

Access Agriculture Wins 2021 FAO Innovation Award



Access Agriculture has won 2021 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Federal Government of Switzerland award for the 2021 Annual International Innovation Award for Sustainable Food Systems, the award, is a joint initiative designed to encourage and celebrate innovation and entrepreneurs who successfully implement outstanding projects in the agriculture sector.

The awards were announced in a virtual ceremony with the participation of FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu and Christian Hofer, Director-General of the Federal Office for Agriculture of Switzerland. The ceremony was held on the first day of the flagship event of the World Food Forum – a youth-led movement and network to transform or agri-food systems.

Speaking after receiving the award, Josephine Rodgers, Accessagriculture Executive Director, stated “We see this as a highly replicable model, not only for youth employment and business development but also to help farmers transition towards agroecology, boost their incomes and thereby contribute to more sustainable food systems.”

“It is indeed a great honor for Access Agriculture to win this award. It encourages us and instills confidence in us for reaching remote communities across the globe. With our rich library of farmer-to-farmer training videos in more than 90 languages, we are well placed to contribute to South-South learning and help mainstream agroecology,” she added

Rodgers further said Access agriculture is committed to scaling visual extension to transform rural communities and establishing a broader range of rural Entrepreneurs for rural access to scale extension using multi-faceted innovations to reach smallholder farmers” adds Josephine.

Access Agriculture AISBL was recognized for enabling young people individually or as a team, to use solar-powered technology to show farmer-to-farmer training videos in local languages in remote villages with no electricity, no internet access, and poor mobile signal. Access Agriculture is working

with local communities across the Global South, while also improving the environment using agroecological principles.

Access Agriculture shared the prize with Bountifield International, which offers young people in rural areas new opportunities as postharvest technology entrepreneurs providing a fee-for-service to farmers to process, preserve and sell their crops. Bountifield’s ‘business in a box’ model equips them with needed technology, access to financing, and information they need to drive agri-business value addition, reduce food loss, and increase growth across rural Africa.

FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu congratulated the winners, adding that the Award “highlights the importance of innovation and youth as key drivers to transform agri-food systems. FAO is working to engage and empower youth to transform our agri-food systems.”

“I wish to convey my appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for the effective partnership which has led to this successful outcome. It also affirms the value of our shared goal – to encourage game-changing solutions by innovative approaches and people,” he said.

Christian Hofer, Director-General of the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture, said the “Swiss-FAO International Innovation Award aims at honoring already existing projects that proved to be successful and have a potential to scale up or spill over to other parts of the food systems. This kind of support is important because there is a need for a larger number of well-functioning innovative projects to achieve food systems transformation.”

“I’m convinced that transformative change is only possible if it engages young people and if it exploits the potential of digitalization in the agriculture and food sector,” he said.

FAO and the Federal Government of Switzerland first launched the awards in 2018, as a way to encourage innovation by publicly recognizing best practices in the field of sustainable food and agriculture. Each year individuals, private companies and institutions are invited to submit a nomination

for an innovation that is contributing to Sustainable Development Goals 1 (No poverty) and 2 (No hunger).. This year, the awards were part of the World Food Forum’s flagship event,

The Digitalization and Innovation for Sustainable Food Systems award is given for innovations that impact more than one level of the supply chain and strengthen the link between farmers and consumers. A second prize is also awarded for Innovations that Empower Youth in Agriculture and Food Systems. The prize for each award is \$30 000, allowing winners to take their business to the next level.

This year’s award for Digitalization and Innovation for Sustainable Food Systems went to Ifarm360, a start-up enabling investors to crowd-fund smallholder farmers in Kenya. In addition to access to finance, Ifarm360 offers smallholder farmers crop advice and supervision, as well as farming inputs and equipment such as solar irrigation kits. Ifarm360 connects smallholder farmers, the crowd

investors and off-takers, creating a win-win-win business model.

Special mention was given to En-Veritas for using digital technology and innovation to conduct sustainability verification of unorganized and underserved smallholder coffee farmers globally.

The Innovations that Empower Youth in Agriculture and Food Systems award was split this year between two projects, both of which received equally high rankings from the Screening Committee.

Access Agriculture is an international non-profit organization that supports local organizations and entrepreneurs in developing countries to strengthen the knowledge and skills of rural people in food production, processing and marketing through the use of farmer-to-farmer training videos. By translating quality videos into local languages, Access Agriculture has become a global leader in supporting South-South learning between rural communities ●

