

# Youth inclusiveness in agricultural transformation

*A quick scan study*

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# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Youth Inclusiveness in Agricultural Transformation .....	4
1. Mali, Ghana and Kenya: an overview and a comparison.....	5
1.1 Agricultural development .....	5
1.2 Youth employment challenges.....	6
1.3 Programs and policies .....	7
1.3.1 African government policies .....	8
1.3.2 International organizations .....	8
1.3.3 NGOs .....	9
1.3.4 Private sector and partnerships.....	9
2. Conclusions and further debate.....	10
2.1 Determining the focus.....	10
2.2 Educational curricula .....	11
2.3 Integrated approaches.....	11
2.4 Directions for further research .....	11
Annex – Summaries of three country cases .....	13
A. Mali 13	
A.1 Mali’s agricultural sector .....	13
A.2 Development of the sector.....	13
A.3 Accessibility of land .....	13
A.4 Youth (un)employment .....	13
A.5 Policies and programs .....	14
A.5.1 Government policy .....	14
A.5.2 International governmental organizations.....	14
A.5.3 NGOs .....	14
A.5.4 Incubators.....	15
A.5.5 Private setor .....	15
B. Ghana 16	
B.1 Ghana’s agricultural sector .....	16
B.2 Development of the sector.....	16
B.3 Accessibility of land .....	16
B.4 Youth (un)employment .....	16
B.5 Policies and Programs.....	17
B.5.1 Governmental policy.....	17
B.5.2 NGOs .....	17
B.5.3 International organizations .....	17
B.5.4 Private actors and partnerships.....	18
B.5.5 Public-private partnerships.....	18
C. Kenya 18	
C.1 Kenya’s agricultural sector.....	18

C.2	Development of the sector .....	19
C.3	Accessibility of land .....	19
C.4	Youth (un)employment .....	19
C.5	Policies and programs .....	19
C.5.1	Government policy .....	19
C.5.2	NGOs .....	20
C.5.3	Private sector and partnerships.....	20
C.5.4	International organizations .....	20

# Youth Inclusiveness in Agricultural Transformation

**Africa's rapid population growth of youth are increasingly becoming a key priority on the development agenda. The "youth bulge" poses challenges on the demand for employment and for food security. Looking at the cases of Mali, Kenya and Ghana, this paper provides some new insights into the challenges of the agricultural sector, food security and youth unemployment. It also looks at the extent to which current policies and programs are addressing these issues with the aim of stimulating constructive dialogue and debate.**

Most developing countries have witnessed an explosive population growth over the last two decades. As a result, the majority of these countries' inhabitants are below the age of 25, which in many countries may be well over 60% of the population. A pressing concern is, however, the fact that this young population faces excessive challenges in society and in shaping their own futures. In many African countries, the situation is very urgent. Africa's youth are more often unemployed, lack appropriate skills and education that match with labor market demands, and have greater constraints in obtaining land and finances.

The agricultural sector is still one of the sectors that offers most employment opportunities in general and for youth in particular. It is commonly said that youth are turning their backs on agriculture and that the sector should be made more attractive for youth. However, the agricultural sector is still [constrained by factors including](#) low farm productivity and profitability associated with the limited use of modern technology and poorly functioning rural institutions. These constraints have both grave immediate consequences for the young generation and also for the future of African countries in general. International policymakers and researchers have pointed out opportunities of [agricultural transformation](#), such as an increase in the level of agricultural productivity by productivity-increasing technology and inputs, development of markets structures and a well-functioning private sector. Youth are often envisioned as the changemakers of this transition through agri-entrepreneurial programs. But how can young people really be included in a trend that reinforces agricultural transformation in Africa? All these important issues and question are still on the table, and while [recent policy debates](#) have emphasized the urgency to start acting upon them, in many cases the knowledge needed to do so is fragmented. Considerable policy and program framing and responses to the "problem" of young people and agriculture in Africa are still hampered by a lack of (context-specific) evidence and therefore often fall back on "common knowledge", assumptions and narratives. For example, while the growth of Africa's rural population is expected to grow, even a real decline in the percentage of young people working in agriculture could still mean an increase in the absolute number of young people who are living in rural areas, as [an IDS-report highlighted](#). This is also an important group to bear in mind when discussing the need for structural change in the agricultural sector and the factors that constrain it.

This paper presents the results of a *quick scan* study to assess the available evidence in relation to African young people's engagement with agriculture, and to analyze how this is reflected in current policy and programming in Ghana, Mali and Kenya. This paper focuses on the concept of "youth inclusiveness in agricultural transformation" with particular emphasis on employment and food security. The paper is part of a series of work of the [INCLUDE platform](#) (INCLUDE), [AgriProFocus](#) and [the Food & Business Knowledge Platform](#) (the F&BKP), who are combining their strengths on the topic of youth in order to more effectively address the existing knowledge gaps. This quick scan is a response to several questions that have been raised during conversations with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a group of non-governmental organizations (aiming to) working with youth more extensively. This paper is based on three country cases of [Mali](#), [Kenya](#) and [Ghana](#). These cases have been selected in line with the active involvement of a varied network of stakeholders (research, policy and programs) with the aim to augment the relevancy of its outcomes for these stakeholders. Each of these country cases builds on (as much as possible) systematic literature as well as document reviews and expert interviews. This quick scan summarizes the findings of these cases and makes a modest comparative analysis between the cases. Differences and similarities are described between the countries' demographics, agricultural activity, legislation and youth employment. Also, similarities and differences are analyzed between the countries policies and programs on the one hand, and challenges on the other. The aim is to highlight some context specific approaches, to stimulate constructive dialogue and debate with policymakers and practitioners.

However, four important limitations must first be mentioned. First, a shortage of and deficiencies within the datasets made the search for policies and programs very difficult. Secondly, the heterogeneity of data meant that the comparison between the data is also challenging. Thirdly, youth groups are defined in different age categories, which adds to the challenge of comparison. Pragmatically, youth groups have been defined according to the definition within the referred to policies and programs. Lastly, limitations in time meant that this quick scan paper can only present "low hanging fruit". Nevertheless, the descriptions of the data and the comparative analysis have been done as systematically as possible. It is advisable to read the country cases individually since this quick scan only covers limited examples of policies and initiatives. Links to the individual cases can be found throughout the text. Since the literature, data and policies and programs themselves were profoundly scattered, it appears difficult to draw generalized conclusions. However, the aim is to bring the debate forward with context-specific examples and the comparison of differences and similarities between them. Its meaning therefore is not to make sweeping

statements, but rather to identify possible pathways for improvement and to learn from the differences and similarities between the three explored contexts. More specifically, this paper serves as input for the discussions at the [Vijverberg session](#), a [lunch meeting at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), as well as to build on the Knowledge Agenda for the [community of practice](#).

## 1. Mali, Ghana and Kenya: an overview and a comparison

The table below provides a broad overview of the different contexts in terms of demographics, agricultural activity, youth and employment. Next, an effort is made to compare the three different contexts in more detail as well as to highlight some important initiatives by the government or (international) organization. Please read the country cases in full by clicking the link of [Mali](#), [Kenya](#) and [Ghana](#).

	Mali	Ghana	Kenya
Total land area (sq. km) (WB 2015)	1,220,190	227,540	569,140
% agricultural land (WB 2013)	33.8 %	69 %	48.5%
Total population (HDI 2015)	15.8 million	26.4 million	45.5 million
Median age (UN, 2015)	16.2 years old	20,6 years old	18,9 years old
GDP (WB 2015)	13.1 billion USD	37.9 billion USD	63.4 billion USD
% agricultural sector to GDP (WB 2015)	41%	21.1%	32.9%
% overall employment in agri-sector (HDI, 2015)	66%	41.5%	61.1%
% total unemployment (HDI, 2015)	7.3	4.2	9.2 (UN 2014)
% youth unemployment (HDI, 2015)	10.7	11.2	17.4 (WB 2014)

### 1.1 Agricultural development

With a GDP of US\$63.4 billion, Kenya is the most prosperous of the three countries under investigation. Seen as the most prosperous nation of East Africa, the Kenyan economy has shown a steady growth over the last decade. Of these three, Ghana's economy comes second although its development is cause for concern, whereas growth figures outranked those of Kenya from 2011 to 2013. Since 2014, economic growth has been very disappointing, and even Ghana's GDP dropped from US\$47.8 billion in 2013 to US\$37.9 billion in 2016. A similar trend is visible when looking at Mali's economic development. Although Mali has always been the poorest of the three nations, for a number of years, growth figures were very promising and averaged 9.5% over the last decade. Yet as was the case in Ghana, Mali's economic growth has stagnated since 2013 and the country's GDP now (US\$13.1 billion) has dropped below levels of two years ago. Moreover, due to suffering from ongoing conflicts, Mali's economy is particularly vulnerable to external shocks and making economic recovery far from certain.

Unsurprisingly, these differences in economic prosperity greatly affect employment rates and food security in the three nations, but also largely determine the development of the agricultural sector. While it is impossible to draw conclusions in terms of cause and effect, some differences in agricultural development are most certainly striking. In Kenya agriculture's contribution to the GDP, there has been a steady increase over the last decade from 23.2% in 2007 to 32.9% in 2015. In Ghana on the other hand, an opposite trend is visible. In 2000, agriculture accounted for 39.4% of total GDP, however by 2007 this had declined to 29.7% and has only dropped further to 21.1% in 2015. This is usually associated with a shift of the economy out of agriculture and into services as the service sector accounted for 32.2% of GDP in 2000 and 52.6% by 2015. Mali shows an altogether different picture. Here with an

average of 37% agriculture that has continuously contributed a very high percentage to the total GDP, over the last ten years this percentage has risen steadily to 41.0% in 2015. The developments of the agricultural sector in Kenya, Ghana and Mali has direct impact upon matters of employment. In Mali for instance, the agricultural sector is the country's largest source of employment, with 68% of the male labor force employed in agriculture, plus 64% of its women. In Kenya, agriculture is the largest employer as well, accounting for 60% of total employment. Corresponding to the decline of the sector, the proportion of agricultural workers in Ghana has been declining. Yet, agriculture still engages almost half of the Ghanaian labor force (41.5%) which demonstrates the ongoing major importance of the sector despite the decline. This major importance of agriculture also extends to the issue of food security. All three countries are facing explosive population growth, which leads to a dramatic rise in food demand. Although in Kenya serious challenges remain for the production of some commodities (coffee, sugar and pyrethrum), over the last five years the performance of important commodities and sectors such as horticulture, tea, dairy and maize have been very encouraging. Even though Kenya is not entirely self-sufficient in terms of food, with average food imports of less than 12% (of total imports) over the last five years, it is less dependent on external producers than Ghana and Mali. Mali appears most vulnerable to food insecurity. Due to ongoing and increasing droughts particularly the northern regions, people are facing food deficits. However even in the lush southern areas, people must partially rely on imports for their staple foods. For households in Mali this means that their food security is heavily affected by external events, such as changes in prices on the international market. In Ghana, some very worrisome trends are visible as well. Against a backdrop of a declining agricultural sector, the West African country is increasingly dependent on food imports for its food security and produces only 51% of its cereal needs, 60% of fish requirements and 50% of meat, and imports about 70% and 15% respectively of all rice and maize consumed. Thus, while the current situation in Ghana may not be as pressing as Mali's, the combined trends of declining economic growth and a shrinking agricultural sector, and growing food insecurity definitely calls for immediate action.

In terms of agricultural challenges, for all three countries droughts are possibly the most pressing problem, followed by lack of proper infrastructure, farm inputs, and access to markets. In addition, providing productive employment for young people in the agricultural sector appears to become increasingly problematic. The population that is currently working the land is aging and this trend is visible in all three countries. Given the enormous numbers of young (and unemployed) people in Kenya, Ghana and Mali, this situation demands attention.

All three countries are dependent on the development of their agricultural sector for enough food for their expanding populations. One feature of the agricultural sector itself can be said to form an obstacle for young people to enter the business of land: the studies of all three countries showed that youth generally have significant trouble getting access to land, and reasons for this trouble were similar across the three nations. Access to land is [generally framed as](#) having legal, economic and institutional access. Widespread existence of customary land tenure systems ensure that land can only be acquired through inheritance, and this often happens only when the previous owner dies. When buying of land is possible, the young people generally have no financial means to do so. Moreover, when state owned land is sold, big and often foreign companies buy up large stretches of land which limits possibilities for local smallholders and youth. What is most troubling is that while it is widely recognized that access to land is a prerequisite for youth to become more active in agriculture, no comprehensive approach seems to be taken to address this issue. The case studies found no programs in Kenya nor Ghana that enabled youth with (access to) land. While in Mali the National Youth Employment Agency (APEJ) did initiate a program where beneficiaries were provided with a piece of land, this project failed miserably so impact was negligible. In fact, in both Mali and Ghana several projects exist that specifically target youth *with* their own piece of land. These cases also show that when it comes to access to land, there is still much to be gained from government policy that addresses the obstacles preventing youth from acquiring land, as well as from targeted programs that provide (financial) assistance to enhance land ownership.

## 1.2 Youth employment challenges

As mentioned, all three countries are experiencing an explosive demographic growth, which puts pressure on the availability of food and leads to a very young population. In addition, youth in Kenya, Ghana as well as Mali suffer disproportionately from high unemployment rates. In Ghana for instance, over the last decade youth unemployment has been estimated to be 4-5% higher than overall unemployment rates. For young women, the problem is even more pressing. In all three case studies, female unemployment rates among youth were higher than those of men, indicating that young women should perhaps be targeted specifically within programs and policies. There is much variety amongst datasets, which makes an indication of, and the comparison between, overall unemployment and youth unemployment an impossible task. Also, a clear definition on formal and informal employment is missing within these datasets. Furthermore, the unemployment numbers differ greatly per region within countries, which should be taken into account when looking at overall numbers.

Nevertheless, the problem of youth unemployment is widespread throughout the African continent. Hundreds of thousands of youth enter the labor market as new job-seekers every year but the market simply cannot keep up. It is often argued that unemployment can largely be solved by investing in school enrolment and ensuring children receive education. However, evidence in all three country studies suggests the contrary. To take Mali as an example, the level of unemployment is considerably higher among educated youth than less educated youth. Recent figures are missing, as well as figures for the agricultural sector specifically, but in 2011 unemployment among youth with a university degree was 33%, which was more than twice as high as those with only primary

education (12.8%). This can partially be explained by the fact that highly educated youth have higher expectations in terms of jobs. As their expectations often cannot be met, these youth prefer to wait for the right job rather than settle for insecure, badly remunerated and informal employment or starting their own business. Even though higher education seems to increase the odds of unemployment, this does not mean that school enrolment should be discouraged. Rather, it means that the type and content of education should be critically assessed. At present, the school systems in Mali, Kenya and Ghana are producing graduates whose skills and wishes do not match with the demands and opportunities in the labor market. In the case of Ghana, this is particularly visible in terms of attitude towards agriculture. While there are a number of other reasons for youth to regard agriculture as a job “of last resort”, one potential cause is their education. Ghana’s general education system does not include practical agricultural training, nor does it stimulate learning skills on entrepreneurship or self-employment. Rather it prepares students – in terms of skills as well as expectations – to enter a formal wage labor market, a sector which only a small amount of graduates eventually find employment at this point. Still, in this discussion it is important not to make generalized statements that all youth should or want to become an entrepreneur. The question therefore is how can youth obtain the right capacities and skills to have better job opportunities and to be part of more productive sectors, including the agricultural sector as well as along the entire value chain?

It is not only within educated youth groups that agriculture has a “bad name”; the sector is not a desired career path for the non or lower educated youth either. Young people have grown up seeing their parents struggle on small, family-held farms without much economic payoff. In both Ghana and Mali, the majority of agriculture continues to be organized on subsistence basis with very little mechanization or large-scale activities. Thus, if the agricultural sector is to realize its potential and become an attractive venture (for youth and in general), the daily practice of farming must be changed dramatically. This however creates a no-win situation for policymakers: for the sector to transform, modernize and be organized as an attractive business venture, young people’s engagement is necessary. For them to become the future workforce of the sector and to be successfully part of the transformation (development of new technologies, higher productivity, strengthening of institutions etcetera), their aspirations for the sector must be met. Yet in order to engage youth in the agricultural sector and contribute to its transformation, they first must begin to regard agriculture as a possible venue for employment (which seems to require the transformation of the sector). Even though it seems agricultural transformation and youth engagement are interlinked, this does not mean there is no way forward. If the sector is to realize its potential and become an attractive venture for youth, a push-and-pull mechanism is needed. On the “pull-side”, the daily practice of farming must be changed dramatically; a process which can be started with targeted measures and efforts of those people – including some young people – who are already involved in the sector, including farmers, researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders. In addition, to “push” youth towards agriculture, education and the demands of the sector should be more aligned and special training programs should be put in place that encourages young people to seek employment or start their own business in the agricultural sector.

To ensure that agriculture becomes an attractive venture for youth, more is necessary than just addressing agriculture’s bad image or foster its modernization. Those young people who do want to enter the agriculture sector [are facing specific obstacles](#). The lack of access to land as discussed above remains an important constraint, as well as lack of access to capital, markets, information, technology, farming inputs, and so on. As the [Kenyan case](#) clearly portrays, for youth that are working in agriculture, opportunities and prospects are rather bleak. Generally, uneducated youth end up at the farms of their parents and work just to feed themselves and their family. In addition, compared to older farmers, a lower percentage of youth were found to use improved inputs (such as improved seeds, fertilizers, agricultural chemicals and veterinary drugs), meaning that their productivity is likely to remain low. While in the case of Mali, figures suggest that many young people work in agriculture, and unemployment rates are lower in rural areas than in the urban centers, yet these figures mask a rather gloomy reality. As is the case in Kenya, the young people working in agriculture are generally not earning a decent living. The figures mask a significant amount of underemployment in low productivity smallholding agriculture. Therefore, there seems to be a dichotomy between youth in informal jobs who are limited in increasing their productivity on the one hand, and youth seeking formal positions in incomplete labor markets (“jobless growth”) on the other. The example highlights that it is therefore crucial to identify what the focus of existing policy and programs is and the extent to which they match current needs of certain groups of youth within the sector. Improving these productivity levels and engaging youth involvement in agriculture requires targeted and concerted actions from multiple stakeholders. In the section to follow, some existing programs and policies in the three country cases will be discussed.

### 1.3 Programs and policies

So far, the description and following comparisons of the three countries has revealed a number of issues that require attention if youth are to be gainfully employed in the agricultural sector. These include: access to land; the mismatch between education and the skills-demands of the agricultural sector; gender inequality; and other youth specific challenges such as access to finance, information, markets, etc. Much literature exists on youth specific constraints in the agricultural sector. This final section aims to analyse to what extent programs in the three countries actually address these known constraints, by briefly comparing existing programs and their approaches. It does not differentiate between constraints specifically for youth and constraints for all age categories, but rather looks at what policies and programs exist. First, government policies will be compared in terms of focus and impact (or lack thereof). The same will then be done with other non-governmental programs, initiated either by NGOs, international organizations or the private sector. Several mismatches between existing policies and programs on the one hand,

and problems that demand attention on the other will become visible. Such gaps provide valuable input for policy and research recommendations, as well as fuel future debate.

### 1.3.1 African government policies

The issues of youth unemployment as well as agricultural transformation are high on the political agendas of governments in Sub-Saharan Africa. Mali, Kenya and Ghana are no exception. Especially youth unemployment is a hot topic as it has become evident in the three case studies. In Mali for instance, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) himself made a public promise to create 200,000 jobs focusing specifically on youth. In Ghana as well as Kenya, especially attention seems to be given to stimulating of entrepreneurship. Special funds were established by the nations' respective presidents to **support young entrepreneurs**. In Ghana, President Mahama has launched his own project, the so-called [Youth Enterprise Support Fund \(YES\)](#), to stimulate youth employment with particular emphasis on young (starting) entrepreneurs. Moreover in December 2015, YES commenced an entrepreneurship development program that targeted specifically the rural youth in Africa, because – as the official announcement of the program stated – “this has been necessitated by the discovery that youth development in the rural areas is more than ever linked to entrepreneurship”. The program known as the Rural Entrepreneurship Activation Programme (REAP) aims to build capacity of the youth to transform their lives and entire rural community through business support, start-up funding and training. Given the recent conception of REAP, it remains to be seen whether the YES fund will succeed in effectively supporting young rural entrepreneurs through its new program. Also, as other government programs have been plagued by shady deals and corruption (see below), confidence [among youth](#) is additionally very low. The Kenyan [Youth Enterprise Development Fund \(YEDF\)](#), which also aims at job creation through the promotion of entrepreneurship, supported more than 157,000 enterprises with capital between 2007 and 2012, trained 200,000 young entrepreneurs, and created over 300,000 jobs. Critics have argued that the YEDF had little impact on youth. Officers had not provided youth with adequate guidance on YEDF activities and there was a lack of follow-up on loan beneficiaries. In addition, President Kenyatta added an additional KES 2 billion (US\$19.6 million) to the budget of his Youth Enterprise Development Fund that was specifically earmarked for supporting youth in the agricultural sector. This budget will be used to train young people in new farming techniques and management to enable them to start profitable agribusinesses. These programs thus seem to focus on youth entrepreneurs as the changemakers that can contribute to (rural) community building, but without accountability and adequate guidance they seem to be limited in their impact.

In addition to these presidential initiatives, in all three countries policies and programs exist that are implemented by the responsible ministries of employment. In Mali, the most important program is the [Programme Décennal de la Formation Professionnelle pour l'Emploi](#) (PRODEFPE 2012 -2021). The name of this program already indicates that the prime focus of the Malian government is the provision of **vocational and business skills training**. The same goes for both the Ghanaian and the Kenyan governments. Projects initiated by their ministries of employment also focus on training to improve employability. As in all three countries governments recognize the crucial importance of the agricultural sector for youth employment and general economic development in general, a specific “sub-program” for agriculture is present in Mali, Ghana, as well as Kenya. Although on paper the policies seem promising, the **implementation by all three government agencies is often woefully inadequate**. In Mali, the National Youth Employment Agency (APEJ) has been criticized for its ineffectiveness and has been subject to a major corruption scandal. Similarly in the Ghanaian case, so far government agencies responsible for youth employment have failed to establish any substantial projects “on the ground”. In less than ten years, [three different agencies for youth employment](#) have succeeded one another, each replacing its predecessor for reasons of corruption, shady deals and misappropriated funds. [The Kenya Youth Empowerment Program \(KYEP\)](#), a government project providing skills training and internships, seems to be an exception as impact evaluations have showed very positive results. One of the major differences with programs in Mali and Ghana is the fact that the **private sector was engaged in the design and implementation of the program**, which thereby more effectively prepared youth for the labor market and functioning as an entry point for the jobs.

In terms of government policies, there are two main lines of action: 1) funding for young entrepreneurs that want to start, or have recently started a business; and 2) provision of skills training to improve employability of youth. While both approaches are undoubtedly important, they only address a limited number of constraints that young people are facing when trying to enter the (agricultural) job market. Access to land for instance is not an issue that is effectively included in the “youth in agriculture” programs of the three governments. Moreover, programs are not taking an integrated approach i.e. rather than trying to promote youth employment in the agricultural value chain on multiple fronts, government programs tend to have a very specific focus.

### 1.3.2 International organizations

A number of big international organizations are active in Mali, Kenya as well as Ghana to foster economic development and agricultural transformation, as well as to improve employment opportunities for youth. These international bodies include organizations and institutes like the World Bank, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), USAID, and the African Development Bank (AfDB), all of which are working in the three countries under investigation. Apart from providing funds for existing government programs, they implement their own programs as well. These large scale programs often do not target youth specifically but do include some youth specific projects. In Ghana for instance, [the USAID program Africa Lead](#) focuses on capacity building and skills development for the agricultural sector. The program

includes workshops on best agricultural practices, technical assistance to improve productivity and food security and leadership courses. Additionally, it provides training programs specifically targeted at women and youth.

Similar to the governmental programs, the international organizations mostly focus on capacity building and skills development within the agricultural sector. However, these **training programs are often combined with the provision of equipment and/or funds**. Also in Ghana, the MasterCard Foundation's "Youth Forward Initiative" focuses particularly on youth living on less than US\$2 per day and aims to enhance their chances of quality employment or the opportunity to start their own businesses through market relevant skills training, mentorships as well as the provision of financial services. In Mali a similar program is in place: the [FIER program](#). Financed by IFAD, FIER targets poor youth living in rural areas. By combining skills training with the provision of funds in the form of microcredits, FIER allows these young Malians to formulate and carry out their own business proposals, which mostly involves agricultural enterprises.

### 1.3.3 NGOs

In an effort to determine what NGOs were working on youth inclusiveness in agriculture and gain information about their scope and impact, all three case studies ran into the same problem. The number of NGOs active in this field proved to be enormous in Mali, Ghana as well as Kenya, but details on their activities were hard to come by. The issue is that **the NGOs are profoundly scattered** and given the sheer quantity and often small size of these organizations, it is very difficult to pinpoint exactly what the NGOs do and what their impact is. Adding to the difficulty is the fact that most programs lack a research component, which means that very little data on impact and efficiency exist. However looking at the NGOs highlighted in the three case studies, it is possible to identify some patterns.

First, **there are very few NGOs that work exclusively on youth employment in agriculture**. Rather, most organizations focus on broader themes such as youth employment, food security or agricultural transformation; and only a proportion of their package will be devoted specifically to youth employment in agriculture. In Mali for instance, [the PAFP IV project](#) is aimed at "economically integrating" 40,000 un(der)employed people in Mali's key economic sectors by means of targeted and personalized vocational training. The program is not focused on young people in particular, but of the 40,000 available placement, 10,000 are reserved for youth.

A second feature that is shared by most NGOs as discussed in the case studies is their approach. Practically **all organizations offer some form of skills training**, be it technical skills, business skills, soft skills or a combination of the three. This observation clearly shows that NGOs, like policymakers and large international institutions, see the so-called "skills gap" as one of the main problems for productive employment. If young people entering the labor market do not have the skills the market demands, providing them with the skillset that matches this demand is a first important step towards finding a job. Most NGO programs do however go further than mere provision of training. The [Kenyan Youth Empowerment Institute \(YEI\)](#) shows that while a Basic Employability Skill Training (BEST) is an important foundation, ensuring long-term employment for youth requires experience and connections. Therefore, the YEI arranges internship placements and connects young Kenyans to potential employers, which has resulted in many (75% of participants) permanent jobs.

Thirdly, many **NGOs supplement the training component of their programs with financial support**. Such financial support could for instance help young starting farmers to begin their own agribusiness and invest in inputs like seeds and fertilizers. In the Malian case however, evidence suggests that NGOs are more hesitant to engage in financing activities, based on previous experience as some interviewees indicated. Yet as mentioned before, if training is not supplemented with other methods to address obstacles faced by young people searching for jobs, program impacts may remain very limited. Recognizing this issue, [LuxDev](#), an NGO working in Mali's Segou region, accompanied young farmers to the bank to assist them in the process of applying for a loan.

Finally, the case studies revealed that, like the governments and international organizations, **NGOs largely fail to address the issue of access to land** when it comes to supporting young farmers. In the case of LuxDev for example, to participate in the offered courses on agriculture, participants needed to have access to their own piece of land. Similarly, programs focusing on capacity building for young agripreneurs in Ghana start from the assumption that beneficiaries already possess a stretch of land. This does not mean that such initiatives are not important as well. YPARD's agriculture mentorship program in Kenya that connects young farmers to successful senior agripreneurs is a great example of empowering the new generation to lead the sector in the future. However, such approaches are insufficient as there are still hundreds of thousands of unemployed landless youth that have the potential to contribute to (and benefit from) the transformation of the agricultural sector but are now being left behind.

### 1.3.4 Private sector and partnerships

Effective inclusion of youth in the agricultural sector cannot be achieved without the involvement of the private sector. For one thing, private sector companies could potentially provide a large portion of the jobs that could be filled by young African workers. Additionally, their financial input is of vital importance for the continued existence of many government and NGO programs. Partnerships between the private and public sector are crucial as well. The provision of traineeships and hands-on education for youth only benefits from such partnerships because training can take place within existing agri-businesses (offering young people actual job experience and potential employment), and at the same time is a part of more comprehensive development programs. Moreover, **public-**

**private partnerships can change the actual structure of the agricultural value chain**, and create better employment opportunities for young farmers and improve the livelihoods of rural populations in general. [Ghana's cocoa sector](#) is a good example. Here, NGOs, international partners, as well as private companies are forming partnerships that facilitate sharing of knowledge and resources and improve rural livelihoods. In addition, the partnerships have caused a shift in the cocoa-value chain. The top-down structure – in which the state and some multinational companies set the rules – is replaced with a mixed bottom-up/top-down structure, in which the needs and demands of local farmers are taken into account and young Ghanaians are actively involved to ensure the continued development of the cocoa sector.

In addition to partnerships and supporting already existing projects by means of financial support, technical assistance, or provision of other (including human) resources; the three country studies show that **the private sector initiates its own projects as well**. In Kenya, the private sector has organized itself in the [Kenya Private Sector Alliance](#) (KEPSA), which also established its own foundation. Through this KEPSA foundation, the Kenyan private sector is (among other activities) implementing the training and internship component of the Kenya Youth Empowerment Program (KYEP). Interestingly, the KEPSA is explicitly working on both the “supply” as well as the “demand” side. To “improve supply”, i.e. generate a skilled labor force, KEPSA is providing youth with relevant work experience and skills through training. In terms of demand, KEPSA is also **actively recruiting private sector employers to create internships and give young people who have just entered the labor market fair opportunities**. Other private sector actors go about their projects differently. Instead of setting up a foundation devoted to stimulating agricultural development, they have **made projects out of their own business**. The Ghanaian social enterprise [Farmerline Ltd.](#) has made the supporting of the development of the agricultural sector and improving of opportunities for local farmers its core business. Through innovative ICT solutions, data can be communicated and collected from smallholder farmers in rural regions of the country. In addition to offering small farmers easy access to critical agricultural information, including best farming practices, weather forecasts and regional market prices; the student-led company is providing skills training for youth.

Compared to governments, NGOs, and international organizations, the private sector thus seems to add some different elements to existing approaches that aim to include youth in agriculture. The private sector does invest in training and education, but ensures that companies are actively involved in this process, thereby stimulating formal job creation as well. Additionally, the case studies suggest that the private sector is more creative in terms of offering technical and modern solutions to farmers in order to stimulate agricultural transformation.

## 2. Conclusions and further debate

It is important to continuously stress that this quick scan has not resulted in generalizable recommendations on how to transform the agricultural sector, nor does it provide insights in the aspirations of different youth groups (high skilled versus low skilled, male versus female, rural versus urban, informal versus formal). The findings presented in this paper can and should therefore not be induced to other countries, or should they be applied to all regions, sectors and youth groups as a whole. Furthermore, not all constraints that have been mentioned here solely apply to youth. Nevertheless, it does present some interesting insights in the current situations and contexts in these three countries and gives some preliminary statements on how to include youth better in the in the steps ahead in agricultural transformations. [A recent IDS report has concluded](#) that most programming meant to encourage young people into agriculture still fails to acknowledge the diversity that is evident among both rural young people and rural areas in Africa. Negligence of the involvement of youth in the agricultural sector might have negative implications on food security, unemployment and underemployment and may undermine economic growth through agriculture. Several important conclusions emerged from the country cases studied for this quick scan. First, it needs to be kept in mind that the work of governments, international organizations, NGOs and the private sector on youth involvement in agriculture is profoundly scattered, which undermines a good analysis of the best approaches towards better inclusion of youth in agricultural transformation. More research is needed to understand what deserves more focus in policy and programs. Secondly, a negative relation has been found between the educational level and involvement in agriculture and this should be further researched. Whereas high skilled youth are more often unemployed, low skilled youth are forced towards informal and temporary jobs. Thirdly, not all obstacles to youth involvement receive similar attention in policy and programming, which could undermine effectiveness. Most successful programs are public-private partnerships with an integrated approach.

### 2.1 Determining the focus

The country cases have illustrated that a large agricultural potential is untapped in terms of agricultural activity, employment and demographic dividend. Both in Mali and Kenya, agriculture is the largest employer of the total labor force. In Ghana, the decline in agricultural employment is occurring in tandem with the sector's contribution to GDP. [The World Bank Report "Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa"](#) highlights that Africa's growing labor force can be an asset in the global marketplace. “Youth not only need jobs, but also create them [...]”. More research is needed to understand the dynamics between agricultural transformation and the role of youth therein. Current international development policies and programs focus on bridging the gap between the disenfranchised youth and an unproductive agricultural sectors, particularly by creating employment opportunities, to ensure food security, and augment the demographic dividend. But would a modernized sector and the opportunities it could bring attract youth to agriculture? Or should youth determine the parameters of what, according to them, would be a successful and

interesting agricultural transformation towards a sector that offers opportunities for youth? What are the enabling factors that should be part of an integrated approach in terms of protecting youth rights, enhancing economic, social and cultural opportunities, and enlarging employment opportunities in a productive sector? **When should youth be targeted specifically and when should they be “mainstreamed” in current policy in programs targeting broader structural issues for all age groups?** This obviously poses strategic questions for policymaking, such as what to focus on?

## 2.2 Educational curricula

Additionally, different youth groups need different approaches. For Ghana, Dr. William Baah-Boateng, Senior Research Fellow at the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), attributes the difference in unemployment numbers between high skilled and low skilled groups to the fact that those with only basic or no formal education enter into agricultural or informal jobs where entry is not restricted by education. By contrast, wage employment opportunities in the formal sector are very limited and as university and other tertiary graduates seek jobs in this sector, they often end up unemployed. Policies and programs should better align high skilled youth to the job market and create decent working conditions for low skilled youth at the same time. Education curricula should be improved to prepare youth for the job market with special attention for different types of work along the value chain. Multisectoral programs could include the service sector by working with ICTs and other services to attract youth. However, while the services and industrial sectors are growing at considerably faster rates than agriculture, they have not created enough jobs for the increasing youthful labor force. Most success therefore is expected from a **multisectoral approach**.

## 2.3 Integrated approaches

Several mismatches have been identified between existing policies and programs on the one hand, and problems on the ground that demand attention on the other. The country cases have shown that the biggest obstacles that hamper youth from being successful in agriculture include: access to land; the mismatch between education and the skills demands of the agricultural sector; gender inequality; and other youth specific challenges such as access to finance, information, markets, etc. Plentiful literature exists on youth specific constraints in the agricultural sector. These fields of attention comply largely with [the focal points of youth policies by international organizations](#) such as the FAO. Yet not all of these obstacles are receiving similar attention. Most policies and programs by the governments, international organizations, NGOs and the private sector provide skills training and capacity building to make youth more employable or provide financial support for start-up businesses. While both approaches are undoubtedly important, they only address a limited number of constraints that young people are facing when trying to enter the formal (agricultural) job market. [According to a 2011 report by UN-HABITAT](#), youth are not always aware of acquisition, registration and taxation measures, and are disproportionately affected by corruption and the fraudulent activities of land dealers. While it is crucial to align the needs of the market with the skills of employees, other obstacles as well as the enabling environment are equally important for youth entering the agricultural job market. Specifically, none of the programs have removed the barriers to land access although this has been identified as one of the key obstacles for youth involvement in the agricultural sector. Additionally, most programs focus on creating skills for youth to be better suited for jobs or to become entrepreneurs. **But to what extent these skills are aligned with strategies on actual job growth is not always clear.** Instead, most programs seem to be implying that making youth entrepreneurs will result in more jobs. Arguably, instead of focusing on a sole problem, policies and programs should focus on the entire pallet of challenges as well as identifying an enabling environment.

Policies are likely to be more effective when they are part of an **integrated approach**. [A World Bank report stated that](#) compartmentalization is damaging and “limits Africa’s ability to reap the benefits of its youth dividend”. If young people can gain access to available resources and use them in conjunction with strategies to make agriculture more productive, the results could be transformative for livelihoods and economic growth. Osei-Amposah spoke about NGO programs in Ghana, which generally supplement capacity building with financial support, to help young people to start their own agribusiness or invest in inputs like seeds and fertilizer. “But of course they need to have their own small piece of land somewhere” suggesting that little is done by NGOs about the challenges of limited land access that many young Ghanaians have to face. Having access to land and investment in infrastructure is crucial to farmers and agri-entrepreneurs or the skills training formal job creation will not be effective. Thus, most success could be expected when policies that remove obstacles come jointly together in integrated approaches. Another important aspect for the success of the program is the partnership between public and private parties. The example of Kenya Youth Empowerment Program illustrated that the involvement of the private sector in designing the programs is crucial to its success as it more effectively prepared the youth for the labor market and functioning as an entry point for the jobs. The private sector should become more active in the agricultural sector as it is the most important sector in terms of contribution to GDP in Kenya and Mali, and one of the largest in Ghana. The agricultural sectors could benefit far more from additional private sector and public-private partnerships. The need to create more sustainable projects within the agriculture sector and moving away from donor dependency is critical.

## 2.4 Directions for further research

This paper has pointed to several directions this debate could take, however it has not examined the needs, perceptions and aspirations of youth in detail, despite the fact research has suggested these are frequently overlooked. In 2010, [a discussion report by Future Agriculture](#) emphasized the aspiration attainment gap which

seem to be more pressing for rural youth. There is a mismatch between what youth aspire to do and what their realities really are. Thus, **further research is recommended in this area to better align youth aspirations with current policy and programs**. Most programs are addressing youth entrepreneurs as the change makers for the agricultural sector, employment opportunities or the economy as a whole. **Should policies and programs focus on making agriculture more attractive or facilitate youth in achieving their future prospects in terms of jobs and entrepreneurship?** What would agriculture need to look like in order to be compatible with young people's aspirations?

Additionally, **structural problems for all age groups** should not be solely addressed by targeting youth only. Should youth indeed be benefited with access to land, finances and extension services, or should these improvements be made for entire communities? On a macroeconomic level, Kenya has the strongest economy of the three, despite its stagnating growth since 2014. While the economy of Mali is most vulnerable. How should these different contexts translate into youth strategies for agricultural transformation, formal job creation and entrepreneurship? In other contexts, what kinds of youth specific policies and programs are good ways to move forward without structural transformation, transformation first, or youth first? Is a transformed agricultural sector attractive to well-educated youth? Should creating decent working conditions for low skilled youth be the key priority? These remain important questions to ask ourselves.

As becomes clear from this paper, there is still a need for more insight into a set of interventions that work for different youth groups along different phases of the value chain. We should be aware of the differences for women versus men; rural versus urban; well-educated youth versus low skilled; informal versus formal work; and entrepreneurial mindset versus employee when designing future steps. The questions mentioned in this paper as well as the insights in some context specific current practices can be used to stimulate constructive dialogue and debate and the formulating of a Knowledge Agenda on this topic.

## Annex – Summaries of three country cases

### A. Mali

#### A.1 Mali's agricultural sector

Mali is a sparsely populated, predominantly arid and semi-arid country with a highly undiversified economy, which is based mostly on gold and primary agricultural goods, cotton in particular. With a total land area of 1,220,10 sq. km, it takes eighth place in terms of largest countries in Africa. According to the World Development Indicators (2016), around 30% of this land is agricultural land, which has been relatively stable since 2003. Mali has a population of 15.8 million (Human Development Index 2015), of which 61% lives in rural areas. Over the years, **there has been a slow decline in rural populations** with 72% of the population still living in rural areas in 2000. This is mostly caused by unemployment rates in rural areas and the attractiveness of the cities as job providers and modernity.

Broadly, three zones can be identified yet the north, which constitutes about half of Mali's territory, does not receive enough rainfall to support rain fed agriculture and is defined by nomadic and transhumant pastoralism with a low population density. The middle band allows for the cultivation of millet and cowpeas. However, rainfall is still low and unreliable, making **agriculture alone relatively risky**. As a consequence, transhumant livestock remains a principal characteristic of the zone. More to the south, there is a decreasing dependence on livestock and a broader range of food and cash crops. Millet, sorghum, cotton and maize are very common and in the highly productive southern zones, a wide range of crops are cultivated, including fruits, rice, maize and garden crops.

#### A.2 Development of the sector

Since 2011, general economic growth has been subject to several holdups due to political unrest, weather conditions and price volatility on international markets. Food, oil and gold prices heavily impact the countries growth rates. The last crisis in 2012 has considerably impacted the economy as a whole and the northern economy in particular due to limited trade routes and abandoned agricultural fields. However, although Mali's economy (the agricultural sector included) is very vulnerable to external shocks, growth rates overall have remained around 4.5% in the last ten years.

Food insecurity remains a recurring problem in Mali, especially in the northern regions during the lean season (June to August). The northern regions have a deficit in production, rely on imports for their staple foods, and are food insecure. The most southern regions by contrast, produce a surplus, export cereals, and are food secure. The more to the south, the less dependent households are on markets as they can sustain themselves with their own production. Yet even in the south, the poorer population especially depends on the market and must use cash to purchase their food, mainly due to the fact that the poorest often do not have (enough) land. All households in Mali rely on the market for their food needs. As a result, **food security is heavily affected by external events** such as changes in price on the international market.

#### A.3 Accessibility of land

All land in Mali belongs to the state. However, more well-off farmers are able to pay corrupt officials to stay on their land, which is especially a problem in the urban areas where prices are high. If the state wants to confiscate land, they will always be able to do so with poor smallholders. Land in villages is allocated on a family basis rather than at an individual one. As a consequence, village chiefs are hesitant to give land to young individuals in their village as their family has already been given land. For women, land access is even more complex, as they do not inherit land, and to formally obtain land they will always have to purchase it. Urban youth do have a real limited access to land as there is not much agricultural land available in urban areas and they have only limited links with the surrounding communities that do have land.

#### A.4 Youth (un)employment

Mali has one of the youngest populations in the world with a median age of 16.2. 65% of the population is under 24 years old, 18% is between 15-24 years of age and 12% between 25 and 34, according to UNSD Demographic Statistics in 2014. Population growth is a real concern as the fertility rate is 6.2, the highest in the world after Niger. At the same time, unemployment rates have been around 8% for the past ten years. These rates do vary across gender and age however; where unemployment among young men between 15-24 years is around the average of 8%, and for young women it is 14%. **In rural areas, unemployment rates are generally lower than in urban areas**. However, these relatively low youth unemployment figures in rural areas are likely to **mask a significant amount of underemployment in low productivity smallholding agriculture**. The level of unemployment is also considerably higher among educated youth than less educated youth.

## A.5 Policies and programs

### A.5.1 Government policy

One of the election promises of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) was to create 200,000 jobs. Many of the government initiatives for the youth are based on this promise. The Ministry of Employment, Youth and Citizenship Building (ministere de l'Emplois, de la Jeunesse et de la Construction citoyenne) is in charge of youth affairs and employment. In programs with rural youth, it works together with the Ministry of Rural Development. Many of the policies focus on access to education and the promotion of entrepreneurship.

In 2015, the ministry launched a ten-year program for employment and vocational training aimed at providing vocational training to more than 60,000 people, especially youth (Programme Décennal de la Formation Professionnelle pour l'Emplois (PRODEFPE 2012 -2021 ). The program is divided in different phases due to budgetary constraints, but by 2017 it is expected to train at least 82,000 people, 29,230 of which for the agricultural sector. The agricultural objective of the program is coordinated by the Ministry of Rural Development, which identifies partners to implement the program. The main executing agencies are the ANPE, the APEJ and the FAFPA.

- The Agency of the ministry in charge of employment is the ANPE (Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi). In 2004, the Malian government created the National Youth Employment Agency (APEJ) as part of the ANPE to develop and implement youth employment strategies. APEJ offers young graduates the possibility to fill in an internship application form in order to be matched with a private sector opening. This option however has yielded little success in providing internship opportunities for young people because APEJ has yet to develop a sustainable network of private sector partners who can offer internship opportunities.
- The FAFPA (Fond d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle et l'Apprentissage) is a semi-public fund that is financing vocational training and educational activities. The FAFPA only provides technical training. The FAFPA is considered as a highly effective organization that enables many Malians to pursue their studies. FAFPA has benefited from a series of strong leaders that were able to position the organization as a highly effective organization with no corruption scandals.
- The Conseil National de la Jeunesse (CNJ-Mali) is the government's main interlocutor on matters of youth. It is represented in almost all government structures and regularly consulted. The Conseil represents the youth's voice in the government and facilitates access for young people to government agencies like the FAFPA and APEJ. The representatives of the CNJ-Mali are elected every two years by the Malian youth. Every region has a representative and in the bigger cities, each neighborhood is represented. The CNJ-Mali is largely funded by the government and has very close ties with the President's office. As a consequence, it is not an autonomous body and must follow government lines to a larger extent.

### A.5.2 International governmental organizations

International governmental organizations (IGO) refer to those with governmental membership, which therefore excludes the NGO sector. Generally, IGOs take a holistic approach in focusing on both training and providing equipment and/or funds. They have large budgets, closely collaborate with the government and intervene in almost all regions of the country. They normally do not implement the projects but instead look for partners that do it for them.

- The World Bank and the IFAD are the most important actors on youth entrepreneurship in agriculture. UN Women also intervenes.
- Launched in 2014, PROCEJ is a US\$63 million program financed by the World Bank which aims to support education and training for employability and private sector led job opportunities for youth. PROCEJ has had a slow start and has not delivered many results yet.
- FIER is a program financed by the IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, a specialized agency of the UN dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in developing countries. The FIER program aims to allow young people in rural areas to develop their businesses in their village of origin. Contrary to the failed APEJ project in the Niger Delta which targeted educated urban youth, FIER focuses exclusively on youth that already live in rural areas. Due to its rural focus, most of the projects are in agriculture or transformation. The majority however is in agriculture because it is usually the urban youth that engage in transformation and commercialization and they are not included in the FIER project.

### A.5.3 NGOs

- LuxDev and Helvetas have agricultural schools in place where young people follow courses on agriculture and can immediately place theory into practice. To receive training with LuxDev, having access to a piece of land is therefore a requirement.
- PAFP IV (2014-2017) is a project financed by the Danish embassy and executed by SwissContact. The program is aimed at the economic integration of 40,000 people and the development of expanding economic sectors by means of vocational training leading to a qualification. The program is not focused on youth exclusively but from the 40,000 people it aims to train, 10,000 are youth.

- SwissContact also established youth orientation centers together with APEJ. They recognize the difficulties many young Malians have in deciding what they really want to do and finding the right initiatives that can support them. The centers located in Bamako, Segou and Mopti offer career advice and help young people identify their needs and opportunities. Although the projects are still in the pilot phase, 2,500 youth have already benefited from the centers, plus 14 advisors that are currently working there, and all since June 2015.
- USAID has initiated a similar program in which people are asked to identify their needs as well. The program includes a major project on livestock (L4G - Livestock For Growth) in Mali's Mopti region, which aims to support young livestock farmers (15-35 years old). The project works with platforms where farmers and future farmers can one day become a member. Through these platforms, farmers can communicate their needs and organize their own (learning) activities, which are then supported by the L4G project. Currently, there are two platforms for women and two platforms for men and each have at least 90 members.
- FARM, a project financed by the Canadian government, is one of the exceptions focusing specifically on agriculture and rural financing. The FARM project provides capacity building for agricultural producers and participating financial institutions, in addition to introducing loan insurance and crop insurance programs.<sup>1</sup> They aim to improve access to finance for youth. The program started end of 2015 and is ongoing until 2020 and has already shown great potential.

#### A.5.4 Incubators

In the past year, there has been a large increase of incubators and some with a specific agricultural focus. Incubators help new and start-up companies to develop and grow by providing them with services such as management training and coaching. They are dedicated to the start-up phase of a company. Most incubators in Mali started because of a lack of entrepreneurial skills in Mali and a need to *create* jobs rather than *wait* for jobs to be given.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the target group for incubators is focused almost exclusively on educated youth with creative and innovative ideas. Since most ask for a financial contribution to be incubated, they tend to work with the youth that come from the middle-class and higher income families.

- Initiated and largely funded by ICRISAT, TETELISO is a specific agricultural incubator. During a yearlong incubation period, young people are offered skills, trainings and land to start their own business.
- AJA is an NGO and one of the oldest Malian incubators, one that also has a specific agricultural center where young people can experiment and learn new techniques. They recruit 50 young people directly in villages via a yearly call for applications. Besides training they also help their students to launch their businesses and put them in touch with banks with whom they have partnered. They have a guarantee fund with those banks.
- Other incubators such as Impact Hub and Createam (funded by the phone company Orange) focus on entrepreneurship in general and not specifically entrepreneurs in agriculture. ImpactHub joined a consortium of several NGOs in the NextEconomy program funded by the Dutch embassy for €3.5 million in three countries (Mali, Niger, Somalia). Their impact is yet to be examined.
- In regards to specific youth organizations in Mali, the rural youth themselves are making an effort to get organized in order to increase their ability to access funds. These are often small initiatives started by a group of friends all working in agriculture within a certain geographical area. They are organized often in an association or cooperation. In reality however, FENAJER struggles to reach out to their peers outside the capital. They are not very well-known in the regions while in Bamako they are very present. FENAJER has a strong hierarchical structure, which strongly resembles the L4G platforms. Yet there is no cooperation between the FENAJER and L4G.

#### A.5.5 Private sector

There are few private sector initiatives in Mali that focus on youth in agriculture in particular. There are some general agricultural programs:

- The large telephone company Orange invested in a mobile application which allows farmers to gain information about market prices in the whole country. Orange is also working on a weather app which predicts rainfall.
- In 2014, the MasterCard Foundation finished a program on finance for youth, the "Advancing Integrated Microfinance for Youths" program. This project worked on the chronic need for finance for risk management and life cycle events by providing youth with access to financial services and strengthening of their financial skills. Young people were encouraged to become a member of a Youth Savings Group or open a group savings account and participate in financial education sessions. At the end of the program, there was evidence that participants had increased their savings or had invested in livestock. Results of the program demonstrated that youth were more able to save for bigger life events such as marriage. In addition, some gender differences were found in terms of what young people saved for. For girls, both the livestock and marriage grew in importance while for boys it was livestock and emergencies.
- Recently gold mine companies also started to engage with youth in agriculture. RandGold started two different agricultural projects in their mining areas. In Kayes, a mining area, they started an agricultural business school with 50 youth and a curriculum of farming techniques and entrepreneurial skills. **While RandGold did initially**

<sup>1</sup> Interview Mariam Togo – FARM. 18/10/2016

<sup>2</sup> Interview Diarra – TETELISO. 25/10/2016

**not want to pay their students to enroll in their program, they learned from experience that it was a critical criterion to keep youth engaged.**

There are many local, national and international initiatives in place for youth, most of which focused on training of both soft skills and technical skills. For this research alone, over 50 organizations have been identified working on youth entrepreneurship with a particular agricultural focus. This includes six government structures, 15 NGOs, four private sector initiatives and three international governmental organizations.

## B. Ghana

### B.1 Ghana's agricultural sector

With a total land area of 227,540 sq. km, Ghana is one of Africa's middle-sized nations. A substantial amount of its surface is used for agriculture and this is still expanding. In 2000, 63.4% of the Ghanaian land area was defined as "agricultural" and by 2007, it had risen up to 67.7%. In 2015, agricultural land spanned 69% of Ghana. This growth is not the same across the whole nation as population density greatly impacts the size of cultivated area surface. The coastal region for instance – the most population dense region – [has less than 10% of total cultivated area](#), which is the smallest share of income from agriculture and the smallest amount of livestock per capita. The types of farming systems also varies across the country, corresponding to the different agro-ecological zones. In the southern forest zone, tree crops like cocoa, oil palm, coffee and rubber are dominant. The middle belt is characterized by cropping of maize, beans, yams, tobacco and cotton. Cotton and tobacco are also important in the northern sector, supplemented with food crops like maize, millet, nuts and yams. [Rice and livestock are present in all zones](#) although the types of animals kept varies according to the regional climate.

### B.2 Development of the sector

Given the large quantity of agricultural land, it is not surprising that Ghana's agricultural sector contributes significantly to the nation's GDP. However, contrary to the steady growth of agricultural land surface, agriculture's contribution to the GDP has been declining: from 29.4% in 2000; to 29.7% in 2007; to only 21.1% in 2015. The economy in general however has seen a gradual growth, which is usually associated with a shift of the economy [out of agriculture and into services](#). The [slowdown in agricultural development is particularly visible in the crop sector](#), which is cause for worry as this is the sector that engages most farmers in Ghana. Its current lacking growth rates poses a serious challenge for Ghana's development policy in terms of economic development, employment opportunities, as well as food security. Owing to the explosive population growth in Ghana, the need for food is rapidly increasing. As a consequence, Ghana is increasingly dependent on food imports for its food security. [The country produces](#) 51% of its cereal needs, 60% of fish requirements and 50% of meat, and imports about 70% and 15% respectively of rice and maize consumed. What is more, while Ghana's agricultural sector still engages almost half of the Ghanaian labor force, the proportion of agricultural workers has been declining. Whereas in 2006 almost 60% of the total working population was employed in the agricultural sector, by 2010 this had dropped to 41%.

### B.3 Accessibility of land

For the development and employment opportunities in the agricultural sector, access to land is a critical component. In Ghana, two types of land ownership are recognized: state (or public) land, which is used for public interest; and customary (or private) land. It is estimated that over 75% of Ghana's territory is held under this customary system, and the arrangements of which are embedded in complex social norms and cultural rules. The customary system underpinning most of Ghana's land ownership causes marginalization of a significant part of the population due to lack of land access. As the older generation generally possesses the tenure rights, this problem is particularly pressing for young people who form an ever growing share of the Ghanaian population. Moreover, purchasing land is not a viable option for young starting farmers, especially given the high rates of youth unemployment and high land prices.

### B.4 Youth (un)employment

Like most African countries, Ghana is witnessing an explosive population growth. While in 2000 an estimated 18.8 million people lived in the West African nation, today this number has gone up to 2604 (Human Development Index 2015) million, and is expected to rise to 36.9 million by 2030. Corresponding to this rapid growth, Ghana's population is very young. Last year the median age was estimated at 20.6 with 58.3% of the total population below the age of 24, and 19.5% between 15-24.

Despite Ghana's economic growth, unemployment rates remain relatively high. In 2012, the average national unemployment rate was estimated at 3.6%. Especially youth have been affected by joblessness and low-wage employment. For those aged 15-24, unemployment rates in 2012 were 7.4%, and over the last decade youth unemployment has generally been 4-5% higher than overall unemployment rates. With [elections coming up in November 2016](#), at the moment the issue of youth unemployment is particularly pressing in Ghana. Data shows

that among Ghanaian youth, levels of unemployment vary across sexes as well as living areas. In urban areas unemployment rates are significantly higher than in rural areas because young people are often attracted to the cities in search of jobs. In terms of gender, young women face higher unemployment rates than their male counterparts, which seriously undermines efforts towards economic empowerment of women. Looking at the educational dimension of youth unemployment in Ghana, it appears that unemployment rates are higher among the educated than the less or uneducated youth.

## B.5 Policies and Programs

### B.5.1 Governmental policy

In November 2016, Ghana will go to the polls to elect a new president and government for the next four years. Apart from worsening fiscal and budgetary deficits and ongoing political corruption, the issue of rising unemployment – youth unemployment in particular – is on the lips of many Ghanaians. The current government is blamed for doing too little too late; but given the experience of the last decade, whether opposition parties will be able to bring about meaningful change remains highly doubtful.

- As part of the overarching National Employment Policy (NEP), the National Youth Employment Policy (NYEP) started in 2006 to develop, coordinate, supervise and facilitate the creation of jobs for Ghana's youth.<sup>3</sup> The NYEP has not been a success and was even described as a "woefully inadequate" and "elite-prescribed program" that failed to deal with the problem of youth unemployment in a sustainable fashion.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2013, the NYEP was transformed into the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA), which served to reinvigorate the program and announce the acquisition of substantial World Bank funding. However like its predecessor, the GYEEDA failed to achieve its purpose. The agency was characterized by shady deals, corruption related activities and misappropriated funds. In yet another effort to "start with a clean slate", the Ghanaian government launched the Youth Employment Agency (YEA) in late 2015. Unsurprisingly, this latest initiative is regarded with [much suspicion](#) as some fear that it is merely a cover for perpetuating the same corruption. Unfortunately, it is too early to tell whether these accusations are correct.
- President Mahama has launched his own project to stimulate youth employment. The so-called [Youth Enterprise Support Fund](#) (YES) aims to support young Ghanaians between the ages of 18-35 years who have a business or business idea for which they require financial support and mentorship. The launch of the YES Fund was greeted with mixed feelings as many [critics feared the program would face the same challenges as the GYEEDA](#). Moreover, as there is much evidence that a simple [grant-financing model does not offer a sustainable solution](#) to (under)employment, whether the YES initiative can generate long term success remains to be seen.

### B.5.2 NGOs

There are many different NGOs working on youth inclusion in agriculture in Ghana and while these are very diverse, some key focus areas can be identified. "Capacity building is central to most NGO-programs", was said by Charity Osei-Amponsah, a researcher at Wageningen University. This includes skills training – both technical and soft skills – as well as knowledge sharing in terms of best business and agricultural practices. Many programs supplement this component of capacity building with financial support, which helps young people to start their own agribusiness or invest in inputs like seeds and fertilizer. "But of course they need to have their own small piece of land somewhere", Osei-Amposah notes, suggesting that little is done by NGOs about the challenge of limited land access that many young Ghanaians have to face. Most importantly, Osei-Amposah and her colleague Alexander Nuer emphasize NGOs' aim to have youth take up agriculture as a business. By encouraging youth to approach farming as a profitable business venture, they are stimulating increased productivity and thereby elevating the sector beyond subsistence level.

### B.5.3 International organizations

In addition to NGOs, many other parties are working in Ghana to improve the agricultural sector, improve youth employment, or a combination of both. In this respect, big international organizations like the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and USAID constitute the most important sources of large scale programs and funding. These large scale initiatives are mostly and not specifically targeted towards youth, but do include some youth specific projects.

- The USAID program [Africa Lead](#) focuses on capacity building and skills development within Africa's agricultural sector. The program in Ghana includes workshops on best agricultural practices, technical assistance to improve productivity and food security, leadership courses, as well as training programs specifically targeted at women and youth. In addition to its own projects, USAID supports many existing organizations such as (among others) the Savanna Integrated Rural Development Aid, the Ghana Livestock Development Network and the Africa Youth Network for Agricultural Transformation (AYNAT).

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<sup>3</sup> The Ghanaian Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations. National Employment Policy. Accra, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Gyampo, Ransford. "Youth Participation In Youth Programmes: The Case Of Ghana's National Youth Employment Programme". The Journal of Pan African Studies 5.5 (2012): p. 18.

- As part of its ten year strategy, the strategy “*Feed Africa*” involving youth in agriculture is not identified as a goal in itself, but is seen as *instrumental* for achieving sustainable transformation of the agricultural sector or combatting food insecurity. Recently however, the AfDB did launch a new program where youth inclusion in agriculture is taking central stage: the *Empowering Novel Agri-Business-Led Employment for Youth in African Agriculture* (ENABLE Youth) program. [Through ENABLE Youth](#), the AfDB has begun to establish “incubation centers” where young people are to be provided with life-skills education (effective and functional job training), technological assistance, and are encouraged to exchange knowledge and experiences with one another.
- Although formally an NGO and due to its scope and work method, the MasterCard Foundation is discussed here with other “international organizations”. In December 2015, the MasterCard Foundation launched its “Youth Forward Initiative” (YFI). The YFI is a five year US\$74 million initiative which aims to reach more than 200,000 economically disadvantaged young people aged 15-24 and give them market relevant skills training, mentorships and provision of financial services. The YFI focuses on those youth living on less than US\$2 per day, who are out of school, unemployed or underemployed, and are seeking quality employment or the opportunity to start their own businesses in the growing agricultural and construction sectors.

### B.5.4 Private actors and partnerships

Current investments by private sector companies are already making a difference and are of crucial importance for the continued existence of quite a number of development programs. In addition to donations, many private sector parties have launched their own initiatives, mostly in partnership with local NGOs or local government institutions. However since these initiatives are as varied as they are numerous, and are often very small and intertwined with existing NGO projects, it is difficult to identify their scope and impact.

- Mondelēz International, a multinational snack and chocolate company (see [Box in the case study](#)) has established its own separate foundation devoted to sustainable agricultural development: Cocoa Life. Although not a specific youth program, Cocoa Life does target young Ghanaians as it explicitly recognizes that “without the next cocoa farming generation there is no cocoa”. The program’s aim is to create empowered and thriving cocoa farming families and ensure a more sustainable supply of cocoa. With regards to youth, Cocoa Life’s objective is twofold. On the one hand, the program is aiming to safeguard the future of cocoa production and therefore tries to attract youth to the sector. On the other hand, Cocoa Life focuses on the general development and needs of the community, meaning that the organization is working hard to keep the “very young” out of the cocoa sector. That is, based on the assumption that education for children inspires the next generation of farmers, fighting child labor and stimulating school enrolment for children is high on the organization’s agenda.
- Farmerline Ltd. is a Ghanaian social enterprise that develops ICT to communicate and collect data to and from smallholder farmers in rural regions of West Africa. [It offers small farmers easy access](#) to critical agricultural information, including best farming practices, weather forecasts, regional market prices and financial tips. The company is founded and lead by young Ghanaians (mostly students) and in addition to its “regular” business, it is empowering the youth through skills training. Even though it is a small company, Farmerline has managed to reach over 5,000 smallholder farmers in Ghana and has a number of contracts with ministries, international NGOs and bilateral organizations, including the German Welthungerhilfe (WHH), USAID and Ghana’s Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA).

### B.5.5 Public-private partnerships

In addition to initiatives by private actors themselves, **partnerships between the private and public sector are of major importance**. The provision of traineeships and hands-on education for youth, for instance, benefits from such partnerships because training can take place within existing agri-businesses (offering young people actual job experience and potential employment), while at the same time be a part of more comprehensive development programs. Moreover, partnerships can change the actual structure of the agricultural value chain, create better employment opportunities for young farmers, and improve the livelihoods of rural populations in general. In Ghana’s cocoa sector for example, such developments are already visible. Research has found that recent decentralization of Ghana’s cocoa value chain has led to a growing role for non-state actors in the governance of this chain.

## C. Kenya

### C.1 Kenya’s agricultural sector

Kenya has a total area of 580,367 sq. km, of which only 12% is considered high potential for farming or intensive livestock production. A further 5.5% is classified as medium potential and mainly supports livestock, especially sheep and goats. Only 60% of this high and medium potential land is devoted to crops (maize, coffee, tea, horticultural crops, etc.) and the rest is used for grazing and forestry. The agricultural sector is the mainstay of Kenya’s economy. The sector directly contributes 30% of the GDP and 27% of GDP indirectly through linkages with manufacturing, distribution and other service-related sectors. Approximately 45% of government’s revenue is derived from agriculture and the sector contributes over 75% of industrial raw materials and more than 50% of the export earnings. The sector is Kenya’s largest employer, accounting for 60% of the total employment. Over 80% of

the population, especially those living in rural areas, derive their livelihoods mainly from agricultural related activities. Due to these reasons, the government of Kenya has continued to give agriculture a high priority as it is regarded as an important tool for promoting national development. This is despite the fact that only 15% of Kenya's land has adequate rainfall and fertility to support farming.

## C.2 Development of the sector

From the above description, it is evident that agriculture contributes heavily to Kenya's economy although its [share of GDP is steadily declining](#): In the period 1964-1974, the agricultural sector contributed 36.6% of GDP; 33.2% in 1974-1979; 29.8% in 1980-1989; 26.5% in 1990-1995; and only 24.5% in 1996-2000. In 2012, the sector witnessed a slight recovery (expanding by 3.8%) meaning that in that year, agriculture was the main contributor to Kenya's economic growth: 4.6% compared to 4.4% in 2011. It is worthwhile to note that the government continues to support various interventions to ensure more land is put under cultivation. Over the last five years, the performance of the agricultural sector has been encouraging the number of important commodities and enterprises, most notably horticulture, tea, dairy and maize. The agricultural sector has been revived and is on a trajectory of further development. However, serious challenges remain for the production of some commodities – including coffee, sugar and pyrethrum – and for exploiting the potential in livestock and fisheries.

## C.3 Accessibility of land

In Kenya, land tenure can be classified into three broad categories: communal land; government trust land; and privately owned land. The communal land ownership system is based on traditional customary rights, and all individuals born in the community owning that land have a right to use but not sell it. Government trust land is land held by ministries, state corporations or other public institutions for public use such as buildings, forests, research facilities and national parks. Privately owned lands are registered to a specific owner who holds the land title under a freehold or leasehold system and can use it as collateral to access credit. [Private ownership of land has encouraged investment](#) and long-term improvements, as well as development on farms to enhance more agricultural activities. However, young people seldom have the capacity to buy land as land prices set by individuals possessing the tenure rights are very high. Unsurprisingly, lack of access to land is one of the main hindrances for youth.

## C.4 Youth (un)employment

The Kenyan population is comprised of a high and increasing cohort of young people. Kenya has a population of 45.5 million (Human Development Index 2015). The country faces a "youth bulge" with 80% of the population aged 35 years and below, and youth aged 15-35 accounting for 37% of the population. Approximately 800,000 young Kenyans enter the labor market every year and youth unemployment is estimated to be as high as 17.4% (ages 15-24) compared to the overall national unemployment rate of 10%. However, estimates vary greatly. Unemployment significantly affects Kenya's young people who comprise more than 70% of the unemployed. High youth unemployment in Kenya can be attributed to a number of factors, including: high fertility rates; relatively low levels of education attainment; lack of appropriate labor market skills; information asymmetries in the labor market; and gender and cultural biases which result in lower unemployment for women compared to men across all age groups. Kenya's Country Report for the 2014 Ministerial Conference on Youth Employment notes that approximately 1.2 million youth possess no formal training or skills when they reach the age of 18.

## C.5 Policies and programs

### C.5.1 Government policy

The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Gender is responsible for youth affairs in Kenya. However, there is always close coordination and partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture on how to better support youth engagement in agriculture as this is critical for both ministries. This cooperation has resulted in a number of programs and projects to address various issues that hinder youth employment. Only one example of a successful government policy is mentioned in this quick scan, so please find a full overview in the [case study on Kenya](#).

- **Kenya Youth Empowerment Program (KYEP)** is a government pilot project started in 2010 by the World Bank that addresses the lack of skills and work experience of youth in Kenya with an aim of improving their employability. The training conducted through Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) has established the private sector as leaders in preparing youth for the labor market or functioning as an entry point for the job and job creation market. [KEPSA noted](#) that so far the KYEP-PSIT has had a significant impact: a total of 20,384 youth (47% female) received training; and 13,289 youth (49% female) were successfully placed in internships. Additionally, the project was successful in placing youth in paid jobs (75% of participating interns managed to secure employment). An [impact evaluation](#) revealed that 14 months after the internship completion, 80% of young male beneficiaries were in paid work (compared with 69% in the control group). Among young women, the increase in employment was slightly smaller (8.7% for those who completed the program compared to the control group), but still significant.
- The [Youth Enterprise Development Fund \(YEDF\)](#) is a state corporation under the Ministry of Public Service, Gender and Youth Affairs. YEDF is one of the flagship projects of Vision 2030 under the social pillar. YEDF

seeks to create employment opportunities for young people through entrepreneurship and encourage them to be job creators and not job seekers. Under this program, youth are provided with low cost credit from a revolving fund standing now at about KES 6 billion (USD\$70 million). Critics have argued that the YEDF had little impact on youth. Officers had not provided youth with adequate guidance on YEDF activities and there was a lack of follow-up on loan beneficiaries.

### C.5.2 NGOs

- CAP-Youth Empowerment Institute is a non-government organization committed specifically to skills training for youth through Basic Employability Skill Training model. CAP-YEI is supported by the MasterCard Foundation and CAP Workforce Development Institute. In its latest impact report, [the CAP-YEI stated](#) that by July 4, 2016, “a total of 8,911 youth had been enrolled into the program, 8,663 had completed training, 1,068 are in internships, 582 of them had started their own enterprises, and 5,748 or 76% who had completed training had been employed and were earning money”. Now that the organization is entering its second phase, the MasterCard Foundation [has announced](#) to donate US\$10.5 million to reach another 68,000 young Kenyans.

### C.5.3 Private sector and partnerships

According to Faith Ngige from KEPISA, the private sector plays a major role in a country’s socio-economic development as an engine of investment, wealth creation, growth and innovation.<sup>5</sup> Private companies under KEPISA have been very vibrant in the KYEP amongst other interventions.

### C.5.4 International organizations

The global community continues to play a critical role in supporting agricultural development in Kenya. Big international organizations such as the World Agroforestry Research Centre (ICRAF), the UN, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and USAID constitute the most important sources of large scale programs and funding. A number of these large scale donors either work with local implementing NGOs through sub-granting or have actual running projects that they implement themselves.

- ICRAF’s Evergreen Agriculture Partnerships has identified entrepreneurial opportunities in the agro forestry value chain where a cadre of well-trained youth can offer a complete set of products and services to farmers, and in so doing, create decent employment opportunities, and contribute to agricultural sustainability, food security and climate adaptation. The Youth Evergreen Entrepreneurship Program (YEEP) is a prototype for a sustainable agribusiness model with a vision to increase opportunities for enhancing sustainable and climate-smart agriculture while at the same time providing lasting solutions to youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- YPARD is an international movement by Young Professionals for Agricultural Development. This global online and offline communication and discussion platform is meant to enable young professionals’ all over the world to realize their full potential and contribute towards innovative agricultural development. **In 2015, a 12-month pilot mentoring program was launched in Kenya** to support a new generation to proactively contribute to innovative and sustainable agricultural development. The program successfully paired 15 YPARD members – including farmers, students, entrepreneurs, young scientists and extension workers across Kenya – with mentors based in their sectors and skillsets.
- United States International University (USIU) Global Agribusiness Management and Entrepreneurship Center (GAME) aims at improving management and leadership capacity of agribusiness entrepreneurs and leaders of producer organizations including farmers and farmer associations. The program has developed curricula, training materials for 14 modules, eight core modules and six agribusiness concentration modules. So far, over 200 agribusiness entrepreneurs from East Africa have successfully undergone the training.

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<sup>5</sup> Kenya Private Sector Alliance publication issue 11