

Participation of youth

This note provides examples that investors, civil society, and governments can follow to engage youth in participating in agriculture.

Young people can be the driving force for the inclusive rural transformation needed to address the many challenges posed by growing populations, urbanization, and youth unemployment. Yet, many young people are frustrated by the lifestyles and opportunities available in rural areas. They face barriers to their participation in agriculture, including inadequate access to training, land, credit, and markets, and a lack of voice in the decision-making processes that affect their futures. Strategies are needed to better engage youth in the agriculture sector.



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RESPONSIBLE AGRICULTURAL INVESTMENT (RAI)

KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION NOTES

The **UNCTAD–World Bank Knowledge Into Action Note Series** is a compendium of practical, thematic guidance documents for use by governments, investors, and other stakeholders in the implementation of responsible agricultural investment principles. Background and a complete list of notes are in *Note 1: Introduction*.



WHAT DOES FIELD RESEARCH SHOW?

Youth perceptions of investors. Overall, young people interviewed had a more positive than negative perception of the agriculture investments surveyed. Moreover, young people's views were, on average, more positive than the average across the sample. This was true of both young women and men. Young people appreciated the opportunities to gain a job or become an outgrower, and the associated training benefits; they noted the improvement that the presence of investments had on general economic activity, opportunities for women, and education possibilities. Nevertheless, young people were at times unsatisfied with pay and working conditions, noted that investments negatively affected their access to land (already a key constraint on their ability to participate in the agricultural sector; box 1), and often felt that they lacked a voice in decision-making processes.

Youth engagement schemes or policies. Few investment schemes or government policies that directly targeted young people were encountered in the research. Although more governments are crafting policies to address youth employment in agriculture, they may not yet be having direct impact at scale owing to budget and/or capacity constraints. Positive effects on youth arose primarily as indirect effects of the operations of the investment.

Positive spillover impacts of large-scale investments can improve opportunities for youth. Investments can have positive spillover effects beyond the direct operations of the investment itself: for example, opening a new market, introducing a new technology, or proving a new business model that triggers the start of a new industry. At best, the private sector shoulders the considerable initial risks, while its dynamism, skills, and experience are harnessed to drive economic benefits at scale. Young people tend to be more open to the associated innovation, technology, and opportunities and therefore more suitable to benefit from them.

(box 2). The field research found many examples of young people who had set up businesses to respond to demand created by the investment. For example, two women in their early twenties opened a shop and hotel near a flower farm to leverage the passing trade.

Outgrower schemes. Investments that employ outgrower schemes have a greater positive impact on rural communities than those that do not, owing to the income generation and technical assistance involved (UNCTAD and World Bank 2014). Young people's ability to participate is, however, inhibited by a lack of access to land, difficulties in obtaining credit, and lack of skills training. For young women, these constraints are even more pronounced. To successfully integrate young people into outgrower operations requires dedicated training programs and schemes that help address these challenges.

Inclusive business models. Business models that involve smallholder farmers, while letting them farm on their existing land, have a good chance of success. Farmers can become partners in the investment through a variety of models with varying degrees of participation, including contract farming arrangements, management contracts, and outgrower schemes as well as more innovative joint ventures (see *Note 3: Choosing an appropriate business model*). Youth groups and organizations could become direct investment partners but they also represent a dynamic force within mixed groups of farmers and within their own family farms that can push those groups toward engaging in different business models.

Job creation. The impact that respondents rated most positively during field research—job creation—was a benefit particularly appreciated by young people. The creation of skilled or professional jobs in rural areas has encouraged educated youth to remain in or return to their home areas, in some cases invigorating local development and raising the aspirations of local youth. The creation of unskilled jobs has also provided incomes for rural youth, increasing food security and expanding possibilities for entrepreneurial activities and further education. The creation of additional job opportunities is particularly important for young people, who tend to have less access to land than older generations. There are, however, issues for concern, including reductions in employment numbers as the investment evolves and agricultural practices change (as through mechanization); the quality and availability of training; the types of employment (full-time, seasonal, or casual); to whom opportunities are made available (that is, local, national, or foreign workers); the quality or employment conditions of jobs (that is, low- or high-skilled, pay levels, decent work standards, and gender characteristics); all which affect youth.

Voice in decision-making processes. A frequent complaint of youth, especially young women, was a lack of voice in decisions that affect them. One young CEO of a processing operation complained that he did not have access to local or national government officials or older CEOs as a result of their prejudice against perceived inexperience. Young people often complained about a lack of participation in pre-investment consultations and forums for ongoing dialogue with investors. Some investments explicitly included representatives of youth organizations in consultations and community liaison committees. One investor appointed the head of the local NGO dealing with women and youth advocacy issues as its community liaison officer.

Youth targeting in community development programs. Most investors operate a scheme to provide benefits to the local community, such as schools, medical centers, or agronomic training. Some programs specifically target youth. For example, one operation donated tractors to a youth association and trained local youths as technicians to operate, maintain, and repair the vehicles. Another investor works with local community savings groups, which include young people, in a forum for skills transfer on producing the crops that the investor purchases from local farmers. These savings groups are a useful local institution that exposes young people to financial skills.

Box 1. Challenges to the active participation of youth in agriculture

- Inadequate education, training, and knowledge which limits productivity, the acquisition of skills, and entrepreneurship
- Limited access to financial services, including credit, savings, and insurance, which hinders entrepreneurship
- Less access to land, owing to inheritance laws and customs, especially for women
- Constraints on access to markets and supply chains
- Lack of voice and empowerment, inhibiting the ability to engage in policy dialogues that affect youth

Source: Adapted from FAO, IFAD, and CTA (2014).

Box 2. Better supporting youth through ICT

One domestic investor in Ghana, concerned about the lack of interest by young people in agriculture as a career and business opportunity, established a nongovernmental organization (NGO), which in turn set up an information and communication technology (ICT) center at the firm's processing operation. The advantage of this model was that the NGO receives access to facilities and financial support from the investor and other donors.

This center, which has computers and training tools, is but one service offering of the NGO, which also offers a wider range of developmental support initiatives to benefit the community of outgrowers and youth, including educational visits to the operation by local schoolchildren.

The ICT training tools available at the center itself are used by young and old outgrowers to learn good agricultural practice for a wide range of crops.

Source: UNCTAD–World Bank Survey of Responsible Agricultural Investment Database.

✓ ELEMENTS OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR INVESTORS

Support education and training. Investors should implement education and training programs, in partnership with universities and NGOs (see *Note 17: Training and integrating local people into the workforce*), to assist youth in developing skills needed to integrate into the agriculture sector. This can include scholarships to community youth representatives and loan schemes. An equitable and transparent selection process for scholarships is essential for such schemes.

Engage youth in decision-making fora. Youth should be given a voice in the decisions that affect them. Include youth and their groups in all aspects of community engagement strategies (see *Note 15: Community engagement strategies*), including consultations with communities, ongoing dialogue, community development agreements (see *Note 18: Community development agreements*) and grievance redress mechanisms (see *Note 19: Grievance redress mechanisms*).

Promote technology adoption. ICT use should be promoted. Mobile phones and Internet services, including social media and online TV, videos and radio, attract rural youth and can improve access to information on markets, production techniques, new technologies, and financing schemes, thereby enhancing productivity and promoting innovation, for example. Also, developing ICT for agriculture can represent an interesting entrepreneurship path for youth (box 3).

Establish savings groups. Investors should give support the establishment of youth savings groups within the community and/or encourage community savings groups to incorporate young people.

Facilitate career progression. In a similar vein, support fast-tracked training, internships, and mentoring of youth, especially within organizations, allowing for promotion so that youth can move up the organizational hierarchy. This can include internships for practical on-the-job training.

Improve participation in outgrower schemes. Consider implementing Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools as components within outgrower projects, targeting youth in outgrower families (see References and resources). Facilitate youth participation in outgrower programs. Doing so would include reducing the barriers of access to land, finance, markets, and training as part of the program of support to outgrowers.

Partner with civil society. Undertake partnerships with civil society organizations that work on youth empowerment or that support youth engagement in local development.

Box 3. Case study examples of how to integrate youth into agriculture

Future Farmers Foundation: Started as an informal farming apprentice-placement program for school leavers, this program has evolved into a highly successful initiative to develop competent 21st century farmers. The apprenticeship program includes youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who were unable to attend tertiary institutions as well as tertiary graduates between the ages of 18 and 30 who are struggling to find placements on farms. Future Farmers offers an entry point into the agriculture sector from which young men and women who are passionate about farming can become successful commercial farm managers and owners. The Future Farmers model provides opportunities for youth by placing apprentices on the best local farms to develop farming skills and expertise through practical training by expert farmers supported by mentors. After a couple of years of practical experience, the best apprentices are selected to do an overseas internship at world-class farming operations. Upon their return, the interns have gained so much knowledge and experience that they invariably become section or farm managers, with a view to becoming farm owners. As of, 428 apprentices have been placed on local farms and 54 on overseas farms. The initiative has the support of private business and state-funded agricultural training bodies. <http://www.futurefarmersfoundation.com>

Technology Applications – Hello Tractor Project: Youth are attracted to and adapt to the use of technology such as mobile phone apps. One successful example is Hello Tractor, a start-up company that provides a mobile phone platform for West African farmers to contract tractor services, which usually are operated and owned by young people. <http://www.hellotractor.com>

Youth in Agriculture – Ministry of Agriculture, Ghana: A state-supported program offering successful candidates training in processing, marketing, and consultancy and in specialized areas of production such as greenhouse vegetable farming and developing a policy environment to support youth development in agriculture, including the needs of young women. <https://agricinghana.com/category/youth-in-agriculture>

Source: UNCTAD–World Bank Survey of Responsible Agricultural Investment Database.

✓ ELEMENTS OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR GOVERNMENTS

Youth empowerment policies. Governments should implement policies that facilitate youth's access to resources and markets to promote their participation in agriculture; this includes supporting procurement from businesses owned by young people.

Education and training. Similarly, improve agricultural educational and training institutions, including tertiary, technical, and on-farm ones.

Prioritize investors and business models that will benefit youth. It is important to improve business models that support the development of economic linkages between investors and other parts of the value chain. Promote investors that actively seek

to integrate youth into decision-making processes. Consider requiring investors to establish a specific youth engagement strategy as part of their business plan.

Establish youth producer groups. Consider supporting the establishment of youth producer groups that will have greater bargaining power in supply chains.

Change youth perception of agriculture. Implementing programs to change youth's perception of participation in agriculture is important. One example is the Ghanaian Ministry of Agriculture "Youth in Agriculture Program" (see case study in box 3).

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

This Note is complementary to the literature and guidance documents to which many organizations have contributed, a selection of which is provided below. Further resources are provided in *Note 2: Additional resources*.

FAO. [Skills Development](#). (accessed December 10, 2017).

FAO, CTA & IFAD. (2014). [Youth in Agriculture: Key Challenges and Concrete Solutions](#). (FAO/CTA/IFAD: Rome/Rome/Wageningen).

G20. (2017). [G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment: Supporting the "Next Generation" in Rural Development, Agriculture and Food Security in Developing Countries](#). (G20 German Presidency 2017: Hamburg).

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FOUNDATION. (2014). [Promoting Agricultural Entrepreneurship among Rural Youth](#). (Global Partnership for Youth Employment: Bonn).

TECHNOSERVE. [Agriculture as Business for Rural Youth Blog](#). (accessed December 10, 2017).

UNCTAD & WORLD BANK. (2014). [The Practice of Responsible Agricultural Investment Principles in Larger-Scale Agricultural Investments: Implications for Corporate Performance and Impact on Local Communities](#). *Agriculture and Environmental Services Discussion Paper 8; UNCTAD Investment for Development Issues Series*. (World Bank/UN: Washington/New York).

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