



IITA

Youth Agripreneurs

Agriculture is the future

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We would take Agriculture to the next level - Youth Agripreneurs



R-L: Ohanwusi Evelyn, Dr Ousmane Dore, Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Dr Chiji Ojukwu and Festus Okunlola at the opening session of Enable Youth Workshop

The IITA Youth Agripreneurs have reiterated the need for adequate skills in agribusiness, institutional support from concerned stakeholders and an enabling environment to attract youths into agriculture.

The youth who spoke during the ENABLE (Empowering Novel Agri-Business-Led Employment) Youth Program Design Workshop on 21-22 April in Abuja, Nigeria stated that the experience of IITA through the Youth Agripreneurs' model has shown that if all these things are put in place, the youth will not only be productively engaged in agriculture but also excel accordingly in any chosen area along the agricultural value chain.

The program design workshop which was organized by the African Development Bank (AfDB) in collaboration with IITA is aimed at bringing all key stakeholders from interested governments across the continent, international development partners, agribusiness companies, finance institutions, women and youth

groups together in order to build a well-grounded evidence-based understanding of the ENABLE Youth program concept.

Sharing the experience of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs, Evelyn Ohanwusi and Festus Okunlola stated that with the average farming force in Africa which is above 60 years of age, and the high number of unemployed youths in Africa, youth engagement in the agricultural sector is the only solution to transform and develop the agriculture sector.

They added that a change in mindset and re-orientation of the youths towards the productive path in agriculture is important. The need for skills enhancement both on agronomic practices, business, ICT, mechanization, developing enterprises and sustainable businesses across the agriculture value chain, youth networking has helped the IITA Youth Agripreneurs excel in agribusiness. Buttressing the points highlighted by the IITA Youth

Agripreneurs, the Minister of Agriculture, Liberia, Dr Moses Zinnah said focusing on agriculture gives certainty into the future and this consists of the youth who have the skills to develop the sector.

"The mistake we have made in the past is seeing the youths as empty vessels forgetting that they are wise. Let us see them as co-pilots in the development of the agricultural sector and give them the necessary support needed for them to excel", he said.

Sidi Tiemoko Toure, the Minister of Youth Employment, in Ivory Coast said attractive credit schemes, favourable tax measures and restrictive measures on rice importation are some of the measures taken by the government of his country to encourage youth involvement in agriculture.

The Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga said the experience of the institution with the youths have been encouraging so far and there is no doubt that the youths, when given the opportunity can excel as Agripreneurs and become successful businessmen and women.

"In 5-10years, these youths will be the Dangotes and billionaires of tomorrow. I believe strongly in this case, and I know it will happen", he added.

Nigeria's Minister of state for Agriculture and Rural Development, Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, said access to money is a major problem in engaging youths in agriculture.

"The AfDB has come up to help the youths with 300 million dollars to help them access fund, the money is not a grant but a loan. We would ensure that they channel it into the right thing", he said.

Ms Abimbola Adebakin, Chief Operating Officer, Tony Elumelu Foundation said Agripreneurs do not necessarily need money. What they need according to her is an understanding of what they

need to use the money for. They should understand that they need money for input, resources and networking.

In his video address shown during the opening session of the workshop, the AfDB President, Dr Akinwumi Adesina talked about his vision for the agriculture sector.

“The future of African agriculture lies in agriculture as a business and the creation of a new generation of young farmers and agribusiness owners. The labor composition of the agriculture sector in Africa must change. We must involve the younger generation. I have seen what the IITA Youth Agripreneurs have done and I am delighted. They are very passionate about what they do, they are dynamic. They make things happen and so we need to support them to be able to become the next generation of young commercial farmers in Africa”, he said.

In his remark, Dr Ousmane Dore the Director, AfDB Nigeria country office, said AfDB is concerned about the youth unemployment and underemployment in Africa and has decided to explore opportunities for youths in agribusiness through the 300 million dollars ENABLE Youth Program. He added that youths under the program will undergo agribusiness training at an incubation center for a period of time after which they will be supported with finance to put into practice the things learnt at the incubation center. With a series of break-out sessions and panel discussions,



DG-IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga (M), sharing IITA's experience on youth in agribusiness

participants shared their experiences and lessons learned in promoting youth employment in agriculture around the Continent. Several speakers were young people who shared inspiring first-hand accounts of how they set up their agribusinesses and some of their challenges and successful experiences.

About 240 participants, including over 70 young people from more than 30 countries attended the workshop. Many African governments have already expressed keen interest to work with the AfDB in collaboration with IITA and other relevant partners to develop and roll out country-specific ENABLE Youth

programs designed to sustainably tackle youth unemployment and promote food security. The workshop consisted panel sessions on agribusiness value chains, incubation platform, financing, marketing, and impact assessment; a break-out session to discuss creation of an enabling environment for the program implementation, arrangement, and exit strategy; and a closing session that synthesized findings.

Many of the speakers agreed that ‘the ENABLE Youth program is a powerful mechanism for getting youths employed in agribusiness’.

Take home messages from the ENABLE Youth Workshop

Session 1: Agribusiness Value Chain Approach for African Youth Employment Creation

The importance of using the value chain approach is because the value chain is big enough to accommodate everybody, thus it creates employment, reduces wastage and loss - **Dr Mpoko Bokanga, Consultant, AfDB.**

National policy and policy harmonization is essential for business development especially among the youths - **Hon. Mpendulo Dlamini CCARDESA.**

The value chain is big enough to accommodate everyone but youths must be given the right technical and business skill to explore the various areas along the chain effectively - **Mr Samuel Miriki, MD Ekimiks Nigeria Limited.**



Panelists at the session: (L-R), Mr Patrick Muganga, Mr Samuel Miriki, Mr Mpendulo Dlamini and Dr Mpoko Bokanga

Session 2: Agribusiness Incubation Platform

The goal of this (IITA Youth Agripreneurs) incubation platform is to create job opportunities and decent employment for the African youth. Our success has and will be measured by the number of spin-offs and replications we have - **Mr. Zaccheus Baggi, IYA.**

There should be a distinction between business incubators and vocational incubators. Also, a business plan is an Agripreneur's brain child that needs to be nurtured by the individual and not the coach - **Sadok Bedja, Director General, Ministry of Industry, Tunisia.**

There is need to deploy latest technologies, and to also bridge the gap between high demand and low supply. Youths should harness available opportunities along the agricultural value chain. - **Fredrick Schreurs, CEO,**



CEO-IITA Business Incubation Platform, Mr Fredrick Schreurs speaking on the Agribusiness Incubation Platform

Business Incubation Platform, IITA. There is a need to tie the Agripreneurs to practical mentors, to create a good

workforce that would accelerate agricultural transformation. - **Mosunmola Umoru, MD Farmshop, Farm Retail.**

Session 3: Financing and Risk Sharing

The payback attitude/levels of the youths have not been impressive as most youths often think loans are grants and are not willing to pay back, my advice is for you to channel the loan through the bank. Another challenge faced is the attempt to put youths in cooperatives or groups which have not been particularly easy. In all, mindset change of youths for employment creation in the agricultural sector is important - **Hon. Maxas Bweupe N'gonga, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia.**

Banks do not lend to agriculture because the Executives are ignorant of the advantage and they often are members of the credit facility responsible for granting loan approvals. Thus there should be agriculture literacy at the banking level. Agriculture lending should



MD-L.A. Consult, Mrs Ololade Adesola speaking about loan structure in the banking sector

be a business decision not social responsibility. Loan structure which includes interest rates, gestation periods and collateral issues should be clearly defined. The loan should be monitored periodically through scheduled and unscheduled visits and uniform reporting format - **Mrs Ololade Adesola, Ekimiks Consultant, Nigeria.**

A single digit interest rate is achievable and the mind-set change should be for youths, governments financial institutions, and all relevant players. If collateral won't work thus innovative financing should be implemented - **Ms. Rita Kimani, Co-founder, FarmDrive, Kenya.**

SESSION 4: Marketing and Growth

IYA Uganda is into vegetable production, even though our production was good but we had the problem of selling our vegetables. We were forced to give the vegetables to the middlemen who dictated the price for us. The middlemen are like a cabal which is difficult to penetrate. After sometime, we brainstormed and came up with an online market platform to sell our vegetables. This platform gave us the edge to overcome the challenges of middlemen. We started with 6 customers and now we have



An Agripreneur from Uganda, Beckie Zaaka Nakabugo, sharing her experience about online marketing

360 customers with a constant supply to them on Fridays. She concluded by saying online marketing is great, it gives peace of mind and breaks the chain of the

middlemen - **Beckie Zaake Nakabugo, IITA Youth Agripreneur, Uganda.** There must be support for young innovators, and encouragement of ICT

regulatory authorities to put affordable ICT facilities in the rural areas - **Mr. Ken Lohento, Proram Coordinator, ICT4D, CTA.**

Session 5: Measures of Success

No one can cage the minds of youths; they must be given the space to take hold of chances of success - **Dr. Temitope Aroge, CEO, Bio-Agro Services Ltd. Nigeria.**

Agricultural productivity and success can be measured only by measuring inputs and outputs to ensure that outputs outweigh the inputs. Success can also be measured by checking the impact made in poverty, food security and number of jobs created - **Mr Papa Magaye Gaye, Director, National Agency for Promotion of Youth Employment, Senegal.**



Dr Temitope Aroge (A Medical Doctor, now a Farmer), talks about measures of success

Picture gallery



Participants at the ENABLE Youth Workshop



Dr Chiji Ojukwu (R) and Senator Heineken Lokpobiri (2nd from right) at IYA exhibition stand



Agripreneurs from East Africa

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