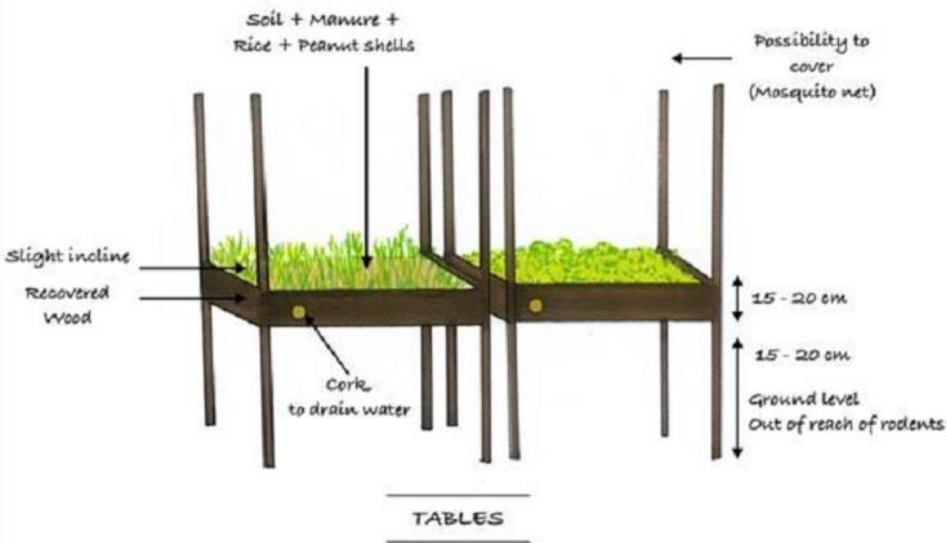


## Factsheet final findings Global Challenges Programme Call 2



[Picture: Marina Humblot]

## WFE: Women Food Entrepreneurs in Kenya and Burkina Faso

### Summary

Women Food Entrepreneurs (WFEs) in Kenya and Burkina Faso city slums play an important role in the food and nutrition security of vulnerable populations. Yet, their contributions and challenges are ill-understood and not visible in policy. WFE's in Ouagadougou and Kisumu operate under precarious conditions, amidst rapid urban development. They form a heterogeneous group; ambitions and motivations differ. Group participation increases women's voice and empowerment, access to resources and markets. Moreover, bottom-up and co-created innovations leverage business viability and sustainability by introducing new food mixtures, more processed food, higher added value and sales, and reduced input costs and food waste. Women's own knowledge constitutes the departure point for developing hybrid technologies, upscaling and professionalization, but support and mutual validation by formal stakeholders is required. Tailor-made policy instruments should enable WFEs to address 'hidden costs' faced due to their social-economic status and marginality. Moreover, WFE groups require tangible knowledge on soil management and sustainable farm inputs and technology to shift towards circular agriculture. Innovation can come from multiple directions. Co-creation between different WFE groups, science and private sector offer a promising route towards adopting affordable, applicable and accessible (AAA)-innovations in small-scale agri-business.

### Final research findings

The project has developed an in-depth understanding of how an inclusive agri-business model can be operationalized in an informal city-slum context. Creating equality of opportunity is not enough to grow out of survival entrepreneurship; there needs to be intrinsic motivation, perseverance, resourcefulness, open mindedness, and also the opportunity and conditions to realize returns on business effectively. WFEs face multi-dimensional costs; e.g. mobility and transportation, land and water insecurity, testing and certification, information access, time constraints, (unknown) soil fertility problems, incompatible agricultural management practices, food waste, lack of food hygiene, physical insecurity, and regulatory capture. When these costs are minimized, through collective action, CSO skills training and support, or effective governance instruments, WFEs can develop a viable business. Bottom-up innovations that are affordable, applicable and accessible to low-income groups were found to address everyday challenges. These innovations can, when demonstrated on site, contribute to women's empowerment. Capacity building and training that is designed to build forth on women's local and indigenous knowledge is an effective instrument for developing hybrid food production and processing technologies and accumulate new business skills. A pre-condition for shifting towards circular agri-business is to mitigate costly trade-offs between social, economic and environmental values.

### Final outcomes

#### **Story 1 – Bottom-up innovations: learning from cross-site visits**

Via exchange visits to each other's garden the WFEs learned about sustainable food production techniques, for example water preservation and irrigation, vertical gardening, and elevated tables to grow vegetables and control water levels. These are bottom-up innovations, self-constructed by the WFE groups to address daily challenges in the urban and peri-urban slum gardens, such as lack of space, protection of food quality, and water shortage (see Picture). This form of knowledge exchange, builds on the idea that 'seeing is believing', and sets in motion mutual validation and upscaling of AAA-innovations. It also has an empowering effect, because women see their knowledge valued and applied.

### **Story 2 – Zuhura Abdallah: ‘Champion’ food market woman**

Zuhura Abdallah is a female trader based at the Kibuye market in Kisumu in Kenya. Zuhura is also a leader of the Kibuye market traders’ group. Her market-based group initiative to turn market food waste into compost is an example of an inclusive and sustainable business model. In this project, Zuhura has innovatively led her group to connect with different researchers, government initiatives and consumers to develop a high-quality government certified compost product.

#### **Messages to**

##### **A) Actors from private sector:**

- The collection of food wastes in market places can be translated into an inclusive business model. The food waste is turned into natural compost by the WFEs, packaged and sold after and testing and certification by a research institute.
- Strengthening WFEs in the food value chain and giving space to mini-farming contributes to greening the city, healthier diets and better incomes. Women in the local and regional markets would benefit from better-visited spots in local markets and lower market fees.

##### **B) Civil society and practitioners organizations:**

- Groups of mixed composition (women and men) with women in leadership roles, facilitate awareness-raising of gender barriers and constraints and identification of joint opportunities and development of collective strategies beneficial at individual, household and group level.
- Exchange visits between WFEs enhances shared knowledge of soil management and food production, processing and marketing techniques that are innovative, sustainable and empowering.

##### **C) Policy makers:**

- WFEs experience gender specific barriers and constraints that hamper their business development. WFE’s inclusive business development requires awareness, gender-aware policy measures and instruments.
- Secure and formalized access to land, by individual WFEs and groups, contributes to food and nutrition security of vulnerable populations in the city and enable an orientation towards growth instead of survival-entrepreneurship.

#### **Knowledge products**

- [Policy Brief #1](#) (Jan 2018); [Policy Brief #2](#) (April 2018); [Policy Brief #3](#) (June 2018)
- Scientific Article [Inclusive Business](#) (March 2017)
- Scientific Article [Women’s Agricultural Practices](#) (2019)
- Scientific Article [Towards an Inclusive Food Systems Approach](#) (2019):
- Project surveys (2016 & 2017):
  - [Food and nutrition baseline survey report - Kisumu](#)
  - [Geochemical survey rocks and quarries around Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso](#)
  - [Geological survey rocks and quarries around Kisumu, Kenya](#)
- [Podcast “Hope in Kisumu”](#) (2017), Seasonal Calendars [#1 \(2018\)](#) and [#2 \(2019\)](#)

#### **Knowledge networks**

Through European partners [EADI](#) and Dutch Food & Business Knowledge Platform ([F&BKP](#)) the project connected to and shared research outputs with scientific and policy networks engaged with food and nutrition security in international development. Via the [The Broker](#) we participated in knowledge exchange events and translated research outcomes into policy messages. [NAFTC](#) and [BodemBergsma](#) functioned as private sector partners to give knowledge input and support on agro-value chains and soil analysis respectively.

#### **Co-creation**

In the process of knowledge sharing and laying the foundations of co-creation, local government and private sector stakeholders have become more attuned to WFEs diversified priorities and needs to access land and water resources, market space, enhance food commodity added-value, food security and income opportunities. On their sides, WFE groups have become more aware of the commonality of the obstacles and constraints that are shared across different groups in producing, processing and marketing food commodities in the urban and peri-urban slums. This has induced them to seek strength in the collective by identifying and establishing new linkages, with other WFE groups, private business and local government stakeholders. Finally, it is fair to conclude that all stakeholders involved have developed new understanding about a range of sustainable soil amendments that can be locally sourced, either from organic manure that some WFEs self-produce already, or from local mines in the form of rock dust (that is now a waste product), and of sustainable food processing methods using hybrid technology.

#### **Consortium partners**

- [Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research](#), University of Amsterdam (NL)
- [Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics](#), University of Amsterdam (NL)
- [Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship](#) (Kenya)
- Victoria Institute for Research on Environment and Development
- [Études Actions Conseils](#) (Burkina Faso)
- [Institute of Soil Science and Site Ecology](#), Technische Universität Dresden (Germany)
- [Royal Tropical Institute](#) (NL)
- [NAFTC](#) (NL)
- [BodemBergsma](#) (NL)

#### **Contact person**

Dr. Nicky Pouw, [N.R.M.Pouw@uva.nl](mailto:N.R.M.Pouw@uva.nl)

#### **Project website**

- [F&BKP Research Project page](#)