



Hack4Farming Nairobi 2016

Judging Panel



Sheilah Birgen

Ms. Birgen is the Lead at m:Lab East Africa, a technology lab and a center for digital entrepreneurship that offers business incubation, developer training, application testing, and ecosystem building. She is also the Head of Community at iHub, where she facilitates, amplifies, grows and catalyzes the scaling of East African digital entrepreneurs.

Ms. Birgen has been the organizer of the largest tech event in East Africa: PIVOT East – East Africa’s premier annual mobile startup pitching competition and conference – since 2012. She has also coordinated regional events such as the ICT4Ag AgriHack Championships in 2013, the M2Work MicroWork 2013 Global Challenge, and the Space Apps Challenge 2013.

She is passionate about mobile development, entrepreneurship, startup-investor relations, growth, hacking and startup dynamics. She is currently a mentor and a coach to several startups.



David Campbell

Mr. Campbell runs operations for Mediae in Kenya and has over 35 years of experience working in development communications. Under his leadership, Mediae has become the region's leader in researching and producing media productions that are highly effective at impacting on people's knowledge, attitudes and practices, including Tembea na Majira, Makutano Junction, Shamba Shape Up, Pilika Pilika, KnowZone and many others. His innovative program format for Shamba Shape Up has changed the way agricultural information can be accessed by large audiences across the East African region. He was given an OBE in 2008 for his work supporting education and development in Africa through media.



Kayode Sanni

Dr. Sanni has more than 20 years of progressive experience in agricultural research and development, and science and technology, with extensive leadership in genetics, plant breeding, genetic resources and management. He currently serves as the Project Manager for Rice at AATF, where he provides overall leadership to the research and product development of the rice projects. Prior to joining AATF, he was the Head of Genetic Resources Unit and the coordinator of International Network for Genetic Evaluation of Rice in Africa (INGER-Africa) at the Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice), where he led and managed the collection, conservation and utilization of rice genetic resources. Before joining AfricaRice, he worked at IITA in various capacities, firstly with the Maize Breeding Program and later with the Genetic Resources Center. Dr. Sanni also participates in the crop technical sub-committee of the National Varietal Release Committee of Nigeria as an international expert on rice.

Dr. Sanni holds a Ph.D. in Plant Breeding from the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria. He obtained a Masters degree in Environmental Genetics, and a Bachelor of Agriculture degree in Soil Science from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He was a Postdoctoral Fellow on rice molecular genetics at the Genetic Diversity and Improvement Program of AfricaRice in Cotonou, Republic of Benin.



John Karanja

Mr. Karanja is the Founder of BitHub Africa, a Blockchain Accelerator providing Consultancy and Incubation services for individuals and firms interested in Bitcoin and Blockchain Technology. He is also a Director and co-Founder at Space Kenya Networks Ltd, which provides work space for businesses and startups operating in Nairobi.

Mr. Karanja has 9 years of experience in the management of web solution development both for small enterprises and larger organizations. He has also been involved in a number of projects that involve the analysis of the social impact of ICT in Africa, as well as projecting possible growth areas of ICT based solutions for the continent. He was awarded the Vision2030 ICT Award 2011 for Innovation in Youth and Gender Sector by the Kenyan Government for his Whive SMS product. In addition, Space Kenya Networks Ltd was the First African Winner of the Nokia Open Screen Fund in 2009, as well as a nominee for the Tech4Africa Innovation Award in 2011.

Mr. Karanja has a Masters degree in Sociology from the University of Oxford, England and a Bachelor of Business and Information Technology from Strathmore University, Kenya.



John Mann

Dr. Mann is a scientist and business owner, involved in plant breeding, with a focus on developing seed business in Eastern Africa. He has been involved in the development of hybrid rice research for over 25 years, and currently specializes in the 2-line hybrid rice system. He is a co-Founder, the Managing Director and the Chief Science Officer at Afritec Seeds Limited, which is currently testing over 100 hybrid seeds. He is also the owner, Managing Director and Chief Science Officer at Hybrids East Africa Limited, a co-partner on the Hybrid Rice: Breeding by Design project.

Dr. Mann holds a Ph.D. in Genetics and Plant Breeding from the Texas A&M University, and a Masters of Science in Genetics and Plant Breeding from Colorado State University.