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# **Tropentag 2023**

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**Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:  
trade-offs and synergies**



September 20 - 22, 2023

organized by

**The Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF),**

**Germany**

**in cooperation with**

**Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany**

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## Summary

Every year an annual interdisciplinary conference on tropical and subtropical agriculture, natural resource management, and rural development is organised by ATSAF e.V. in collaboration with European universities ([www.tropentag.de](http://www.tropentag.de)). This year, Tropentag 2023 (Conference; 20 – 22 September 2023) has been organised as a hybrid conference by Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF), Germany, in cooperation with the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany.

We attended a 2-half-day online workshop at the beginning of September 2023 and a 2-day in-person workshop right before the beginning of the conference on journalism and social media. We worked as an interdisciplinary team of 12 international students and were entrusted with all the social media accounts of ATSAF for us to share reports on the conference.

We published 23 blog articles, that got 26,051 views overall and uploaded 5 videos on YouTube that reached 485 views (as of 25.12.2023). As for the newly founded TikTok account, we posted five videos, that reached a total of 3,775 views and 13 likes. Finally, we shared 7 reels on our Instagram page, which obtained a total of 3842 views, and 193 likes and were commented on 10 times (as of 11.11.2023)

We were also allowed to participate in a post-conference seminar, titled "The Path Forward to a Professional Career" at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

In this report, you'll find a summary of the work we carried out, along with some suggestions for future reporters.

# **Tropentag 2023: Media Coverage**

## **Social Media**

We highly encourage future student reporters to brainstorm beforehand about different formats of posts. For example, this year we set up the format ‘**Humans of Tropentag**’, to not only show the scientists but also to show the conference visitors and the employees that are the backbone of the event. This project resulted in three Instagram posts. The first one was shared on September 20<sup>th</sup> and was a reel containing the recording of an interview with some visitors from South America. It was not only shared on Instagram but also on Facebook and through our TikTok profile. The second post introduced Ritti, a former student reporter from Tropentag 2023, and her parents. His father, Dr. Rainer Zachmann, is the oldest visitor to Tropentag and presented his poster for international agricultural research, training, and communication. Finally, the last piece of content was in the shape of a reel that introduced some of the main organizers of the event.

The format of “Humans of Tropentag” was extremely flexible and suitable for both reels and picture-based content. Moreover, they were easy-to-make content since they just required networking with visitors and organizers in the hallways. They were also easy to manage since they did not require extensive design work.

We, the social media team, met up for a brainstorming session in the morning to organize the daily schedule. We would then proceed to work on our pieces of content, that were planned to be suitable for all the social networks we were using with some small adjustments in terms of texts, links, and tags.

### **Task division:**

- 1) 1 person: Canva, Instagram + Facebook posts through the Meta Manager page, LinkedIn.
- 2) 1 person: Instagram Stories, Reels, TikTok.
- 3) 1 person: X (twitter)

The workload was perhaps a bit too high, but this team had prior experience in social media management. Working with 2 people was very efficient! The third working on X can work individually. Better planning should be done with the photo and blog teams to ensure coordination in the delivery of the interconnected pieces of content. Tip: if the blog is not finished yet, but you know the topic and title for example and one picture, you can already

create/incorporate it in a post and just schedule the post with the Facebook/Meta Business manager to be posted at a certain time for example.

### **Canva**

We used Canva to design all the posts for the social media channels. Our tip would be to assign one person to design the posts and create a design format before the beginning of Tropentag (font, colours, headings, logo). This will speed up the creation process during the fast-paced conference days.

### **Facebook**

First tip: while in some countries Facebook is outdated, in many others it is still the main social media channel, so don't neglect it.

It is possible to connect the Instagram and Facebook accounts so that what is posted on Instagram is automatically shared on Facebook/Meta Business Manager as well. Within the manager, you can select the option to write different text for both posts, which allows you to add a link to the Facebook post.

### **LinkedIn**

We chose to share on LinkedIn only the more professional and scientific posts. Repurposing blog posts and YouTube videos was useful to generate additional clicks on the original versions, as it allowed the use of links. For this social media, it is crucial to tag all featured persons and organizations.

We shared a total of five posts on LinkedIn:

1. Meet the student reporters - all student reporters are tagged.
2. Announcement of the German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture
3. Hans H. Ruthenberg Award - Blogpost
4. Interview with Dr. Catherine Nakalembe - YouTube Link
5. Thank you post - Link to all pictures on Flickr, an overview of all the blog posts with tags to relevant persons and organizations featured in the blog posts.

### **Instagram**

We have shared 16 posts on the ATSAF\_ev Instagram channel, including 7 Reels. The Instagram posts had a commercial aim for the Tropentag conference and the blog posts on the WordPress website contained a recap of the Tropentag days. ATSAF requested for some facts

and events, like the presence of the federal minister, to be shared. Besides that, we had total freedom over the formats and contents we chose to share.

1. How to register/Welcome to Tropentag Reel
2. Meet the Student Reporters 2023
3. Announcement of the German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture
4. Hans H. Ruthenberg Award - Blogpost
5. Humans of #Tropentag2023
6. Recap Day 1
7. Mulemba Kaffee - Donor Goodiebag
8. Recap Day 1 - Blog post overview
9. Strengthening resilience - blog post highlight
10. Recap Day 2
11. Interview with Dr. Catherine Nakalembe
12. Humans of #Tropentag 2023
13. Interview with Lorenz Bachmann from Agrecol
14. Blog posts Overview
15. Meet the humans behind #Tropentag2023
16. Pictures on Flickr - Thank you for posting, where to find the pictures.

### **Instagram Stories and Reels**

*“As a student reporter at the Tropentag 2023 conference with ATSAF in Berlin, I worked on the social media team with Kim. My responsibilities included posting Instagram stories, Instagram reels, and TikTok videos. Additionally, Facebook is automatically connected to Instagram stories and posts, so everything is posted to Facebook as well. I have previous experience with social media, and this is recommended if taking up this part of the student reporter team.” - Hannah Blake*

Having a general idea about SEO, reach, and audience is also strongly recommended to have the highest reach possible. It’s also important to be comfortable with approaching people and asking them to take videos, pictures, soundbites, etc. Additionally, it is crucial to have/use a good quality phone (we would recommend at the very least minimally an iPhone 10 or higher, or the equivalent with Androids).

The first step is logging into the ATSAF social media accounts and getting familiar with the posting style. It is not compulsory to follow the exact style of the previous posts, but it does

look more coherent if it resembles it. Getting familiar with how many views, likes, interactions, etc the previous posts, and more importantly the ones from the previous Tropentag have, is not strictly necessary either, but it can be interesting to use them as a target goal.

Our advice is to start taking photos and videos right from the beginning. People like to see that the student reporters are having fun and working hard, for example through behind the scenes. This kind of content will allow to add B-roll in other videos, to make them more personalised and engaging.

We will now explain how we planned out our process with posts and tell you the likes/views that we have on videos.

For the Instagram stories, we had a daily goal, split up between morning, afternoon, and evening. We would see beforehand what events were scheduled, and what would be interesting for people to see on the ATSAF stories. People like seeing themselves in videos, mingling, and speaking. It is important, especially if you are highlighting one person in a story, to ask whether they would like to be tagged, because they may repost it and therefore increase the engagement on ATSAF's page. We managed to post a minimum of 15 stories a day throughout the whole duration of the conference. It is nonetheless important to post Instagram stories before the beginning of the event, showing the student reporters working and enjoying the time. We advise to use the #tropentag2024 in those first posts so people know to use it. Moreover, we advise to create a "highlight", for people to be able to access stories from the previous days. To increase the engagement, it is important to make the stories fun and interactive, when possible. Also, you can add links, hashtags, and music. Have fun with it!

For Instagram reels, we used CapCut to edit. In our opinion, this is the best app you can have for social media videos, since it is very user-friendly, free, and does an amazing job. There are a bunch of fun fonts and transitions, and it can be used on your phone, tablet, or computer. Try to keep the videos under 30 seconds (having videos that are 8 seconds or under is key because of our very low attention spans). We went over this arbitrary limit in two cases, but they were either single interviews or multiple ones packed into one video. Use trending audio, this boosts the video's views. Use hashtags in the caption and use the caption to explain what is happening in the video. Try to make the transitions smooth. Make sure the audio is clear. Tag people if they have social media. Try to get the keynote speakers to make comments if possible or add them to the videos.

	<b>Views</b>	<b>Like</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Reel 1</b>	1,032	56	7
<b>Reel 2</b>	300	19	1
<b>Reel 3</b>	524	22	0
<b>Reel 4</b>	552	23	0
<b>Reel 5</b>	502	16	0
<b>Reel 6</b>	391	18	0
<b>Reel 7</b>	541	39	2

**Instagram Reels: views, likes, comments (as of 11/11/23)**

### **TikTok**

We were the first group of students reports to use TikTok, and we therefore had to create the account from scratch. This allowed for complete freedom in the communication strategy we selected for this platform. The easiest and most efficient approach is to create videos for both Instagram reels and TikTok. TikTok is a very “giving” form of social media, since it will randomly boost your posts and providing thousands of views, just because the algorithm decided to reach a broader audience. With TikTok, views are more important than likes. Since it does not require additional work than the one necessary to produce Instagram reels, we strongly suggest you utilise this social network.

Typical hashtags to use are in Mara's document but use whatever else you feel is trending. As of 2023, hashtags still work, but they don't work as well as the general algorithm. Using trending audio is very important (even if you use the audio but turn it to 0 or very low).

Upload all the videos and photos in a shared file (like Google Drive) and constantly updated it for the other reporters to have access to the latest content. It is indeed important to maintain a collaborative environment, also to boost creativity and share ideas.

	<b>Views</b>	<b>Likes</b>
<b>TikTok 1</b>	883	5
<b>TikTok 2</b>	919	1
<b>TikTok 3</b>	847	2
<b>TikTok 4</b>	864	1
<b>TikTok 5</b>	262	4

**TikTok: views and likes (as of 11/11/23)**



Social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, is used ideally as a fun, informative platform. Use these accordingly! People interact, like, share, and comment more when it is more fun and share-worthy. This is also a science conference, so keep it professional, but try to have as much fun as possible.

### **X (Twitter)**

X (formerly Twitter) is a platform particularly valuable for researchers, scientists, and science communicators. The reason why it that you can streamline your content to a targeted audience, which in our case were the attendees of Tropentag2023, the scientific community and other colleagues, and only lastly the General public. During the Tropentag 2023 conference, the posts we created contained updates from the conference, promote specific events, and even blog articles. At the end of the conference, we made a total of 6 posts which were viewed by approximately 3000 users, had a like count of 37, and were retweeted by 15 users.

Since Twitter is a social media platform, we would recommend for it to be managed by the social media team. *“whichever team handles social media content also includes Twitter in the Portfolio. As might be observed, because I had to Photograph also and did not have enough time for content.”* - Maximus Anochirim

### **Interviews and Videos**

The video team was established at the onsite pre-conference workshop, together with all the other tasks. It was a three-members groups, which was mainly responsible for recording videos, editing, and publishing through YouTube. The already existing YouTube channel was the main platform for long videos.

Two of the team members recorded the videos and participated in the live streaming. The other person edited the raw videos. All the editing tasks happened in the evening and nights after receiving the raw material recorded during the daytime. To edit videos, we mainly use iMovie and DaVinci. You may feel free to whatever software you are comfortable with for editing. Since the video editor was unfamiliar with iMovie, she had to study iMovie overnight. It is not impossible, yet it can be quite tiresome. It is strictly advisable to edit on laptops, as you have to explore a lot of footage. Videos were mentioned on other social media channels operated by ATSAF (not as paid advertisements).

On YouTube, we published a total of 5 videos.

Video	Number of views As of 25 Dec 2013,
Introduction of Student Reporters	162
Interview with Dr. Nakalembee (Key-note Speaker)	87
Day 1 Recap	115
Day 2 Recap	69
After-movie	52

We decided to make a relatively shorter video (2.08 minutes) for the introduction of the student reporters to keep the audience engaged. On the other hand, Dr. Nakalembe’s Interview was quite long. We could have produced a shorter version as well. For daily recaps and after-movies, we have touched every possible moment and aspect throughout the whole Tropentag. We also have used relevant hashtags to be compatible with Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

**Benefits:**

1. Pre-conference workshops were a great help. Specifically, Roland’s session touched on the technical aspects mostly.
2. One team member had previous experience in video recording, which allowed the process to go on without any without any hassle.
3. Even though we had a lot going on, we also helped other teams to fulfil their tasks such as photographing and blog writing. This allowed us to get interdisciplinary experiences.

**Challenges:**

1. We feel the equipment was slightly inadequate for lighting.
2. We received feedback that we did not include voices/ interview parts in the after-movie. For future reference for an after-movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jX77WHjVSFk>
3. Video editing can make you feel introverted, frustrated, and sleepless. Recording is also the same yet has to move around a lot non-stop.

**Recommendations**

If ATSAF would provide software such as Adobe Premier and Lightroom, it would be more convenient for both photography and video editing. The mentioned software works well with any kind of operating system and is more functional (even with AI!) than any other software

we know. Moreover, interested people can study the matter way beforehand. Indeed, a 7-day trial version is also enough for Tropentag.

As mentioned before, upgraded gear would be desirable, specifically for lighting. We can still see some dullness in the videos recorded at dark locations.

It is always desirable to plan what you are going to shoot but be flexible for anything that might come your way. Be mindful of aspects of each video such as duration, target audience, responsible person, and video quality.

## **Photography**

The photography team did not provide information about their experience to add to this report.

The team was composed of three people, that were both supposed to take pictures of the overall event and the attendees, but also of specific events. They were indeed summoned by the writers that were going to attend certain conferences, in order to have some high-quality pictures to add to the blog article.

Still, every student reporter was more than welcome to take pictures and share them with the rest of the team through the common Google Drive account. It is nonetheless important to point out that pictures taken with obsolete cameras or phones may be useless because of their intrinsic low quality.

Some advice would be to make sure to always have someone who either carries one of the provided photo cameras or a good phone covering the main events and walking around the building to take informal pictures of the public.

## **Watermarking and Flickr**

Watermarking is a fundamental step to be able to upload the pictures on Flickr. While this social media may be unknown to most of you, it represents a crucial channel to share the pictures with the event. Attendees and speakers are indeed happy to find nice pictures of them, that they can then potentially share on their own social media accounts, representing publicity for the event itself.

This task doesn't have to be underestimated. It is indeed very time consuming and should probably be considered a two-people job (we assigned this role to one of the two editors, and it created a very challenging schedule for her). We created the watermark using Canva, and then used one of the many websites to automatically apply it to all the pictures. Before doing

so, though, our editor had to hand pick only the relevant and high-quality pictures and crop them when necessary. This made the process extremely time consuming.

## Blogging

The Tropentag blog was classified into two different categories: 1- Must cover, and 2- Interest-based. The first category included keynote speeches and roof topics that represented the zest of the conference and were assigned to writers on a priority basis. As for the second category, writers had the option to choose based on their interests.

In total, 23 blog articles were published, written by 8 members of the team and edited by 2 co-chief editors. As of December 25, 2023 “Opening the Pandora’s Box: Blockchain and Web 3.0 in Food Systems” was the most viewed article, followed by “Chocolate bean endangerment: an immersive food and sound experience”, and “Bugs on the Rice: Eavesdropping on Insects Using Science”.

Top three most viewed (*As of December 25, 2023*) blog articles.

Blog Title	Reach	Author
Opening the Pandora’s Box: Blockchain and Web 3.0 in Food Systems	12884	Mary Grace Barbacias
Chocolate bean endangerment: an immersive food and sound experience	1127	Shikhar Acharya
Bugs on the Rice: Eavesdropping on Insects Using Science	1079	Mary Grace Barbacias



### Opening the Pandora’s Box: Blockchain and Web 3.0 in Food Systems

In the world of sustainable agriculture, discussing “blockchain” and “farming” in the same breath might raise eyebrows, especially within the scientific community. Yet, in this workshop, we dared to venture into this intriguing territory and explored how blockchain and Web 3.0 could potentially revolutionize local initiatives within our food systems.

29/09/2023 By Mary Grace Barbacias

### The most viewed blog article

## Blog Feature

### IFPRI Blog Feature

Two blogs written for the Tropentag blog were featured in the IFPRI: Tropentag 2023: Bridging ecology and economy with payments for ecosystem services (PES), and Tropentag 2023: Battling the global 3Cs (climate change, COVID-19, conflict) through food systems transformation. These versions were rewritten with the guidance of Claudia Ringler and IFPRI's blog team. Both of these articles were plugged by IFPRI's LinkedIn page as well, in two separate posts which garnered around 80 reactions and 11 reposts.

Blog Title	Reach		
Bridging Ecology and Economy: Dialogue on Payments for Ecosystem Services by BMZ, GIZ, and CGIAR	747	Mary Barbacias	Grace Barbacias
Battling global 3Cs (Climate Change, COVID-19, Conflict) through food systems shift	571	Mary Barbacias	Grace Barbacias

*\*As of December 6, 2023*

### IRRI Facebook Feature

One article featuring an IRRI Scientist was featured on the IRRI Facebook page in October, garnering more than 80 reactions.

### Shoutouts

A blog article written about Blockchain was given a shoutout by the featured speaker via LinkedIn: Ronald Steyer.

### Editing

All the articles were published through WordPress and were thoroughly edited by one of the two editors. The process was both focused to ensuring the writing clarity of the language used, and also to check for potential mistakes in terms of information shared. The

While one of the two editors had previous experience in the role, thanks to her presence at Tropentag 2022, the other one had none. Still, it was quite easy to learn how to manage that kind of duty.

One of the main challenges faced was the difficulties for the writers to meet the deadlines. Considering that everybody was burdened with several tasks, it was frequent for the blog articles to be delivered after the deadline, since they were a very time consuming task. We advise the future student reporters to consider very carefully the timings and deadlines, to avoid overlaps and the need of editing blogs even after the end of Tropentag.

Moreover, we would advise the future student reporters to ensure that blog articles are written by members of the team that have at least some writing skills. While it is fundamental to provide everybody with the opportunity of learning and trying out new things, it can be very time consuming and frustrating for an editor having to deal with articles that need to be completely rephrased before being posted.

Also, while it is possible to edit the drafts directly on WordPress, we would advise you to copy the text on a private document (for example, on a Word document) and modify it there. Indeed, if both editors access the document at the same time, the modifications made may be lost.

## Recommendations for future student reporters

1. Firstly, it is important to level your expectations. You will be spending a lot of time just sitting down and writing. If you wish to socialize more and talk to a diverse mix of people at the conference, you better mix blog writing with something else, like photography and social media.

Everyone can write something, but writing an impactful article is quite challenging. Indeed, our task is to report on a scientific conference, but in terms that can be understood even by the general public. If you have writing experience and are interested in sharpening them,, blog writing for Tropentag would be perfect for you.

2. Choose topics you are passionate in to write about. While there were some events that we had to cover, most of the other ones were completely arbitrary.

*“I wanted to leverage and strengthen my connections with the CGIAR so I chose the articles that are related to them and tried to create the best articles I could produce. Regarding features, I chose the most exciting new piece of technology that was featured in Tropentag 2023: machine learning and blockchain. Blockchain was the ‘hit’ in all of the five blogs I have written, which must have been due to the ‘controversy’ around it within the science community. Was an exciting piece to write!” – Mary Grace Barbacias*

3. Talk to the speakers before and after the event. Making the speakers aware that their event is being covered keeps them excited and will make things easier for you later on when you bombard them with interesting questions after the event. Interviewing them is indeed important to ensure a correct understanding of the main messages. An interview can also be an opportunity to connect with them via social media, for them to access the blog article and potentially share it with their own network. When you’re lucky, the bigger and more prestigious organizations can even give you a bigger platform to reach more people– like what happened with my articles, which were featured on IFPRI’s blog platform.

4. Don’t be caught up by numbers.

*“You will be able to see the view count of your blog articles on WordPress (Tropentag Blog), and it may make you happy or frustrate you, but you should be chill. What matters is getting the message across– you did your job by writing that article. The network, experience, and new skills you gained cannot be defined by mere numbers anyway. Good luck!” - Mary Grace Barbacias*

## **Recommendations for ATSAF**

### **2-half-day online workshop**

It would be beneficial if the online workshop were structured more concisely and practically. This would allow the student reporters to actively engage with each other and understand how to work effectively together before actually collaborating as a team on-site.

Adding some in-depth learning sessions about video editing software through a brief tutorial and then applying it with a hands-on task could enhance the experience. Similarly, for blog writing, receiving feedback on already published articles and guidance on crafting articles based on speeches, seminars, or poster presentations would be highly valuable. Detailed information on blog texture and formatting before the conference would be essential.

### **Post-conference Seminar – “The Path Forward to a Professional Career”**

It would be beneficial if the seminar focused more on giving feedback and sharing additional information. A great addition would be allowing reporters to receive direct feedback from the journalists on the articles they've published. This feedback would serve as a valuable takeaway, providing insights into areas for improvement.



## **Conclusion**







Overall, our experience at Tropentag 2023 was great. Although the workload during the conference was heavy, splitting into teams—photo, video, social media, and blogging proved to be beneficial. However, maintaining effective communication and coordination among the teams was crucial and not always easy.






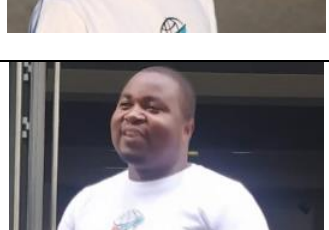
Considering all the members of the team come from different backgrounds and possess different levels of experience in all fields, collaboration can be challenging. Future student reporters should be ready for this kind of environment and be prepared to compromise.

If you go there ready to learn, to teach and to be taught, you will be satisfied.

# Appendix

## Student Reporters 2023

Photo	Name	University	Task as SR
	Ayodhya from Colombo, Sri Lanka	University of Kassel and Göttingen, Germany	Videography Blogging
	Koppuravuri V S Chetan Kumar Gupta, from India.	University of Kassel and Hochschule Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany	Videography
	Francesca from Genova, Italy	University of Gent, Belgium	co-editor-in-chief Blogging
	Gideon Mawenge from Ruacana, Namibia	University of Hohenheim, Germany	Photography Blogging
	Hannah Blake from Boise, Idaho (USA)	Ghent University in Belgium	Social Media
	Kim van Wijngaarden from Zaandijk, The Netherlands	Wageningen University, The Netherlands	Social Media Blogging

	Mary Grace Barbacias from Laguna, Philippines	Bonn University, Germany	Blogging
	Maximus Anochirim from Lagos, Nigeria	University of Greifswald, Germany	Social Media
	Pooja Nain from Delhi, India	TU Dresden, Germany	co-editor-in-chief Blogging
	Shikhar Acharya from Kathmandu, Nepal	University of Bayreuth, Germany	Blogging
	Tristan Fang from Wuhu, China	University of Gent in Belgium	Videography
	Yamikani Harry Makwinja from Thyolo, Malawi	TU Dresden, Germany	Photography Blogging