innovation is when new knowledge or technology is applied so that it leads to social or economic benefits.
- Most Instruments rely on bringing multiple stakeholders together.
- Many are virtual rather than brick and mortar structures.
- Most instruments are evolving so that they have a clear focus on supporting market access.

DISCUSSION

Which of the preliminary instruments do you think has been particularly relevant for supporting innovation by small growing businesses and why?
- To have a very healthy innovation ecosystem in agriculture, you have first to develop the ecosystem in the rural area and get all the stakeholders involved, for example, the technology and financing value chain.
- The instruments needed are dependent on the innovation, target customers, and the business stage, so we must look at the continuum of the innovation and the business model to go to market and scale.
- Innovation and Incubator hubs play a huge role as an instrument in supporting businesses in ideation with business development services and serve as a pipeline for investor funds.

What sort of support do you think small and growing businesses that are ready to innovate need?
- Small and growing businesses need Investment Readiness Support. They need to be able to identify their market, size, develop and commercialize.
- There is also a need to build the capacity of young people and ensure work readiness.
- Accessing investment is key for small and growing businesses; there needs to be a country-level approach to financing.