

Community of Practice on Agriculture and Job Creation

Theme: “Fostering Youth-Led Innovation in Agriculture for Sustainable Job Creation in Africa”

Date: December 2025-January 2026

Concept Note

Background

Africa faces a daunting challenge of youth unemployment, which threatens the continent's social stability and economic growth. With a rapidly growing youth population where over 60% of Africans are under the age of 25,¹ the demand for meaningful and decent employment opportunities has been on the rise day after day. Most of these youth live in rural areas where there are limited job prospects and where agriculture remains a crucial driver of economic development. Unfortunately, traditional job markets have struggled to absorb this burgeoning demographic, resulting in high rates of underemployment and increased reliance on the informal sector among young people. The unemployment rate for youth is currently three times than that of adults in all regions of the world.² In Africa, especially, which boasts the globe's youngest population, two-thirds of youth are unemployed or working in vulnerable, low-paying positions.³ This unemployment crisis hampers individual livelihoods and undermines broader development goals, emphasising the need for innovative strategies to harness the potential of Africa's youth.

Despite the high rate of youth unemployment in Africa and other parts of the world, youth participation in economic activities, particularly in agriculture, remains vital yet

¹ FAO (2018). *Youth employment in agriculture as a solid solution to ending hunger and poverty in Africa*. Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition. Report of activity No153

² Verick, S. S. (2023). The challenge of youth employment: New findings and approaches. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 66(2), 421-437.

³ Aduroja, D. (2021). *What is the Role of Youth in Agriculture?* <https://www.heifer.org/blog/what-is-the-role-of-youth-in-agriculture.html>

underutilised. Historically, agriculture in Africa has been viewed as a traditional and low-income sector, often associated with subsistence farming and limited modernisation.⁴ Additionally, agriculture has long been considered a rural-based, less desirable job opportunity, and one that is less attractive to young people. Nevertheless, in the past few decades, young people have increasingly recognised agriculture as a viable pathway for entrepreneurship, job creation, economic empowerment, and rural transformation. Governments across Africa are also increasingly promoting “youth in agriculture,” arguing that agriculture is key to providing the much-needed jobs for the millions of youths entering Africa’s job markets every year.⁵ Youth engagement in agriculture is also considered a catalyst for poverty reduction, thereby helping to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (17 SDGs) and the African Development Agenda 2063.

Fostering youth-led innovation in agriculture presents a promising avenue for job creation while enhancing the continent’s food security.⁶ When young entrepreneurs introduce innovative practices, they can transform traditional farming systems into more productive, efficient, and environmentally friendly operations. Such innovations enhance food security and increase income levels, while also generating diverse employment opportunities throughout the agricultural value chain, from input supply and farming to processing, packaging, and marketing. Innovative agricultural practices are crucial in stimulating youth employment and driving sustainable growth. These include the adoption of digital technologies such as mobile platforms for market information, weather forecasting, and financial services. Precision agriculture tools, such as drone technology and soil sensors, enhance productivity and resource management. Additionally, agro-processing innovations enable young people to add value to raw agricultural products, creating opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises to generate numerous jobs within local communities. Embracing such practices makes farming more attractive and accessible to the youth.

⁴ Losch, B. (2022). Decent employment and the future of agriculture. How dominant narratives prevent addressing structural issues. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 6, 862249.

⁵ Ogunjimi, O., Daum, T., & Kariuki, J. (2023). The Farming Question: Intergenerational Linkages, Gender and Youth Aspirations in Rural Zambia. *Rural Sociology*, 88(1), 71-107.

⁶ Kote, P., Yallapa, M., Jabeen, A., Srinatha, T. N., Prabhavathi, S. J., Ramasamy, M., ... & Malathi, G. (2024). A scoping review on youth participation in agriculture: sustainable development, food security, and economic growth. *J Sci Res Reports*, 30(5), 947-58.

It is against this background that the African Institute for Economic Development, in collaboration with the Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network Global (GCSAYN), conceived the idea of launching a Community of Practice (CoP) dedicated to agriculture and job creation. The Community of Practice brings together youth from diverse areas, including academia, the private sector, public institutions, and farming communities, to establish a vibrant community that mobilizes youth, policymakers, and development actors to co-create innovative solutions for agriculture-driven job creation in Africa, aligning with climate-smart practices and policy needs.

Current Context of Youth in Africa and Theme Rationale

Africa's youth population is growing rapidly and is expected to double to over 830 million by 2050.⁷ Currently, Africa is home to over 420 million young people aged 15 to 35, with 10 to 12 million entering the labor market each year. Yet, only about 3 million formal jobs are created annually, resulting in high youth unemployment and underemployment rates across the continent.⁸ In Africa, more than 21.9% of youth are neither in employment, education, nor training, highlighting systemic barriers to inclusion.⁹ The growing youth population is challenging Africa's ability to meet the demand for jobs, which has pushed many to migrate out of rural areas and across borders.¹⁰

Nevertheless, agriculture remains the backbone of African economies, employing around 60% of the labour force.¹¹ While it offers untapped potential for youth employment and innovation, the sector is often marked by limited access to productive land, capital, and modern technologies. At the same time, agriculture is increasingly affected by climate

⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2019). African youths, an asset for their countries. <https://archive.uneca.org/stories/african-youths-asset-their-countries>

⁸ African Development Bank. (2016). *Bank Group Strategy for Jobs for Youth in Africa: 2016–2025*. https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Boards-Documents/Bank_Group_Strategy_for_Jobs_for_Youth_in_Africa_2016-2025_Rev_2.pdf

⁹ International Labour Organization. (2024). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024*. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/global-employment-trends-youth-2024>

¹⁰ FAO (2024). Boosting decent employment and self-employment opportunities in agriculture and agribusiness for youth in Africa. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/023533fe-0a3b-4d6f-a292-abc9d9a9af47/content>

¹¹ World Bank. (2025). Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) – Sub-Saharan Africa. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS>

change, which aggravates food insecurity and constrains long-term productivity. Climate-Smart Agriculture presents a promising path forward. Designed to sustainably increase agricultural productivity, build resilience to climate risks, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Climate-Smart Agriculture opens opportunities for youth-led innovation. When supported through dedicated platforms and policies, young people can become powerful agents of change by transforming food systems and creating green jobs.

The Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network Global and other youth-led initiatives are spearheading efforts to promote innovative, climate-resilient agricultural practices. The upcoming Africa Development Impact Forum offers a strategic platform to showcase youth-driven solutions and inform policy directions. There is a need for a collaborative space to prepare, align, and amplify youth contributions toward job creation in agriculture, particularly in the context of climate change. This Community of Practice aims:

- To serve as a preparatory event for the Africa Development Impact Forum and as an example of how initiatives from the youth can support the creation of jobs in the sector (inclined for agri-business; climate-smart practices).
- To bring to the table proposals that can illustrate how the policy hackathon of the Africa Development Impact Forum can be directed.
- To foster collaboration among youth, alumni, practitioners, and policymakers.
- To identify and highlight innovative approaches and scalable models in agriculture and employment.

Topics to be discussed

- 1- **Understanding Climate-Smart Agriculture: Concepts and Implications:** Clarifying Climate Smart Agriculture's objectives and benefits for African youth and smallholder systems.
- 2- **Technology and Innovation across the Agricultural Value Chain:** Exploring digital agriculture, agri-tech platforms, climate services, and data tools for modern farming.

- 3- **From Ideas to Impact: Building Youth Agripreneurship:** Youth's access to finance, incubation, mentorship, and scaling for youth-led agri-enterprises.
- 4- **Enabling Sustainable Job Creation through Climate-Smart Agriculture:** Policy frameworks, capacity building, and public-private collaboration for green employment.
- 5- **Gender-Inclusive Approaches in Youth-Led Agriculture:** Empowering young women in agriculture through targeted support and ecosystem reform.
- 6- **Green Finance for Agricultural Innovation:** Unlocking climate finance, blended finance, and impact investment for youth in Climate-Smart Agriculture.
- 7- **Multi-Stakeholder Engagement for Youth-Led Innovation:** Role of governments, development partners, academia, and the private sector in strengthening youth-led agricultural transformation.

Expected Outcomes

- 1- Youth-led initiatives in Climate-Smart Agriculture and agri-business are highlighted through a dynamic, inclusive platform (the Community of Practice successfully creates momentum ahead of the Africa Development Impact Forum by showcasing concrete, youth-driven solutions that promote sustainable employment in agriculture).
- 2- A set of actionable proposals is formulated to guide the Africa Development Impact Forum policy hackathon (the discussions generate policy-oriented ideas and solution pathways that reflect the lived experiences and innovations of youth actors across the continent).
- 3- A strong participatory process strengthens dialogue between youth, experts, and institutions (the Community of Practice enables meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement, positioning young voices as central to the agricultural transformation and policy co-creation process leading into the Africa Development Impact Forum).

Potential Stakeholders



- Young agripreneurs and Climate-Smart Agriculture practitioners across Africa
- Youth networks and organisations in agriculture and climate
- Policymakers and government institutions in charge of agriculture, youth, and climate
- Development partners, donor agencies, and international non-governmental organisations
- Training centers, universities, and research institutions
- Private sector actors, investors, and incubators in agri-innovation

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