



Biennial Plenary Session 7

Harnessing the Africa Youth bulge: Innovation, entrepreneurship and agribusiness incubation

Venue: Kenyatta International Conventional Centre (KICC)

Contact person: Dr. Sylvanus Mensah, RUFORUM Secretariat

Email: m.sylvanus@ruforum.org

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Time: 11:00-13:00

Room: Arbadares

Venue: KICC, Nairobi, Kenya

Background

Africa has the world's youngest population with about 60% of it being under 35 years old, of which 420 million are aged between 15 and 35. Between 2000 and 2008, Africa's working age population (15-64 years) grew from 443 million to 550 million, indicating an increase of 25% and an annual growth of 2.7% per year (World Bank, 2011). By 2040, the continent's labour force is expected to reach 1 billion making it the largest continent in the world, surpassing China and India. Africa's expanding youth population is often seen as challenge for youth development and employment but potentially, represents itself a promising driving force for Africa growth and development. However, this is only possible if youth in Africa can efficiently take advantage of existing opportunities to serve their country, and become the engine of new agriculture and agribusiness enterprises driving the transformation on the continent. For instance, Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world, with 60% of people below the age of 18 and 78% below 30 years old, but the youth in Uganda account for 60% of the unemployed, while three quarters of working youth are in vulnerable employment¹. Similarly, while Uganda national economy relies heavily on agriculture, which employs about 65% of the working population, the engagement of youth in the sector is declining.

Innovation, entrepreneurship and agribusiness are believed to be promising opportunity outlets for youth in Africa², but most African countries are still facing many challenges related to institutional, human and youth development, limiting the opportunities to harness the Africa

¹ <http://www.fao.org/rural-employment/resources/detail/en/c/1069622/>

² Singinga, N. 2015. Youth in Agribusiness within an African Agricultural Transformation Agenda, Background paper. Available from:

https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Events/DakAgri2015/Youth_in_Agribusiness_within_an_African_Agricultural_Transformation_Agenda.pdf





youth bulge. Africa's challenges (agricultural productivity, nutrition and food security, environmental degradation, limited technologies, etc) cannot be solved without a critical mass of young African innovating, developing and leading the agribusiness sector on the continent. For instance, in many countries, young women and men engaged in agri-business face a wide range of problems, including inability to own or access land, lack of affordable financing for agribusiness start-ups, as well as lack of technical know-how. Youth in entrepreneurship face obstacles to successful business management which include among others, low qualities of education, lack of entrepreneurial skills, limitations in access to affordable financial services, preference to formal employment as a career path of choice, lack of collateral/security and negative perceptions that the poor cannot manage funds.

The sector of agriculture in Africa struggles with a myriad of challenges: low national sector budgets, poor economic returns, labour intensiveness, limited access to inputs such as land, machinery, credit and extension services etc. The nature of the education system trains youth for classic jobs as opposed to involvement in agribusiness hence a large number of young people are migrating to urban areas in search of jobs disregarding opportunities in agricultural production and business³. Youth access to and use of ICTs in most African countries is still insufficient, and this is attributed to numerous factors namely disadvantage in financial, educational and/or cultural resources; inadequate ICT infrastructure; and low literacy levels; among others and as the coverage and use of ICT increases in the country there is need for guidance and mentorship on proper usage. Considering that agriculture is still the pillar of national economy in most African countries, and that ICT could help to potentially harness agri-business opportunities and technologies, it is important to eliminate the barriers for young people to develop innovations and engage in entrepreneurship. There is need to provide the growing youth not only with opportunity to appreciate the job creation opportunities in agribusiness and incubation investment, but also the right skills to become future modern entrepreneurs capable to nurture their peer. More specifically, it is important to link the training of youth with market, financing opportunities, enabling environment and partners (Agribusiness experts, government agencies, private sector companies, donor communities, venture capitalists, NGOs, women innovators in Agribusiness, ICT Developers) and forward-thinking environments that expose them to advanced technologies and systems. Further, there is need to (i) create awareness of numerous job opportunities in agribusiness and incubation network to equate the growing youth population on the continent and to reduce the rate of unemployment; (ii) re-engage youth and create more and better jobs along agricultural value chains, from production to agro-processing and marketing of agricultural inputs and products; (iii) ensure provision of youth-sensitive agricultural extension services and create national information centers that will serve as innovation hubs; (iv) support youth agro-entrepreneurship by setting up Youth-In-Entrepreneurship Fund to enable rural youth to access affordable financing, trainings, land and equipment required for start-ups.

³ http://upfya.or.ug/wp-content/files/National_Youth_Policy_Popular_Version.pdf





Session Aim

This plenary session aims at debating upon how to harness the growing Africa's youth population through innovation, entrepreneurship and agribusiness to promote inclusive livelihoods and employment creation for youth in Africa. Particular focus will be put on examples and lessons from strong economy countries, and on regional and country level interventions in Africa.

Session Objectives

The plenary session is targeted at:

- Providing an enabling environment to facilitate exchange, discussion and shared understanding of opportunities for youth in Africa, with particular focus on innovation, entrepreneurship and agribusiness
- Understanding the enabling factors (e.g. youth policies, TVET, Universities, private sector) of contribution of youth to national development in successful and strong economy countries to create awareness of job opportunities in agribusiness
- Discussing opportunities in agribusiness and incubation investment in Africa, linkages of youth with market and financing opportunities
- Exploring possibilities to re-engage youth in technology and agriculture value chains, from production to agro-processing and marketing of agricultural inputs and products, through provision of youth-sensitive agricultural extension services, national information centers and innovation hubs
- Proposing promising and sustainable solutions (Youth-In-Entrepreneurship Fund, etc) to support youth access to affordable financing, trainings, land and equipment required for start-ups.

Approach

Overall, the session moderator is expected to use participatory approaches to engage all participants, including keynote speaker, panelists. The session shall be executed based on the approach below:

- The session moderator will introduce the plenary session objectives and content to the audience, by highlighting the importance of Innovation, entrepreneurship and agribusiness for youth in Africa and for Africa development.
- He will then introduce the panelists while highlighting their presence to specific aspects to be discussed in the session. He will invite the keynote speaker to give a key note address;
- After the keynote message, the session moderator will engage the Key note speaker on the issues emerging from his presentation; then after, will follow the first round of discussions and comments from panelists in response to the key note presentation. There will then be specific and more focused discussion by the panelists to present their perspectives and insights on issues as assigned by the session moderator.
- After a complete round of presentations by the panelists, the moderator will engage the audience in a dialogue through question-answer session to get participant perspectives on





the various topics addressed. The session will end with “Take-Home Messages and Recommendations” for participants and stakeholders.

SESSION AGENDA

Time	Activity	Expectation
10:30 – 10:40	Session Moderator Ms. Nancy Kacunguri , BBC World Service	Introduce session by highlighting the importance Innovation, entrepreneurship and agribusiness for youth in Africa and for Africa development
10:40 – 11:00	Lead Speaker: Dr. Kiran Sharma , CEO, Agribusiness and Innovation Platform, ICRISAT	Topic: Harnessing the Africa Youth bulge: innovation, entrepreneurship and agribusiness incubation
11:00 – 11:50	Panelists and suggested questions to be addressed <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Yoshiyiku Tagaku, Assistant Director General, Global Infrastructure, World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) <i>Africa Youth bulge: Does this constitute threats for employment? or opportunities for development?</i> Dr. Kiran Sharma, CEO, Agribusiness and Innovation Platform, ICRISAT <i>What are the enabling factors of contribution of youth to national development in successful and strong economy countries?</i> Mr. Joao Bosco Monte, President Instituto Brasil Africa <i>What are the key areas of opportunity in agribusiness and incubation investment in Africa, for linking youth with market and financing opportunities?</i> Mr. Samuel Rigu, Young Entrepreneur, Safi Organics Ltd, Kenya <i>What should African countries do differently to attract youth to entrepreneurship and agribusiness?</i> Prof. Hiroshi Koaze, Adviser, Africa ai Japan <i>What is the role of the government including universities, and the private sector to accelerate youth entrepreneurship in Africa?</i> 	
11:50 – 12:50	Plenary Q&A	
12:50 – 13:00	Take Home message from the Moderator	

Expected session Output:

Detailed session report outlining the perspectives and insights from panelists on specific questions