

exploring  
**AFRICAN** agricultural  
**FUTURES**

**KEYNOTE**

**Paul Richards**  
Wageningen University  
Njala University

**PANELISTS**

**Million Belay**  
Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa  
Stockholm Resilience Centre

**Hussein Haji**  
Somali Agriculture Technical Group

**Abbyssinia Mushunje**  
University of Fort Hare

**Rebecca Nelson**  
Cornell University  
McKnight Foundation Collaborative  
Crop Research Program

**Bronwen Powell**  
Pennsylvania State University

**Batamaka Somé**  
McKnight Foundation Collaborative  
Crop Research Program

Public Symposium  
**PROGRAM**

**November 9–10, 2017**  
**120 Elmer L. Andersen Library**  
**University of Minnesota**

**SPECIAL SESSION**

*ICGC Faculty-Student Seminar*  
**African Agricultural Futures Related to  
Food Sovereignty and Social Justice**

**Elizabeth Mpofu**  
La Via Campesina

Organized by the African Studies Initiative,  
a Title VI African Studies National Resource Center funded at  
the University of Minnesota by the U.S. Department of Education

[africa.umn.edu](http://africa.umn.edu)

Co-sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change,  
Global Programs and Strategy Alliance, and UMN Extension Global Initiatives



## African Studies Initiative

# Exploring African Agricultural Futures

## African Studies Initiative Public Symposium

co-sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change,  
Global Programs and Strategy Alliance, and UMN Extension Global Initiatives

November 9–10, 2017 • 120 Elmer L. Andersen Library  
University of Minnesota

## Welcome

The African Studies Initiative (ASI), a University of Minnesota Title VI African Studies National Resource Center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is pleased to convene this international public symposium on **Exploring African Agricultural Futures**. The Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC), Global Programs and Strategy (GPS) Alliance, and UMN Extension Global Initiatives are co-sponsoring the symposium. The event expands on prior discussions of food and agriculture in Africa at the University of Minnesota, among these the October 2016 ASI Campus Conversation “African Studies and Agronomy: Points of Intersection” and the August 2017 ASI-sponsored publication workshop “Contemporary Efforts to Transform African Agriculture: Actors, Institutions, and Ideas.”

Africa faces many different agricultural futures, with some receiving more donor and institutional attention than others. Most prominent of these in recent years has been the new Green Revolution for Africa, which is being promoted by mainstream development agencies, the Gates Foundation, African state actors, and multinational agribusiness firms. From their various vantage points—admittedly not homogenous—these new Green Revolution advocates often see in commercial farming and the introduction of exogenous agricultural technologies (including hybrid seeds, pesticides, and inorganic fertilizers) the promise of higher crop yields that can feed growing African populations; an opportunity to substantially reduce African smallholder poverty and rural malnutrition; the possibility of countering crises such as famine and drought and their human toll in hunger and starvation; and a means of promoting economic self-sufficiency of the continent. Simultaneously, some agroecologists, social scientists, historians, and NGO representatives harbor deep concerns about this approach. They argue that increasing farmer dependency on external inputs, commercial credit, and markets will expose smallholders to untenable economic, agronomic, and nutritional risks while also privileging those with the greatest access to resources. While not univocal, the latter group contends that approaches rooted in local agricultural and ecological knowledges, technologies, and systems are far more likely to improve rural food security, nutrition, and environmental sustainability for the smallholding farming systems that have historically fed the continent.

We take as points of departure the importance of enhancing the economic and nutritional well-being of African smallholder farmers; the very serious issue of environmental sustainability; and questions of gender equity. This symposium will explore the implications, viability, and risks of diverse approaches to African agricultural futures, ideally generating productive conversations and new ideas.

We are delighted to bring into conversation, here at Minnesota, experts from the worlds of research, policy, and practice in Africa, Europe, and the United States. To our speakers and to all in attendance, we extend a warm welcome!

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## Exploring African Agricultural Futures

### African Studies Initiative Public Symposium

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#### SCHEDULE | Thursday, November 9

11:30–11:40 am: Welcome, opening remarks, introductions by Shaden M. Tageldin, Director, African Studies Initiative

11:40–11:50 am: Welcome by Evelyn Davidheiser, Director, Institute for Global Studies, and Assistant Dean for International Programs, College of Liberal Arts

11:50 am–1:00 pm: Lunch

1:00–3:00 pm | *Special Session*: ICGC Faculty-Student Seminar: Food Security, Food Sovereignty, and Social Justice

Welcome by Karen Brown, Director, Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC)

*Speaker*: Elizabeth Mpfu, General Coordinator, La Via Campesina

“African Agricultural Futures Related to Food Sovereignty and Social Justice”

3:00–3:30 pm: Coffee break

3:30–5:00 pm | Panel 1: Engaging Smallholder Farmers: Indigenous Knowledges, New Technologies

Moderator: Rachel Schurman, Professor, Sociology and Global Studies, University of Minnesota

- Hussein Haji, Somali Agriculture Technical Group (SATG): “Reviving Agriculture in Somalia Using Modern and Sustainable Agriculture Technologies”
- Rebecca Nelson, Cornell University and McKnight Foundation Collaborative Crop Research Program: “Farmer Research Networks: Towards Bigger Data by and for Smallholder Farmers”

5:00 pm: Informal mingling over coffee, tea, and refreshments

#### SCHEDULE | Friday, November 10

9:30 am: Continental breakfast

10:00–10:15 am: Welcome back, introductions by Shaden M. Tageldin, Director, African Studies Initiative

10:15–11:45 am | Panel 2: Contesting Productivist Agricultures: Toward Food Sovereignty and Diet Quality

Moderator: William Moseley, Professor, Geography / Director, Food, Agriculture & Society Program, Macalester College

- Million Belay, Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa and Stockholm Resilience Centre: “Africa: The Battle Ground for Productivist and Agroecological Paradigms”
- Bronwen Powell, Pennsylvania State University: “Ensuring Diet Quality and Nutrition in the Face of Agricultural Intensification and Landscape Change across Africa”

*(schedule continues next page)*

## **SCHEDULE | Friday, November 10 (continued)**

**11:45 am–1:00 pm: Lunch**

**1:00–2:30 pm | Panel 3: Negotiating the Green and Gene Revolutions: Global Paradigms, Local Strategies**

**Moderator: Tade Okediji, Associate Professor and Chair, African American and African Studies / Associate Professor, Applied Economics, University of Minnesota**

- **Abbyssinia Mushunje, University of Fort Hare: “Integrating Green Revolution, Gene Revolution, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa”**
- **Batamaka Somé, West Africa Community of Practice, McKnight Foundation Collaborative Crop Research Program: “Selective Adhesion: Donors’ Packages and Smallholder Farmers’ Decisions in the African Sahel”**

**2:30–2:45 pm: Coffee break**

**3:00–4:30 pm | Keynote Address**

**Paul Richards, Emeritus Professor of Technology and Agrarian Development, Wageningen University  
Advisor to the Directorate of Research and Planning, Njala University**

### **The African Experimenting Farmer: Marginalized but Necessary in an Era of Global Climatic Change**

How can the world avoid massive social dislocation caused by global warming? Africa will be a key test. The continent is projected to experience huge population increase during a period of heightening climatic instability. This demographic-cum-climatic “time bomb” will further boost outmigration of many rural young people both to coastal cities and across the Mediterranean towards Europe. Climate change (greater dryness in interior districts, greater wetness in coastal regions) is already beginning to demand substantial change in African agrarian systems, without which the currently poor living conditions in African coastal mega-cities will become worse. A veritable agricultural revolution is required. Despite current enthusiasm, the new Green Revolution for Africa is unlikely to generate the widely adopted and climatically robust solutions required. It is too oriented towards enclaves of “farming for business” and mired in thinking about agrarian change imported from Europe, America, or Asia. A better source for adaptive agrarian change is to be found in the distributed adaptive experimentation of those who live with the challenges of African agriculture on a daily basis: local farming communities. This keynote address assesses the current state of this population of key responders: both their awareness of drivers of change and their current capacity for development of effective responses to challenges of market integration and environmental change via distributed processes of “unsupervised learning.”

**4:30–4:45 pm: Thanks, closing remarks, farewells by Shaden M. Tageldin, Director, African Studies Initiative**

**4:45–5:30 pm: Informal mingling over coffee, tea, and refreshments**

**6:00 pm: Dinner for invited symposium participants (speakers, moderators, and planning committee) at Dilla’s Ethiopian Restaurant (address: 1813 Riverside Ave N, Minneapolis, MN 55454 • phone: 612-332-2898)**

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### Paul Richards

**Emeritus Professor of Technology and Agrarian Development, Wageningen University  
Advisor to the Directorate of Research and Planning, Njala University**



## **The African Experimenting Farmer: Marginalized but Necessary in an Era of Global Climatic Change**

How can the world avoid massive social dislocation caused by global warming? Africa will be a key test. The continent is projected to experience huge population increase during a period of heightening climatic instability. This demographic-cum-climatic “time bomb” will further boost outmigration of many rural young people both to coastal cities and across the Mediterranean towards Europe. Climate change (greater dryness in interior districts, greater wetness in coastal regions) is already beginning to demand substantial change in African agrarian systems, without which the currently poor living conditions in African coastal mega-cities will become worse. A veritable agricultural revolution is required. Despite current enthusiasm, the new Green Revolution for Africa is unlikely to generate the widely adopted and climatically robust solutions required. It is too oriented towards enclaves of “farming for business” and mired in thinking about agrarian change imported from Europe, America, or Asia. A better source for adaptive agrarian change is to be found in the distributed adaptive experimentation of those who live with the challenges of African agriculture on a daily basis: local farming communities. This keynote address assesses the current state of this population of key responders: both their awareness of drivers of change and their current capacity for development of effective responses to challenges of market integration and environmental change via distributed processes of “unsupervised learning.”

**Dr. Paul Richards** ([paul@akaresearch.co.uk](mailto:paul@akaresearch.co.uk) and [paul.richards1945@gmail.com](mailto:paul.richards1945@gmail.com)) was formerly Professor of Anthropology at University College London and is currently Emeritus Professor of Technology and Agrarian Development at Wageningen University in the Netherlands and advisor to the Directorate of Research and Planning at Njala University, central Sierra Leone. He has worked on issues of food security, armed conflict, and health in West Africa since 1968. His recent books include *Ebola: How a People's Science Helped End an Epidemic* (Zed Books, 2016) and (with Perri 6) a work of social theory inspired by Africanist ethnography, *Mary Douglas: Understanding Social Thought and Conflict* (Berghahn, 2017).

## SPECIAL SESSION

*Faculty-Student Seminar on Food Security, Food Sovereignty, and Social Justice*  
organized by the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC)

*Speaker:*

**Elizabeth Mpofu**

General Coordinator, La Via Campesina

## **African Agricultural Futures Related to Food Sovereignty and Social Justice**



**Elizabeth Mpofu** ([eliz.mpofu@gmail.com](mailto:eliz.mpofu@gmail.com)) is an organic farmer and activist who works tirelessly for the betterment of smallholder farmers. She is the current General Coordinator of La Via Campesina, the international peasant movement comprising some 164 local and national organizations in 73 countries in the defense of small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. She is also a Board member of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, representing La Via Campesina in Africa. Mpofu is a founding member and Chairperson of Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum (ZIMSOFF) and Board member of Eastern and Southern Smallholder Farmers' Forum (ESAFF), organizations which promote sustainable farming practices and the majority of whose members are women. She is currently working with African rural women leaders to build a grassroots movement that advances rural women's rights across the continent. In the 1980s and 1990s, Mpofu was Chairperson for the Association of Zimbabwe Traditional Environmental Conservationists (AZTREC). In 2016, she was appointed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UNFAO) as its Special Ambassador for the International Year of the Pulse for Africa. Mpofu's recent opinion column in the global magazine *Farming Matters* focused on issues of gender equality, women pastoralists, and traditional crops. She was featured in a series on food and seed sovereignty and is a regular speaker at events.

## PANELISTS

### **Million Belay**

**Coordinator, Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa**

**Researcher, Food Systems Transformation, Stockholm Resilience Centre**

#### **Africa: The Battle Ground for Productivist and Agroecological Paradigms**

This paper will begin by outlining challenges to African agriculture, including population explosion, urbanization, degradation of natural resources, erosion of biocultural diversity, and climate change. It then briefly introduces the solution given by the two paradigms, namely the productivist and the agroecological. The productivist narrative propounds that the problems listed above can be solved by producing more food with industrial agriculture methods using agro chemicals, hybrid seeds, irrigation, new farming techniques, and so on. The presentation will discuss some of the narratives that are driving this productivist paradigm and how these narratives enter into policies and legislations and how these strategies are leading practices on the ground. It will then touch upon the impacts that industrial agriculture has on health, human rights, the environment, and cultural values. It also will briefly discuss dangers of getting locked into this system. Agroecology is introduced as an alternative to this paradigm and is explained through the case studies collected and published by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa. The synthesis of the case studies shows how agroecology can feed Africa by promoting better utilization of natural resources and locally available knowledge, aided by science and supported by social movements for food sovereignty.

**Dr. Million Belay** ([million.belay@su.se](mailto:million.belay@su.se)) coordinates the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, a network of major networks in Africa. Currently he is a researcher in food systems transformation at the Stockholm Resilience Centre. He is a member of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food). Belay is a founder of MELCA–Ethiopia, an indigenous NGO working on issues of agroecology, intergenerational learning, advocacy, and livelihood improvement of local and indigenous peoples. Belay has been working for over two decades on intergenerational learning of biocultural diversity, sustainable agriculture, the right of local communities to seed and food sovereignty, and forest issues. His main interest is now advocacy on food sovereignty, learning among generations, knowledge dialogues, and the use of participatory mapping for social learning, identity building, and mobilization of memory for resilience. He holds a PhD in environmental learning, an MSc in tourism and conservation, and a BsC in Biology.

### **Hussein Haji**

**Executive Director, Somali Agriculture Technical Group (SATG)**

#### **Reviving Agriculture in Somalia Using Modern and Sustainable Agriculture Technologies**

Despite the tremendous challenges faced by Somalia over the last three decades, the agricultural sector, including livestock, remains the main livelihood and is critical both for the country's economic recovery and for its long-term development. Crop yields are extremely low, mainly due to poor agricultural practices; inadequate infrastructure, especially irrigation; and lack of government support services. Somali agriculture is based on traditional farming systems with minimal input use. The majority of farmers have very little knowledge in the use of modern agriculture technologies available to improve production. The Somali Agriculture Technical Group (SATG) was established to fill the knowledge gap resulting from the nearly three decades of conflict. While recognizing the potential use of the farmers' indigenous knowledge and practices, SATG identifies a range of technologies and evaluates for suitability to local conditions prior to dissemination. While using farmers' own seed (maize), SATG was able to show three- to four-fold yield increase using simple off-the-shelf technology. Considering the recurrent drought, SATG is currently promoting the use of climate-smart agriculture using early and drought-resistant varieties of maize, cowpeas, and mung beans; application of organic and inorganic fertilizers, as most Somali soils are deficient in nitrogen and phosphorous; and introduction of minimum tillage while also encouraging associated Good Agricultural Practices. Training farmers is extremely important for SATG, as most Somali farmers have been out of touch with extension support services for the past 27 years.

**Dr. Hussein Haji** ([hhaji@satg.org](mailto:hhaji@satg.org)) has served for twenty years with the Ministry of Agriculture in Somalia. He worked as Senior Researcher and a lecturer of Genetics and Plant Breeding at the Somali National University. He also has served as the coordinator of the national sorghum improvement program and director of the central agriculture research station. In 1990, he traveled to

Canada, where he obtained his MSc and PhD in Genetics and Plant Breeding at the University of Guelph. Soon after his graduation, he joined Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Tobacco Research Foundation, where he served for 10 years as a lead scientist in the tobacco breeding and biotechnology department. During his service, he developed both open pollinated as well as hybrid varieties of tobacco using state-of-the-art technologies. While working with the Canadian Tobacco Research Foundation, Haji joined other agriculture professionals in founding the Somali Agriculture Technical Group (SATG). He is currently the Executive Director of the Somali Agriculture Technical Group.

## **Abbyssinia Mushunje**

**Professor of Agricultural Economics and Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension,  
University of Fort Hare**

### **Integrating Green Revolution, Gene Revolution, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Sub-Saharan Africa has been grappling with poverty and food insecurity. Agriculture has been identified as a way out of this quagmire, with the Asian and Latin American green revolutions identified as model strategies. The objective of this paper is to review the highlights of the green revolution, how it is being integrated in the gene revolution, and the position of indigenous knowledge systems in curtailing food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa. The literature shows that, with the exception of isolated cases, the green revolution in sub-Saharan Africa has been a failure. This has been due to spatial and temporal differences, unpredictable weather patterns, lack of infrastructure, and reduced government financial and advisory support. Furthermore, the green revolution in sub-Saharan Africa has been modeled on the Asian and Latin American cases; however, unlike Asia and Latin America—whose agricultural systems, for various reasons, underwent more successful green revolutions and are now able to adapt their institutions and infrastructures to the gene revolution—the African continent has entered the gene revolution era with its green revolution unfinished, still struggling to adapt untenable green-revolution structures to African contexts. Policies concerning the “green revolutionizing” of sub-Saharan Africa have also been reactive instead of proactive, with indigenous knowledge systems taking a back seat on the continent’s production system. The study concludes that the green revolution has not been context- and specific-area-based; rather, it has taken a blanket approach in applying alien methodologies. The study recommends that on its own, the green revolution inadequately circumvents low productivity, requiring proactive integration with the gene revolution and indigenous knowledge systems.

**Dr. Abyssinia Mushunje** ([AMushunje@ufh.ac.za](mailto:AMushunje@ufh.ac.za)) is Full Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa. He is also the Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension at the same university. Mushunje is a national board member of the South African Foundation on Economic and Financial Education (SAFEFE), and he is the Eastern Cape Provincial Coordinator of Economic Education in South Africa. He holds a BSc in Agricultural Economics (Honours) from the University of Zimbabwe and an MSc (*cum laude*) and PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Fort Hare, as well as a National Council on Economics Education (USA) Trainer Certificate and an Environmental Leadership Program Certificate from the University of California, Berkeley. Mushunje’s most recent research has focused on land reform, farm efficiency, food security, climate change, ecotourism, and food systems, among other topics. He has published some 40 papers in international peer-reviewed journals. To date he has successfully supervised 25 Masters and 13 PhD students and has presented over 20 papers at local conferences and several others internationally in countries like Namibia, United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Turkey, and China. Mushunje is current Editor-in-Chief of the *Fort Hare Papers* journal.

## **Rebecca Nelson**

**Professor, School of Integrative Plant Science, Cornell University  
Scientific Director, McKnight Foundation Collaborative Crop Research Program**

### **Farmer Research Networks: Towards Bigger Data by and for Smallholder Farmers**

The McKnight Foundation Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP) supports diverse research teams to contribute to the evidence base for agroecological intensification (AEI) of smallholder agriculture in Africa and the Andes. AEI is defined as improving the performance of farms and farming systems through the integration of agroecological principles and practices.

Given the diverse conditions faced by African farmers, agroecological approaches must be locally adapted to socio-ecological contexts in order to achieve AEI. Participatory methods are needed to facilitate this adaptation and to learn from the process, but engaging rural communities at scale is a formidable challenge. The CCRP has envisaged farmers research networks (FRNs) to enable large-scale, farmer-centered AEI research. FRNs typically involve farmers, NGOs, and formal researchers, with NGOs often in key roles. FRNs are currently being implemented in several African countries. Guided by a set of shared principles, they range in leadership models, structure, size, and focus. FRNs led by researchers tend to focus on specific problems or opportunities, while those led by NGOs and farmer organizations are more variable in their scope, sometimes tackling multiple issues of interest to farmers. NGO participation has enabled some experiments to involve many hundreds of farmers. The “bigger data” is allowing better matching of options to farmers’ diverse socio-ecological contexts and niches. This presentation will provide an update on the progress and learning achieved to date across a range of FRNs.

**Dr. Rebecca Nelson** ([rin7@cornell.edu](mailto:rin7@cornell.edu)) is a professor in the School of Integrative Plant Science at Cornell University and a member of the fields of Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Biology, Plant Breeding and Genetics, and International Agriculture and Rural Development. She serves as Scientific Director for the McKnight Foundation’s Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP). Through the CCRP ([ccrp.org](http://ccrp.org)), Nelson contributes to the support of a portfolio of research projects aimed at improving food security in 12 countries in Africa and Latin America. At Cornell, she co-teaches courses on “Perspectives in International Agriculture and Rural Development” and “Food Systems and Health.” Her laboratory collaborates with maize geneticists and nutritionists in the United States and Africa to reduce vulnerability of maize to fungal pathogens, with special interest in mycotoxin management. Nelson also serves as co-chair of the Thematic Group on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems for the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), a global initiative for the United Nations. Prior to moving to Cornell in 2001, she worked at the International Potato Center in Lima, Peru (1996–2001), and at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines (1988–1996).

## **Bronwen Powell**

**Assistant Professor of Geography and African Studies, Pennsylvania State University**

### **Ensuring Diet Quality and Nutrition in the Face of Agricultural Intensification and Landscape Change across Africa**

African landscapes are changing rapidly, and land-use policymakers are faced with competing demands and limited (and often overly simplified) evidence on which to base decisions. Many conservationists argue that agricultural intensification will be the best way to conserve biodiversity while providing sufficient food (Phalan et al. 2011). In many places “agricultural intensification” has meant increasingly large-scale agriculture and a focus on increasing yields of staple crops (Moseley et al. 2015). While many countries in Africa continue to have some of the highest rates of impaired child growth (under-nutrition), a large number of countries in Africa now have obesity rates and impaired glucose tolerance rates that are higher than those of most European countries (IFPRI 2016). Agricultural and land-use policies that focus on intensification and increasing yields of staple crops, without attention to nutritionally important foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, and lean animal foods, will do little to improve the nutrition situation in Africa. African policymakers need to support agricultural systems that produce diverse and affordable foods, especially nutritionally important foods. Emerging evidence suggests that in some contexts, a large portion of these healthy foods come from the wild and that diverse agricultural landscapes that include trees and forests are better able to provide a healthy and diverse diet. The production of cheap staple foods has led to rapid change in agricultural landscapes. Continuing this trajectory will not likely have a positive impact on either human nutrition or environmental sustainability.

**Dr. Bronwen Powell** ([bxp15@psu.edu](mailto:bxp15@psu.edu)) is an Assistant Professor of Geography and African Studies at Penn State University. Her research examines the social, cultural, and environmental drivers of human nutrition, diet, and food security. She is best known for her research linking biodiversity, forests and wild foods, and human nutrition. She seeks to understand how people draw on wild and agricultural resources and diversity to improve dietary diversity, food security, and nutrition. More recently Powell has been looking at the ways in which landscape structure and different land-use types impact diet and nutrition. She completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the Center for International Forestry Research, a PhD in Human Nutrition from McGill University, and an MSc in Ethnobiology from the Department of Anthropology, University of Kent, Canterbury, England. Her field sites include Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Morocco. She has published widely for diverse audiences, including background papers for various United Nations meetings. She was a member of the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO) Global Forest Expert Panel on Forests and Food Security and Nutrition and the United Nations Committee on World Food Security’s High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (Report published June 2017).

## **Batamaka Somé**

**Regional Representative, West Africa Community of Practice (CoP), McKnight Foundation Collaborative Crop Research Program**

### **Selective Adhesion: Donors' Packages and Smallholder Farmers' Decisions in the African Sahel**

In their aim to achieve food security and economic improvement within smallholder farmer households in Africa, donor-sponsored agriculture programs use a diversity of approaches. One of these offers packages of agricultural value chains that usually come along with demand for mineral and organic fertilizers and improved inputs, which may not always be affordable by the most economically vulnerable households. Another group of donors, usually smaller in size, tends to build on smallholders' endogenous knowledges and cultures of food cropping, including the most marginal crops, to advance farmers' food security priorities, taking into considerations their contexts, gender, and diverse social statuses. At any rate, although smallholder farmers tend to adhere to program packages that present some potential, as a way of diversifying and mitigating risk, they operate within a realm of subtleties that governs the logic of their priorities. In this talk, I draw from case examples from the field of agricultural development in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger to show that farmers wield some agency—slyly be it—in deciding which aspects of the package portfolios to adopt. They do so because such aspects are aligned with their priorities and are fit for enhancement, even in situations when program content is imposed on them from the top. I conclude by presenting the benefits of an integrated approach that builds on local socio-environmental contexts marinated with endogenous knowledges and practices and global agricultural perspectives and technologies.

**Dr. Batamaka Somé** ([batamaka@gmail.com](mailto:batamaka@gmail.com)), a practicing anthropologist, is a research consultant based in Burkina Faso. He has conducted work in agriculture and gender, cash crop farming, agricultural productivity and market access, food security, and women's economic empowerment. Somé has provided technical advising to non-government, philanthropic, and humanitarian organizations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Somé also drafted the WFP West and Central Africa Bureau's Regional Gender Strategy for 2015–2020, as well as reports on local governance of natural resources and climate change adaptation among pastoralists for the International Livestock Research Institute. He currently works mostly as the Regional Representative of the West Africa Community of Practice (CoP) of the McKnight Foundation's Collaborative Crop Research Program. Prior to embracing international development work, Somé garnered 15 years of teaching in high school and in higher education. He holds a Masters and a PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology and a Master's Certificate in Gender Relations in International Development from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (USA). He also holds a BA in English, a Master's degree in African literature, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Education from the University of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso).

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*Exploring African Agricultural Futures* is organized by the African Studies Initiative (ASI) at the University of Minnesota, a Title VI African Studies National Resource Center funded by the U.S. Department of Education:

**Director:** Shaden M. Tageldin, Associate Professor, Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature

**Associate Director:** Klaas van der Sanden, Institute for Global Studies

**Outreach Coordinator:** Deborah Jane, Institute for Global Studies

Our thanks to the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC), Global Programs and Strategy (GPS) Alliance, and UMN Extension Global Initiatives for co-sponsoring this symposium, and to ICGC for organizing the special faculty-student seminar session with Elizabeth Mpofo of La Via Campesina. Our thanks also to the following colleagues for invaluable contributions: Evelyn Davidheiser, Director, Institute for Global Studies, and Assistant Dean for International Programs, College of Liberal Arts; Pat Baehler and Emily Janisch, Events Coordinators, Institute for Global Studies; and the ASI Planning Committee on Food and Agriculture in Africa, which steered the event:

Karen Brown, Director, Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change

Deborah Jane, Outreach Coordinator, Institute for Global Studies, College of Liberal Arts

William Moseley, Professor of Geography and Director of Food, Agriculture & Society Program, Macalester College

Tade Okediji, Associate Professor and Chair, African American and African Studies, College of Liberal Arts /

Associate Professor, Applied Economics, College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences

Paul Porter, Professor, Agronomy and Plant Genetics, College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences

Rachel Schurman, Professor, Sociology and Global Studies, College of Liberal Arts