

## Policy Brief Series

Issue 2: Volume XII

April 2012

# Engaging Youth in Agricultural Policy Processes

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING THE YOUTH IN AGRICULTURAL POLICY PROCESSES

Sub-Saharan Africa has the world's youngest population and is home to over 200 million young people. Two out of three inhabitants are under 25 years of age and 44% of its population is under the age of 15. 70% of the youth resides in rural areas (FANRPAN, 2012b) and employed African youth work primarily in the agricultural sector, where they account for 65% of the workforce. However, rural areas are not benefitting fully from this resource, with most young men and women leaving rural areas to seek employment opportunities elsewhere. In addition, the youth in rural non-farm employment are better off than the youth employed on farms (AfDB et al., 2012).

### Key Messages

1. Promote multi-stakeholder platforms for youth engagement in agricultural policy processes
2. Youth is the Future of African Agriculture
3. Promote Leadership in Agriculture
4. Incentivise Youth in Agriculture



*FANRPAN 2011 Regional Dialogue Youth Participants with Minister of Youth and Development, Hon. Hlobisile Ndlovu*

Young African men and women are critical to the development of agriculture in Africa and for efforts to ensure food security. They are the future farmers, future policy makers, future leaders, future researchers and future drivers of Africa's social and economic development. However, while the role of agriculture in job and wealth creation for young people has been recognised, the nexus between the African youth and agriculture has only partially or insufficiently been developed and translated into public policies at the national, regional or continental level.

**For Africa to achieve food security, the youth must be regarded as critical agricultural players who need and deserve special attention, support and follow-up.** With their energy, passion and talents, they can help to solve many of the serious problems that Africa faces today. But first the youth must be given the tools that they need to drive Africa's green revolution while also safeguarding the continent's natural resources and the environment. The youth need to be part of decisions and policy-making processes for agriculture in Africa because they are the generation that will have to ensure that the continent's growing population is fed.

## CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL POLICY PROCESSES

**Although African youth are primarily employed in the agricultural sector and account for the majority of its workforce, they are disadvantaged in terms of employment status and they face several challenges that undermine their economic potential and ability to influence existing policy processes.** Many are unable to fulfil their potential because of poverty, hunger, poor health and lack of education. Young people face constraints in gaining access to land, credit, training and new technologies. They have limited or, in most cases, no direct access to the agricultural sector, across the entire agricultural value chain – from farming to research, innovation, product development and market

participation. The responsibilities that come with marriage and parenting may limit their engagement in farming activities, which potentially bring high returns but are intensive and risky. Public policies on youth employment are not adequately addressing ways to ensure that agricultural development reduces youth unemployment and poverty.

**Perceptions among the youth concerning the agriculture sector pose a threat to the development of the sector.** Agriculture, and farming in particular, is perceived as an occupation for the aged, illiterate, and rural people. Rural youth regularly migrate from rural areas in search of "better" economic opportunities in towns and cities, which do not often materialise as they lack the necessary skills to gain employment in the formal sector. Case studies commissioned in 2011 by [FANRPAN](#) in six SADC countries found that a lack of information and an inadequate enabling environment were among the factors affecting the youth's perception of the potential of agriculture.



**National policies and programmes are not actively involving the youth in agriculture policy processes.** While most African countries have national agricultural and/or youth policy and programmes, they often do not directly address the need for active involvement and participation of youth in agriculture policy processes. The FANRPAN-commissioned case studies found that there have been varying degrees of effort to facilitate the mainstreaming of young people into the national economic and development agendas. However, some of the efforts to increase their participation in the agricultural sector seem to have been ad hoc and lacked the necessary integrated approach needed to make them more effective.

**Policies and responses are often not evidence-based, rely too heavily on “common knowledge” and do not respond to the needs of the youth.** Policy advocates and policy makers sometimes rely too heavily on “common knowledge” to develop and argue policy alternatives to respond to the problem of “young people and agriculture” in Africa. During a FAC/ISSER international conference in 2012, participants stressed that, while much concern is expressed from both the agricultural perspective (e.g., aging farm population and loss of farm labor) and the social perspective (e.g., unemployment and underemployment of young people; migration to uncertain and risky urban environments), the search for appropriate responses is sometimes hampered: Analysis is not theoretically and historically informed, conceptually sound and context sensitive; there is a weak base of empirical research relating to either the nature of the “problem” or the potential impacts of particular policy responses; and there is a limited cadre of researchers and policy advocates who are actively working on and informed about the issues. As a result, policy responses are commonly at odds with young people’s own imperatives, aspirations, strategies and activities ([FAC/ISSER, 2012](#)).

## **INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL POLICY PROCESSES**

**African leaders have adopted a framework to guide youth empowerment and development at the continental, regional and national levels.** In July 2006, the African Union heads of state and/or government endorsed the [African Youth Charter](#). The charter aimed to strengthen, reinforce and consolidate efforts to empower young people through meaningful youth participation and equal partnership in driving Africa’s development agenda. The African Union declared 2009-2018 as the decade for youth development, and the [African Youth Decade, 2009-2018 Plan of Action](#) was adopted to facilitate more coordinated and concerted actions towards accelerating youth empowerment and development. However, much work remains to be done to domesticate and implement the African Youth Charter and to align national legislation and policies with its provisions.

**Most African countries have institutions and mechanisms overseeing their engagement with the youth and for funding their related initiatives.** For example, they may have ministries responsible for youth affairs and sports, National Youth Councils, Youth Enterprise Development Funds for NEPAD and for the CAADP compact. These act as institutions and mechanisms through which young people are engaged in policy processes and through which such initiatives are funded. However, most of them are recent institutions and initiatives that have not yet either realised their potential or led to meaningful impact on the ground.



*Youth Participants at the FANRPAN 2011 Regional Dialogue, Ezulwini, Swaziland*

**FANRPAN and other partners and stakeholders are advocating greater engagement of the youth in policy processes and providing them with a platform to voice their concerns.**



*Delegates of the 2011 FANRPAN Regional Policy Dialogue, Ezulwini, Swaziland*

FANRPAN dedicated its 2011 and 2012 Regional Multi-stakeholder Food Security Policy Dialogues, held in Swaziland and Tanzania respectively, to considering concrete ways to engage the youth in agricultural policy processes. The 2011 dialogue attended by more than 250 delegates from 23 countries, under the theme “Advocating for the active engagement of youth in the agricultural value chains.” At the 2011 meeting, participants from SADC countries, including youth leaders, reaffirmed that there are opportunities for youth engagement in agricultural policy formulation and development. They vowed to strengthen and involve the youth in their countries in public policy formulation and development. They further pledged to develop a Plan of Action in their respective countries with implementable strategic plans and financial resources. To this end, they called for baseline data on what public policies and initiatives are currently available that relate to the youth in SADC member countries’ agricultural sector.

**The 2011 FANRPAN Dialogue adopted several resolutions for further engagement and involvement of the youth in the agricultural value chains. They were:**

- Youth initiatives should be better supported and documented.
- Information should be made available to the youth regarding opportunities in agriculture.
- Policy platforms that specifically include the youth should be strengthened.
- The youth should be engaged in providing evidence to inform policies on agriculture, natural resources and related sectors.
- The youth’s knowledge of new media and ICTs should be harnessed to develop the agricultural sector.

FANRPAN contracted six young professionals in November 2011 to conduct country case studies on current and emerging youth policies and initiatives with a special focus on links to agriculture.



Calvin Kamchacha,  
Malawi



Nawsheen Hosenally,  
Mauritius



Obert Mathivha, South  
Africa



Mduduzi Dlamini,  
Swaziland



Evodius Rutta, Tanzania



Tavaka Nyoni,  
Zimbabwe

The case studies were conducted in Malawi, Mauritius, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe in response to the call made at the 2011 Regional Dialogue for baseline data on the current status of public policies and initiatives available in SADC countries. The consultants were tasked to identify spaces and opportunities for developing national “youth and agriculture policies” within the agricultural sector and to make appropriate policy recommendations. The findings of the studies were synthesised and presented to stakeholders in July 2012 at the FANRPAN Regional Multi-stakeholder Food Security Policy Dialogue in Tanzania. It is hoped that national authorities and their partners will use the report to re-orient their efforts so as to involve the youth in public policy formulation and in implementation of programmes in the agricultural sector.


**The 8th CAADP Partnership Platform Meeting stressed the importance of engaging the youth in the agricultural sector.** The African Union Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, Her Excellency Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, called for greater multi-stakeholder consultations, involvement of youth, public/private partnerships, engagement of regional economic communities, and international support for the CAADP process. The President of the Pan African Farmers’ Forum, Ms Elisabeth Atangana, called for greater investment in women and youth in agriculture. The NEPAD Agency Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ibrahim Mayaki, highlighted some of the development challenges in Africa that CAADP is seeking to address, including the demographic challenge that is increasing the number of mouths to be fed, and increasing the number of youths who cannot be absorbed by the labour markets. The list of major issues resulting from the 8<sup>th</sup> Partnership Platform Meeting includes the need to focus on smallholder family farmers, especially women and youth.

**During the 8th CAADP Partnership Platform Meeting, FANRPAN**, on behalf of the youth, held a recital that called for “increased and focused dialogue among the youth and between the youth and state and non-state actors on CAADP and African agriculture development”. The recital stressed that the youth want to be active participants in agricultural policies, and they want “Nothing for the Youth without the Youth”. It also stressed the need to articulate a clear strategy on how the vast majority of the human assets and capital needed is being mobilised and capacitated to drive Africa’s development. FANRPAN, with the assistance of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation, supported the participation of three youths in the meeting.

(The recital is available from [http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d01323/8th\\_CAADP\\_PP\\_Meeting-CAADP\\_Recital\\_20120509.pdf](http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d01323/8th_CAADP_PP_Meeting-CAADP_Recital_20120509.pdf).)

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASED YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The following recommendations are aimed at increasing youth engagement in agricultural policies and processes:

- **Include the youth in policy decisions:** The youth are the leaders of tomorrow and should be included in decision-making and policy making. It is therefore recommended that young men and women are included in committees when policy decisions are being made and that their opinions are taken into consideration throughout the process. The equal engagement of young women and men in decision-making processes at local, national and regional levels should be facilitated. Promote the active engagement of youth in agricultural value chains and CAADP processes.
- 
- A photograph of Mr. Lawrence Muli, a young man with short dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a dark tie. He is smiling and speaking into a black microphone. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a presentation screen with some text.
- Mr. Lawrence Muli, Advocacy & Communications Associate,  
Human Resources & Youth Division, African Union
- **Invest in education:** School curricula should be linked to on-going policy debates and developments in the agriculture field. More opportunities for on-farm training for the youth, and enterprise development training, particularly in value-added activities such as food processing, packaging and trade, should be identified and utilised. More training for young men and women is required to build skills in agronomy and business. Consideration should be given to making university degrees in agriculture more appealing to young people and to providing incentives to attract more students.
  - **Provide economic incentives for the youth to participate in agriculture:** Incentives targeting the youth should be provided and the direct beneficiaries should be made aware of the existence of the incentives. For example, if loan facilities are provided to start an agribusiness, students and young graduates from the university or other training centres should be informed about these schemes or incentives.
  - **Improve policies that encourage access to land, credit, finance and investment by the youth for agricultural projects:** Allocate land to agricultural projects for young people in rural and urban areas. There is a need to improve the land formalisation processes in rural and urban areas to enable the youth to own bankable land. There is also a need to invest in collateral-free micro-credit systems that offer incentives tailored to the financial needs of young farmers. Financial institutions should develop agricultural financing packages and loan products that target the youth, who until now have often been seen as high risk clients because they have very little security or assets that can be used as collateral against which they can mobilise credit or loans from banks. Greater investment in agriculture is needed, as stressed by the CAADP. Investment should target youth programmes and ensure that more programmes that meet the needs of different categories of young people are designed and implemented. This may entice more of them to get involved in agriculture and contribute to the economy of the country and food security, thus reducing the unemployment rate. All schemes that are provided to the farming community should be published on government portals. This will create a greater awareness among interested young men and women of the type of programmes at their disposal and how they can use them.

- **Encourage the use of modern technologies in agriculture:** Traditional farming is seen as unattractive to most young men and women. However, the use of ICTs along the agricultural value chain (production by hydroponics, access to market information through mobile phones, marketing of products using social media, etc.) has changed the way agriculture is being practised. The youth are already interested in ICTs and a more extensive application of ICTs in agriculture might attract more interest from them.
- **Rebrand the agricultural sector:** Farming should be presented more effectively as a business opportunity. The agricultural sector should be seen in its totality and the youth should be made aware of the opportunities that exist throughout the agricultural value chain. They could get involved in it anywhere from inputs manufacturing and supply, agro-processing, or marketing and financing of agricultural products, all the way to the production process itself. Databases of organisations that can provide young people with information, skills and opportunities in agriculture should be developed and disseminated widely. Targeted marketing opportunities for primary and value-added agricultural products produced by young entrepreneurs should be identified and encouraged.
- **Promote leadership in agriculture:** The young people who are involved in agriculture sometimes feel that they do not have any support or guidance and they are demotivated. Introducing mentorship programmes to guide young farmers may help them find ways to make a good living from agriculture. Encourage greater investment of time and resources in young professionals across agricultural value chains and toward climate-smart agriculture. Ensure that young professionals are prepared, directed and supported to undertake relevant research with the scientific rigour that is needed for decision-makers at all levels.

## REFERENCES

AfDB, OECD, UNDP and UNECA, 2012. *African Economic Outlook 2012: Promoting youth employment*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

AfDB, World Bank and World Economic Forum, 2011. *The Africa Competitiveness Report 2011*. Geneva: World Economic Forum. Available at <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/>

WEF GCR Africa Report 2011.pdf. [Accessed 6 October 2012].

AU. 2012. *Report and Recommendations of the Conference of the African Union Ministers in Charge of Youth Development, 12–14 September 2012*. Addis Ababa: African Union.

AU and UNFPA, 2011. *African Youth Report 2011: Addressing the youth education and employment nexus in the new global economy*. Addis Ababa: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Available at [http://new.uneca.org/Portals/ayr/2011/African%20Youth%20Report 2011\\_Final.pdf](http://new.uneca.org/Portals/ayr/2011/African%20Youth%20Report%2011_Final.pdf) [Accessed 6 October 2012].

AU Commission, 2006. *African Youth Charter*. Adopted by the Seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Banjul, the Gambia, 2 July 2006. Addis Ababa: African Union. Available at [http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/AFRICAN\\_YOUTH\\_CHARTER.pdf](http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/AFRICAN_YOUTH_CHARTER.pdf). [Accessed 6 October 2012].

AU Commission, May 2011. *African Youth Decade, 2009 – 2018, Plan of Action: Accelerating youth empowerment for sustainable development - Road map towards the implementation of the African Youth Charter*. Addis Ababa : African Union. Available at <http://africa-youth.org/sites/default/files/African%20Youth%20Decade%20Plan%20of%20Action.pdf>. [Accessed 6 October 2012].

CAADP, 2012. *Accelerating CAADP Implementation for Results and Impact: 8th Partnership Platform Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, 3–4 May 2012*. Addis Ababa: African Union Commission and NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency. Available from <http://www.nepad.org/foodsecurity/knowledge/doc/2711/8th-caadp-partnership-platform-pp>. [Accessed 6 October 2012].

FAC/ISSER, 2012. “Young People, Farming and Food: A post-conference synthesis” re FAC/ISSER International Conference on Young People, Farming and Food: An international conference on the future of the agrifood sector in Africa, Accra, Ghana, 19-21 March 2012. No date [PDF created 2012-04-27]: Future Agricultures Consortium and the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research. Available from <http://www.future-agricultures.org/events/young-people-farming-a-food>. [Accessed 6 October 2012].

FANRPAN, 2011. *Regional Multi-stakeholder Food Security Policy Dialogue: Advocating for the active engagement of the youth in the agricultural value chain, 19–23 September, Ezulwini, Swaziland*. Information available at <http://dialogue2011.fanrpan.org/>. [Accessed 6 October 2012].

FANRPAN, 2012a. 8<sup>th</sup> CAADP Partnership Platform Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, 3-4 May 2012: Report. Available from [http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d01323/8th\\_CAADP\\_PP\\_Meeting\\_20120509.pdf](http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d01323/8th_CAADP_PP_Meeting_20120509.pdf). [Accessed 6 October 2012].

FANRPAN, 2012b. Current and Emerging Youth Policies and Initiatives with Links to Agriculture: The Case of Malawi, Mauritius, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Draft Report. June 2012: Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network.

ILO, 2007. *African Employment Trends, April 2007*. Geneva: International Labor Organization. Available at [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---emp\\_elm/---trends/documents/publication/wcms\\_114278.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_elm/---trends/documents/publication/wcms_114278.pdf). [Accessed 6 October 2012].

Okojie, Christiana E.E. 2003. “Employment Creation for Youth in Africa: The Gender Dimension”. Paper prepared for the *Expert Group Meeting on Jobs for Youth: National Strategies for Employment Promotion, 15-16 January 2003, Geneva, Switzerland*.

UNECA, 2011. *African Youth Report 2011: Assessing the Youth Education and Employment Nexus in the New Global Economy*. Addis Ababa: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

World Bank, 2008. *The World Development Report, Agriculture for Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

---

This publication has been produced with the financial support from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation (CTA), Regional Center for Southern Africa, U.S. Agency for International Development.

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, representative of FANRPAN or of the co-sponsoring 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 an autonomous regional stakeholder driven policy research, analysis and implementation network that was formally established by Ministers of Agriculture from Eastern and Southern Africa in 1997. FANRPAN was borne out of the need for comprehensive policies and strategies required to resuscitate agriculture. FANRPAN is mandated to work in all African countries and currently has activities in 16 countries namely Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

#### 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](mailto:policy@fanrpan.org). Website: [www.fanrpan.org](http://www.fanrpan.org)