

# Read the writing on the wall: Emerging opportunities for Africa's food systems

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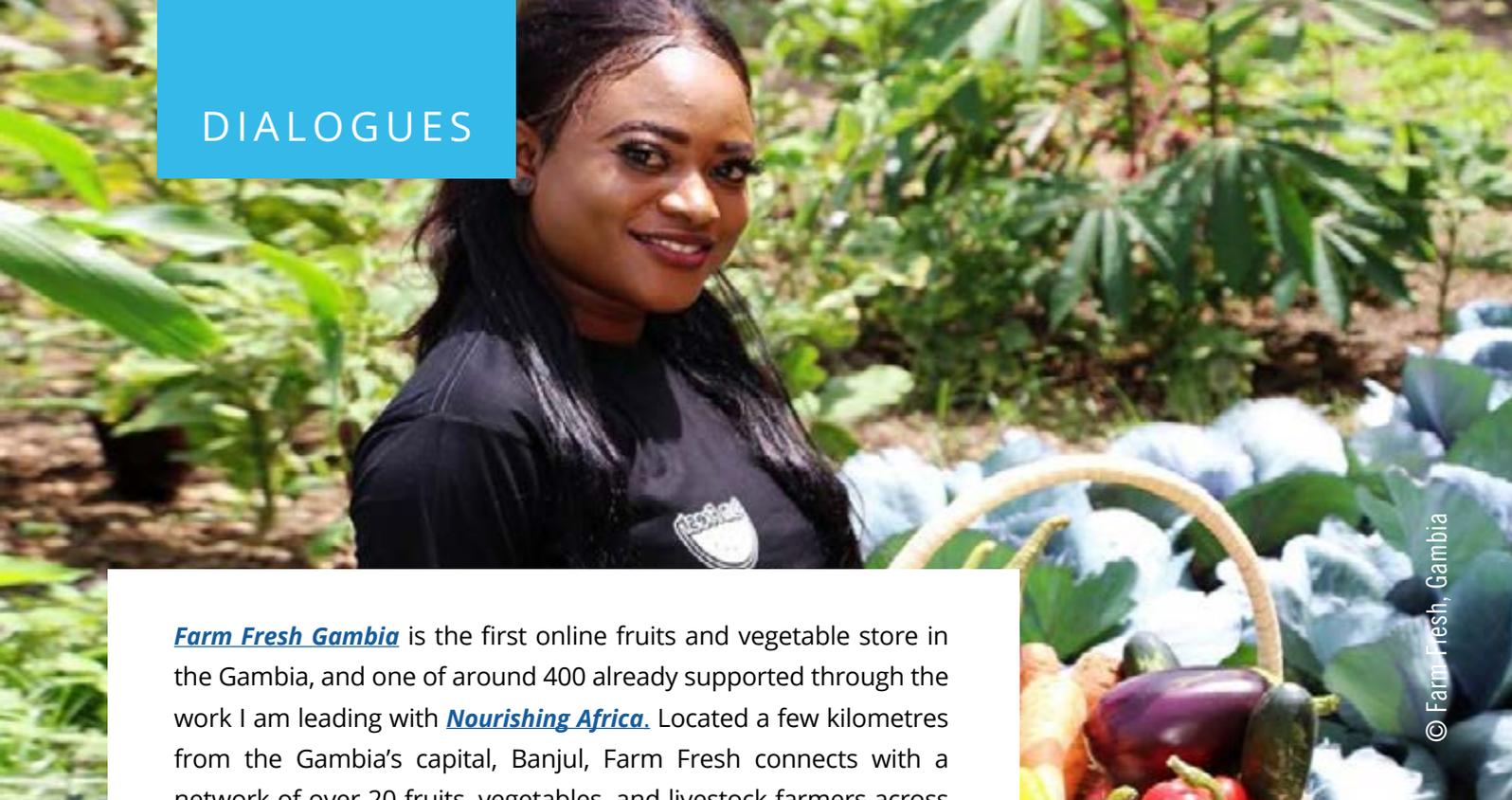
by Ndidi Nwuneli, Founder of Nourishing Africa, FOLU Ambassador

This year has revealed the startling lack of resilience in many systems across our world as well as the interwoven challenges of living together in society. It has deeply and profoundly questioned both security and justice, leaving many hungry for change. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed severe deficiencies and fragilities in our food systems, especially across the African continent. Evidence from the sub-Saharan African region points to growing stress, with a lack of proper logistics, technology, and safety nets – leaving many agri-food companies slowing production or forced to shut down.

But just like seeds, a crisis can help sift out the resilient, the resourceful, and the brave – offering a glimmer of hope for tomorrow. COVID-19 has shone a light on some of the opportunities of Africa's food systems and opened our eyes to those who feed us. Now, more than ever, we must treat farmers as essential workers – supplying them with the appropriate information, protection, and support. As [\*recent research from the Food and Land Use Coalition \(FOLU\) highlights\*](#), following a [\*Call to Action\*](#) to prevent a global food security crisis, this means strengthening the extension services to support farmers and building resilience along the entire food supply chain.

Governments play a pivotal role in scaling the enabling environments needed to connect stakeholders and provide access to key markets for farmers and consumers but so too does the private sector.

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**Farm Fresh Gambia** is the first online fruits and vegetable store in the Gambia, and one of around 400 already supported through the work I am leading with **Nourishing Africa**. Located a few kilometres from the Gambia's capital, Banjul, Farm Fresh connects with a network of over 20 fruits, vegetables, and livestock farmers across the country, particularly in the rural areas – and is one of many companies that has managed to adapt through the pandemic. Farm Fresh has seized the opportunity to continue pushing its business to the Gambian public and online sales and delivery have increased by 400% during the crisis as a result. Farm Fresh now offers delivery services only and has shifted focus to aggressively promoting their products online.

Often referred to as the “hidden middle”, Farm Fresh Gambia and other small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up **80 per cent** of food supply on the continent and are the true drivers of growth and innovation in Africa. Nourishing Africa's online hub for agriculture and food entrepreneurs aims to support over one million agri-food entrepreneurs and their businesses across the continent. It bridges the knowledge, skills and resource gaps that have resurfaced through this crisis and scales action from farms all the way to forks.

I believe that **with the right policies and interventions, African entrepreneurs can drive the transformation of food systems and ensure that the continent can feed itself**. But we must read the writing on the wall and emerge stronger through local, regional, and global collaboration. Only in this way can we ensure the health and prosperity of our people, planet and ultimately our hearts.



**Ndidi Nwuneli is Founder of Nourishing Africa, Co-Founder of Sahel Consulting, Co-Founder of AACE Foods, and Founder of LEAP Africa, as well as a FOLU Ambassador.** FOLU is a global community of organisations and individuals committed to the urgent need to transform the way we produce and consume food and use our land for people, nature and climate. The World Farmers' Organisation is one of the Core Partners.



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