



IITA

Youth Agripreneurs

Agriculture is the future

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IITA, IYA, chevron, launch Youth Agripreneurs Program in Delta State



IITA Youth Agripreneurs (Lemon green shirts) with Mr Deji Haastrup (M) at the program launch

On February 11, 2016, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in collaboration with Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) launched the Chevron Youth Agripreneurs (CYAG) project in Warri, Delta State.

The CYAG project which will be implemented by the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) in the Ijaw and Itsekiri communities of the Niger-Delta region is an offshoot of the first proposal written by the group since inception in 2012. The CYAG project is a Youth in Agriculture Program (YAP) which is aimed at providing training opportunities for young men and women to venture into agriculture as a business.

Speaking at the launching of the program, Mr Deji Haastrup, CNL's General Manager in charge of Policy, Government and Public Affairs stated that the program with a budget of over N188 million would empower youths to embrace agriculture and agribusiness as an income generating activity through trainings in aquaculture, cassava, plantain/banana production and processing.

"The program which will run for two years will kick off with forty youths from the Egbema-Gbaramatu Communities Development Foundation (EGCDF), and the Itsekiri Regional Development Committee (RDC) under our Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) with the Delta State government and the two community clusters," he said. Emphasizing the benefits of agriculture, Mr Haastrup stated that the agricultural sector is the only sector that provides enormous opportunities both for employment of labor and for entrepreneurs to invest unlike the oil and gas sector which is capital intensive.

The Group General Manager, National Petroleum Investment Management Services (NAPIMS), an arm of NNPC, Mr Dafe Stephen Sejebor who was represented by Mrs Clementina Arubi, the Deputy General Manager in charge of Community Development expressed delight at the program stating that the program would help encourage the youth to pursue other economic activities besides from oil. Her words, "We are happy that the Agripreneur

program is coming at this time when the country is passing through challenging economic times occasioned by low crude oil price. There is need for us to diversify from oil because when oil dries off, we will all have something to fall back on," she stated.

The Deputy Director General, Partnership and Capacity Development, IITA, Dr Kenton Dashiell said the CYAG project initiative which was built based on the experiences gathered from the IITA Youth Agripreneurs model would create wealth and jobs for young men and women in the communities where CNL and NNPC operate. He added that

at the end of the program, the youths would have been practically exposed to opportunities along the agricultural value chain.

Speaking on the uniqueness of the program, the Head of Partnership Coordination, IITA, Dr Alfred Dixon said the youth to youth approach of training and mentoring of the CYAG youth by IYA in the communities are some of the features that distinguish the program from other normal agribusiness trainings out there.

Team Leader of IYA, Evelyn Ohanwusi called on youths in the region to key into the program. Ohanwusi and her team are bringing to the program, their personal experiences as "agripreneurs", and are willing to share their experiences and expertise with the young men and women in the Niger Delta. "When we started a few years ago as agripreneurs in IITA, most of us never viewed agriculture as a 'goldmine', but today, we are proud to be called farmers. What happened to us and convinced us to take agriculture as a profession is what we want to transfer

to the youths in the communities that we will be working in under this program. Agriculture is good, it is sweet... and we want you to join us as we make our communities better and create jobs, not only for ourselves, but also for other youths in this region," Ms Ohanwusi said.

The representatives of the two communities where the project will be implemented; Michael Jonny and Canaan Ajagbawa, commended the NNPC/CNL for initiating the program and promised to support and actively participate in it.

IYA will be conducting a 3-week intensive a g r i b u s i n e s s training for the identified CYAG youths in the first quarter of the year after which they will move to the communities to establish the fields and a g r i b u s i n e s s enterprises for the CYAG youths.



Dr Kenton Dashiell (R), and Mr Deji Hastrup (L), Mr Godwin Atser (far right) at the program launch

ICT can help revive the agricultural sector - **Rita Kimani**



Rita Kimani delivering a seminar on "Uptake of ICT in Agriculture" at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture

The use of ICT in agriculture has been identified as one of the best ways to enhance access to finance for smallholder farmers and transform unproductive farming activities in Africa into sustainable means of livelihood.

Rita Kimani, the Co-founder of FarmDrive, stated this recently during a seminar organized by the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) on ICT and Agriculture at the IITA headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Rita's company, FarmDrive which she co-founded with Peris Bosire is a Kenya based ICT company, which helps smallholder farmers access loans through a technology platform used in collecting data on smallholder farmers and uses the data to link farmers with sources of credit, thereby increasing their income by 300% in the process. After the data has been collected and analysed, it is then sent to banks and other financial institutions for review to enable the farmer get certain percentage of loans for operation.

Speaking at the seminar titled, "ICT meets Agriculture," Rita stressed that some of the challenges faced by smallholder farmers in Africa include poor access to finance, huge information gap between the farmers and lenders and operational risks involved in agriculture. She added that the use of the latest technology and data are the only means of helping the smallholder farmers mitigate these challenges.

Highlighting the importance of the use of ICT in this regard, Rita added that ICT can be used by smallholder farmers in carrying out soil tests on their farms before planting. She stated that through the use of mobile applications on phone, ICT can help farmers share knowledge with extension services, consultation with experts, have access to inputs, enhanced marketing skills especially in the areas of determining market prices, understanding market demand and establishing a trading platform between the smallholder farmers and the consumers.

Sharing her experience with the use of ICT in helping smallholder farmers in Kenya, Rita said her company, FarmDrive, which is currently working with about over a thousand farmers in the country, makes use of an algorithm data platform to collect self-reported farm level data from farmers, data from value chain players – input suppliers, farmer organisations, soil data, agronomic data, meteorological data, market information data, and satellite data for smallholder farmers using sms-based application for farm record keeping, input suppliers simplified point of sale system, mobile money payment system for input buyers, soil testing kits, and farmers' organisations management systems.

The panelist at the seminar, Tomiwa Adesanya, Damola Adewole, Bunmi Ajilore, and Rita Kimani all agreed that the use of ICT in agriculture could help change the face of agriculture from the contemporary way to a trending sector like other sectors of the economy.

The Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga while speaking at the end of the seminar urged the youths to take the issue of ICT in agriculture seriously as it is one of the numerous opportunities in which the sector can provide jobs for the youth.

He emphasized that with the dwindling economy of the nation, the government is making moves to embrace agriculture as another means of generating income for the country and the youth are going to be playing a major role in reviving the economy through the use of agriculture. He said the only way to make the agricultural practice distinct from the way it is being practiced in the past is to take it as a business and introduce technologies that would attract young men and women prior to the seminar,

Kimani had a brainstorming session with the Agripreneurs on means of developing solution applications and software that can aid the farming operations of smallholder farmers in

Nigeria. She also visited some of the enterprises operated by IYA. While commending IYA on their various innovative business enterprises, Kimani advised them not to relent in their effort

of being an enviable model of success for other aspiring Agripreneurs in Africa.

Up, close and personal with **Rita Kimani**



Rita Kimani

Rita Kimani, co-founder of FarmDrive holds a first class honours in Computer Science from the University of Nairobi. She is a young and ambitious change maker whose work focuses on leveraging technology to enable smallholder farmers in Africa achieve self-sustenance. Through her passion for ICT, Kimani has proven expertise in conceptualizing and designing solutions for emerging economies and fostering scalable innovations. Rising from an impoverished background in

Turbo village, a rural farming community in Kenya which relied on unproductive agriculture for livelihoods, Kimani became fascinated by electronic devices such as mobile phones and computers to help rescue smallholder farmers in farming communities to sustain a profitable business in agriculture.

With all the hardship faced by the people of Turbo especially women who worked hard tilling the lands and trying their best to get food for their families, Kimani was fortunate to have a mother who treasured education especially for the girl child. She made sure Kimani and her siblings went to school even if it was on empty stomachs. Going by the words of her mother, "In our society, the women who break barriers are the ones who ignore limits." Kimani became determined and defied all boundaries that the society had defined for women. She became the only female software engineer who worked with Mobile Decisioning (MoDe), a leading Fintech company in Africa that has over 100 employees.

While working at MoDe, she developed systems that supported millions of

people across Africa and Asia, enabling them to access convenient and affordable nanocredit.

Kimani who was ever passionate about understanding users in order to build solutions that are usable and address the user's pain points was also involved in projects carried out as a collaboration between University of Nairobi and Nokia Research Center. These projects focused on user research and building human-centered solutions based on the research findings. She has also built games which facilitate learning amongst students of higher learning.

Realizing the importance of accessing private, convenient and affordable credit to farmers, Kimani and her friend Peris Bosire, whom she met in the University co-founded FarmDrive to make access to credit easy, convenient, reliable, transparent and affordable to smallholder farmers. FarmDrive which is less than 5 years old has developed rapidly scalable mobile application solutions which are currently being used in over 20 countries across Africa and Asia.

Abuja Youth Agripreneurs diversify into fish farming



A team of Abuja Youth Agripreneurs working inside the new fish pond

The IITA Youth Agripreneurs in Abuja have diversified into fish farming. The fish farming business which is currently being carried out using an earthen pond within the premises of IITA Abuja station in

Kubwa is to enable the youths tap into the vast economic opportunities available in the fish farming business. With the construction of an earthen pond of 40m by 20m, the fishery and livestock unit of

the group stocked the pond with 5500 juvenile catfish for the first production cycle.

With technical support from the fishery and livestock unit of the mother group in Ibadan, the catfish are to be raised from juvenile stage to table size which will be sold to consumers within and outside the Abuja metropolis.

Commissioning the fish pond in February, the Head of IITA Abuja station, Dr Tarawali Gbassey commended the youths for the initiative and encouraged them to make good use of the available resources within their means to expand the business.

Agribusiness specialist, Dr Adebowale Akande taking the Agripreneurs through the economic benefits of investing in fish farming stated that the youths can generate huge income from the business.

Exploring mechanised options

Mechanisation in agriculture is not just about the use of tractor in farming. It involves the application of mechanical technology and increased power to agriculture, largely as a means to enhance the productivity of human labor and often to achieve results well beyond the capacity of human labor.

This includes the use of tractors of various types as well as human-powered implements and ICT tools among others. In modern times, mechanically powered machinery has replaced many jobs formerly carried out by manual labor or by working animals such as oxen, horses and mules.

Mechanisation in agriculture helps reduce the drudgery associated with the sector and will help attract youths, who in recent time have been identified as the needed agent of change in the sector.

Realizing this, the Green Wealth Agripreneurs is adopting several means and exploring various opportunities to put an end to drudgery and attract youths to agriculture. Through its mechanisation

unit, GWA will be introducing mechanised tools that can serve farmers from the land preparation stage, through the planting, weeding, harvesting, transportation stages to processing.

To effectively deliver on the new task at hand, the team has commenced the use of the mechanised weeder modified by the Cassava Weed Management Project in IITA on fields with maize, soybean and banana/plantain. It is one of their objectives to see that farmers stop the traditional method of weeding using cutlasses and hoes. The use of the mechanised weeder has shown great prospect of being effective and efficient.

Also, they are currently being trained on the use of tractors which was identified as one of the enterprises needed for effective farming operations. The team which will operate as an independent



A Green Wealth Agripreneur, Oladokun Ibukun using a mechanised weeder

entity will offer farmers the right choice of technology at the right price to increase agricultural productivity, reduce post-harvest loss and promote local fabrication and manufacturing of equipment and

We are catching them young



Obafemi Victoria (IYA) addressing the students of the International Staff School (ISI)

In a lot of societies, young people of secondary school age view agriculture as a profession for the old, rural and lower class of the society. A lot of them as students see it as a course offered by their not too brilliant colleagues. The punishment of weeding mete out to the erring ones among them by the authorities in most secondary schools in this part of the world most times does not give the average student a positive perception of the sector. In a bid to catch them young and change the mindset of the students about the sector, the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) in February, 2016 took the mindset changing activity

and youth agribusiness campaign to staff and students of the International Staff School (ISI) located within the premises of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

The exercise which involved the students both at the junior and senior levels, also gave IYA an opportunity to exhibit some of its produce like soymilk, tidbit delight, *croquant*, smoked fish and *sneh balls*.

Starting with students from the junior level to the senior, representatives of IYA to ISI enlightened the students on the state of the agricultural sector in Nigeria urging them to be part of the agents of

change who can help revive the sector through modern technologies and innovations.

The representatives of IYA also enlightened the youths on income generating options available for the students along the agricultural value chain.

Relaying the experience gathered from IYA, the representatives shared with the students how they can be actively engaged in agriculture choosing either production, service or value addition of agricultural produce.

They enjoined the students not to see agriculture as a back breaking job but rather an avenue where they could be self-independent through job creation and also employers of labor.

The students were given the opportunity to express their views on the exercise and many of them showed interest in undergoing internship with the Agripreneurs especially during school vacation. A palatability test of the exhibited products by the management of the school also created a business link for IYA.

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