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Innovations Session N°27

Empowering Youth and Women in
Agrifood: Bridging Entrepreneurship
and Job Creation for Sustainable
Impact

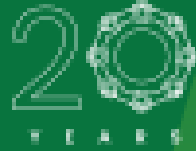
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Sustainably Growing
Africa's Food Systems



When
Farmers Prosper,
Africa Prospers.

Empowering Youth & Women

Bridging Entrepreneurship and Job Creation
for Sustainable Impact

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Why This Conversation Matters

Africa is home to the world's fastest-growing youth population — by 2030, 375 million young Africans will enter the workforce. Yet agriculture employs over 60% of the continent's labor force and contributes 23% of GDP. The gap between demographic potential and economic opportunity has never been more urgent. With 1 in 3 young Africans unemployed or underemployed, and women comprising 60–80% of food producers yet owning less than 20% of farmland, the agrifood sector sits at a critical crossroads — a challenge and a generational opportunity.





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The Opportunity Gap



Youth Barriers

Over 60% of Africa's youth are engaged in agriculture, yet face land access barriers, lack of finance, and limited market linkages — keeping them trapped in subsistence rather than enterprise.



Women's Potential

Women contribute up to 80% of food production in Sub-Saharan Africa, yet remain underrepresented in agrifood value chains, leadership, and entrepreneurship opportunities.



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Lesson 1: Connected Opportunities

The AGRA YEFFA Program (Youth Entrepreneurship for The Future of food in Africa) demonstrates that sustainable impact requires linking three pillars: skills training, access to finance, and market connectivity — creating a seamless ecosystem for youth and women entrepreneurs.



Training & Skills

Equipping youth and women with practical agrifood skills, entrepreneurship training, and digital literacy to build viable agribusinesses.



Finance Access

Connecting young agripreneurs to micro-finance, grants, and blended finance instruments tailored to early-stage agrifood ventures.



Market Linkages

Bridging the gap between producers and buyers through structured market access, value chain integration, and digital trade platforms.





Albertine's Story

Albertine was 23, unemployed, and living in a rural community with few prospects. After joining a youth agribusiness training program, she secured her first plot, learned climate-smart farming techniques, and connected with a cooperative network.

Within two years, Albertine grew her smallholder operation into a thriving vegetable enterprise, employing three other young women and supplying two regional markets. Her revenue increased by 340% — transforming not just her own life, but her community's.

"I didn't just learn to farm. I learned to lead, to plan, and to believe that agrifood could be my future — and it is."

— Albertine, Agripreneur & Community Mentor





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Lesson 2: Agribusiness Ecosystems

A thriving agrifood economy is not built by isolated actors. It requires four interconnected pillars working in concert — from the farm gate to the final consumer — creating value, jobs, and resilience at every link in the chain.



Input Suppliers: Providing seeds, fertilizers, tools, and training to equip farmers for productivity and climate resilience.



Producers: Youth and women-led farms and cooperatives at the core, generating raw output and driving rural employment.



Processors & Value Addition: Transforming raw harvests into marketable products, multiplying income and reducing post-harvest losses.



Market Linkages: Connecting producers to buyers, retailers, and export channels through digital platforms and partnerships.





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The New Extension

Agricultural extension is being reimagined. Digital tools, community networks, and private sector alliances are replacing outdated models — delivering timely, relevant knowledge directly to youth and women farmers where they are. The AGRA Village Based Advisor Model (VBA) is a good example of this.



Digital Platforms

Mobile apps, SMS tools, and e-learning platforms deliver real-time agronomic advice, market prices, and climate data to farmers at scale.



Peer-to-Peer Learning

Farmer-to-farmer networks and youth agri-champions spread practical knowledge faster and more effectively than traditional extension agents.



Private Sector Partners

Agribusinesses and input companies co-invest in knowledge delivery, linking extension services directly to market access and supply chains.





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Farmer Organizations 2.0

Modern farmer organizations are evolving beyond traditional cooperatives. By pooling resources, negotiating better market prices, and integrating youth and women into leadership, these organizations are becoming engines of rural transformation and sustainable agrifood growth.



Collective Bargaining



Shared Services



Youth Leadership



Women's Cooperatives



Onesphore's Story

Onesphore began as a subsistence farmer in rural East Africa, struggling to feed his family and generate any surplus income. With access to only a small plot of land and no market connections, his harvests barely covered household needs.

Through an agrifood ecosystem program, Onesphore received training in modern farming techniques, connected with input suppliers, and joined a farmer cooperative that linked him to reliable buyers. Within two seasons, his yields tripled.

Today, Onesphore employs six young people from his community, supplies a regional food processor, and mentors other smallholder farmers — a living proof that ecosystem support transforms lives.





Institutional Anchoring: Embed agrifood youth programs within national agricultural policies and ministries for long-term continuity.



Investment Coordination: Align donor, government, and private sector funding around shared ecosystem priorities — not isolated interventions.



Policy Alignment: Advocate for regulatory frameworks that reduce barriers for youth and women to access land, credit, and markets.



Ecosystem Measurement: Shift from counting project outputs to tracking systemic indicators — enterprise survival, income growth, and policy adoption.

From Projects to Ecosystems

Sustainable impact in agrifood requires moving beyond short-term projects toward lasting institutional change. When policy, investment, and innovation align within a functioning ecosystem, youth and women entrepreneurs don't just survive — they thrive and lead systemic transformation.





Continental Call to Action

African governments, institutions, and development partners must align around bold, coordinated action to unlock the full potential of youth and women in agrifood systems across the continent.



Reform policies to remove barriers for youth and women accessing land, finance, and markets.



Prioritize investment in agrifood innovation hubs, digital infrastructure, and rural connectivity.



Build partnership models linking governments, private sector, and youth-led enterprises.



Embed youth and women as co-designers of national agricultural transformation strategies.



THANK YOU

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Y E A R S

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Thank you

