

WCEF 2025 Accelerator Session Summary

Shaping Circular Food Futures: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach To Scale Up Innovations

About the Accelerator Session

On May 15, 2025, the [Circular Food Systems for Rwanda \(CIRF\) project](#) hosted a WCEF accelerator session in collaboration with African Circular Economy Alliance (ACEA), the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE), and the Circular Economy Coalition for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC CEC). The goal of the session was to emphasize the potential impact that cross-sector partnerships could have in creating sustainable, scalable circular food systems from Brazil to Rwanda.



At the session, the CIRF partners including World Resources Institute, Resonance Global, and African Circular Economy Network (ACEN) shared our vision for a scaled-up, pan-African initiative called [Accelerating the Circular Economy for Food \(ACE4Food\)](#), which aims to create regional food systems transformation through cross-sectoral action; targeting small business innovation as a strategic vehicle to drive the transition to a circular food economy through coordinated systems leadership.

Who did we hear from?

Across regions including Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, agriculture is a large part of the economy where most jobs are still found in the agri-food sector. Circular food systems interventions exist, but we will not be able to deliver circular innovations at scale without collaborations – across both sectors and regions. Panelists spotlighted initiatives that are accelerating circular food systems innovations in their respective contexts, as well as the ways that multi-stakeholder partnerships are amplifying their work.

- Marcos David Ferreira, Researcher from [Embrapa](#)
 - Brazil is striving to continue increasing its production without increasing the land under cultivation at the same rate. Marcos shared how Embrapa is focusing on technology and knowledge creation to reduce food waste, highlighting a case study of fruit coating technology that can increase shelf life by 15 days. Ultimately, government research like Embrapa requires significant collaboration with industry to ensure these technologies take root.

- Sâmia Mouallem, Strategic Partnerships Manager at [Impact Hub São Paulo](#)
 - Sâmia featured her program's Climate Innovation Hub, which accelerates start-ups that bring new meaning to organic residues, use agro-ecologic practices, or lead to positive results for rural communities in Brazil. For start-ups, it is critical to have collaboration with policymakers to not only innovate, but provide the conditions for innovations to scale and grow.
- Eric Ruzigamanzi, [WRI Rwanda](#) Country Representative and [CIRF](#) Program Manager
 - CIRF aims to use global ambitions around circular food systems to create local results at the country-level in Rwanda. So far, through its SME Technical Assistance Facility and Multi-Stakeholder Policy Platform, CIRF has seen amazing results – including new circular products, new circular policies launched, increased revenues, and new green jobs created. Now the goal is to scale the impact across East Africa through ACE4Food, working with partners that believe in seeing the change, policymakers willing to listen and act, entrepreneurs ready to innovate, and institutions willing to collaborate.

What did we discuss?

After hearing from our panelists, attendees joined breakout discussions to explore regional barriers and enablers to circular food innovations, the role of partnerships, and existing actions. Key themes included persistent gaps in knowledge, trust, and awareness; the critical importance of cross-sector collaboration; and systemic challenges around affordability, distribution, and scale. Participants also emphasized the need to better harness traditional knowledge and to share learnings across regions to amplify impact.

Major Takeaways for ACE4Food

Through the perspectives of the session's panelists as well as the opinions shared in the breakout discussions, it was clear that there is a need for multi-stakeholder partnership to accelerate the transition to a circular food system. No project, business innovation, research, or policy can do this alone, and it is time to make sure that knowledge is shared to accelerate impacts at scale. As one participant said, "we cannot keep reinventing the wheel to achieve circular food systems."

Our vision for systems leadership in circular food systems transformation in Africa that unites sectors, metrics, learnings, and action for scale feels more urgent than ever. Post-WCEF 2025, the ACE4Food partners are actively seeking potential partners and opportunities for collaboration with those who share in our mission of accelerating the circular economy for food, beginning in East Africa.

We invite interested organizations to contact us to explore how you can be part of this collective effort to drive lasting change



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