

## **Inclusive Markets Symposium 2025: Transforming Market Systems for Resilience, Inclusion, and Sustainability: Reimagining the Future Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape**



*A photo of the participants taken during the Symposium at Ciala Resort*

The Inclusive Markets Symposium 2025, held from November 26-28 at CIALA Resort in Kisumu, Kenya, brought together 74 participants from 36 organizations to explore transformative strategies for Africa's evolving market systems. Under the theme "*Transforming Market Systems for Resilience, Inclusion, and Sustainability: Reimagining the Future Amid a Shifting Donor Landscape*," the event fostered collaboration across sectors to develop solutions focused on resilience, inclusion, and sustainability. Kisumu, symbolizing the region's economic transformation, provided an ideal backdrop for discussions on how decentralized, context-responsive strategies can strengthen market systems across Africa.

Rebecca Amukhoye, Chair of the BDCG Secretariat, opened the symposium by emphasizing Kisumu's role as an emerging economic hub and emphasizing the BDCG Network's crucial role in shaping resilient market systems. She urged the audience to rethink traditional market strategies in light of shifting donor funding and increasing private-sector involvement.

Victor Nyagaya, CEO of the Lake Region Economic Bloc, echoed these sentiments, highlighting the potential of regional collaboration to accelerate economic growth by organizing farmers and strengthening market-oriented value chains.



*Victor Nyagaya, CEO of the Lake Region Economic Bloc giving his speech*

Day 1 featured dynamic sessions on evolving donor landscapes, climate adaptation, green transitions, and bioeconomy. Presenters stressed the importance of integrating climate resilience, digitalization, and regional cooperation into market systems. An exhibition showcased innovative agricultural solutions, including eco-friendly poultry models and sustainable waste management systems. Discussions on agri-finance highlighted the need for tailored financial products to meet farmers' needs, while a session on inclusive leadership, gender equality and youth empowerment explored how empowering women, youth, and persons with disabilities can transform market systems by elevating these groups as active leaders.



*Getrude from Garithe CBO showing a participant how they use coconut shells to value add*

Day 2 expanded the conversation to structural inclusion and reimagining market systems through data-driven policy, public-private partnerships, and equity-focused agri-finance models. A session on Trade and Regional Integration addressed the challenges of political cycles and regulatory inconsistencies, advocating for stronger partnerships and infrastructure improvements to ensure sustainable economic integration across borders. Field visits to M-Taka, Victoria Eco Farm, and Peaknest Beekeeping Farm provided hands-on insights into innovative, community-driven, and tech-enabled solutions. M-Taka's digital waste management, Victoria Eco Farm's circular agroecological practices, and Peaknest's inclusive apiculture model showcased scalable approaches for

building resilient food systems and empowering local communities. These visits highlighted the importance of community engagement, digital tools, and sustainable practices in fostering ecological resilience and economic opportunity.

On Day 3, reflections from the field visits emphasized the integration of innovation and sustainability in market systems. A session on systemic change and policy focused on data-driven decision-making, spotlighting citizen-generated data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools like the Strathmore Agri-Food Innovation Centre's SAFIC platform. Post-symposium evaluations showed high satisfaction, with many delegates planning to implement circular economy models and digital solutions in their work. Margaret Miano concluded the symposium by highlighting the BDCG network's growth and the importance of member engagement and strong leadership. She called for enhanced member participation, structured governance, and contributions to shape future events and training programs.



*A photo taken during a panel discussion*

Feedback regarding future events showed a strong preference for the 2026 symposium to be held in November, with Mombasa as the top venue. Other locations, including Malindi, Kisumu, and Nanyuki, were also suggested. The fourth quarter of the year was favored for market systems training, followed by the second and first quarters. Leadership nominations for the Network Council included Rebecca Amukhoye, Wairimu Wahome, and Victor Ndiege, with Patrick Lumumba and others also receiving support. The evaluation reaffirmed the network's focus on sustainability, inclusive governance, and partnerships, with a clear consensus on

November 2026 and Mombasa as the ideal setting for the next symposium.

In closing, Rebecca Amukhoye, Chair of the BDCG Secretariat and Noah Meely, Chair, MESPT Board of Trustees called for continued innovation, collaboration, and actionable strategies to drive the transformation of market systems toward greater resilience, inclusion, and sustainability. As delegates departed, they left with more than just innovative ideas; they were inspired to work toward a future where Africa's market systems are inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. The Inclusive Markets Symposium 2025 served as a

powerful catalyst for change, igniting a collective commitment to ensuring that Africa's economic transformation benefits all, especially the most marginalized.