

## Investing in the future of farming :Youth and Agriculture- Ugandan experience

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### Status of Agric, & youth perspectives

- Uganda's agriculture remains largely traditional, Dominated by small holder subsistence farmers, whose level of investment is insufficient to make meaningful contributions in the livelihood of farmers
- Thus, more importantly, un-attractive to the youth.
- High population density and land fragmentation ; too small pieces of land hence reduction in arable land .
- Little or no margins from subsistence farming system has encouraged or exacerbated the migration of the youths to towns in order to quench their thirst of making quick money.
- leaves agriculture to the ageing farmers who contribute using tradition methods leading to low productivity and thus food insecurity

This low position threatens the youth and makes them shy away from the sector. this implies that:

“as long as agriculture or farming remains marginally rewarding, young men and women will drift away too more profitable sectors.”

There is therefore need to invest in the next generation of farmers. But critically the following should be analysed:

### Reasons of non- involvement

- **Agriculture taken to be manual punishment.** Agriculture related activities are used by schools and prisons (recollection centers) to punish indisciplined individuals
- **Public image:**Agriculture, in particular farming possesses a negative image among the public and most especially the youth. It is portrayed as a sector for the less educated, low-income and one of high risk taking.
- Farmers esp. the old dress in rags, youth find this demeaning
- **Nature of education system.** There is a serious disconnect between agriculture education and the market place. The Ugandan agriculture curriculum trains most youths for white collar jobs which do not reflect the economic and social context for which they are being trained.

- **Neglect by government and society.** Youth are aloof to agriculture because they are neglected a lot by the government line institutions and society that promote the sector. In society, youth do not own land, can't easily access credit and often taken to be volatile.
- **Decision making** youth are normally excluded in policy discussions relating to access to agriculture and rural market development
- **Ownership of land:** youth and women often don't own land titles. Often its such items that are used as premium in access to credit thus they are often left out in acquiring credit too.

**We should note that Youth ;**

- youth can play a significant role in acting as a catalyst for change to agriculture development given their propensity and willingness to adapt new ideas, concepts and have the energy to carry them through the transformation.
- But the underlying goal of attraction and retention of us the youth in the agriculture sector is transforming the sector from purely subsistence to commercial farming where farmers under take agriculture as a business which can help them earn enough income to prosper.

Intervention measures...

Requires a multidisciplinary approach;

- **Changing the image and perception about agriculture in the face of the youth.** Youth need to be educated and made aware of how farmers operate today.

Farmers have to be educated, business –savvy entrepreneurs who possess some extensive training and knowledge.

- **Role models and mentorship.** The positive aspects of choosing agriculture should be emphasized to the youth. the benefits of engaging in agriculture like; - owning own business (so boss of myself), choosing when to work (my own hours –, and having a variety of daily responsibilities
- **Change the curriculum.** It is essential for the government to reform the education curriculum to be broad based and geared towards integrating vocational and practical training in education curriculum. The change in the curriculum will change the mindset of the youth and motivate them to explore untapped opportunities in the agriculture sector.
- **Access the credit.** young people tend to have fewer chances of obtaining credit or capital. Access is often tied to availability of collateral which is usually land which the young people do not have. It is therefore, important that appropriate affordable financial packages are put in place by financial institutions to cater for the youth.

- **Mechanization.** The youth being eager to learn and often moving in a dot.com era, it is critical for the government to improve traditional methods of production to attract youth to agriculture by mechanizing agriculture.
- Government needs to support, young professionals or graduates from the school of agriculture to initiate their own farms. We need to have more young people , educated, employed but doing farming.
- **Farmer organizations. In** Most organizations, the youth are integrated with the old yet they have varied interests. So as farmer associations are formed, special interest groups should be considered in order to create harmony and mutualism.
- **Agri-business incubators** ( science and technology) family farms should absorb create this environment to absorb the youth. These aspects are crucial: Value Chain development –n fostering entrepreneurship and farming as a Business

Conclusively, The challenge that we must take up as leaders, facilitators, policy makers and private sectors in Uganda’s agriculture and Africa as a whole is to build capacities of the youth and equip them to address the emerging requirements of an attractive agriculture that is capable of offering prospects for viable income and good quality of life.