







AN INSIGHTS REPORT



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Inclusive youth agripreneurship in Africa: understanding the basics

1.1. About this report: focus and objectives

This insight report zooms into the 'hot topic' of youth agripreneurship, providing a nuanced understanding of effective youth employment creation in agriculture. Its purpose is twofold: provide clear recommendations to policymakers funding such programmes as well as practical guidance for programme designers. The report constitutes one of the key knowledge products created for the collaborative research project, Inclusive Youth Agripreneurship in Africa (see textbox 1).

The report highlights:

- 1) what the existing evidence base says about what works and does not in stimulating youth agripreneurship; and
- **2)** how to strengthen youth agripreneurship programming by improving different programmatic elements, with a special focus on meaningful youth engagement.

1.2. Motivation and background: the rise of youth agripreneurship as a cross-cutting approach to tackle a multiplex of challenges

The objectives of this research are timely since in recent decades, the remarkable GDP growth levels in Africa have not led to the creation of enough employment opportunities on the continent. Particularly African youth see their opportunities for decent employment shrinking with only 3

million formal jobs created for around 12 million young job entrants each year (AfDB, 2016). Therefore, stimulating decent youth employment has become a priority in many international, regional, and national development strategies.

This growing momentum behind the idea of decent employment for youth has led to a proliferation of youth-targeted interventions (Fox et al., 2020). A telling example includes the Dutch government's new policy on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, which includes "an extra commitment to youth employment in Africa". The Dutch government plans to invest "in a new multiyear vocational and higher education programme, with the explicit aim of ensuring that young people are better prepared for the labour market".

"Agripreneurship is increasingly heralded as an innovative approach to tackle a multiplex of challenges, including climate change, food insecurity and inequality"

Among these numerous interventions, increasing attention is paid to stimulating youth agripreneurship, as a means of harnessing opportunities present in the African agricultural sector, such its capacity to absorb a large number of youth (FAO, 2019). Programmes and policies focused on **stimulating** youth agripreneurship identify opportunities for decent job creation for youth in agribusinesses and build the agripreneurial capacity of African youth

Box 1. Introducing the project: Inclusive Youth Agripreneurship in Africa

The research project, <u>Inclusive</u> <u>Youth</u> <u>Agripreneurship in Africa</u>, is a collaborative effort between The Broker and the Dutch knowledge platforms, INCLUDE and The Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP). The project aims to strengthen the evidence base on good practices for youth agripreneurship programming and policymaking – spurring action in policymaking and youth circles alike.

To explore the state of youth agripreneurship programming, the project makes available the latest insights from academic and grey literature, combined with insights from key expert interviews. To triangulate the collected data, 26 case illustrations of promising youth agripreneurship programmes were also developed and analysed. Emerging research findings have been validated by a reference group of African-based youth agripreneurship networks and Dutch policymakers.

(Aremu et al., 2021). As such youth agripreneurship is increasingly heralded as an innovative, crosscutting approach through which to tackle a multiplex of challenges, including climate change, food insecurity, and inequality.

Youth agripreneurship programmes and policies, however, face several challenges in reaching their full potential. For one, youth in Africa make up a diverse group, consisting of young women and

Box 2. Youth Agripreneurs: what does the literature say and why the hype?

What is an agripreneur?

Agripreneurs are understood as risk-takers who deliberately allocate resources to an agri-business venture within the agricultural value chain to harness opportunities in return for profit (Shantz et al., 2018; Walker et al. 2019). The explanatory power of this Western-centric definition may be limited in the context of emerging African economies (Anderson & Ronteau, 2017). Recent literature showcases that the surrounding enabling environment largely determines whether agripreneurs will establish a profitable business venture or engage in agripreneurship as a survival strategy (Lubberink, 2019). As such, agripreneurship is increasingly viewed as an occupational identity, shaped by social obligations and cultural constrains (DeJaeghere & Aryn Baxter, 2014). Consequently, designing robust youth agripreneurship programmes requires mapping, understanding, and addressing context-specific social obligations and cultural constrains.

Why the hype with youth agripreneurship?

The hype around stimulating agripreneurship arises from the assumption that successful agripreneurs do not only generate profits for themselves. Consequently, agribusiness entrepreneurs are seen as key drivers in the development of sustainable food systems and for employment and income generation (FAO, 2019). They generate jobs and tax revenues, develop the wider business ecosystem resulting in knock-on effects, thereby contributing to rural poverty reduction and positive social change, such as gender and youth empowerment (FAO, 2019).

men from rural, peri-urban, and urban areas alike, with differing technical skills, working experience and education levels. Therefore, **programmatic** approaches that work for one group of young people, might not work for another, posing challenges for programmes to be effective for different youth groups. What is more, the agricultural sector in African countries greatly differs among regions, with different climatic conditions, levels of economic transformation and varying degrees of specialisation and productive capacity along the agricultural value chain. Consequently, youth agripreneurship programmes and policies differ greatly in terms of their programmatic activities,

"What works for one group of young people, might not work for another"

target categories of participants and the degree of holism of the intervention (Lubberink, 2019).

For youth agripreneurship programmes to reach their full potential, these challenges need to be addressed. The evidence base on what programmatic approaches and activities work for

which youth also needs to be strengthened. To that end, this report starts by showing what we already know about what works and how to do better, and presents a guide that helps policymakers and programme designers bring programming to a new level of effectiveness.

1.3. Insights based on research, expert interviews and co-creation with youth networks and policymakers

To develop this report, the authors have engaged in several complimentary research activities. Firstly, we conducted a quick-scan of academic and grey literature, paying special attention to evaluations of youth agripreneurship programmes. Additionally, we undertook a mapping exercise to identify promising youth agripreneurship programmes and develop 26 case illustrations. To compliment these activities, we also carried out expert interviews with development practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and youth-led agripreneurship networks. The project's reference group, consisting of youth representatives from Africanbased agripreneurship networks and policymakers, validated emerging findings in two rounds, providing valuable insights to finetune the research. Based on these research activities, the following sections present an actionable typology of youth agripreneurship approaches, discuss pathways to operationalise youth diversity into programme design and explores the appropriateness of a range of programmatic activities for different objectives and vouth categories.



Youth agripreneurship programmes: unpacking objectives, goals and approaches

Given the fast rise of programmes aimed at stimulating youth entrepreneurship in agriculture a variety of approaches have emerged. From the research we were able to differentiate between long- and short-term goals, identify programmatic approaches and different ways in which programmatic activities are combined. Broadly, two types of approaches emerge, which we unpack in greater detail below. We assess the evidence-base for these different approaches and some of their associated activities to understand their impacts on outcomes for youth.

2.1. Programmatic goals: economic growth, agricultural sector transformation and decent youth employment

For many youth agripreneurship programmes, the overarching objective is to stimulate economic growth with an emphasis on rural economic development (Turolla, 2019). The underlying rationale, is that by increasing young people's engagement in agribusiness, youth will transition to formal modes of (self-)employment. This transition will likely contribute towards a wider shift from largely informal to a formal, modernised economy. Another key objective involves the agricultural sector's structural transformation from smallholder farming to agribusiness (Yami et al., 2019). The envisioned transformation necessitates the sector's modernisation through increased mechanisation and application of agricultural technologies, sustainable productivity enhancement, and a strong commercial, market-oriented focus (Wossen & Ayele, 2018). As illustrated in box 4, some programmes undertake both of these longer-term objectives.

Next to these larger goals, youth agripreneurship programmes work towards the shorter-term objective of creating decent youth (self-)employment opportunities, which is seen as key to inclusive economic growth (International Youth Foundation, 2014). More specifically, some programmes aim to support smallholder farmers and under-/unemployed youth to become agripreneurs or find meaningful employment in agribusiness. The Realising Aspiration Youth in Ethiopia through Employment (RAYEE) project, currently implemented by SNV, for example, intends to secure dignified, waged employment for 60,000 under-/unemployed youth in agribusiness, and help establish 45,000 new youth-led small enterprises with capacity to employ up to four young people.

Other programmes aim to support youth agripreneurs who already have an agribusiness start-up scale up their ventures. By scaling up youth-led start-up agribusiness, such programmes aim to produce trickle down effects and create additional employment opportunities for young people. NFP's

Youth in Agroecology Learning Track Africa (YALTA), for instance, which was implemented in four countries—Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Kenya—includes, among other capacity building activities, a business acceleration programme. The accelerator supports youth-led agribusiness operating for a minimum of one year and employing at least three people scale-up.

2.2. Approaches to youth agripreneurship programming

To stimulate decent youth employment creation and the establishment of youth-led agribusinesses, youth agripreneurship programmes have, traditionally, forged supply-side interventions, focused on the individual entrepreneur, their skillset, capacity and mindset (Flynn et al., 2017). This kind of interventions offer a range of activities, including vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills training, financial capacity

Box 4. The HortiFresh West Africa programme and its objectives

Key facts about the programme

Implementers: Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), SNV, Advance

Consulting, and SENSE

Funder: Embassy of the Kingdom of the

Netherlands in Accra. **Budget:** EUR 8,990,478

Beneficiaries reached: 9,347 family farms increased their productivity and/or income; 8,536 young farmers trained in agronomy

Programme objectives

The vision of the HortiFresh West Africa programme, which implemented several projects between 2018 and 2022, involved both long-term objectives. It aimed at improving the productivity and international competitiveness of the fruit and vegetable sectors in Ghana and Ivory Coast in a sustainable manner, and contribute to inclusive economic growth (Van Dijkhorst et al., 2021).

Relevant resources: Progress report 2020; Programme

Evaluation Part III

building, mindset re-orientation, mentoring and coaching (Betcherman & Khan, 2015). The existing evidence base showcases that supply-side activities are relatively easy to implement, cost-effective and can improve young people's entrepreneurial and agribusiness skills, especially when they are designed based on market demand (see box 5) (Adeyanju et al., 2021; Maiga et al., 2020).

Recent findings, however, suggest that supplyside activities—especially in situations where there is not enough job creation for trained youth—do not necessarily bear an impact on young people's welfare or income. What is more, such activities seldomly lead to improved agribusiness performance (Adeyanju et al., 2020; Cho & Honorati, 2014; Nsikak-Abasi, 2017). Additionally, research shows that programmes offering only supply-side activities, by design, can neither address market and institutional failures nor safeguard young people from being incorporated in the labour market on disadvantageous and/or exploitative terms (Datta et al., 2018; Du Toit, 2009; Flynn et al., 2017). As such, there is a need to complement supply-side interventions with both demand-side and system-level measures.

For this reason there has been increasing attention to programmatic integration, whereby supply-side activities are combined with measures tackling demand-side and system-level factors. Demand-side measures focus on stimulating and creating more jobs and agripreneurship opportunities for youth in the agribusiness sector (Fox Et al., 2020). Such measures and respective programmatic activities revolve around access to and provision of resources critical for starting an agribusiness, such as finance, land, human capital, technology

services, and physical inputs (Babu et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2019). The evidence base on the impact of demand-side interventions is still not comprehensive, but findings from recent meta-analyses of scientific and evaluation literature showcase modest positive effects on youth (self-) employment (Solutions for Youth Employment, 2017; Datta et al., 2018).

"Offering only supply-side activities can neither address market and institutional failures nor safeguard young people from exploitation" System-level measures differ from demand-side measures in that they intend to foster a wider enabling environment conducive to agripreneurship, characterised by well-functioning infrastructure and markets as well as reliable regulatory, policy and legal systems (Tichar, 2019; Walker et al., 2019). While system-level measures can create an enabling environment not only for youth, but also adult agripreneurs, some of these measures—such as creation of market linkages and networking opportunities—might be especially beneficial for youth.

Box 5. Improving supply-side activities through market-based approaches: the case of YALTA

Key facts about the programme

Implementers: Netherlands Food Partnership PELIM Uganda, AAA Kenya, Fair and Sustainable Ethiopia, and Three Mountains Rwanda

Funder: IKEA Foundation
Budget: EUR 1.267.705

Businesses reached through mentorship and business acceleration activities: 170

For the case of Uganda (1 out of 4 countries where YALTA was implemented, capacity building activities resulted in:

- 70% of beneficiaries formalizing their businesses;
- 90% of beneficiaries developing clear and welldefined business models

Youth agripreneurship programmes specifically focused on agroecology usually provide youth with technical training on agroecological principles.

It is questionable, however, whether technical training alone will result in the creation of profitable and sustainable youth-led agribusinesses.

Undertaking a market-based approach, the YALTA initiative combined technical and business capacity building, among other programmatic activities, supporting youth to develop sound agroecological business cases. The initiative also worked towards identifying and engaging funders and other relevant stakeholders to connect youth with robust business cases to funding opportunities.



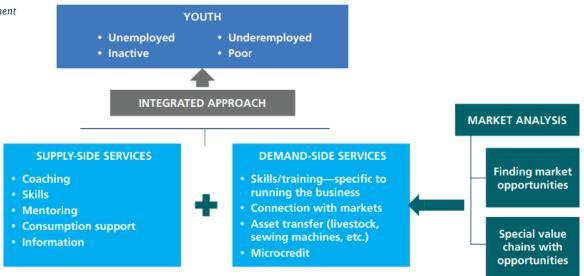
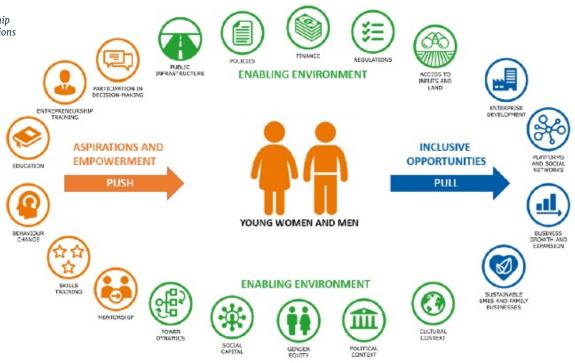


Figure 2: Youth employment and entrepreneurship

in agri-food systems: a framework for interventions (Wageningen & CTA, 2019)



2.3. Integrated programmatic approaches in practice

Several organisations, including the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) and the World Bank, have created frameworks to guide programme integration for youth (self-) employment in agriculture and agribusiness (see figures 1&2).

An illustration of this integrated approach is the Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE) programme, developed by SNV.1 The approach recognizes that youth under-/unemployment can be partly attributed to lack of skills and work experience, but also to major structural barriers—in this case, access to finance and quality information—preventing young people from entering the labour market. The approach therefore combines market-oriented employability and entrepreneurship skills training (push factors) with post-training coaching and mentoring (pull factors). It also adds access to finance interventions through self-organised saving and lending associations (match factors). After ten years of implementing the approach across various youth agripreneurship and employment programmes, SNV has distilled some key lessons **learnt**, stressing that programme integration could benefit from increased attention in three areas:

- 1. The development of integrated, cross-sectoral networking ecosystems that connect youth with each other and all other relevant stakeholders in the agribusiness sector;
- 2. Improving access to finance for youth-led microenterprises and formal agribusineses; and

3. The careful selection of project partners on a case-by-case basis, and the thorough consideration of the country context, as a means to ensuring consistent quality of programme design and implementation.²

Moreover, Datta et al. (2018) provide an additional set of **good practices** towards robust programme integration:

- Explicitly target job creation and earnings as programme outcomes;
- Identify and address youth hiring constrains, and binding constrains to youth-led firms' expansion; and
- Provide technical and financial assistance tailored to the needs of the agripreneur and their agribusiness.

Finally, research and our expert interviews show that there are some combinations of supply- and demand-side activities which can act synergetically to maximise positive impacts for young people. This means that some supply-side activities can strengthen the impact of demand-side measures on youth outcomes, and vice versa. According to

an Orange Corners advisor, one such combination involves the progressive provision of, firstly, financial literacy training, and then the delivery of post-training technical and financial coaching, and start-up capital (Yami et al., 2019).



Box 6. Key resources on this topic

- Frameworks to guide programme integration: WCDI, Youth employment and entrepreneurship in agri-food systems: a framework for interventions; WorldBank, Integration: A New Approach to YouthEmployment Programs
- Lessons learnt from implementing integrated approaches: SNV, Final evaluation of the SNVOpportunities for Youth Employment (OYE) project in Tanzania, Rwanda and Mozambique
- On implementing integrated programmaticapproaches in practice: World Bank, <u>TheNuts and Bolts of Designing and ImplementingTraining Programs in Developing Countries</u>

¹ Interview with SNV representative.

² Interview with SNV representative.



Youth diversity and its implications for targeting programme participants

Acknowledging the diversity inherent in youth as a group has crucial implications for development policies and programmes. Different groups of young people face a multitude of challenges in starting or growing their agribusinesses, and as such have varying needs. To strengthen the match between the activities implemented by youth agripreneurship programmes and the needs of youth, this section unpacks youth diversity and offers recommendations for more inclusive targeting approaches.

3.1. Defining youth and understanding their diversity

International development theory and practice have, traditionally, understood youth as a demographic category, entirely defined by age.

ILO, for example, considers as youth those between the ages of 15 and 29 years—other international organisations and national governments employ varying age brackets in their definitions. This demographic conceptualization, however, is increasingly problematized, with critics arguing that youth is in fact a dynamic and diverse social category that varies in different geographical contexts and time periods (van Dijk et al., 2011). More specifically, what it means to be a young person emerges through context-specific social processes, historical events, and cultural norms (Christiansen et al., 2006). For example, in Uganda's Eastern Region youth refers to males that have not undergone the rites of circumcision and to females who have not yet been married (Turolla et al., 2022).

As seen in Table 1, the vast diversity among youth results from their varying identity markers and characteristics. Gender, socioeconomic status, and educational background all situate young people differently in their respective socioeconomic contexts and across agricultural value chains (Yeboah & Flynn, 2021). What is more, such identity markers shape the social and labour market obstacles young people face in becoming agripreneurs, and affect the kinds of agribusinesses and agricultural activities they can undertake (Turolla et al., 2022). In their pursuit of agribusiness opportunities, for example, young women from rural areas with low levels of education would have to overcome often-repressive gender norms (a social barrier), a lack of connectivity to markets in urban centres (a labour marker barrier), and their skills deficit (Prayer Galletti et al., 2014). These social and

TABLE 1. YOUTH'S IDENTITY ASPECTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ³				
Identity aspects	Implications for (aspiring) youth agripreneurs			
Geographical location	Whether a young person resides in a <i>rural or urban</i> area can affect their proximity and access to markets.	Surrounding <i>ecological conditions</i> will partly decide the agricultural activities and value chains youth can engage with.		
Gender	Repressive gender norms, often prevalent in rural areas, can lead to discrimination against young women, especially in land ownership and agribusiness entrepreneurship.			
Family background and socioeconomic status	Family background can impact youth's success in agribusiness. Wealthier families can provide their offspring with a number of resources like start-up capital, land, and influential social networks.			
Level of specialisation	Some youth specialise in one, multiple or no agricultural value chains, which can respectively limit or expand their ability to harness agribusiness opportunities.			
Personal aspirations and self-identification	Whether youth have wider agribusiness aspirations affects their self-identification either as farmers or agripreneurs. Some youth might see agriculture as a forced career path, while others might have larger ambitions, and thus higher motivation.			

³ Table 1 synthesizes relevant information from a range of academic and grey literature sources (Datta et al., 2018; International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2019) but primarily depends on Turolla's (2022) rich discussion of youth diversity.

labour market barriers do not necessarily constrain male, educated, urban youth—though this group of youth may face other barriers, such as lacking access to land and finance (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2019).

Because of the distinct obstacles they face, different groups of young people will express diverse needs and require alternative kinds of support. From our expert interviews with youth employment researchers, it emerged that one key way to ensure

Box 8. Targeting marginal youth with higher levels of motivation

A key challenge faced by programmes targeting marginalized youth is the relatively higher dropout rates (Ivry & Doolittle, 2003). To mitigate this challenge, some youth agripreneurship programmes are assessing young people's motivation, drive, and commitment. The idea is that those youth with higher levels of motivation are more likely to persist challenges, finish their training, and thereafter harness economic opportunities (Datta et al., 2018). Harambee, for example, a youth employment accelerator in South Africa, selects participants from youth that have already completed secondary education and have actively been looking for a job for at least six months, as proxies for motivation. These selection criteria are also complemented by numeracy and literacy, learning potential, and individual attributes assessments (Romero & Barbarasa, 2017).

programmes deliver activities relevant to the needs of young people is by operationalising youth diversity in the targeting of participants.

3.2. Targeting of participants in existing youth agripreneurship programmes

Insights from the expert interviews and case illustrations show that the bulk of existing youth agripreneurship programmes tend to target skilled youth with larger ambitions in agripreneurship, who often already have an agribusiness. Doing so, such programmes can support the creation of agribusiness start-ups, and the scale-up of existing ones—with the ultimate goal of agricultural sector transformation (Turolla, 2019). There is an underlying assumption that scaling up existing agribusinesses into medium-sized enterprises will bear trickle down effects and indirectly affect a larger pool of youth, especially through job creation.

"Identity markers shape the social and labour market obstacles young people face in becoming agripreneurs, and affect the kinds of agribusinesses and agricultural activities they can undertake"

However, the choice to target more experienced and skilled youth, who are in that sense 'market-ready', comes at the expense of inclusivity. Programmes only reach a very limited group. More marginalized youth—who to varying degrees lack skills, experience, assets, and/or connections—are not explicitly targeted. Without appropriate support their potential remains unused while they risk continued subsistence, or survival, entrepreneurship and indecent employment conditions (Hatayama, 2018). Additionally, when looking to create impact at scale, only reaching the frontrunners will likely not be enough to have a transformative impact in the long term.

Targeting marginalised youth, however, does not come without challenges. These challenges involve higher drop-out rates among more marginalised youth participants, as well as more holistic support required by these youths. Both of these challenges translate into longer project time frames as well as a higher budget requirements per beneficiary (Datta et al., 2018; SNV, 2018).

3.3. How to target diverse youth groups more inclusively— good practices

This section turns its attention to good practices and recommendations for setting up inclusive approaches to targeting participants in youth agripreneurship programmes. Two main recommendations will help programmers and policymakers overcome challenges associated with targeting more marginalised youth.

Box 9. Targeting of participants or value chain identification: what should be the starting point?

In setting up a youth agripreneurship initiative, programmers and policymakers have a choice to make between two potential starting points—either firstly, choose the agricultural value chain and relevant activities, and then the relevant target youth population, or vice versa. Making this decision, relevant stakeholders should consider programmatic goals and objectives:

if the priority is on boosting sustainable agricultural growth, then it might be more appropriate to select the agricultural value chain first. But if improving the lives and livelihoods of the most marginalized constitutes the focus, then selecting the target group first might be more strategic (Datta et al., 2018).

That is because some value chains require higher levels of specialization and financial investment, or access to land, rendering them less suitable for marginalized youth, who usually lack access to these resources. Horticulture, provided year-round access to water, and small-scale poultry could be suitable for less skilled, marginalized youth, while commercial poultry and food value addition (i.e. drying and processing of agricultural products) could be a better fit for more skilled youth with some experience in agribusiness (SNV, 2018).

1. Divide youth in sub-groups based on the social and labour market barriers they face.

Insights from the expert interviews show that the first step to set up inclusive targeting approaches involves dividing youth into distinct sub-groups based on the kinds of social and labour market barriers they face. Having created sub-groups, it is critical to zoom in further and investigate the specific barriers each sub-group faces, access their needs, and design programmatic activities accordingly (Datta et al., 2018). Relevant literature already identifies three generic sub-groups of youth, which could help guide individual youth agripreneurship programmes in appropriately categorising targeted youth:

- Market-ready youth: youth who face low social and labour market barriers belong to this sub-group. This group already possesses relevant skills and specialisation, but might need help to improve their productivity or transition to higher-productivity, formal jobs. As such, they require lighter interventions to formalise or sharpen their skills, and address information gaps, limited access to networks and little work experience.
- Youth requiring special support: youth fitting into this group are technically market-ready, but social barriers, such as discrimination, limit their employability and their capacity to start an agribusiness. This sub-group includes educated, skilled, non-poor young women or youth with disabilities, each facing differential forms of discrimination. For this type of youth, it would be imperative

"Identfying three sub-groups of youth can guide youth agripreneurship programmes in appropriately targeting youth."

to combine light training activities with interventions addressing social barriers—e.g., cash transfers, transportation arrangements and subsidies, caretaking, and flexible participation arrangements.

- Hard-to-serve youth: such youth face high labour market and high social barriers—think, for example, of extremely poor unemployed rural women with low education. Because of these high barriers, this youth sub-group requires more holistic interventions and support that would address low skills, lack of work experience, and limited access to networks, information, and other resources. In addressing the needs of this sub-group, interventions to tackle social barriers should have central role (Ivry & Doolittle, 2003; Avila et al., 2017; Data et al., 2018).
- Collaborate with local organisations and associations, employ inclusive language, and quotas to reach marginalized and socially excluded youth.

Most commonly, youth agripreneurship programmes reach out to potential participants through online application calls, via the phone and

text messaging, or by broadcasting application calls on local radio stations. Additionally, some programmes conduct preliminary field visits and post the application call in public spaces accessible to the targeted youth (Datta et al., 2018). Reaching out to socially excluded and marginalized youth, however, might still pose a challenge even if such mechanisms are employed.

An increasing number of programmes are, thus, collaborating with local organisations and associations that work closely with such youth and are deeply rooted in the community. The Job Booster programme in Burkina Faso, for example, established partnerships with two associations of people with disabilities, and through them, in 2020, managed to reach 317 young people living with disabilities (JBBF 2020 Progress Report).

Beyond outreach mechanisms, youth agripreneurship programmes need also be mindful of their language, selection criteria, and set quotas, as elements that could affect the effectiveness of their targeting. For the EJASA project, implemented in Benin, SNV adopted a targeting approach firmly grounded in gender

"An increasing number of programmes are collaborating with local organisations that work closely with youth and are deeply rooted in the community"

equality to ensure that young women were equally represented in the programme. Some of the key features of that approach included:

- **1.** Gender neutral language to encourage young women to participate in male-dominated agricultural activities and value chains
- **2.** Positive discrimination towards women in setting selection criteria. The latter were largely shaped by the particular constrains faced by women
- **3.** Setting and fulfilling specific gender quotas.

Box 10. Key resources on this topic

ILO Technical Notes, <u>Employment services that work for young people</u>
World Bank Jobs Guide, <u>Integration: A New Approach to Youth Employment Programs</u>
Solutions for Youth Employment, <u>New and Promising Approaches in Youth Employment Programs: The S4YE Impact Portfolio</u>





A deep dive into programmatic activities

Building on the insights raised in the previous two sections, here, we delve deeper into how to develop an appropriate programmatic design that offers activities tailored to youth's varying needs. To do so, this section discusses three promising activities that organisations can undertake when setting up a programme to ensure their design is fit-for-purpose and context-specific. Thereafter, we consider what kind of programmatic activities are relevant to and fit three distinct goals: increasing the employability of hard-to-reach youth (4.2), expanding agripreneurship opportunities for market-ready youth (4.3), and scaling youth-led agribusinesses start-ups (4.4), and provide recommendations accordingly.

4.1. How to select programmatic activities that are context-specific and fit-for-purpose

To ensure maximum impact, youth agripreneurship programme designers need to tailor programmatic activities to the distinct needs of participating youth, undertake a careful selection of project partners on a case-by-case basis, and ensure consistent quality of programme design and implementation in accordance with the country context. This section highlights three activities for youth agripreneurship programmes to undertake during the programme design phase in order to address these factors.

Mapping the business environment before deciding on specific programmatic activities is a crucial learning that came out of this research. All businesses operate within an environment constitutive of political, economic, societal and

environmental dimensions, as well as regulatory and institutional constraints (Walker et al., 2019). Given limited capacity, time, and budget, programmes should first identify and map the aspects in the local ecosystem that pose barriers for young people in their pursuit of agripreneurship. Based on the experience of the Orange Corners programme , comprehensive multistakeholder mapping exercises that involve a range of relevant actors—most importantly, existing youth agripreneurship programmes, youth networks and local businesses—constitutes a promising avenue to identify context-appropriate programmatic activities that add value to the existing ecosystem.

Making the agricultural sector a more profitable option for youth might be a more impactful undertaking for programmes than rectifying youth's often negative perceptions around agriculture through mindset reorientation activities. Mindset reorientation, an often-employed programmatic activity, is geared towards making youth see

agribusiness as a profitable career path (Walker et al., 2019). African youth networks we spoke to in the course of this research, however, suggest that such activities might not have as much of a significant impact. What might be more impactful instead is for programmes to focus on the creation of functioning markets as an avenue to increase the profitability of agriculture (YouthPower, 2022). Our reference group members confirmed findings in the literature that functioning markets are a precondition for profitable agribusiness ventures. Programmers can foster functioning local markets by helping to create immediate and efficient linkages between producers and local markets.

Social Networks have been found to be essential for young agripreneurs to overcome barriers that are related to the stigmatisation of youth (Shantz et al., 2018; Datta et al., 2018). Interviewed representatives of African youth agripreneurship associations explained that social networks serve to exchange information and best practices, and to

Box 12. A sectoral approach to increasing long-term profitability in the agricultural sector

One effective, but also resource-intensive, approach to strengthen the profitability of the agricultural sector is by tackling a specific agribusiness sector in its entirety. This approach can increase the specific sector's long-term economic viability and enhance its resilience to various kinds of shocks. The HortiFresh programme in West-Africa, for example, facilitated public-private partnerships that work on factors holding back the professionalisation and commercialisation of the fruit and vegetable sector in Ghana and Ivory Coast. This was achieved through a rigorous initial country-level context analysis based on a rapid assessments methodology, which allowed the programme to identify and establish partnerships with relevant national and regional policymakers. Through regular informative meetings and multi-stakeholder learning sessions, and by making partial and steady cash investments, the programme managed to improve the business climate for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and international companies, reaching 15,000 farmers to increase their productivity by 20 percent (WUR, 2022a).

create effective links with other stakeholders in the ecosystem.

The co-founder of the Young Farmers Champion Network (Yofchan) in Uganda suggested that one effective way to build social networks is through various forms of mentoring. Yofchan, for example, tasks its programme alumni to function as "farmer champions", share their personal success stories, and act as role models in their rural communities. Furthermore, intergenerational peer-to-peer mentoring can break down stigmatisation through collaboration with established local farmers. For more established agribusinesses creating a professional sector- or value chain-specific network can result in efficient market linkages (WUR, 2022b).

4.2. Increase the employability of hard-to-reach youth

As described in section 3, programmes aimed to improve opportunities for the hard-to-serve youth need to include activities that address participants' lack of work experience, skills, and their limited access to networks, information and factors of production. Programmatic activities that serve these purposes include:

1. Integrated training programmes that include capacity building and activities which develop the individuals' transferable skills. For this group, skills training activities should not only focus on a specific value chain or on promoting certain agricultural techniques, such as agroecological principles, but also on transferable skills. This integrated approach to skills training can help boost youth's employability beyond a particular sector or value chain (D'Sa et al., 2018).

Box 13. Case Illustration – Holistic training for rural unemployed youth

The Youth Employment in Agribusiness and Sustainable Agriculture (YEASA) project, which focuses on building the technical, entrepreneurial and soft skills of rural, under-or unemployed youth, does not only promote the application of modern farming technologies through experiential learning and strategic mentorship, but also offers a range of services and activities, including capacity building, leadership skills training, awareness raising and facilitating intergenerational dialogue.

- 2. Learning relevant and applicable skills is essential to improve the employability of marginalised youth. Therefore, offering on-the-job training and internship programmes can help youth acquire vocational, technical and business skills through practical training, while also stimulating collaboration between different private and public stakeholders (Halabisky et al., 2012).
- 3. Access to finance is an important component of programmes that target disadvantaged youth. In particular, for young and marginalised agripreneurs, small grants are found to be more appropriate than large investments or loans. These small grants can financially support youth against external shocks and the absence of income during the duration of the programme (Walker et al., 2019). Additionally, small grants, unlike large investments and loans, will not add a financial burden in the form of debt for youth.

Another mechanism to provide finance, which also allows for the creation of social networks, is Youth Savings and Lending Associations (YSLAs) (SNV, 2022). These informal cooperative associations allow youth to generate funds also in the informal economy, where individuals usually face high barriers to access finance (SNV, 2018). In SNV's programmes, YSLAs were key for the sustainability of local networks because they acted as a "stabilising pillar and gluing factor" and provided a social security net that can sustain agricultural activities and livelihoods also in low seasons (SNV, 2022).

Box 14. Case Illustration – Hard and soft skill development through practical training

The Latia Agripreneurship Institute (LAI) is a Kenyan Technical Vocational College. LAI uses an industry-led, market driven and competency-based approach to deliver a broad training program to anyone who has a passion for agribusiness. It facilitates agribusinesses (farm and firm), to access markets, farm products, technology, financial services and workforce solutions. It delivers these services through an agribusiness ecosystem consisting of local and international companies. Latia's training model is delivered through 70% practice and 30% theory. Trainers are approved by national Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority thereby guaranteeing thoroughly skilled farm operators and managers.

4.3. Expand agripreneurship opportunities for market-ready youth

Programmes targeting youth that are market-ready in terms of their skills, either due to previous employment in the agricultural sector or educational experience, should focus on creating decent employment opportunities in agriculture or on supporting these youth to start and/or professionalise their agribusiness ventures. The following programmatic activities can support the approach to expand agripreneurship opportunities for market-ready youth:

1. Taking a holistic sector development approach in order to increase the employability of already skilled youth, while also developing the capacity

Box 15. Case Illustration – Sector development activities to develop youth employment capacities

The Next Generation Cocoa Youth Program (MASO) in Ghana focuses on building a critical mass of young entrepreneurs and supporting youth-led professional service providers within Ghana's cocoa value chain. To attain those objectives, MASO offers training in sustainable cocoa farming practices, business training to develop the cocoa-related service sector, and access to a multistakeholder alumni network to surround youth with a supportive enabling environment.

of the agricultural sector to employ these youth (Edewor & Kollie, 2022). These programmes are often positioned in a specific value chain and focus on the expansion of participants' skillset and combine these with sector—wide activities.

2. Offering accredited short training programmes of only a few weeks can equip youth with formal certification for already acquired technical skills. This way, already experienced participants with relevant skills receive formal accreditation and thereby boost their employment opportunities in the formal agricultural sector. According to a policy advisor working extensively on this topic in Kenya, this cost-effective approach has the potential to improve the opportunities of a large number of informally employed youth. Further, it can be very impactful to collaborate with national Technical

Box 16. Case Illustration – Promoting national formal accreditation procedures

The Job Booster Burkina Faso project, which was implemented by Woord en Daad in 2017-2020, combines two different but mutually reinforcing trajectories. Next to supporting national TVET schools by, for example, expanding their educational curricula to include entrepreneurship and employment opportunities in agriculture, the programme also functions as a broker on the labour market connecting unemployed young people with private agribusinesses. Thereby, it can create important market linkages and ensure that labour demand and supply inform each other.

Box 17. Case Illustration – Start-up incubators to build entrepreneurial capacity

The Youth Economic Empowerment through Agribusiness in Kenya (Vijabiz) project, implemented by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) strives to create sustainable youth-led enterprises through:

- 1) collaboration with innovative financial service providers,
- 2) the creation of market linkages,
- 3) the integration of innovative digital technologies, and
- 4) the enhancement of business management capacity. Support is specifically provided to value addition, as well as opportunities for scaling-up through training in critical subjects such as leadership and ICTs/social media use for agribusiness, mentoring and incubation services.

and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions to harmonise certification standards, ease employment opportunities, and create market linkages thorough their network of private businesses offering on–the–job training (Mwaura et al., 2018).

3. Entrepreneurship training and business development coaching can include a wide range of specific topics. Accounting, leadership training and business plan writing are common programmatic activities to boost the entrepreneurial capacity of market-ready youth, as well as start-up incubation programmes.

4.5. Scale youth-led agribusinesses start-ups

Programmes in this category focus on young entrepreneurs that already operate an agribusiness start-up or strongly aspire to start an agribusiness venture based on an innovative business idea. Therefore, the following programmatic activities centre around addressing the needs of small agribusinesses:

1. Incubation and acceleration programmes in the agricultural sector generally aim to promote entrepreneurship and business development. Most of such programmes combine a rigorous selection procedure and an intensive focus on a small number of agribusinesses, mostly in the form of hackathons and start-up competitions. According to an interview with a programme manager at RVO, the reason for the current high

Box 18. Case Illustration – Incubation and acceleration competitions

The Generation Africa - GoGettaz Agripreneur Prize Competition is a pan-African \$ 100,000 grant prize competition in which agribusiness entrepreneurs are connected to initial seed funding and diverse forms of support throughout the agri-food value chain. Finalists and alumni receive investment opportunities through the AGRF Agribusiness Deal Room, and mentorship and education on the community platform and the Generation Africa Fellowship Program (GAFP). All applicants benefit from inspiration, education, and support via access to an online platform for entrepreneurs.

demand for this kind of programmes is the creation of a public image around successful and innovative youth agripreneurship and the possibility to bring attention to cross-cutting issues, such as climate change and gender-equality. Therefore, youth agripreneurs partaking in such programmes are encouraged to share their successes and challenges via social media to inspire other youth after completion of the programme.

- 2. Access to start-up funding is an integral part of business development initiatives. In order to professionalise existing agribusinesses, or to improve the sustainability of participants' business ventures, access to loans is preferred over grants. According to the experience of youth-led farming associations, building up a good track-record of repaying loans and producing an interest on initial investments increases the likelihood to access more funding at later stages. It also familiarises the agripreneur with the process of applying for loans and maintaining accounting records.
- agribusinesses and stakeholders in the wider ecosystem in the economy and within a given sector is a promising avenue for large programmes. In Rwanda, for example, the Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) ran a project that connected SMEs exporting sustainable specialty coffee to the European market through individual and group business export coaching, accompanied by capacity development for an enabling export environment. Thus, national youth agripreneurship initiatives can provide an integrated national support for start-ups and small businesses as a component of a larger development strategy.

Box 19. Case Illustration – Linking agripreneurs to finance

The Young Farmers Champions Network (YOFCHAN) provides comprehensive business support services for young farmers in Uganda to start, grow and scale their agribusiness enterprises. The network promotes small and medium agribusiness youth-led enterprises as the main vehicle for expanding agricultural production, providing sustainable jobs for the youth and enhancing economic growth through providing an integrated and comprehensive range of business support services. Importantly, this includes helping the agripreneurs to link to affordable finances and sustainable markets for them to embrace farming as a profitable business.

Box 20. Case Illustration – Grand prize with digital platform solution to education and support

Ghana's National Entrepreneurship & Innovation Programme (NEIP) has the primary objective to provide an integrated national support for start-ups and small businesses. NEIP primarily focuses on providing business development services; start-up incubators and funding for young businesses to enable them grow and become successful. As such, NEIP is set within the context of the country's long-term strategic vision of consolidating its middle-income status and building an industry-driven economy capable of providing decent jobs that are suitable and sustainable for development.



Meaningful youth engagement in youth agripreneurship programming and policymaking

Youth diversity has been a recurring theme through this report, with section 3 exploring heterogeneity among youth and ways to operationalise it through the targeting of participants. Targeting approaches and programmatic activities that account for youth diversity, however, are not sufficient in ensuring that youth agripreneurship programmes are responsive to the needs of youth. As such meaningful youth engagement is increasingly seen as an avenue through which to align what programmes supply with what youth actually need.

In fact, a growing number of development organisations, donors, and national governments are paying ever-increased attention to meaningful youth engagement as a key component in their strategic plans and policy documents—both within and beyond the thematic area of youth employment and agripreneurship. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Youth at Heart Principles and USAID's Youth in Development Policy are two telling examples. While meaningful youth engagement can yield benefits, its practice and implementation in youth agripreneurship programmes does not come without challenges. This section explores the concept, identifies promising youth engagement mechanisms, and provides concrete recommendations towards improving the practice of youth engagement within (and beyond) youth agripreneurship programmes.

5.1. What is meaningful youth engagement, and why does it matter?

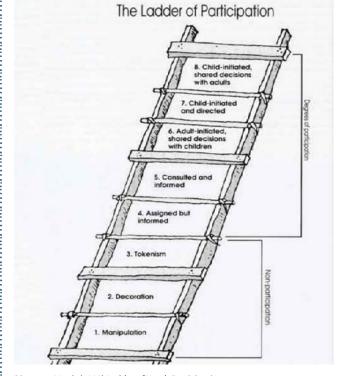
The concept of meaningful youth engagement extends far beyond simply enrolling youth in a development programme as beneficiaries (French et al., 2014). Central to this concept is that youth are

Box 22. Why support youth-led agripreneurship networks?

Youth-led agripreneurship networks bring young people and their resources together to either influence policy, voice their concerns, or get connected to each other. Some networks, like the Botswana Young Farmers' Association, offer business development services, enabling their members to build their agribusinesses. Other networks, such as Young Farmers Champions Network (YOFCHAN), come together to undertake joint production and marketing, or collectively access finance. Their convening power has rendered youth-led networks a robust entry-point into diverse groups of young people for youth agripreneurship programmes and interventions. As such, it is imperative that development stakeholders continue and increase their support to youth-led networks—through funding, capacity building, and by acknowledging them as relevant actors— so they can overcome their challenges and scale-up their impact (Kyewalabye, 2020).

included and actively participate—at the appropriate level and through a suitable mechanism—in different programmatic and policymaking stages, from conceptualization to design, implementation, monitoring, and/or evaluation (French et al., 2014; International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2019).

An informative illustration of the levels of meaningful youth inclusion is Hart's (1992) ladder of participation. It contains 8 rungs, the three lowest ones—manipulation, decorative roles for, and tokenization of youth—representing non-participation. The Meaningful Youth Participation toolkit translates the remaining five rungs in Hart's ladder into five practical levels of youth engagement, ranging from informing, to consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering youth. As can be seen in table 2, keeping youth informed is ranked as the least comprehensive level of youth participation, and empowering youth to create community change is considered most comprehensive.



Picture 1: Hart's (1992) Ladder of Youth Participation

ANNEX 7	Levels of participation			
		Goal and promise		
Inform	This level is about providing youth affected by policies or programmes with information about proposed plans, the decision-making process and/or the rationale behind them. In some cases this may be the appropriate thing to do, but it is important to acknowledge that this is a minimum level of participation that does not allow youth to have a voice (act as a leader and partner). Honest and complete provision of information is crucial.	Both the goal and promise at the 'Inform' level is to keep the public informed.		
Consult	This level enables the basic minimum opportunity for public input into a decision. At this level, you only ask youth to share their insights, comments and opinions. Youth are not invited to sit down together and work on things in a cooperative way. Inputs serve the decision-making process or the content of a policy, strategy or programme. It is a one-time endeavour.	The goal at this level is to obtain and consider public input. The promise is to consider the public input received and to provide feedback as to how that input influenced the decision/policy/strategy/programme.		
Involve	Involving goes beyond consulting, because at this level youth are included in the decision-making process. At the 'Involve' level, youth are invited into the process, usually from the beginning, and are provided with multiple if not ongoing opportunities for input as decision-making continues. However, the Ministry, Embassy or development agency is still the sole decision-maker and there is no expectation of building consensus or providing youth with any sort of high-level influence over the decision.	The goal is to work directly with the public and consider their input throughout the decision-making process. The promise is that the public will have access to the decision process and decision makers and will be given the opportunity to provide input throughout the process and receive direct feedback on how their input helped to influence the decision.		
Collaborate	The 'Collaborate' level includes all the elements of 'Involve'. At this level, the public is directly engaged in decision-making and it often includes an explicit attempt to find consensus solutions. However, as with 'Involve', the Ministry/Embassy/development agency is still the ultimate decision-maker. The degree to which consensus will be sought and how much we are able to share with the youth must be made explicit. In the end, we will take all of the input received and make the decision. Collaborative forms of youth participation can be time-consuming and resource intensive. If stakeholders do reach a consensus and we are not able to give it serious consideration, it can have serious negative consequences on the policy/strategy/programme and on future relationships with the youth.	The goal is to design a process that allows for effective partnering with youth on all aspects of the decision. The promise is that youth will be engaged in all key activities and decisions, and their input will be incorporated to the maximum extent possible. The degree to which consensus will be sought should be an explicit part of the promise.		
Empower	At the 'Empower' level, we provide youth with the opportunity to make decisions for themselves and to improve their quality of life, not on a personal level but by creating greater community change. This can be achieved through participation in youth empowerment programmes, empowering youth-led organisations, youth councils, youth-led media, and finally meaningful youth involvement in decision-making.	The goal at the 'Empower' level is to create a process that allows the public to make an informed decision. The promise is that the Ministry/Embassy/ development agency will implement what the public decides.		

Table 2: The five levels of youth participation (Meaningful Youth Participation, Practical Toolkit)

It is important to note that programmes and policies should not necessarily strive to engage youth at the most comprehensive levels, as that might not be appropriate for their stated goals.

Beyond definitions, it is also crucial to grasp why youth engagement matters for programming and policymaking. Firstly, meaningful youth engagement constitutes a concrete avenue through which to ensure that programmes are relevant and responsive to the needs of young people (French et al., 2014; Youth Power, 2017; IFAD, 2019). As a young person from the Advocates for Youth put it: "young people are the experts of their own experiences." (French et al., 2017). Additionally, it is hypothesized that youth engagement will lead to better results and outcomes for youth, strengthening programmatic impact. As the youth engagement component of youth agripreneurship programmes is rarely evaluated, there is no rigorous evidence to support the abovementioned hypothesis. Anecdotal evidence, gathered from grey literature and our expert interviews, however, is indicating that some youth engagement mechanisms, especially peerto-peer mentoring, are particularly empowering and inspirational for youth (Ose, 2021).

5.2. Promising youth engagement mechanisms for youth agripreneurship programmes

Thanks to the varying levels of youth participation, there is no-one-size-fits-all approach to meaningful youth engagement. In our quick-scan of literature and case illustrations, we have identified three promising youth engagement mechanisms.

Box 23. Rolling out a youth inclusive reference group in practice: associated challenges and benefits

Upon receiving funding for the project, one of the first activities undertaken by YALTA was to set up national and regional reference groups to advise and guide the implementing teams on the overall direction of the programme, and the specific programmatic activities that were still being developed. The regional reference group assumed a more panoramic view, mainly tasked with identifying opportunities to link to relevant regional initiatives. The four national groups, one for each country of focus, were involved in preparing programmatic activities, programme implementation, and advising on issues of national importance. Through our interviews with YALTA programmers, it emerged that the reference groups played a key role in setting up the programme. A key lesson was that as the implementing teams got busier, there was not always enough time to properly consult with and involve the reference groups.

"There is no one-size-fits-all approach to meaningful youth engagement"

These mechanisms are promising in that their sound implementation can increase youth's capacity through personal growth and development. In turn, this increased capacity can empower youth to improve programme quality and catalyse community change (Plan International, 2021).

1. Youth-led reference groups and advisory councils

Youth-led reference groups and advisory councils are widely applied mechanisms through which to involve youth in setting up, implementing, and evaluating a programme, as well as to obtain input from youth's perspective. According to an interview with a programmer from Orange

Corners, such groups and councils are often tasked with mapping the local ecosystem to adjust a programme to a specific context; conducting site visits to the programme and providing feedback; and gathering input from beneficiaries for programme evaluations.

2. Peer-to-peer mentoring and learning

Peer-to-peer mentoring and learning as a youth engagement mechanism assign successful youth agripreneurs with sharing their experiences and knowledge with aspiring agripreneurs, mobilising and sensitising their peers about agriculture and agripreneurship, and functioning as role models. FAO's Youth Inspiring Youth in Agriculture (YIYA) initiative in Uganda, implemented in 2017, has adopted this mechanism. It is reported that by 2019, YIYA's selected youth agripreneurs, called Youth Champions (YC), by 2019, had managed to retrain 20 rural youth, offer internships to university and technical school students, and organize youth-focused networking events, thus creating significant positive spillover effects (FAO, 2021; Ose, 2021).

3. Co-creating and implementing programmes with youth-led agripreneurship networks

Finally, a more comprehensive mode of youth engagement involves youth-led agripreneurship networks co-developing and implementing youth agripreneurship programmes. GFAR, a multistakeholder global forum, for example, set out to tackle the lack of opportunities and access for youth in the agri-food sector by partnering with Young Professionals FOR Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), a youth-led network, to pilot the Youth Agripreneurs Project (YAP). A balanced number of GFAR and YPARD representativeswereinvolvedinmanagingtheproject from design to implementation and an independent impact evaluation found that the project's youth engagement mechanism increased the visibility and relevance of YPARD (Noonan & Dawkins, 2017).

5.3. Good practices and recommendations for meaningful youth engagement

Despite the promise of the aforementioned youth engagement mechanisms, effective youth participation does not come without challenges. Youth is not a unified category and as such ensuring that participation happens in a way that represents young people in all their diversity could prove a challenge (IFAD, 2019). Furthermore, economic, institutional and social barriers can hinder the effective participation of more marginalised youth, especially of young women and rural youth who often lack the social connections, skills and assets necessary for engagement (Campbell et al., 2009). According to our interviews with

Box 24. Digital solutions for cost-effective peer-to-peer mentoring and learning

Some donors and development organisations are supporting and working alongside with innovative, youth-led, web-based platforms, as a way to harness the promise of digital solutions and boost youth engagement in agripreneurship programming. FAO and East Africa Farmer Federation, for example, provide active support to the <u>African Youth Agripreneurs</u> (AYA), a community of rural youth agripreneurs with a robust online platform that seeks to share knowledge and agribusiness opportunities; engage youth in peer-to-peer learning, mentoring and networking; and provide online agribusiness courses and do-it-yourself innovation toolkits. As these digital platform bundle a range of services together and bring youth into one ecosystem, they can be more cost-effective than traditional approaches to training and mentoring (Singh, 2021).

"These recommendations can help programmers and policymakers overcome challenges to improve effective youth engagement mechanisms"

youth agripreneurship programmers, the effective implementation of youth engagement mechanisms is a time-consuming endeavour, which can come in conflict with programmes' short and tightly packed timelines—another challenge to consider. The following recommendations can help programmers and policymakers overcome some of these challenges and improve the implementation of youth engagement mechanisms within their youth agripreneurship programmes:

1. Create a *clear definition of the purpose for which young people are being engaged* and based on that

- definition select the level of youth participation suitable (i.e. inform, consult, collaborate or empower youth) and the appropriate engagement mechanism.
- 2. Recognise that youth is not a unified category, and as such strive to engage youth in all their diversity. In identifying and including youth in all their diversity, pay special attention to the most vulnerable and marginalised sub-groups of young people, who are often hard to reach and excluded, such as rural youth and young women. Working with youth-led agripreneurship networks could be of added value in this regard.
- 3. Consider the national economy's level of transformation, the connectivity of rural youth to urban and peri-urban centres and young people's own sense of agency as factors that can affect the implementation of youth participation mechanisms. In countries where transformation levels and urban-rural connectivity are low, participation mechanisms will likely be more complex and costly to implement. This will

require *investments in hard and soft infrastructure* (the former referring to physical infrastructure and the latter to services and institutions) to open up opportunities for greater youth involvement

4. Invest in *monitoring and impact evaluation* of agripreneurship programmes' youth engagement component to investigate which engagement mechanisms yield what results (French et al., 2014; YouthPower Learning, 2016; IFAD, 2019).

Box 25. Key resources on this topic

Tools to help design and implement youth engagement mechanisms:

Youth at Heart, Meaningful Youth Participation: A practical toolkit

USAID, Youth engagement in development: Effective approaches and action-oriented recommendations for the field

Oaktree, Youth participation in development: A practical guide

Tools to assist with monitoring and evaluation of programmes' youth engagement component:

Cordaid, Youth Engagement Scorecard

USAID, <u>Does your program reflect gender-transformative or positive youth development practices? A checklist</u>





Looking ahead: what do we still need to learn about stimulating youth agripreneurship?

This report has explored different programmatic elements—including goals, approaches, activities, and youth engagement strategies—to inform practitioners and policymakers on what works and what does not in terms of stimulating youth agripreneurship. Based on this exploration, the report has put forth several concrete pathways through which to strengthen youth agripreneurship programmes. In short, these avenues include:

- 1. The *adoption of integrated programmatic approaches* to simultaneously address youth's skills deficits and safeguard them from entering the labour market on disadvantageous and/or exploitative terms
- **2.** The *operationalization of youth diversity in programmatic targeting* to account for the specific challenges different groups of youth face in becoming agripreneurs
- **3. Tailoring of programmatic activities** to three distinct groups of youth—market-ready youth, hard-to-serve youth, and youth requiring special support—as each group displays different needs
- **4.** *Employing fit-for-purpose youth engagement strategies* to ensure that youth agripreneurship programmes are relevant to the needs, realities, and experiences of youth.

"The report identifies four concrete pathways to strengthen youth agripreneurship programmes"

6.1. What does the existing evidence base tell us about youth agripreneurship programming?

In conducting this exploration, we have paid special attention to what the existing evidence base tells us regarding the impact and outcomes of youth agripreneurship programmes, which we have highlighted throughout this report. In short, there is currently:

- Robust evidence, emerging from empirical analysis and programme evaluations, on the outcomes for youth of vocational, technical, and entrepreneurial skills training. Such trainings, especially when designed in accordance to market demand, improve young people's skills and their performance on the job. However, trainings bear no significant effect on the income and welfare of young people.
- *Some evidence*, mostly in the form of programme evaluations, but also empirical analysis, on:
 - 1. Programmatic integration and complimentary

Box 26. Recommendations for policymakers

Keeping the existing evidence base in mind as well as the research findings emerging from this project, we have developed the following set of recommendations for policymakers to effectively support youth agripreneurship:

- 1. Make a choice between supporting decent (self-)employment for marginalised youth (requires long-term capacity building) and investing in developing and scaling agribusinesses (short-term scaling of existing agribusinesses).
- **2. Start with a mapping of what is already there** by holding multistakeholder consultations with all relevant stakeholders in the agribusiness ecosystem (i.e. local youth networks, farmer organisations and existing YA initiatives and established agribusinesses) to identify bottlenecks.
- **3. Invest in integrated policy and programmatic approaches** that combine activities focused on the individual agripreneur, their skillset, capacity and mindset with measures that address (ii) system-level factors to create an enabling environment conducive to youth agripreneurship. This can help safeguard youth from exploitation or bad employment conditions in the labour market.
- **4.** Simultaneously **invest in the creation of an enabling environment** to support programmatic activities. Focus on establishing and/or strengthening:
 - Functioning and sustainable markets to make agripreneurship a profitable option for youth
 - National accreditation and certification systems pertaining to the agricultural sector
 - Access to finance for SMEs
- **5. Invest in more monitoring, evaluation and learning processes,** especially in the areas of youth engagement, digital solutions, inclusion mechanisms.

- combinations of programmatic activities. Relevant literature highlights that combining access to finance with financial literacy training can better enable young people to harness the provided finance.
- 2. The outcomes for youth of activities that provide youth with access to resources critical for starting an agribusiness. Access to finance, in particular, has been shown to have a modest positive effect on young people's income.
- Anecdotal evidence, gathered from grey literature and our expert interviews with programmers, on the effectiveness of certain youth engagement mechanisms. Peer-to-peer mentoring and learning can be more empowering and inspirational to youth than traditional programmatic activities.

6.2. What are persisting knowledge gaps?: Key questions for further learning

As the above might foretell, currently, the evidence base around youth agripreneurship programming is far from comprehensive. Below, we identify 4 key areas where knowledge gaps persist, and propose questions for further learning.

Youth engagement mechanisms

As the bulk of youth agripreneurship programmes do not explicitly evaluate their youth engagement strategies, systematic monitoring, evaluation, and learning on the following questions is crucial:

- Which youth engagement mechanisms lead to what kinds of outcomes for youth?
- To what extent and how can meaningful youth engagement lead to better outcomes for youth, strengthening programmatic impact?

"The evidence base around youth agripreneurship programming is still far from comprehensive"

Programme integration and effective combinations of activities

While existing literature highlights some combinations of programmatic activities as particularly impactful, further exploration of the following questions can strengthen the evidence base on programmatic integration:

- What are cost-effective and complimentary combinations of programmatic activities?
- What are the outcomes for youth resulting from programmatic activities that provide youth with resources critical for starting an agribusiness (i.e. land, technology and physical inputs, human capital, etc.)

Targeting and including marginalised youth

Participants in two multistakeholder learning sessions held as part of this project, highlighted challenges relating to targeting, reaching out to and including marginalised youth in agripreneurship programmes, challenges which were also identified in the literature. As such the following questions merit greater attention:

 What are robust inclusion mechanisms that lead to more effective participation of marginalised youth? How do the outcomes stemming from programmes that stimulate decent youth (self-) employment for marginalised youth compare to the outcomes of programmes that develop and upscale youth-led agribusinesses?

Digital solutions

Arguably, the topic of digital solutions within youth agripreneurship programmes has not featured prominently in this report. This is primarily because the evidence base on their effectiveness is rather weak, despite the current hype. To ameliorate this gap in knowledge, the following questions are of great relevance:

- To what extent can digital solutions improve the reach of and participation in youth agripreneurship programmes?
- To what extent can the incorporation of digital solutions affect (negatively or positively) different outcomes for youth, including their skills development, employability outcomes, and income?

Tackling these questions as well as strengthening monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes will fill in persisting knowledge gaps, strengthening the evidence based, and inevitably make for more impactful youth agripreneurship programmes.

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