

Developing Capacities and Opportunities for Youth Engagement in the Agricultural Value Chain and Transformation

INTRODUCTION

Young people have the potential to make significant contributions to agricultural development at various levels, broadly defined here as the agricultural value chain. It is therefore critical to groom emerging professionals and entrepreneurs to contribute meaningfully to agricultural development initiatives. The agricultural sector should provide opportunities for the youth to actively engage and benefit. However, lack of capacity building initiatives makes it difficult for them to fully realise their potential and to access the opportunities available to them along the agricultural value chain. As such, their contribution to African agriculture and development is not optimised.

While a range of capacities is needed in the agricultural value chain, the focus of this policy brief is on capacity building in the area of research for development. This policy brief presents as a case study the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) project, the Limpopo Basin Development Challenge (LBDC).

The LBDC is a research-based basin development programme to improve integrated management of rainwater to increase smallholder productivity and livelihoods and reduce risk. One of its best practices is capacitating young professionals in the agricultural value chain.

Young Professionals at the 3rd International Forum for Water and Food
St George Hotel
Pretoria, South Africa



CHALLENGES IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR THE YOUTH

The need for development of capacities and opportunities for young people in agriculture has been recognised. However, there are still significant challenges and constraints to their effective involvement.

Emphasis of youth capacity development in policy

There is great potential for impact from young professionals' research on agricultural value chains, if planned and prioritised. However, policy making institutions do not currently acknowledge research for development as an important factor in the transformation of the agriculture sector.

Mismatch between opportunities and resources

Where opportunities for capacity development are available for young people, there is often a mismatch between them and the resources for engaging the young people in the agriculture sector. Opportunities in the agricultural value chain are not clearly articulated. Research and implementing institutions are also hierarchical and not necessarily responsive to the demands of the youth.

Youth's perceptions of agriculture

Most young people consider agriculture to be unattractive due to the limited access, low returns and lack of a market-led approach in the African agricultural sector. In addition, many jobs in the agricultural sector have a strong seasonal component or are categorised as vulnerable.

Availability of information

A large proportion of the unemployed youth reside in the rural areas where there are limited or no resources for accessing information on available development opportunities or cutting edge agriculture. Where the resources are available, affordability becomes a constraint. The type of resource available also determines its accessibility; for example, it would be easier for the rural youth to access newsletters/magazines than to pay for Internet usage.

Youth input in research agenda

There is no career guidance, mentorship or support for young people in research and development. Those young people who are involved in research for development are not clear on the roles they are able to play in the development processes within the agricultural value chain. Development organisations and initiatives do not prioritise meaningful engagement with young people; as such, their contribution is not optimised.

Unsystematic professional youth development paths

The development paths of young professionals are not systematic. The lack of communication channels amongst the young people involved in development programmes hinders their potential to make meaningful contributions to agricultural development and transformation. These young people need a communication path (e.g., a website) that would allow them to interact and exchange ideas and knowledge regarding relevant research, innovations, opportunities and challenges.

**CPWF Young
Professionals**



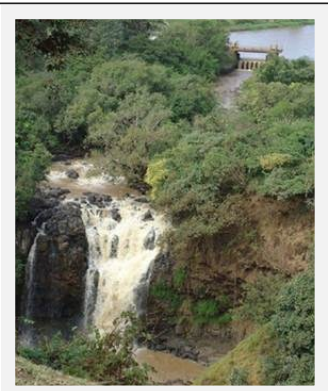
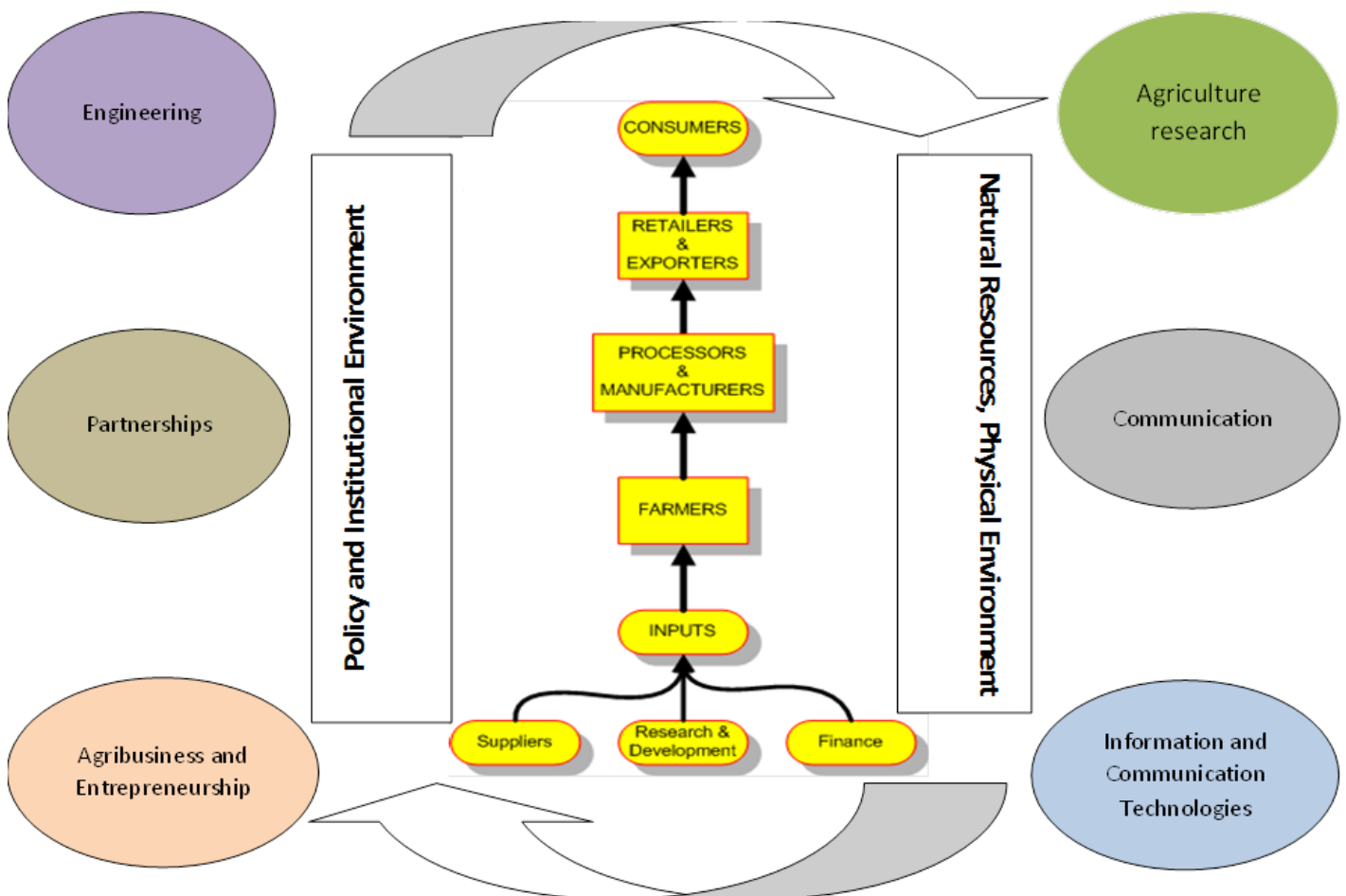
THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAIN

“Agricultural value chain” refers to the full range of activities through which an agricultural product or service passes from production to consumption. The agricultural value chain is often reduced to farming, processing, packaging and marketing, but there are more components of the value chain, often overlooked, where the youth can be engaged, as depicted in Figure 1. For example, agricultural research is a less well-known component of the agricultural value chain.

Developing capacities in the agricultural value chain for the youth gives room to their creativity in agricultural entrepreneurship development. It also improves access to markets and increases productive efficiency, ensuring that all the actors benefit, including the youth.

The case study presented below looks at the youth in agriculture research as part of the value chain.

Figure 1. The broader view of the Agricultural Value Chain



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAPACITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Capacities in this case refers to a conceptual approach to youth development with focus on understanding the obstacles that inhibit the agricultural sector from realising the developmental goals while enhancing the abilities that will allow for achievement of measurable and sustainable results. Opportunities then are a chance or circumstances that make it possible for the youth to be capacitated.

Capacities and opportunities for active engagement of youth in agricultural value chain are viewed separately. But if lasting transformation is to be realised, the dynamic dimensions of the levels of youth capacities and available opportunities in the agricultural value chain should be viewed as related; like in **Figure 2** below.

Scenario I: This is a situation where low youth capacities (and/or capacity building initiatives) are coupled with low available opportunities in the agricultural value chain. The scenario represents a situation where youth are most vulnerable. For example, when youth have no access to education, which in turn means they have no access to information and opportunities.

Scenario II: Even though the scenario shows youth having high capacities, it still represents an undesirable situation because of the low opportunities available in the agricultural value chain. The constraining factors here may be access to relevant information or other resources.

Scenario III: The agricultural value chain is presenting youth with ample opportunities but limited capacity continues to limit youth ability to access available opportunities. That is, youth lack knowledge, skills and competencies required to participate and benefit from the agricultural value chain. Adding to the problem, capacity building institutions do not play their part in providing relevant training and support.

Scenario IV: This scenario represents the "ideal" where the youth are to benefit most from matching their high level of capacities with high levels of available opportunities.

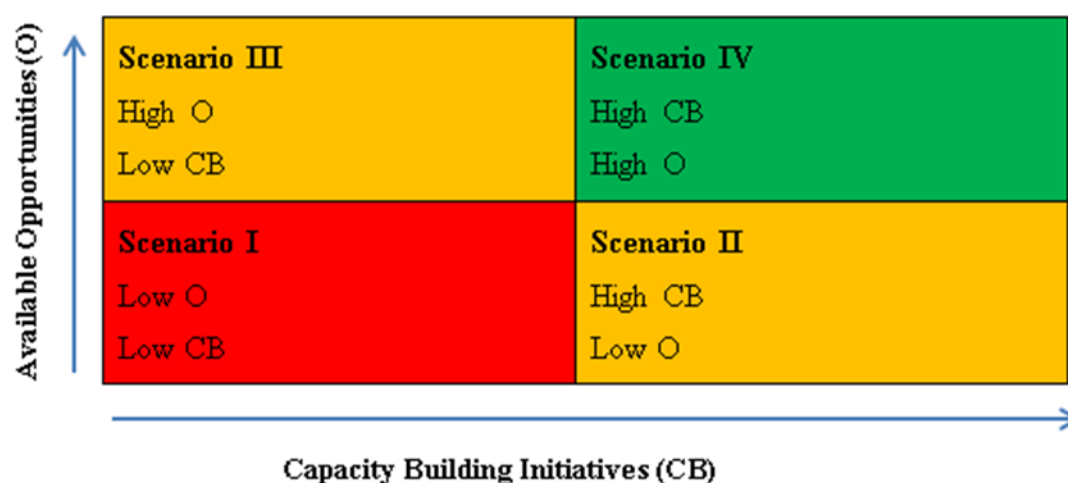


Figure 2. A conceptual framework showing the relationship between capacity building initiatives and available opportunities.

This Policy Brief posits that if youth are capacitated as Young Professionals (within the agricultural value chain, they will be able to grasp opportunities when they appear. Capacity building is the key to promoting youth engagement in the agricultural value chain, which in turn, is an important prerequisite for making progress toward achieving development and transformation in the agriculture sector.

The LBDC YPs are used here as a case study to showcase a best practice to achieve the "ideal" presented in scenario IV of Figure 2.

THE LIMPOPO BASIN DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE CASE STUDY

FANRPAN, in conjunction with other development partners, is involved in various capacity building activities such as the Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF) Limpopo Basin Development Challenge. CPWF is a research for development program to improve integrated management of rainwater to improve smallholder productivity and livelihoods and reduce risk. The CPWF with its basin development challenges presents a great opportunity for emerging professionals to generate innovative research ideas that can add value to targeted development transformations. This case study will answer two questions:

- What type of YP capacities is the CPWF developing?
- How is the CPWF enhancing YP opportunities?

To gain a common understanding, it is important to first define who a young professional is. In the context of CPWF, YP is defined as 'a person in the early stages of his/her career development and feels challenged and/ or compelled to contribute to new innovations while being mentored'. The YPs consist of young individuals coming from multiple disciplines with the same vision of becoming a leading network for innovative, participatory, and result-oriented research on water and food security in the CPWF and beyond.



Capacity-building initiatives in the CPWF

The research by the young professionals is done over a range of multi-scale and multi-disciplinary issues such as hydrology, multiple use water systems, livestock management, trans-boundary water governance, livelihood resilience in dry areas, participation and gender, etc. The YPs are also given a chance to participate and contribute in different forums so they can share their experiences, thus creating an opportunity to seek advice regarding their fears, ambitions, and opportunities.

These are some of the projects that the YPs are currently conducting in different river basins:

Hydrological assessment of up-scaling rainwater harvesting techniques

The study is currently undertaken in the Upper Mzingwane Catchment in Zimbabwe; looking at rainwater harvesting (RWH) techniques in practice and investigating why the farmers have chosen the technique. The study also looked at possibilities of up-scaling the RWH techniques and its effects on runoff.



The farmers in the Mzingwane Catchment have small plots averaging at 0.5 ha and they are mainly practicing Conservation Agriculture (CA). The proportion of RWH to conventional farming practices was found to be fairly low (less than 35% of ward population). The drivers for RWH adoption were mainly the need for water capturing and improving yields. CA was found to be effective in reducing runoff, soil erosion and draught power requirement while increasing yield. Increased labour, weed control and crop residue management were found to be the major challenges to CA adoption.

Gender Empowerment in the Natural Resources Development Sector

This project is aimed at understanding how gender discourses are constructed within international development projects, as well as the possibilities and constraints relating to implementation of gender policies. It will tackle different approaches on women development as a way of addressing challenges of food security, poverty and water scarcity in the Limpopo Basin. The study will also review and assess the perception, positioning, and treatment of gender within the CPWF LBDC program with the aim of improving integrated management of rainwater to improve smallholder productivity and livelihoods, and reducing risks.

Climate Change adaptation Strategies in Crop Production in Swaziland



Fowé Tazen (Young Professional) delivering a Keynote at the IFWF 3 Opening Ceremony

This study will focus on identify negative impacts of climate change on crop production, and review current adaptation strategies in Swaziland. It is anticipated that the study will also look at cost-benefit analysis and then recommend appropriate strategies and policies.

Vulnerability Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Maize Production in Lesotho

The aim of the project is to investigate the effects of climate change in the village of Maphutseng in Lesotho. The focus of the study will be on vulnerability assessment of the households in Maphutseng due to climate related events.

Mechanisms used to enhance YP in the CPWF

The YPs met for the first time during the 3rd International Forum on Water and Food (IFWF3) in Tshwane in November 2011, with the aim of sharing their experiences and thus create a platform to learn from each other. The main objective of the YPs' event was to create a legitimate and recognised space for student engagement and support within the framework of the Basin Development Challenge (BDC). The engagement of YPs at the IFWF3 was designed to create an opportunity for CPWF affiliated students to share, learn and network with each other, and engage with experts. The YPs event also enables the young people to build relationships; support emerging researchers; and to gauge interest in establishing and launching a student platform.

A total of 31 YPs attended the event. Independent sessions for the YPs were conducted including: preparation of the keynote for IFWF3; training workshop on writing skills; 'Gender 101' seminar; motivational talk and the capitalising sessions. In these sessions, YPs gained substantial information and advice on available career opportunities within and beyond the CPWF. The sessions also offered an opportunity for YPs to interact with established researchers who are keen to mentor emerging professionals.



CPWF Young Professionals doing group work

Dr. Lindiwe Majele Sibanda gave the YPs valuable advice during the IFWF3 after they delivered the key note:



Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda
CEO FANRPAN

'Young people must work hard in order to claim their space; they should make themselves relevant by being informed and knowledgeable about their subject of research. They must also seek opportunities and be prepared to make sacrifices in order to achieve their goals'.

SYNTHESIS

YPs are making significant contributions to agricultural value chains through research, however, there are other fields of development through the value chain that are not (yet) considered. Broader view into the value chain is required so as to influence policy and decision makers. Moreover, investment in capacity building and mentorship programmes in the agricultural value chain can also play an important role in preparing the youth to make a desired transformation in the agriculture sector.

The YPs are too often not offered training in skills that can prepare them to engage with the development sector. Interaction among the YPs and with mentors/seniors; and collaboration with other professional networks such as the IWA Young Water Professionals can assist the YPs to make a valuable contribution towards development and transformation of the agricultural sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Any development strategy/policy of the southern African region should include a strong emphasis on the capacity development and transformation of its agricultural sector. These strategies should encourage youth to take advantage of the potential of new technologies to link youth to agriculture and farmers to markets along value chains.
- There is a need for integrated research approach in the agricultural sector. Capacity building needs to go beyond offering research opportunities, that is, there is a need for mentorship and on the job-training programmes as well as technology and skills transfer. It is critical that development initiatives groom students and emerging professionals to contribute meaningfully to research for development. Therefore African universities need to have strong internship programmes that can prepare young people to be stronger participants in the agricultural value chains and agents of change.
- Development organisation should create a space for the YPs to interact and exchange ideas and knowledge regarding relevant research, innovations, opportunities and challenges in their fields of research. This would keep them informed on progress made and information available in their respective subjects of research.

REFERENCES

- AfDB, OECD, UNDP and UNECA, 2012. African Economic Outlook, 2012: Promoting Youth Employment. OECD.Paris.
- CPWF, 2011. The 3rd International Forum on Water and Food (IFWF3) report. www.waterandfood.org.
- IFWF3 YP, 2011. The 3rd International Forum on Water and Food, Young Professionals report.
- ILO, 2007.African Employment Trends, April 2007. International Labour Organisation, Geneva.

This publication has been produced with the financial support from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation (CTA).

The content of this publication can in no way be taken to reflect the views of CTA . Furthermore, the designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of CTA, CPWF, representative of FANRPAN or of the cosponsoring or supporting organizations concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries.



About FANRPAN

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is a multi-stakeholder, multi-national policy network that supports the development and implementation of better food, agriculture and natural resources (FANR) policies in Africa. Its members include universities, research institutes, the business sector, farmer groups and other civil society organisations that have a stake in FANR policies. FANRPAN's membership is organised into national nodes in sixteen countries, with a national secretariat hosted by an existing national institution that has a mandate for agricultural policy research and advocacy. FANRPAN also has a mandate to work Africa wide.

Copyright

FANRPAN Regional Secretariat

141 Cresswell Road, Weavind Park 0184, Private Bag X2087, Silverton 014, Pretoria, South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 804 2966. Facsimile: +27 12 804 0600. Email: policy@fanrpan.org . Website: www.fanrpan.org