



The recent CTA workshop on ‘facilitating next-generation ACP agriculture through youth entrepreneurship, job creation and digitalisation’ identified seven critical success factors for successful rural entrepreneurship and job creation: **access by youth to investment and finance, scalable approaches and models that can be taken up, enabling policy environments for youth, agriculture that is attractive to youth, access by youth to markets, business models that work, and access to a pool of appropriate skills, capacities and knowledge and ways to grow these.**

This brief by Eva Shitaatala, Lilian Mabonga, Oluwaseun Adedeji and Tony Nsanganira argues that policy-makers in ACP countries must engage with young people to ensure that the policy environment reflects their interests and makes the sector attractive to them. Policies that work for and with youth are more likely to attract young people to the

sector, injecting dynamism, growth and transformation. Key actions include: setting up platforms and mechanisms for youth to engage in policy-making and to access employment opportunities; extend and improve consultative processes in rural areas; review existing policies with youth; proactively strengthen participation of young women in rural organisations and institutions; and strengthen the capacities of youth organisations to make their voices heard.



## Introduction

Africa has the youngest population in the world: over 60% of its total population of 960 million is under the age of 24 years. The share of youth in the labour force in Africa is also the highest with approximately 35% in sub-Saharan Africa and 40% in North Africa, compared with 30% in India and 25% in China.

Rural youth constitutes over half of the world's youth. The majority of them are employed in the informal economy as contributing family workers, subsistence farmers, home-based micro-entrepreneurs or unskilled workers. They typically earn low wages, are employed under casual or have seasonal work arrangements. These precarious economic and working conditions are coupled with environmental vulnerabilities and social exclusion, causing rural youth to migrate to urban areas and abroad which deprives rural areas of a vital and potentially dynamic workforce.

The agri-food sector in Africa is growing rapidly, creating new market opportunities for producers and processors and scope for substantial job creation.

However, in order for agriculture to become more dynamic and appealing to young people present levels and quality of public investments need to increase and policy commitments towards agriculture must be honoured. Moreover, young people need

to play a significant role in designing these policies and contribute in translating them into concrete actions.

## Key matters that need attention

It is increasingly recognised that youth participation in decision-making and policy dialogue is important, and policy-makers need to work not only for youth but also with them. However, too often participation of youth in policy-making processes remains token or passive. Advancing age is commonly associated with authority, and youth are often not expected or allowed to speak out or voice their concerns, let alone have an effective role in policy processes. Young women in particular can be disadvantaged, especially in settings where gender-based discrimination persists.

Although some legal documents and policies such as the African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006) explicitly state youth's rights to participate in policy design, many young men and women remain unaware of their rights. Efforts are needed to create and enhance platforms and mechanisms that facilitate youth engagement in policy-making and enable access to employment opportunities. This will also require the adaptation of consultative processes to the heterogeneity of youth. Policy dialogue is commonly restricted to urban areas, thus favouring the involvement of urban, often better-educated, youth. Efforts should be made to extend these consultative processes to rural areas so that they better reflect the interests and needs of rural youth. This can be facilitated by the use of modern information and communications technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones and text messages, social media and online TV, video and radio.

In addition, existing policies need to be evaluated to ensure they respond to the needs of youth. This should be conducted using a participatory process involving youth, thus giving them a voice to critique the policy implementation methodologies and planning.

Young women face particular challenges in participating in policy-making due to traditional beliefs about the unsuitability of

### Policy actions needed

- Policy-makers should work not only for but with youth
- Platforms and mechanisms for youth engagement in policy-making and to access employment opportunities should be established
- Efforts should be made to improve consultative processes in rural areas in order to better reflect the interests and needs of rural youth
- Existing policies should be reviewed through a participatory process with youth to ensure they have responded to the needs of youth
- Efforts should be strengthened to challenge women's low levels of participation in rural organisations and institutions
- Capacities of youth organisations should be strengthened to enable them to effectively make their voice heard and strengthen their position in negotiating for specific support or policy instruments

women to hold decision-making positions and the persistence of gender inequalities at the household level. Women's low levels of participation in rural organisations and institutions not only limits their ability to access essential services and markets, but it also reduces their opportunities to strengthen links with other value-chain actors, exercise an influence on matters affecting governance of the chain and make known their needs and demands at policy level. Efforts should be strengthened to challenge such gender-discriminatory attitudes, including through education campaigns and promotion of awareness of positive examples showing how young women's engagement in decision-making processes can benefit rural communities.

Strengthening the voice of youth in policy dialogue requires youth to be united and effectively organised. While several youth organisations exist across Africa, they often lack financial resources, are limited in reach, informal in nature and have little bargaining power in policy processes. Therefore, the capacities of youth organisations should be strengthened to enable them to effectively make their voice heard and strengthen their position in negotiating for specific support or policy instruments. In order to enhance young women's participation, discriminatory laws and by-laws that may prevent women's membership should be eliminated.

### **Examples of national platforms with strong involvement in policy processes in Africa**

National agribusiness platforms that facilitate interaction between youth, the private sector and government can be effective mechanisms for addressing the specific needs of youth, as exemplified by the Rwandan Youth Agribusiness Forum (RYAF; ryaf.rw) and the Ghana chapter of Young Professionals in Agricultural Development (YPARD; ypard.net).

#### **Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum**

RYAF was established in May 2016 and today has more than 5,000 members aged 35 years and younger.

*“The agri-food sector in Africa is growing rapidly, creating new market opportunities for producers and processors and scope for substantial job creation.”*

The Forum is a recognised national representation of Rwandan youth who are engaged in agriculture and agribusiness. Its representatives participate actively in policy dialogues and advocate for interventions aimed at strengthening youth participation in transforming the country's agricultural sector.

#### **Ghana chapter of Young Professionals for Agricultural Development**

YPARD is an international youth movement that was launched in 2006. Its Global Coordinating Unit is hosted by the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR; www.gfar.net). It is a platform for young professionals active in agriculture who are under the age of 40.

YPARD-Ghana has more than 750 members drawn from farmer organisations, government, private sector and other practitioners. It advocates for policy that favours its members. As a result of its regular interaction with policy-makers, a number of policy reforms have been proposed that particularly respond to the need to create job opportunities for the youth of Ghana.

### **Conclusions**

The agriculture and agri-food sector is growing rapidly in Africa and is an important source of jobs for the continent's burgeoning youth. Policy-makers must engage with youth to ensure that the policy environment reflects their interests and makes the sector attractive to young people. This includes taking measures to give an effective voice to rural youth and to strengthen the role of youth and women's organisations in policy discourse and agricultural and agri-food value chains.

## References

African Union. 2006. *African Youth Charter*. Addis Ababa. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2RjaSaU> [Accessed 14 November 2018]

This brief was created through a CTA-led process to document and share actionable knowledge on 'what works' for ACP agriculture. It capitalises on the insights, lessons and experiences of practitioners to inform and guide the implementation of agriculture for development projects.

A series of video recordings with participants gives personal perspectives on the issues raised during the workshop. See: <https://bit.ly/2FROq7r>

The products of the workshop can be found and downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/2sRaSVH>

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