



DATE: 6TH APRIL 2025
VENUE: UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

ROAD TO THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT +4 STOCKTAKE (27-29 TH JULY 2025) PREPARATORY MEETING AND 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**THEME: "CHAMPIONING INNOVATION AND ACTION FOR
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS"**

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BACKGROUND

From its inception, the UN Food Systems Summit has been organized by the UN Secretariat to enhance the food systems approach to speed up progress on all the sustainable development goals (SDGs). In its commitment to ensuring achievement of the SDGs, the GCSAYN launched its preparatory dialogue meeting across the 170 countries of its operation on 7th March, 2025, and rolled-out institutional dialogues where each Centre of Excellence (CoE) would independently implement their own dialogues, tailored programs, including workshops, research initiatives, and advocacy campaigns.

Objective(s)

The key objective of the dialogues across the CoEs was to mobilize youth, women, persons with disabilities, the aging, indigenous people, and foster engagements that empower these stakeholders in agriculture, education, and technology to contribute actively to agri-food systems solutions.

Through these dialogues, knowledge sharing, and capacity building in skills that are beneficial for sustainable food production, environmental stewardship, and policy advocacy, the role of the aforementioned stakeholders in partnership with academic institutions in shaping global agri-food systems would be strengthened.

INTRODUCTION

GCSAYN remains dedicated to fostering an inclusive, action-oriented approach towards mending the broken agri-food systems. The Road to UNFSS+4 remains an important call to action for youth, women, persons with disabilities, the aging, indigenous people, educators, and policymakers to work together for a resilient, food-secure future.

I: Keynote: The Road towards the UNFSS+4

The University of Zambia (UNZA) CoE held its preparatory meeting on 6th April, 2025. The session opened with an atmosphere of purpose and unity, bringing together 115 passionate change-makers. A vibrant mix of youth advocates, institutional partners, and development stakeholders rallied around a shared vision: to reshape the future of agriculture through climate-smart innovation in the SADC region.

A moment of heartfelt silence was observed to honour the life and legacy of Rebecca Waah, a respected leader in sustainability and lifelong service to humanity. Her passing on 5th July 2023 marked the end of a remarkable journey, yet sparked a legacy that continues to inspire. Motivated by her unwavering commitment, her son, Divine Ntiokam, founder and Executive Director of the Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network Global (GCSAYN) launched the Rebecca Waah Awards, a living tribute to her values, and a dynamic platform that continues to empower young people across continents in the fight against climate change and food insecurity among others. Her spirit and dedication were keenly felt as participants reflected on the roots and mission of the network.

Setting the tone for the dialogue, Ms Olipa N. Lungu, a distinguished lecturer of Agrometeorology, climate change and food security, at the University of Zambia and the SADC Hub Coordinator for GCSAYN, delivered the opening remarks with both clarity and conviction. She reaffirmed the Network's steadfast role in the global movement for sustainable food systems, aligning with commitments under the UN Food Systems Summit, and underscored the significance of SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals. Her message was unequivocal: no one must be left behind as we strive to build a more equitable and climate-resilient agricultural future.



Figure 1 Ms. Olipa Lungu, (Lecturer) GCSAYN UNZA CoE Lead and SADC Hub coordinator

The sessions that followed were enriched by a series of thought-provoking presentations, each shedding light on different dimensions of climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and its intersection with environmental sustainability, stable food systems, and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

II: Defining Climate-Smart Agriculture and Expanding Horizons

Sydney Mfuné set the stage with a compelling introduction to the fundamentals of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA). He articulated CSA as a strategic approach designed to sustainably boost agricultural productivity, strengthen resilience to climate shocks, and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions a triad essential to ensuring food security in an era of escalating climate uncertainty. Going beyond theory, Sydney shared his experiences at the Network as well as his forthcoming participation in a six-month internship programme on rice production, which he described as a pivotal opportunity to deepen his practical understanding and contribute meaningfully to field-level CSA initiatives. This is made possible through the Network's Virtual Academy Platform and the Exchange Program which connects mentees to world-class researchers, and industry leaders to foster career growth and leadership skills. He further highlighted his role in the UNZA CoE's engagement with the children and youth in agriculture under the Centre's Zero Hunger Challenge flagship, which encourages children from Primary to university level to participate in agricultural production and environmental protection. Having worked with more than 150 learners from two schools, he believes that children need support as agents of change within their communities and commended the network's endeavour to "catch them young".



Figure 2 Mr. Sydney Mfuné (MSc. Student, UNZA) GCSAYN-Phil Rice Internship Fellow, 2025

III: Reviving Indigenous Wisdom for Nutritional Security

Mr. Mwila, the President of the Nutrition Association of Zambia, delivered a presentation rooted in cultural authenticity and nutritional science. He advocated for a return to traditional food systems, which he described as not only ecologically sustainable, but also nutrient-dense and emblematic of African identity. His address was a call to action for young people and all stakeholders present to champion indigenous food practices, positioning them as vital tools in the pursuit of nutrition security and food sovereignty.



Figure 3 Mr. Mwila, Nutrition Association of Zambia President

IV: Organic Farming as a Pathway to Ecological Restoration

Mr. Fred's contribution to the dialogue centred on the practice and promise of organic agriculture. With clarity and practical insight, he outlined organic farming techniques and emphasised its far-reaching benefits from enhancing soil fertility and protecting ecosystems, to promoting human health. His presentation functioned as both a technical guide and motivational blueprint for participant's eager to transition toward or support environmentally responsible farming systems using practical examples from his own enterprise.

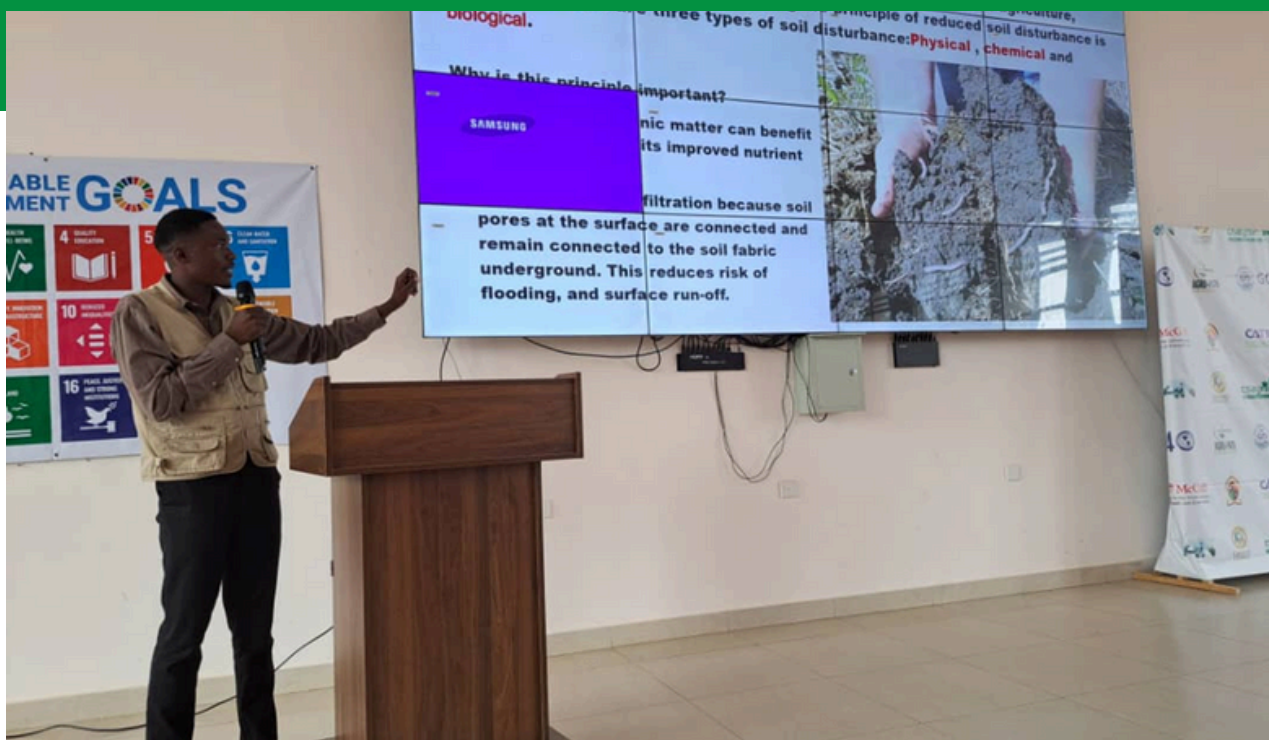


Figure 4 Mr. Fred (Agripreneur, and Organic Farmer)

V: The Power of Networks – A Personal Testimony

In a heartfelt narrative, Mr. Derrick Mukanshi shared his personal journey, offering a vivid example of how networking can unlock global opportunities and bring solutions as embedded in SDG17. Through active involvement in agricultural networks, he earned a place in an international climate programme in Italy, where he engaged with like-minded people from various organisations advancing CSA principles. His story served as a powerful reminder of the transformative power of collaboration, and the doors it can open when one is proactive, present, and purpose-driven. His active involvement at the GCSAYN UNZA CoE also includes engagements with marginalized groups such as the orphans and vulnerable children, and works around the Zero hunger challenge.

Virtual Address by Mr. Divine Ntiokam: Broadening the CSAYN Impact

Joining virtually, Mr. Divine Ntiokam, Executive Director of GCSAYN, reflected on the network's far-reaching impact over the years. He highlighted GCSAYN's efforts in providing internship opportunities, and its strategic engagement with individuals and especially institutions across all educational levels—primary, secondary, and tertiary. His remarks underlined the inclusive, grassroots-to-global approach of the network, commitment to ensuring that climate-smart agriculture remains accessible, participatory, and youth-led, while leaving no one behind.



Figure 5 Mr. Divine Ntiokam (On-Screen) GCSAYN Executive Director

The Road to UNFSS+4 Preparatory Meeting Summary

This pilot meeting at UNZA strengthened youth, women, persons with disabilities, the aging, and indigenous people's participation in global agri-food systems discussions. However, this was also a peculiar meeting as it served as a Launchpad for connection, strategic alignment, and collective momentum. From across diverse sectors and institutions, attendees exchanged insights, forged partnerships, and laid the groundwork for collaboration that transcends boundaries. From academia to government, private enterprise to student organisations, the room pulsed with innovation, purpose, and the determined energy of a generation ready to lead.

There was a general consensus from participants that there was need for

- Increased action to achieve food security through transformative and inclusive food systems.
- Enhanced collaboration between researchers from educational institutions and policymakers.
- Promotion of scalable best practices contributing to food security and sustainability such as those presented during the meetings.

Celebrating 10 Years of Impact: CSAYN at the Forefront of Climate Action

On the same day, 6th April 2025, the Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network Global (GCSAYN) commemorated its 10th anniversary, marking a decade of bold youth leadership in climate action. Founded in 2014 by Divine Ntiokam, inspired by the legacy of his late mother Rebecca Waah, the network has become a global force empowering not only young people but women, the elderly, in over 170 countries to drive sustainable agriculture and food system transformation.

Hosted by the University of Zambia's Centre of Excellence under the leadership of Ms Olipa N. Lungu, (a lecturer, in the Department of Land Management) the celebration was filled with reflections, storytelling, and renewed energy. A symbolic 10-year anniversary cake was shared, representing unity, growth, and a shared commitment to a resilient future. With its roots in grassroots activism and a vision for global impact, GCSAYN continues to inspire, connect, and lead the next generation of climate-smart innovators.



Figure 6 Cake-cutting in commemoration of the GCSAYN 10th Anniversary

The meeting ended with a strong call for unity and urgency in transforming food systems. GCSAYN reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring the youth voice is central at the UN Food Systems Summit 2025.

In conclusion, the Road to the UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake and the celebration of GCSAYN's 10th Anniversary marked a significant milestone in youth-led climate action. As CSAYN continues to grow, there is a pressing need to address challenges faced at the University of Zambia hub, including limited funding, lack of awareness, and minimal student involvement. We therefore recommend stronger institutional support, more student-centered climate-smart initiatives, and improved coordination with both local and international partners. Moving forward, we aim to collaborate not only with global institutions but also with local ministries such as Agriculture, Green Economy, and Forestry as well as universities, smart agriculture companies, and community-based organisations. Formal partnerships, student internships, community projects, and awareness campaigns can help strengthen our impact. Engaging youth meaningfully in upcoming summits and CSA programs will not only build their capacity but also ensure their voices shape the future of sustainable food systems.

Participants

1. GCSAYN Zambia – UNZA CoE
2. Students from various university
3. Ministry of agriculture
4. Various Companies
5. Local community representatives
6. Farmers
7. Nutritional Association of Zambia (NAZ)
8. National Agriculture Information Services (NAIS)



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