



THOUGHT LEADER

Willy Foote

"We have focused all of our social innovation work around partnering with agricultural small and growing businesses because they are such engines of impact."

WILLY FOOTE, FORESIGHT 20/20: BUILDING ON TWO DECADES OF SOCIAL INNOVATION PANEL, 2023 SKOLL WORLD FORUM

Willy Foote (he/him/his), Founder and CEO of Root Capital, is a globally recognized leader in social entrepreneurship, impact investing, and smallholder agricultural finance. He has been a featured speaker at high-profile conferences, including [Skoll World Forum](#), [TEDx](#), and [The White House Summit on Global Development](#), as well as events hosted by organizations like [Forward Global](#) and [the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation](#).

In 1999, Willy founded Root Capital, a nonprofit social enterprise that invests in small and growing agricultural enterprises to transform rural communities in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Through Root Capital's provision of capital, training, and market access, millions of farmers have been able to grow, thrive, and create opportunities, with over \$2 billion in loans provided to 840 agricultural businesses and counting. This collective impact has benefited over 11 million people in farming families.

Willy's expertise and his pioneering work with Root Capital has been featured in [The Economist](#), [Forbes](#), [Impact Alpha](#), [The Boston Globe](#), [Thomson Reuters](#), [Impakter](#), and more.

Willy is a Skoll Entrepreneur and an Ashoka Global Fellow. He was named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2008, one of Forbes' "Impact 30" in 2011, and was a 2012 Henry Crown Fellow of the Aspen Institute. He served for nearly a decade on the Executive Committee of the Aspen Network for Development Entrepreneurs, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and Young Presidents' Organization, and serves on the Governing Council of Catalyst 2030 and the Strategic Advisory Council of the Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise at the University of Michigan. He holds an MS in development economics from the London School of Economics and a BA from Yale University.

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SPEAKING EXAMPLES

- [The Philanthropy Workshop](#)
- [Skoll World Forum](#)
- [Root Capital Gender Lens Investing Webinar](#)
- [TEDXBoston](#)

TOPICS OF INTEREST

- Financial inclusion
- Impact investing
- Climate innovation in rural communities
- Gender lens investing
- Next-generation jobs
- Social entrepreneurship
- International development and poverty alleviation

TO BOOK WILLY FOOTE FOR A SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT OR MEDIA INTERVIEW,
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ABOUT ROOT CAPITAL

[Root Capital](#) invests in the growth of agricultural enterprises so they can transform rural communities. These enterprises purchase crops such as coffee, cocoa, or grains from smallholder farmers. With growth, they become engines of impact that can raise incomes, create jobs, empower women and young people, sustain peace, and preserve vulnerable ecosystems. Root Capital supplies these enterprises with vital resources: access to capital, trade and technical partners, training on financial management, and conservation practices. To date, Root Capital has distributed \$2 billion to more than 840 enterprises and provided training to more than 2,000 enterprises—collectively improving the lives of 11 million people in farming communities.