2025 Norman E. Borlaug International Dialogue
Session Title: Outstanding in HER Field: Women Trailblazers Shaping the Future
Date: October 23, 2025

Speakers

- Facilitator: Swati Nayak | 2023 Borlaug Field Award Recipient and Scientist, International Rice Research Institute
- Linda Kinkel | 2025 Top Agri-food Pioneer and Chief Science Officer, Jord BioScience
- Sandra Cristina Kothe Milach | Chief Scientist, CGIAR
- Esha Venkat | Founder and Chief Operating Officer, NEST4US

Transcript
Swati Nayak:

Hello, good morning and Namaste. What a wonderful day. Wonderful panel. And today is the 23rd of October. In a few hours, this evening, we'll be celebrating another journey, another story yet again for a woman leader in science, Dr. Hungria, as our Food Prize Winner 2025. And we have spectacular women leaders in science, innovation, youth action today with us. Ladies and gentlemen, when women nurture soil, they just don't plant seeds. They plant hope. They plant future.

They plant resilience and abundance. They foster stewardship for social and ecological resilience for smallholders and most vulnerable communities. With this, we have today three women leaders from their respective domains of discipline, science, innovation. And we have with us, Dr. Sandra Milach, chief scientist of CGIAR, who carries significant decades of experience in agriculture research for development, public private partnership, breeding and emerging technology development, innovation. We have Dr. Linda Kinkel, who is also 2025 agri-food pioneer awardee, as well as a renowned professor and plant pathologist, researcher in microbiome and also an entrepreneur.

And we have one of our youngest women leaders, Esha Venkat, who has founded and COO for NEST4US, and she has been engaging thousands of youth, young volunteers who is working around food waste and hunger management. So I welcome all of you to this panel. And just to start with this conversation, I'm curious to hear from Sandra. You are the chief scientist of CGIAR and have been leading one

of the largest global collaboration networks to steer innovation in science. If I ask you, what are those areas of scientific innovations?

Especially maybe in the domain of breeding or soil health. What do you think could be reframed or reshaped in a better manner so that we create a long term impact in the domain of food system resilience?

Sandra Cristina Kothe Milach:

Thank you so much for having me today. I was telling Marcia today that I have been coming to this dialogue for ten years, every year, and I do believe it's a very important dialogue. But this is the first time I sit on this chair, so I feel a lot of responsibility on my shoulders, and I'm really happy to be here. So before I get into your questions, Swati, I really want to describe a little bit of the journey of and the importance of my looking into all this for many years. And I will tell you that I started with agronomy, and my father told me, Sandra, you shouldn't do this because this is not a man agriculture is not a place for women.

And, you know, and he was right on that one because, you know, for many, many years, I was never I was usually the only one, the one of the few ones go into to that. And the reason I'm telling this story, but, you know, the good thing is that I really found some remarkable leaders who were important mentors and coaches. In fact, after thirty years in this journey, my first female leader is Mahan Elawafi. I have never had one before directly who I report to, but I found fantastic men. And I'm here today walking in their footsteps, including Norman Borlaug, who, like me, was a plant breeder.

You know, I was a plant breeder like him. And also, I graduated from Minnesota, so we, you know, he was an inspiration for me as well. The reason I'm telling the story is because I want to tell a story that brings the point of your question. And I recently started with CGIAR, the chief scientist, in January, and I moved to Kenya. And the good thing about being there in the country is being able to actually visit farmers.

This is my happy place when I can walk the fields with farmers and listen to their stories. And, you know, one of these stories that, you know, was that I learned from being there, it comes from work that the livestock institute did. And really, you know, speaks about how important it is for us to look at the systems and the resilience of

food systems as a whole, including all technologies and some that you already mentioned as well. And, you know, this story is that, I don't know if you know, but 70% of the producers of poultry in Kenya are female. They are female producers.

And one of the things we learned very, you know, at the very beginning of this journey was that the vaccines and a lot of work that was done both by the Livestock Institute, but also in collaboration with the National Institute of Kenya, Kauri, the adoption of those vaccines were not very good. And people were asking, why is that? So they started looking for solutions. They looked at, you know, different things. They thought, well, first vaccines, these are small communities to be able to transport these vaccines there.

You know, when they get there, they're not good. There's no refrigerator. Most of these communities don't even have, you know, electricity. So they started finding solutions. Know, roads are difficult, like Ambassador McQueen talked about the need for roads, like roads are difficult.

So they started actually finding solutions for it. And they got, you know, forced, you know, power, solar power, freezers and things like that, and, you know, be able to deliver those vaccines. Then they went back and tested again, and the increase was maybe 20% of adoption. It's still very low based on all these technologies. And then they said, Okay, why is that?

And they decided to go deeper into it. And as they went deeper into it, they found that there were, you know, in these communities, females who were the ones who produced, know, and responsible for the chickens, they were not allowed to talk to men. Guess what? All vets were men, so they couldn't talk to them, so they never got the training, never got that. The other thing also, there were things in the community that didn't see women being able to be empowered to make those decisions and to be empowered to use those technologies.

So long story short, after some time, they actually were able to, you know, address that by having female vets, by having, you know, addressing those, what we call transformative gender challenges that were there. And then the adoption really went to over 70%. What I'm telling you about this story is because we talked so much this week about innovations in many areas, including plant breeding soils, and my second example today will be about that. But I'm telling you that because I think, you

know, these solutions, they they require us to look at things holistically. Resilience of food systems also has to look at equity, to look at who are the players, who are the farmers, how they play, and how we actually get innovations to them with the right transformative actions.

So I will stop now and I'll tell more about the plant breeding the soil in the next example. Thank you, Vaci.

Swati Nayak:

Indeed, I mean, when we talk about resilience, it's not about only one individual or one household. It's a collective effort. It's about a change at a community level or at a landscape level we are talking about. And there comes the role of these social networks that you were highlighting about women farmers. And in many places we see strong institutionalized networks of farmers as well, who could steer those changes to make our system more resilient.

Thank you, thank you for your insights, Sandra. That was really insightful. So coming to you, Dr. Linda, you have been discovering and working around the exciting, invisible world of microbiomes. And that unfolds a lot of opportunity for emerging domains of science or solutions we are talking about in global food and nutrition security.

So how do you see the potential there to unleash for the future?

Linda Kinkel:

Thanks, I wanna thank the organizers for the opportunity to be here today. And based on what Sandra just said, I wanna share one short anecdote that I didn't plan to share, but I think it informs what I'm gonna share from a technical perspective. On my very first day as a University of Minnesota faculty member, which was many years ago, I am not young. I remember unpacking my books in my office, was super excited and just feeling great. And an older male faculty member, We at that point had one faculty member who was at a research station up just near the North Dakota border.

So I was gonna be the female presence in the department and he came to my door. And he said, welcome. And I said, oh, thank you. And then he said, I'm gonna tell you, you're not my first choice because I don't think a woman can handle this job. But I stood there and I am a Midwesterner and the way I was raised.

He stood there and then he said, but again, welcome aboard. And I said, thank you. And as he walked away, I was kicking myself. Said, thank you? When he just? But I thought to myself, it is what it is. And what I realized over the next 20 years was a couple of important things. First of all, productivity was the best revenge. Over that period, I had 25 graduate students and he had one. But I think that that situation and the setting of feeling as an outsider has had a significant impact in my career long over its duration because the ability to take that risk even when you don't know you're taking it can be a big impact.

And as a woman, hopefully this is changing, but there still are cases where you're the only one in the room. And leaning into that and finding your voices is one of the things that's important for women in agriculture. So what about microbes though? So we live in a microbial world. We are surrounded by microbes.

They're in us, they're on us, we eat them, we breathe them. Standing in the soil, a single cubic centimeter can have hundreds of millions of microbes. And plants evolve in partnership with microbes. Plants require microbes for literally everything. Fixing carbon to get energy, colonization of land required fungal partners.

Plants rely on microbes to accomplish important things. Microbes help access nutrients for plants and in P and K, they can provide protection against plant pathogens. Abiotic stress resilience, they can sequester carbon in the soil, which of course is a huge need at this point in time. Plants do amazing things because of their microbial partners. And the proliferation of microbial inoculants really reflects this incredible potential and capability that microbes have.

But the reality is we've missed a part of this story, and that is the fact that microbes also need one another. Microbes exist in partnerships. And to optimize the capabilities of microbes to support plants, we must rediscover those partnerships. Because we've largely broken them in agriculture. Tillage and chemical use and intensive agriculture really breaks apart these collaborative networks of microbes that support plants.

And so the question of how does understanding and nurturing the soil microbiome help contribute to global food security? Understanding when and how and why microbes interact together is gonna be key for us to really leverage their capabilities in cropping systems. As it turns out, microbes coexist and collaborate and interact across a spectrum. Microbes in soil, first of all, interactions. There's antagonistic conflict.

Two microbes together might kill each other. They've got an arsenal of weapons including antibiotics and other toxic compounds. They can compete actively for resources within a zero sum game. And so conflict compromises the capability for microbes to accomplish those things for plants that really make a difference. Moving along the spectrum, microbes can also just coexist in a fairly neutral setting, keeping to their own business.

Microbial inoculants today in agriculture tend to seek this coexistence. If I can just put one microbe in soil or on the plant and it can do its thing, we're all good. But coexistence is not aspirational enough. That will not get us where we need to go in accomplishing the potential of microbes to support food security. We know microbes collaborate positively.

We know that microbes together can support one another in colonizing and persisting, and especially in performing those functions, be it nutrient provisioning or pathogen suppression, those functions that plants need. And so thinking about collaboration among microbes, this should be preaching to the choir. Everybody in this room knows that collaboration is power. Collaboration is a multiplier. People working together leverage one another's understanding, knowledge capabilities to accomplish great things.

Microbes are exactly the same. So the value in understanding and really unpacking how microbes work and the key role of microbial partnerships in plant productivity is gonna be key to really achieving the global security in food that we need. The other thing I'd like to really emphasize is that our capabilities to unpack soil microbiomes and build those collaborative microbial partnerships, is actually gonna just take us back to the legacy, the origin story for plants and microbes in soil. And so that in a nutshell is how understanding soil microbiomes is gonna have a significant impact on food security.

Swati Nayak:

That only gets exciting every moment with every word you shared with us. And I am getting the impression to read more and more about microbiomes now. And we read about your innovation, biological playbook, which has been a game changing way of how we shape up product development in this space. And that's commendable. And thank you for sharing your experience and insights around that.

Coming back to Esha, I'm personally quite inspired by you, Esha. You are 20 years old, and you have founded NEST4US. You have engaged with thousands of young volunteers through youth led collective action. How do you see that youth and youth led action is going to play a key role in shaping up the global food and nutrition security agenda in the future? And what's your vision around that?

Esha Venkat:

Yeah. Well, I love this question. Obviously, as a young person being on the stage, it's really a privilege. And again, like you both are so inspiring and really a true example of trailblazing women. So it's just an honor to be here and honored to have this opportunity from the World Food Prize.

I'm Esha, like you said, I'm 20 years old, so pretty young, but I started my journey all the way when I was 10 years old when I started NEST4US with my sister who is 13. So you can imagine, I had a lot of similar experiences where I was the only young person in the room, the only person advocating and a lot of people doubted my ability to make a difference in the beginning. But with consistency, with grit, with the support of so many people, we've been able to get to where we are now, which is one of the world's largest youth founded nonprofits, really focused on our five core programs that tackle over 14 SDGs, with our amazing team of now 9,000 volunteers who've contributed over $6 million in value of volunteer time. So it's been a whole journey, almost a decade now, and it's been absolutely incredible. And I wanna really talk more deeply about our first program, which is Nest Nurtures, our zero hunger program to give some more context of my background and my perspectives.

So what we do through Nest Nurtures is really address the food climate nexus. We basically address the issue of scarcity and surplus. So we go into the public and

private sectors like schools, restaurants, businesses, rescue their excess food that otherwise end up in landfills, contribute to nearby soil degradation, climate change, and instead we redistribute that food to families and communities facing food insecurity all across the DC area. And I kind of think, thank you. I think about when we talk about solutions, I kind of see soil as a metaphor for youth engagement, right?

Soil is fertile, it's full of life, but it also needs to be nourished, right, in order to actually thrive. And I feel like too often we talk about youth engagement and we're always saying youth of the future, the future leaders, but we're honestly leading right now, right? And seeing what's going on this week with the Global Youth Institute, people are writing the research papers, we're finding our whys, we're creating apps and we're in gardens and maybe even a couple non profits, right? Starting some non profits along the way. So we're really putting in the work and the effort.

And I think when I imagine a vision of Youth Lead Action, I really see integrating climate and sustainability curriculum early on, in elementary school. And imagine if we did that and then don't just stop there, we go into cities and we're having youth food policy councils in every city. So we're building upon the awareness that we've gained and actually taking action. And I think if I was going to sum it up in one sentence, right, I would say youth led action and its role in solutions is really bridging that why with the how. We already have that, why, right?

We know the issues that are going on, we're planting the seeds, we just need the support and the belief to actually put them forward. And I have a little story too of how we do that with NEST4US. And I think one of the most important things and I feel a lot of responsibility in my role is especially as one of the first young people to be in these spaces to open up opportunities and pathways for other young people to also get involved. So we're able to do that by giving leadership opportunities for young people to actually lead these food rescues, like driving in the communities, interacting with low income families, mentoring other youth, so it's really this life cycle of service. And when you're there, you're seeing all this food and all of this, you're getting this awareness, right?

And really understanding, it makes you think differently about sustainability, about equity, about waste, about justice. And that system's awareness doesn't just stop there, right? It goes back to the classrooms and to your career. Like, I'm a public

policy major at Georgia Tech, still in school, missing school, I'll be catching up, don't worry. But I promise for any teachers of mine watching this.

But really, my work with Nespresso inspired me to go into public policy to really hopefully take the actions and volunteerism and make it more structural. I think all of that really starts with this one simple idea of belief. I mean, we at NEST4US, we've had a long journey of almost ten years and we wouldn't have been able to serve 350,000 meals, rescue over 4 million pounds of surplus food, preventing 3.2 million pounds of carbon emissions from entering the atmosphere without belief, right? And it started from my family, from my kitchen table. This whole panel today is about outstanding women trailblazers and I have to shout out my mom.

She was the first woman who really believed in me. Yes, you got the clap for mom. When I was six years old, seven years old, she would bring me and my sister along to volunteer with her and that was really when I got inspired and learned that I had the agency and ability to make a difference. So because of her and she's also an amazing cook and you know, my dad's a big foodie. So really, we're brought up in this idea that food is more than just food, right?

It's culture. It's a connector. And being able to take those ideas and bridge them in local, national and global communities was amazing and all because of the belief that people had. I'm even sitting on this stage today because the World Food Price Foundation believed in my ability as a young female entrepreneur of color to share my stories and share how I'm making a difference. So I think if I was going to sum it up in a short sentence, it would be combining this idea of belief with opportunity, right?

Not just giving the platforms, but the pathways to engage further, to make sure that youth led action isn't just symbolic, right, to check a box, but it's really more structural and ingrained and that's how we're going to keep making a difference in the generations to come.

Swati Nayak:

Indeed, when you say that youth are not for the future, they are living in the present, and are making the change right now, right here. And I acknowledge that. And we all agree to it. And we can see the way you were explaining already there are a lot of

examples and ground safe for chain reaction ahead. And this is a time where we can capitalize, intensify these efforts in our mainstream efforts around food and agriculture, food system innovations.

Coming back to Sandra, you have immense tremendous experience in both the public and private sector. And building on those experiences, how do you see, what are some of the best bridging models that connects emerging domains of science and technology with applicability, or the field application, or building practical solutions for the small holders, or the realities that are on ground. So how do we take it there and make it a more palpable solution on ground?

Sandra Cristina Kothe Milach:

Very good. So I'm going to bring the second example, because I think it does bring that to life and exemplifies how important it is to look at holistically technology, but also the partnership, especially with the private sector. So again, when I was very young, starting with my undergrad, I remember going to one of the workshops that I participated in was soil conservation. By then, this was the late '80s. Brazil was really I'm originally from Brazil, as you probably already picked it up from my accent.

But at that point, Brazil was really facing a very big crisis, if I may say, or at least a very big challenge dealing with soils, especially in the Southern part of Brazil, we're producing quite a bit of wheat and soybean and other crops. But one of the challenges is that our soils were really, really being washed out. The topsoil was being washed out by erosion. There were no tariffs, no infrastructure that was stopping that to happen. And farmers were really having, you know, a problem, but this was also affecting the quality of the water.

The rivers were like red rivers because the soil was all going and washing away. And the reason I'm bringing this example is because, I mean, we usually talk about history and we look at, oh, you know, this happened. But once you live through it and and then you reflect later, then you see, well, I watched some of this happening. And I call this the no till revolution in Brazil, which also builds upon the work of Dr. Mariangela Hungria and also many people in EMBRAPA, which was fundamental to make this happen.

And basically, this no till technology is very interesting to see how the adoption of that happened. In the, you know, if you look at in the 80's and the 90's, early nineties, there was still not a lot. Maybe you had a couple of 100,000 hectares being used for this technology. But it took a very long time for this to really go up and start moving into a large adoption. And at the beginning, it was because there were no solutions.

Know, you had technology, you understood how to do it. But when we had to actually plant in no till, there was no machinery ready. There was like, you know, a lot of this was still being developed. And there were some very entrepreneur farmers who took that very early. They started modifying their own machineries.

And it happens that my husband's cousin was one of them, and we watched that very closely, where they would really change their machinery. They will try no matter what. Right? They will try. And still, herbicide control was difficult and all that.

And it was in the '98-2000s when we had some foundational technologies coming, including GMO, soybean tolerant varieties. Machinery at that point was already getting some traction that the big companies started investing, machinery companies, including John Deere, others who were, you know, starting to invest to get the machine in place. And if you look at the graph on that adoption, it really scaled very fast. And today, Brazil has over 36 million hectares of no till soybean. Pretty much all the soybean planted in Brazil is no till.

And that also, you know, created some lots of other secondary effects, including, you know, the growth of safrinha in Brazil because with no till now and then breeding, where we start getting shorter variety soy, shorter variety cycle of corn, we can plant, intensify crops. And those technologies become, you know, in the private sector also supporting that. My point is that for us to do technology is important in the role of EMBRAPA into this first foundation, you know, institutions like EMBRAPA, like CGIAR are doing for international, we play such an important role in showing what is possible, showing what are the new innovations. But when you get to this very large scale, you need the private sector to step in and invest. And I think, you know, perhaps because I've been twenty years in the private sector, I see the importance of, you know, how we actually work together in bringing this to scale.

But I think that transformation of Africa, transformation of agriculture in many countries will come with that. But the thing is that the private sector does not get

there until there is a clear business opportunity. And that enablement through technology, through incentives, through policies, through regulation, that happens with the work of institutions like EMBRAPA and people like doctor Mariangela. I wanna honor that for the work that she did, and we are celebrating today. I'm very proud of that.

But also institutions like, you know, CGIAR, who are playing a very important role in many of these countries. We sit on the tropical belt of the world. We're working with these farmers to find the solutions. So, yes, we need both. We need, be able to open this, enable these spaces.

We need the private sector coming in all forms. Well, yesterday, we talked about some entrepreneurs bringing some technologies. It's not only the big companies. It started with the small, the mid size, but that investment that comes and that entrepreneurship is extremely important for us to drive the solution. So I think this is one example that shows that it was a big revolution.

And I think it is a combination of the soils, health, consequence of that, but also plant breeding, adapting varieties to be able to cope with that as well. And I think all together make it happen. Yeah, thank you.

Swati Nayak:

Continuing the same question with a complementary towards the world of microbiome, I would really like to know from Dr. Linda, what are some of the emerging innovations in the space you are working and how do we make those accessible to the farmers, small holders and women farmers? And how do we make sure? We all are talking about, you know, equitable access to technology and innovation. So where does that fit into and how can we work towards that?

Excellent.

Linda Kinkel:

And I do wanna start out by also acknowledging this year's World Food Prize recipient, Dr. Hungria, for being a global leader in microbials, a well deserved award for an amazing scientist. I had a really clear idea how I was gonna answer this, but I

wanna start by picking up a thread that Sandra touched on, which is getting technologies out. I've been a faculty member at the University of Minnesota for 35 years. I never dreamed, aspired to be an entrepreneur.

But about eight years ago, I realized a couple of things. I realized that I had written grants and spent millions of federal dollars. And every grant I wrote said this work will make agriculture better. And I taught, I had advised students, I had published papers, but I hadn't moved the needle. And I worked closely with growers and the growers would always say, would do field trials on their farms and show them the results and they would say, can we get these microbes?

And I would say, it's research. And I realized I was a liar unless I did something different. The land grant mission asks U.S. scientists to improve the lives of individuals, communities and the global community. But you have to get the technologies out. And it's true, there needs to be a business case.

But the greatest science in the world in a university that can't get out will have no impact, will not advance food security. And after I realized that I was failing in the land grant mission, I started having conversations with companies that were interested in licensing organisms and in every licensing microbes from our collection. And in every case, I was left with, well, wait a minute. No, they're gonna do it wrong. They're gonna use one microbe like it's chemistry and put it everywhere, and that's actually not the right model.

And I was deeply fortunate to have a university that said, okay, we'll support you to launch a startup. And so five years ago, we launched a startup company, Your Bioscience, to translate our technologies to get them into the hands of growers. And it costs money but the reality is to get those technologies out. How do you pay for the field trials at scale, the communication, the scaling up of inoculum production, the work that needs to be done to make that big leap. So when you think about innovation, what are the next big steps for microbes or for soil solutions more broadly?

We have to find better pathways. We have to basically grease the skids to get technologies out of academia and research labs more effectively. It's good that there are big companies that make investments, but if you look at the bigs of agriculture, they become very conservative in their R and D dollars. The innovation is coming

earlier in the pipeline, in research institutions and in academia. We have to be able to get that technology out.

And that needs to be an active conversation. I sometimes think, looping back to where I started, that the only reason I said, okay, I'll start a company not knowing anything about what that meant. Has to do with having been a bit of an outsider. Okay, so you don't think I can do the job? Let me show you.

But that's one of the big innovations we need. We need to get technologies out, but from a microbial perspective, we have spent hundreds of years studying plants. What do they need? We've bred them, we know what food, you know, NPK, water. We spent probably one hundred and fifty years studying plant pathogens, the bad guys.

Oh, they're terrible, let's kill them, let's rotate it, reduce their populations. We've spent just the blink of an eye unpacking the beneficial microbes. The billions of microbes in soils, which actually are doing good things, but we've never focused on them because they can be invisible. So a big innovation over the next couple of decades is gonna be just that basic understanding. We have tools today that even five years ago, I would have fantasized about having these tools.

So innovations are going to come in basic understanding, which again means we have to be able to get those technologies and ideas out. The smallholder farmer, I can finish quickly with that, I realize time is running out. Global food security, those small holder farmers are perhaps the very most important target for novel technologies. If we really wanna enhance global food security because it rests with those small farmers and especially women who are feeding their families and trying to get funding for things like school tuition. And it's hard with microbials.

You have to do the things that maybe aren't the fun part. How do you produce inoculum that's stable, that's viable, that I can transport, that it's hot, it's cold, all of the above and it gets on farm ready to do what it needs to do. Needs inoculum, microbial inoculants need to be nimble. I might wanna put it on as a soil drench, I might wanna treat my seeds, I might want an in-furrow. Any of those need to be possible.

We need to think of the unfun, but the foundational game changers are actually making technologies that can go to the farmers. Effective packaging, it sounds

boring, It's absolutely crucial. So we need to put the time and energy into the people infrastructure, but the distribution infrastructure. Those things are gonna be game changing even though they might not be the fun parts, but they will have big impacts on global food security. And a couple more things, but I'm going to turn it back to you.

Swati Nayak:

As we all say keep on retreating, take it to farmers. So that remains our aim for all innovation. Until and unless we do that, no value is added from our side to the society. And as time is short, but I would really like to listen to you Esha, that as a representative for youth leadership in agriculture or global food security, what is your one key message to the established leaders that they should consider as a voice of youth?

Esha Venkat:

Yeah, absolutely. I think especially as we look to the next few years of food insecurity, there are a lot of challenges that we're going to be facing, right, conflict and inequality and climate shocks and all of these things. But I think in the midst of all these challenges, right, there's an invitation and opportunity to reimagine certain systems and reimagine really the systems that sustain life itself, right, from soil to spoon. So if I was going to say a quick call to action, it would really be to let the science and the technology guide us, but let compassion really ground us in what we're doing. I think with equity, you know like Dr. Sandra, like she really talked a lot about how important equity is and really representation and involving young people and female farmers and people who are typically not brought in the conversation and not just giving them a seat at the table, but the tools in their hands to make change.

I know that was game changing for me and I think continuing to lead with compassion and if anybody here, mean today, I mean listening to the young people with their research papers in the Global Youth Institute, like as somebody who was able to be in the room with them and be a roundtable expert, it was amazing to see their ideas and how they were looking at these issues and thinking, you know, there wasn't a lot of data, there wasn't a lot of people looking at this, but I thought I'm going be the one to try. And I think that's really giving me hope and I think we need

to really tap more into that idea because that's really how we're going to go into that systems change by focusing on what's out there, what's the missing pieces and how can I play a role, whether it's science or technology or culture or an interconnected mix of all of that and continuing to lead with empathy and growth and youth leadership?

Swati Nayak:

Just to come to an amazing conclusion, I would really like to quickly ask Dr. Sandra and Dr. Linda, what would be that one quick critical call for action from your end that we must target for the coming five years?

Sandra Cristina Kothe Milach:

Yeah, I will say that for me very important is how we become more allies of gender equity. I mean, talk so much about resilient systems. We talk about being able to reach out to different farmers in different ways and how these technologies affect different gender and affect women who are so I was never a feminist. I never want to be treated differently. Okay?

But I see that the only way we can actually change the system and make food systems and women being the decision makers, the leaders into the system is that we have allies. People because the majority are men in the boardrooms that they become allies and they see the potential in the women and they actually help them to move forward. So my call today is for the leaders sitting here that you really become allies of this and to transform the systems to be also equitable systems. Doctor. Linda?

Linda Kinkel:

I wanna totally second what she just said. We need more women at the table at every level in discussions that have to do with agriculture. Research, technology transfer, on farm management, women have to be present. The other thing, relating to where we're at in the world today, exacerbates global tensions. This room, these people, what we need to do is we need to continue to lean into what we know works.

International discussion, collaboration, partnerships. We are all in this together. Agriculture is something that touches all of us and solutions have to be collective collaborative ones. And so we need to keep leaning into our capability to be part of the discussion again at every possible level.

Swati Nayak:

The world needs innovation and innovation needs women. So please give a big round of applause to our trailblazers.