

BUILDING RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS



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ABOUT VOICES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Voices of Sustainability is a thought leadership platform launched by the Zayed Sustainability Prize to explore the challenges and opportunities of the global transition to an inclusive and

prosperous future. Each month, the series hosts the world's thought leaders to discuss the latest trends and themes in the sustainability agenda.



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INTRODUCTION

On 30 December, the Zayed Sustainability Prize aired its 43rd episode of the virtual fireside chat series 'Voices of Sustainability.' This episode spotlighted three organisations that are building more resilient food systems in unique and exciting ways: ABALOBI,

NaFarm Foods and Xinjiang Shawan Oasis Sustainable Development Institute. The panel explored how their organisations are addressing food scarcity and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.



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SUMMARY

The 43rd episode of Voices of Sustainability, titled Building Resilient Food Systems, brought together three leading experts to discuss how artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping industries and driving sustainable change. Moderated by journalist and Zayed Sustainability Prize Selection Committee member Daphne Ewing-Chow, the episode highlighted groundbreaking projects and innovative approaches that are transforming food systems and empowering communities worldwide.

Dr. Serge Raemaekers, Executive Director and Co-founder of ABALOBI, opened the discussion by describing the organisation's efforts to empower small-scale fishing communities. Serge explained how ABALOBI works to improve the livelihoods of fishers through sustainable practices and traceable supply chains. Their marketplace connects consumers directly with



True progress comes when we reduce the distance between those who produce and those who benefit to build direct connections and shared prosperity.

Dr. Serge Raemaekers

Executive Director
& Co-founder
ABALOBI



fishers, offering fully traceable seafood caught under responsible management frameworks. This approach not only enhances food security and fair pricing but also promotes ecological balance. Serge highlighted ABALOBI's ability to increase fishers' incomes by up to 300%, showcasing the transformative potential of their model.



Our solution has turned thousands of acres of wasted desert land into productive farming land, alleviating the food shortage problem for more than two million residents and creating seven thousand related jobs.

Dr. Gang Chen

CEO
Xinjiang Shawan Oasis Sustainable
Development Institute



Dr. Gang Chen, CEO of Xinjiang Shawan Oasis Sustainable Development Institute, shared insights into his organisation's innovative solar powered greenhouses in China's Xinjiang region, one of the driest desert areas in the world. Gang described how these greenhouses utilise IoT technology to monitor and optimise growing conditions, enabling precision agriculture even in harsh climates. Their breakthrough biochemical adhesive transforms desert sand into cultivable soil, significantly improving agricultural yield and combatting desertification. Gang highlighted the impact of their solution, which has created over 7,000 jobs and alleviated food insecurity for more than two million residents.

AbdulLateef Olaosebikan, Co-founder of NaFarm Foods, introduced their hybrid solar food dryers designed to reduce food loss in Nigeria, a country with the highest per capita food waste in Africa. AbdulLateef explained how the dryers prevent up to 50% of post-harvest losses by rapidly dehydrating fruits, vegetables, and other perishable goods. This solution not only saves 40,000 kilograms of food daily but also reduces CO₂ emissions and boosts incomes for farmers and food processors.

As the discussion progressed, the speakers examined the broader implications of their work for global food systems. Serge emphasised the importance of supporting traditional small-scale fisheries, highlighting their potential to sustainably feed billions. Gang underscored the need for advanced agricultural technologies like desalination to address water scarcity, while AbdulLateef stressed the critical role of affordable technology in empowering smallholder farmers.

Daphne wrapped up the conversation by reflecting on the diverse approaches represented in the episode. From marine to terrestrial solutions, each innovation demonstrated how AI and sustainable practices could address pressing food security challenges. The episode left viewers with a sense of optimism about the role of ingenuity and



We are making hybrid solar food dryers to help farmers and food processors reduce food waste and post-harvest loss across Nigeria, preventing up to 50% of post-harvest losses.

AbdulLateef Olaosebikan

Co-founder
NaFarm Foods



collaboration in shaping resilient, equitable food systems.

One of these exceptional Food category finalists will be recognised as a winner at the 2025 Zayed Sustainability Prize Awards Ceremony on 14 January 2025, solidifying their impact on the global stage.

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BIOGRAPHIES



Dr. Serge Raemaekers

Executive Director and Co-founder
ABALOBI

Serge Raemaekers is a social entrepreneur with over two decades of experience in Fisheries Science, dedicated to sustainable development and the self-empowerment of fisher communities. In 2017, Serge co-founded ABALOBI in South Africa, an initiative dedicated to advancing small-scale fisheries toward social, economic, and ecological sustainability. The name ABALOBI, meaning “fisher” in isiXhosa—one of South Africa’s 11 official languages—embodies the organisation’s fisher-led ethos. Under Serge’s leadership, ABALOBI has developed a pioneering digital platform connecting fishers directly with consumers, promoting transparency and equity in the value chain. The organisation’s inclusive approach also fosters community-led conservation, Fisheries Improvement Programmes (FIPs), and Climate Change adaptation strategies. Beyond ABALOBI, Serge is an advisor to numerous organisations focused on sustainable development and social entrepreneurship, driving measurable change towards a more just and equitable world.



Abdullateef Olaosebikan

Co-founder
NaFarm Foods

Abdullateef Olaosebikan is an entrepreneur transforming Nigeria’s agricultural systems. As Co-founder of NaFarm Foods, he has developed hybrid solar food dryers that reduce post-harvest losses by 50%, saving 40,000 kilograms of food daily while improving livelihoods for over 65,000 farmers. NaFarm Foods also empowers communities by training 18,000 women and youth in sustainable food processing, fostering economic inclusion and resilience. Founded in 2015, the company leverages renewable energy and climate-smart technologies to boost agricultural productivity and promote food security. Recognised by organisations such as the African Development Bank and the Tony Elumelu Foundation, Abdullateef aims to scale NaFarm Foods’ impact to reach two million farmers within three years, expanding into new markets and introducing innovative climate-smart tools to address food security challenges across Africa.

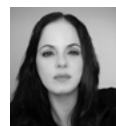


Dr. Gang Chen

Director
Xinjiang Shawan Oasis Sustainable
Development Institute

Gang Chen received both business and engineering degrees in China and the US. Since his graduation, he has worked as a research associate and project manager on projects related to natural resources conservation in Xinjiang Environment & Natural Resources Conservation Research Institute, China. Since 2009, he has been working as the Executive Director and Desert Resources Development expert at Xinjiang Shawan Oasis Sustainable Development Institute where he is responsible for the general business development and management. Besides his continuous efforts on initiating and implementing the application of the desert greenhouse solution in China, Gang Chen has also been a member of several renowned international organisations in the field of sustainable agriculture and food security for more than a decade. He has been involved actively in the pertinent consulting and technology transfer work of the desert greenhouse solution to other desert countries.

The conversation was moderated by:



Daphne Ewing-Chow

Journalist & Zayed Sustainability Prize
Selection Committee member, Food category

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OUTCOMES



Small-scale fisheries, when sustainably managed and supported, have the potential to rebuild fish stocks and feed billions globally



Smart agricultural technologies, such as solar powered greenhouses, can transform desert landscapes into fertile farmland, improving food security and creating jobs in underserved areas



Hybrid solar food dryers reduce post-harvest losses by 50%, saving 40,000 kilograms of food daily and improving farmer livelihoods



Sustainable practices that integrate traditional knowledge with modern technology can create resilient food systems while addressing ecological, economic, and social challenges simultaneously



Collaboration across sectors and geographies is essential to scale impactful innovations and address global challenges in food security effectively

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