

Transforming agriculture with entrepreneurship and technology in the Middle East

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

9:00 – 10:30 a.m. EDT

Online event via Zoom

Speaker Bios



Dr. Kamel Abdallah

Managing Director, Vita F&B Capital

Dr. Kamel Abdallah is the Managing Director of Vita F&B Capital, an Agri-Food Strategy and Private Equity Advisory Management firm. For over twenty years, he has led large regional Agri-Food companies in the Middle East. He is considered a GCC (Middle East) regional subject matter expert on transformation of regional Agriculture and Food Security programs and has chaired the 2020 World Food Security Forum for the MENA region, among others. Since 2003, He has served in Board Director/CEO positions in Agri/Food based companies, including Executive Vice Chairman/CEO of Aujan Industries/Rani Investment (now Aujan-Coca Cola), the largest private beverage player in the Middle East (Rani, Vimto, Barbican), as well the CEO of Exeed Industries, an Abu Dhabi based Industrial/Agricultural family office group with farms and feed mills among others. He also served as Managing Director of AATCO Food Industries in Oman, the largest GCC manufacturer of wet condiments food in the region. He has led a major regional dairy group, Baladna QPSC, from Greenfield to a successful IPO placement and executed successful private placements for companies in the Business Groups he led. Dr. Kamel remains integrated with academia, where he has served as Asst Vice President of the American University of Beirut; and Professor of Strategy and Finance as well as being a tenured Prof and department chair at accredited business schools in the USA. He is a frequent guest speaker at regional Agriculture and Family Offices Investment conferences, including the World Food Security Conference in Dubai, Abu Dhabi Global Manufacturing Industrial Summit (GIMS) , InBev Global Soft Drinks Congress, the Global Ag Investing, The International Water Summit in Abu Dhabi to name a few as well as off-the-record briefings on Africa, GCC, Iran & Iraq economic issues Dr. Kamel holds a Ph.D in Strategic Management with minors in International Finance and Economics from the Ohio State University. Kamel is a graduate of the Harvard Business School Agri Business seminar management program (2020, 2021). He has been awarded the Honorary title of Colonel by the Governor of Kentucky, as well as numerous awards in the US and the region. Dr. Kamel is a mountaineer who has summited Mount Kalimanjaro, Atlas mountain, Mount Ararat, and the highest peaks in the Levant and the GCC.

**Mr. Sky Kurtz***CEO & Co-Founder, Pure Harvest Smart Farms*

Mr. Sky Kurtz is the Cofounder and Chief Executive Officer of Pure Harvest Smart Farms and is a pioneer in the Agritech sector. Pure Harvest develops world-leading controlled-environment agriculture technologies to deliver the best quality fresh produce. The Company's hybrid growing solutions provide precise climate and environmental controls, enabling increased productivity and reduced waste (including water, energy, time, & transport). Since its inception, the Company has raised \$200 million making the Company the most funded startup in the Middle East in 2020, ranked by Forbes Middle East. In March this year, Pure Harvest secured \$60 million in growth funding to support regional expansion in a first-of-its-kind structured Sukuk financing solution. Pure Harvest currently supplies premium quality, sustainably-grown fresh fruits and vegetables to key retailers and HORECA accounts across the UAE and is now expanding across the Gulf Region. Last year, the Company entered into a first-of-its-kind, multi-year offtake and retailer-integration partnership with The Sultan Centre (TSC) in Kuwait – creating a 'farm center' that will include edutainment, a retail farmers' market, & an integrated café – emblematic of the Company's innovative approach to delivering food security, water conservation, economic diversification, and sustainability. Prior to founding Pure Harvest, Mr. Kurtz Cofounded Vence – a wearable technology solution for animal protein farming that semi-automates rotational grazing, reinventing livestock management. Mr. Kurtz also served as a Senior Executive with Francisco Partners, a \$24 billion tech investment firm based in California and an affiliate of Sequoia Capital, a world-leading venture investment firm. Mr. Kurtz invested in and served on the boards of numerous companies across many sectors, with annual turnover ranging from \$25 million to \$2 billion dollars. Mr. Kurtz was awarded an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business and holds a B.S. in Finance from the W.P. Carey School of Business at ASU, where he graduated Summa Cum Laude and was named the Turken Family Outstanding Graduating Senior (valedictory honor).

**Ms. Daniella Taveau***Nonresident Senior Fellow, GeoTech Center, Atlantic Council*

Ms. Daniella Taveau is a regulatory and global trade strategist and the founder of Bold Text Strategies. Ms. Taveau is an internationally recognized expert in developing global business and regulatory strategies. She has extensive experience working with senior political officials and advises multinational corporations in six continents in the areas of international trade, finance, agriculture, food safety, chemicals, pesticides, new technologies, cosmetics, and personal care, intergovernmental organizations, and information technology. Prior to starting her own firm, Daniella was a strategist for the Law Firm of King & Spalding and was an international trade negotiator with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency where she represented the United States at the World Trade Organization (WTO); all U.S. Free Trade Agreements including the Transpacific Partnership, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (U.S./E.U. FTA), and the U.S. Korea Free Trade Agreement; the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (U.N. FAO); and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Ms. Taveau also served as an international policy analyst with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and as an executive for a global cosmetics company for ten years. A classically trained and accomplished opera singer and pianist and

fluent in six languages, Daniella is the chief operating officer of Embassy Series, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering international understanding through musical diplomacy. In addition to a degree in business administration, Daniella has done extensive post-graduate work in the sciences and holds an MBA from the Robert H. Smith Executive School of Business where she is an Executive in Residence.

Moderator Bios



Mr. Amjad Ahmad

Director and Resident Senior Fellow, empowerME, Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, Atlantic Council

Mr. Amjad Ahmad is director and resident senior fellow of empowerME at the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. He focuses on shaping innovative investments to empower entrepreneurs, women, and youth in the Middle East. He develops strategies and policies to drive sustainable prosperity through the creation of dynamic entrepreneurial economies, the economic participation of women, and educational transformation. Amjad is also managing partner of the venture capital firm Precinct Partners and serves on the boards of Eyewa, Tapal Tea, RSA Global, Mumzworld, Mr. Usta and The Luxury Closet. Based in the United Arab Emirates for fifteen years prior to moving to Washington, DC, Amjad has collaborated with business leaders and entrepreneurs to build leading companies in the Middle East. Through his work as a venture capital and growth investor, Amjad established two investment firms in the region that provided over \$1 billion in funding to over fifty companies in sectors ranging from technology and education to healthcare and finance. During the past five years, Amjad has focused his investments on entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology. Amjad holds a master's degree in international affairs with a concentration in international finance and economics from Columbia University and is a graduate of the general management program at Harvard Business School.



Ms. Stephanie Wander

Deputy Director and Senior Fellow, GeoTech Center, Atlantic Council

Ms. Stephanie Wander is a technology and innovation strategist with a successful track record of launching large-scale projects to solve global grand challenges. Ms. Wander's approaches integrate innovation best practices and mindsets including design thinking, behavior change strategies, foresight techniques, and expert and public crowdsourcing. Previously, Stephanie Wander was a Lecturer at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work where she taught graduate Social Work professionals in Design, Innovation, and Disruptive Technology. She is also a former Senior Manager of Prize Development at the XPRIZE Foundation, where she led the design of IBM Watson AI XPRIZE and competitions for on-demand urban aviation and tissue engineering. Ms. Wander was also a contributing designer on the Wendy Schmidt Ocean Health XPRIZE and the Global Learning XPRIZE competitions. Ms. Wander has written and spoken about disruptive technologies and processes, notably at NASA's On-Demand Mobility Workshop, South by Southwest, and on CXOTalk. She co-authored the chapter "The Power of Prize Competitions" in the book *What Matters: Investing in Results to Build Strong, Vibrant Communities*. She has also been quoted by various publications including *Sports Illustrated*, *Wired Germany*, *Vice*, *Engadget*, *Digitaltrends.com*,

Geekwire, Futurism, I Programmer, IFLscience, and The Verge. Ms. Wander is a graduate of the UCLA Anderson School of Management and Northwestern University. Ms. Wander is passionate about collaborating with experts and teams to identify disruptive change, create meaningful opportunities, and deliver high-impact results through innovation.