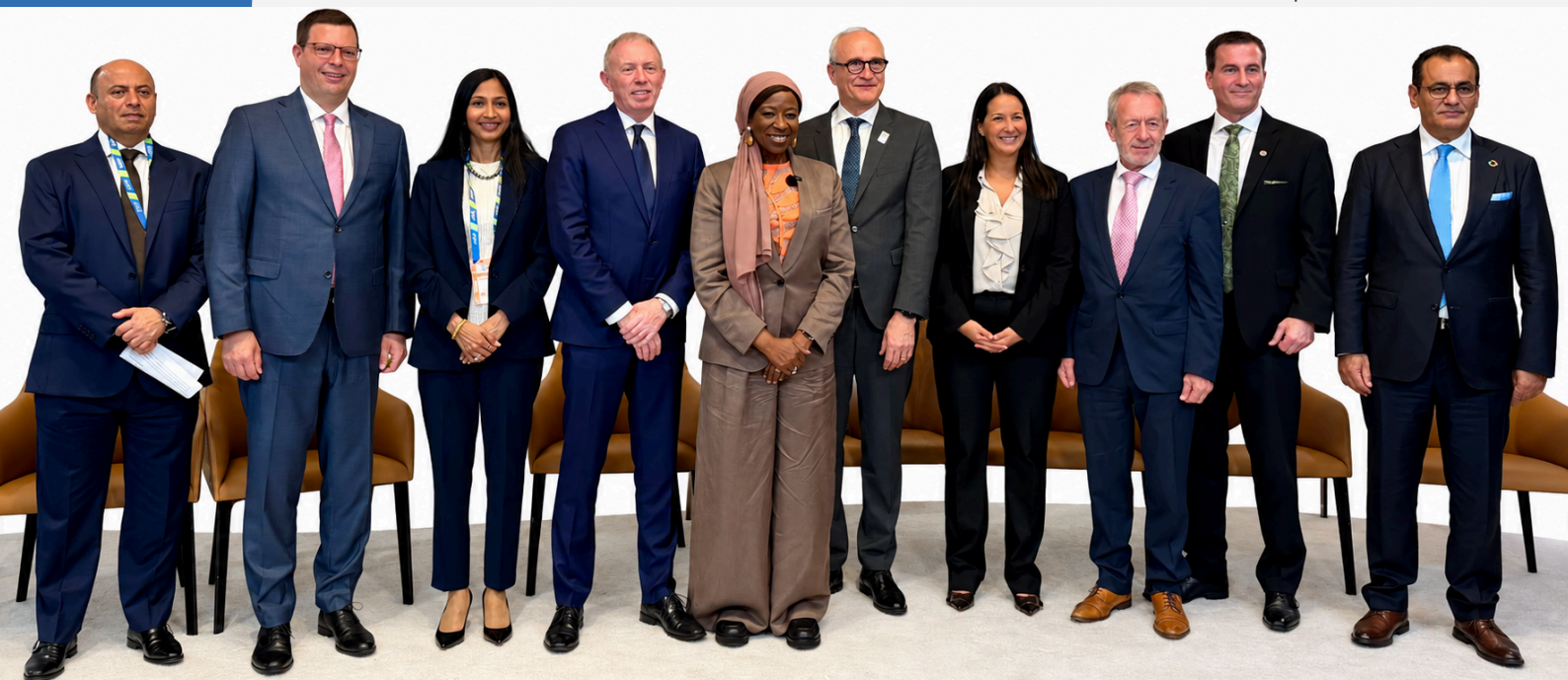


The Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security Newsletter

Issue 07 | 06 October 2026



Dear colleagues and partners,

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter – and to our new newsletter format and design. As the Flagship continues to grow, we want this newsletter to provide an even more engaging window into the work, partnerships and people driving our Initiative forward.

And what an extraordinary few weeks it has been. Our first Annual Members Meeting in New York marked an important milestone in our journey. Just one year after our launch, the Flagship has grown into a truly global coalition, bringing together a diverse range of partners committed to advancing food security.

But our ambition has never been simply to build a coalition. Our focus is now firmly on turning partnerships into action, investment and measurable impact. Our engagements around UNGA81 and New York Climate Week demonstrated the strength of this shared commitment – from advancing country-led implementation and mobilising public and private finance to strengthening science, innovation and capacity development.

I am particularly encouraged by the new partnerships and leadership emerging across the Flagship. Our growing cooperation with GAFSP, African Development Bank President H.E. Dr. Sidi Ould Tah joining our Steering Committee, and the many concrete discussions with members and partners demonstrate the momentum we are building together.

The next phase must be about delivery and impact at scale. No single institution can solve the global food security challenge alone. Our strength lies in connecting governments, science, development finance, the private sector and implementing partners around practical solutions – and then taking those solutions to scale.

Thank you to all our members and partners for your trust, energy and commitment. The Flagship belongs to all of us, and I look forward to what we will achieve together in the months ahead.

Dr. Conrad Rein

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If you have feedback, want to be featured in our upcoming newsletters, or want to stop receiving the newsletter, please contact:

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The Initiative in Action: WAFI and UNGA81



01 | GFIFS in New York

The Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security concluded an intensive week of engagements in New York during UNGA81 and New York Climate Week, marking an important step in the Initiative's transition from coalition-building towards implementation, investment and measurable impact. The Flagship convened its first Annual Members Meeting and fourth Scientific Advisory Committee meeting, co-convened two events focused on financing and investment for food security, and participated in a range of engagements with governments, development institutions, the private sector and other partners. Across the week, discussions centred on a common priority: translating partnerships, evidence and investment into practical action at scale.

Successful First Annual Members Meeting Marks a Milestone for the Flagship

On 21 September 2026, during the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security convened its first Annual Members Meeting in New York. The meeting brought together members and partners to review the Initiative's first year of operation, present its impact agenda, and discuss how the coalition can contribute to its goals over the year ahead.

The day opened with welcoming remarks from Dr. Nasser Al-Kahtani and Dr. Stefan Schmitz, Steering Committee Co-Chairs, who set out the meeting's purpose as both a moment of reflection and a starting point for shaping the Initiative's next phase. Opening remarks followed from Hon. Dr. Stephen Modise, Minister of Health of Botswana, on behalf of H.E. Duma Gideon Boko, President of the Republic of Botswana, and H.E. Dr. Bernardette Arakwiye, Minister of Environment of Rwanda. H.E. Dr. Arakwiye took the opportunity to formally announce that Rwanda has joined the Flagship, noting the significance of the Flagship's work within the broader international effort to advance food security.

Dr. Conrad Rein then presented a review of the Initiative's first year, tracing its key milestones and engagements since its launch at COP16 and setting out its preliminary impact agenda. Declan Kirrane of the Scientific Advisory Committee provided updates on the Food Security White Paper, Global Initiative on Livestock, Rangelands and Pastoral Systems, and programming across IGAD countries, while Co-Chair of the Youth Work Stream Ruby Celia Weiling provided updates on the Flagship's Youth Consultations, Recommendations, and Statement on the Triple COP year.

During the meeting's first high-level panel, Financing, Partnership and Delivery at Scale, speakers discussed how their institutions could contribute to the Initiative's impact agenda, with particular attention to capacity-building programmes, scaling implementation, and advancing joint cooperation in Syria with the European Union. The panel brought together H.E. Mr. Abdullah Khalil Al-Musaibeeh, President of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA); H.E. Mr. Fahad Al-Sulaiti, Director General of the Qatar Fund for Development; Mr. Pradeep Kurukulasuriya, Executive Secretary of the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF); Ms. Marina Ponti, Deputy Director General of the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); and Dr. Agnes Kalibata, Chair of the Steering Committee of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP).

The second high-level panel, Cameroon as a Flagship Implementation Model, examined the political and strategic significance of the Cameroon Convergence Model and Country Replication Framework, addressing national leadership and sustained government commitment, financing arrangements including the de-risking of private-sector investment, and the value of aligning international partners behind a single country platform. Speakers included H.E. Moses Vilakati, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment at the African Union; Dr. Issa Faye, Director General for Global Practices and Partnerships at the Islamic Development Bank; Mr. Jean Van Wetter, Chief Executive Officer of Enabel; Ms. Mireia Villar Forner, Deputy Director of the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO); and Dr. Issa Sanogo, UN Resident Coordinator for Cameroon.



The afternoon opened with a strategic discussion with the Flagship Steering Committee, reflecting on the Initiative's strategic direction and priorities for the coming years, with contributions from Professor Michael Kremer, Nobel Laureate and incoming Chief Economist of the World Bank, Dr. Nasser Al-Kahtani, Dr. Stefan Schmitz, Ms. Andrea Meza, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNCCD, and H.E. Dr. Obaid Saif Hamad Al Zaabi, Chairman of the Board of the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID).

The final panel of the day, Aligning Public and Private Investment for Food Security, examined the role of public-private partnerships in mobilising private capital and expertise to transform food systems and deliver food security outcomes, including expanding opportunities for women and youth. Panelists reflected on how such partnerships can balance commercial return with development impact and sustainability, and the conditions needed to ensure their long-term viability. Speakers included H.E. Mr. Tim Dooley, Minister of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine of Ireland; H.E. Dr. Obaid Saif Hamad Al Zaabi, Chairman of the Board of the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID); Ms. Diene Keita, Executive Director of UNFPA; Ms. Chitkala Kalidas, Senior Vice President at Bayer AG; Ms. Meriem El Asraoui, Chief Global Affairs Officer at OCP Group; and Mr. John McPhail, President and Chief Executive Officer of Partners of the Americas.

The meeting marked an important transition from the Flagship's first year of coalition-building towards a stronger focus on implementation, investment and measurable impact. Members and partners were invited to identify concrete areas in which they can contribute to the Initiative's programme of work over the coming year.



Fourth Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee

On 22 September, the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security convened the fourth meeting of its Scientific Advisory Committee, bringing together scientific, development, investment and private-sector perspectives. Discussions considered the Committee's draft white paper, *Science for Food Security Beyond 2030*, and the role of evidence, global research collaboration, capacity building and investment in supporting the Flagship's work.

Professor Shenggen Fan, Chair Professor at China Agricultural University and Dean of the Academy of Global Food Economics and Policy, delivered a scientific keynote on evidence, investment and the transformation of global food systems. He highlighted the importance of evidence-based investment, international collaboration and emerging technologies in accelerating progress on food security.

New Partnership with GAFSP Announced at High-Level Event, Co-Convened with Action Against Hunger USA

On 23 September, the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security co-convened *"From Investment to Impact: Delivering Results for Food Security at Scale"* with Action Against Hunger USA and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), marking the third joint event convened by the three partners. Hosted by Morgan Stanley, the roundtable brought together more than 75 participants from governments, multilateral institutions, development banks, UN agencies, philanthropy, research institutions, civil society and the private sector to examine how investment can translate into measurable food security, nutrition and resilience outcomes at scale.

The event also marked an important step in the Flagship's cooperation with GAFSP. Building on GAFSP's 9th Call for Proposals, the two organisations announced closer cooperation around a pipeline of country-led, technically sound investments, with the aim of increasing their scale and impact. The partnership reflects a shared commitment to supporting countries in advancing their own food security priorities while reducing fragmentation across initiatives and financing.

Discussions highlighted the need to move from financing commitments towards delivery, implementation quality and measurable results. Participants emphasised that financing, implementation and accountability need to work together; that evidence and forecasting must translate into timely action; and that country ownership and implementation capacity remain fundamental to achieving impact at scale.



Flagship Convenes 2Unlock Session on Finance in Agriculture and Natural Capital

Also on 23 September, the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security convened “2Unlock: Finance in Agriculture and Natural Capital, Allying Investments to Food Security”, a high-level session bringing together senior policymakers, investors and private-sector leaders, including representatives from the US International Development Finance Corporation, the African Development Bank, IGAD and OCP Group, to examine the conditions needed to unlock investment in agriculture and natural capital at scale.

Discussions explored which existing investments hold the greatest potential for food security, the bottlenecks preventing capital from reaching areas of greatest impact, and which partners and sectors remain missing from the current investment landscape.

Participants considered collaborative approaches and financing mechanisms that can better align investment with the achievement of SDG 2, while advancing sustainable food systems, empowering communities and building long-term resilience.

Flagship Congratulates Professor Michael Kremer on World Bank Chief Economist Appointment

The Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security was delighted to welcome Professor Michael Kremer to its first Annual Members Meeting in New York. A Nobel Laureate and member of the Flagship’s Scientific Advisory Committee since its founding, Professor Kremer joined the strategic discussion with the Steering Committee, sharing perspectives on digital agriculture and artificial intelligence, access to finance for resilience, and the role of rigorous evidence in translating innovation into practical solutions at scale.

The Flagship also congratulates Professor Kremer on his appointment as the World Bank Group’s incoming Chief Economist and Senior Vice President for Development Economics. His longstanding focus on rigorous evidence and innovation is highly relevant to many of the challenges the Flagship is working to address.

Building Partnerships and Advancing Dialogue in New York

Beyond the Flagship’s own convenings, Flagship leadership participated in a series of engagements across UNGA81 and New York Climate Week, advancing dialogue on investment, innovation, public-private partnerships and resilient food systems.

Dr. Conrad Rein and Dr. Nasser Al-Kahtani participated in discussions at the Concordia Annual Summit and ALDI SOUTH Group’s Building Better Partnerships for Agriculture session. They also joined a roundtable hosted by Danone on scaling nature-based solutions for water security. Policy and Advocacy Consultant Heather Elaydi represented the Flagship at a Stimson Center and UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) roundtable on resilient food systems and the climate-nature-conflict nexus.

Dr. Rein also participated in the New York launch of ESG in the Age of AI, to which he contributed a chapter on food security and global health with Kanika Joshi. The week concluded with Dr. Rein and Dr. Al-Kahtani visiting Rutgers University for discussions with university leadership and faculty on opportunities for collaboration in food security research and implementation.

During the week, Dr. Rein and Dr. Al-Kahtani also met Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, providing an opportunity to update him on the Flagship’s progress and exchange perspectives on innovation, finance and inclusive development.



02 | Flagship Participates in WAFI 2026 in Beijing

From 17–19 September, the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security participated in the World AgriFood Innovation Conference (WAFI 2026) in Beijing, where Dr. Conrad Rein contributed to three discussions on South-South cooperation, agrifood innovation and financing.

Across the sessions, the Flagship highlighted a common challenge: many of the technologies, approaches and evidence needed to strengthen food security already exist, but greater cooperation and investment are needed to adapt proven solutions to local contexts and take them to scale. Discussions also explored the role of blended finance and partnerships between governments, research institutions, development finance institutions and the private sector in moving promising innovations from evidence to implementation.

The Flagship also shared lessons from its work in Cameroon, where a country-led approach is bringing together government, UN and financing partners around coordinated investment in priority agricultural value chains.

The Flagship thanks Professor Shenggen Fan, Executive Chair of the WAFI Advisory Committee and a longstanding member of the Flagship's Scientific Advisory Committee, for his continued support and leadership.



03 | Leadership Announcement: AfDB President H.E. Sidi Ould Tah Joins the Flagship Steering Committee

The Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security is honoured to announce the appointment of H.E. Dr. Sidi Ould Tah, President of the African Development Bank Group, to its Steering Committee.

As President of Africa's premier development finance institution, Dr. Ould Tah brings extensive leadership experience in development finance and agricultural transformation. His appointment strengthens the Flagship's strategic engagement with one of the continent's most important financial institutions and its capacity to mobilise investment, build partnerships and advance food security implementation at scale.

The Flagship is privileged to welcome Dr. Ould Tah to the Steering Committee as the Initiative moves further into its operational phase.



04 | Impressions from New York: UNGA81 and NYCW 2026



Partner Contributions

It all starts with a drop: How catalytic investment in Herding for Health is helping shape resilient food systems across Africa

Article by Zvikomborero Tangawamira: Senior Programme Manager – Herding for Health Programme

Transforming food systems rarely begins with a large investment. More often, it begins by proving what is possible.

For Herding for Health, that proof began with less than USD 50,000 from the John and Katie Hansen Family Foundation in South Africa's Namaqualand. Farmers there were losing livestock to caracal and jackal. Shepherd dogs and professional herders cut those losses and raised a bigger question: if better herding could solve this, what else could it solve?

The answer reshaped the approach. Planned grazing began restoring soils and rangelands. Mobile auctions and a mobile abattoir opened formal markets to communal farmers previously excluded by disease restrictions. Today, Herding for Health operates across seven African countries, with more than one million hectares under improved management and an estimated US\$8.4 million in economic benefits for participating communities. In Botswana, the government has adopted the model across roughly 4.6 million hectares.



Photo Credits: Peace Parks Foundation

Location: Limpopo National Park, Mozambique

*The herders sowing palatable grass seed, *Schmidtia pappophoroides*, into a previously vacated boma footprint. Following the seeding, the cattle will be herded over the area. This controlled trampling (heavy hoof herding) will press or plant the seed into the soil and improving the seedbed and increasing the likelihood of successful germination.*

Behind these numbers is a lesson for anyone investing in food security and climate resilience. The first investment does not need to finance the whole solution. It only needs to create the conditions for the next one.

How did a single drop become a ripple, and what will it take to build the wave? [Read the full story here.](#)

Photo Credits: Corle Swart

Location: Namaqualand, South Africa

A smallholder farmer taking out sheep for grazing in the communal rangelands in the Namaqualand, South Africa



What's Next?

Looking Ahead

Our Upcoming Engagements

- GFIFS World Food Day 2026 Webinar: 16 October 2026
- World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund Annual Meetings: 12 - 18 October 2026 - Bangkok, Thailand
- UNFCCC COP31: 9-20 November 2026 - Antalya, Türkiye
- UN Water Conference: 8-10 December 2026 - Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Get Involved

Call to Action

The next phase of the Flagship is about delivery. We encourage organisations, governments, researchers, financiers and private-sector partners to engage with our work, share expertise, and help advance food security solutions where they are needed most.

Welcome to Our Newest Members

Sea-Stematic (South Africa)

MEA's first Cultivated Seafood company inceptioned in 2021 and invested in publicly by the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa in early-stage R&D in 2023. Transborder collaboration and co-creation remain central to the business culture. New raise rounds are open.

Website: <https://www.sea-stematic.com/>



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