



**REPORT OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURE CAMPAIGN
CARRIED OUT BY AGRIRESEARCH ORGANISATION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA
from 17 to 21 May 2021**

**THEME: “THE CONTRIBUTION OF YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE TO THE
WORLD’S PATHWAY OF SUCCESS”**

June 2021

PREPARED BY

AGRI RESEARCH Organization

Partners and Co-organizers:



Rwanda Youth In Agribusiness Forum (RYAF)
“Youth as Agents of Change in Agribusiness”



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, AGRIRESEARCH is overwhelmed with humbleness and gratefulness to acknowledge the support of the Government of Rwanda. The campaign wouldn't have been satisfactory achieved without your support, and guidance.

AGRI RESEARCH would indeed like to acknowledge that this campaign was organised under the support and collaboration from RYAF, YEAN and YALTA. We appreciate how they support young and create youth networks with aims to better change old-mind-sets on Agriculture and transform to a business-oriented Agriculture, giving employment to a large population and boosting sustainable economic development and an inclusive food system.

We also wish to thank Mr Dieudonne (Diego) TWAHIRWA, Managing Director of Gashora Farm, Olivier MUVANDIMWE, Program Manager of RYAF and Arcade NSHIMIYIMANA, Executive secretary of YEAN for their compelling insights to demonstrate the privilege of agriculture and their contribution for taking us through the webinar with theme "Opportunities exist for youth engaged in Agribusiness."

They were more than concerned with their expertise, inspirations and precious time during the campaign of Youth Engagement in Agriculture and they have been youth mentors and cheerleaders for youth doing and willing to do Agriculture as business.

Finally, we extend our gratitude thanks to all the entire audience including youth, Agriculture institutions, private sectors and all social media users for their assistance, excitement, willingness to provide their views, comments and feedback, made an essential contribution to the completion of this campaign and a remarkable experience.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RYAF: Rwanda Youth in Agriculture Forum

YEAN: Youth Engagement in Agriculture Network

YALTA: Youth in Agro-ecology and Business Learning Track Africa

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

UR: University of Rwanda

CAVM: College of Agriculture, Animal resources and Veterinary Medicines

RICA: Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture

Mr: Mister

MD: Managing Director



*Youth engagement
in agriculture campaign
via social media*

THEME

The contribution of
youth in agriculture
to the world's pathway of success

BACKGROUND

Rwanda is a youthful country. The median age is estimated as 19 years, and about 78 % of the population is below the age of 35 years¹. Agriculture is the main economic activity in Rwanda with 70% of the population engaged in the sector, and around 72% of the working population employed in agriculture². Yet, employment opportunities for rural youth remain limited and of poor quality. In this context, facilitating the participation of the youth cohort in the agricultural sector has the potential to reduce rural poverty amongst youths and adults alike.

Rural youth are the future of food security. Yet around the world, few young people see a future for themselves in agriculture or rural areas. Rural youth face many hurdles in trying to earn a livelihood. While most of the world's food is produced by (ageing) smallholder farmers in developing countries, older farmers are less likely to adopt the new technologies needed to sustainably increase agricultural productivity, and ultimately feed the growing world population while protecting the environment.

Hence, youth need to be re-engaged in agriculture³. However, too often young people's voices are not heard during the policy process, and so their complex and multifaceted needs are not met. Policies often fail to account for the heterogeneity of youth, and so do not provide them with effective support. To remedy this, youth need the requisite skills and capacities for collective action to ensure that their voices are heard. Policymakers themselves must also actively engage youth in the policymaking process.

Agriculture is a major economic sector of Rwanda, employing about 70% of the total population. AGRIRESEARCH Non-Governmental Organization reaffirms its commitment to creating a conducive environment for the realization of the youth engagement in Agricultural development initiatives.

We grew up thinking that being a farmer means you have failed in life and that agriculture is a profession reserved for the poor people in our communities that we call misconception.

¹Awiti, A., Scott, B. (2016). The Rwanda Youth Survey Report. Available on https://ecommons.aku.edu/eastafrica_eai/22/

²FAO (2021): Rwanda at a glance, available on <http://www.fao.org/rwanda/our-office-in-rwanda/rwanda-at-a-glance/en/>

³FAO (2014): Youth and agriculture: key challenges and concrete solutions, available on <http://www.fao.org/3/i3947e/i3947e.pdf>

This, in turn, caused a lot of us to abstain from it, yet it is the source of food we eat every single day.

Africa has the youngest population in the world, with almost 200 million people between the ages of 15 and 24—a number that is expected to double by 2045 (African Economic Outlook 2015). Although many jobs have been created by Africa's growing economies, Michigan State University (MSU) designed the Agrifood Youth Employment and Engagement Study (AgYees) which revealed the Agrifood system as the dominant employer.

The impact of youth engagement in agriculture will be evident in sustainable economic growth and in the reduction of poverty, food security and malnutrition. This growth will be achieved through transforming small-scale agriculture from subsistence to innovative, commercially oriented and modern agriculture.

To address challenges and present a wide range of solutions for the modern farmer, social media is used for reaching a mass audience particularly youth. The main benefits for this agriculture businesses using social media are that you get to connect and develop a relationship with customers and other professionals in the industry.

According to YPARD, (2019) social media is the powerful and most useful platform where one can access information easily, it has grown extremely in last few years and it made the access of information easily to whole population. The rise of social media and its attraction among young people with access to the appropriate technologies could be a route into agriculture sector, if the two could be linked in some way.

To cut a long story short, we have to see agriculture as the bedrock and the stimulator of all inventions by then. The campaign organised by AGRIRESEARCH Organization has proved to youth and widen their view to see agriculture not only as crop cultivation, but all those opportunities that bud from it and wider field that hosts more inventions. It is believed that youth engagement in agriculture business will not only help to reduce unemployment among youths but, has a great implication on poverty eradication, food security and economic development (Yami et al., 2019).



Figure 1: Agriresearch team demonstrating how to establish demo plot/ Musanze

DESCRIPTION

Methodology

The campaign was held mainly on social media, and it took place May 17th -21st, 2021.

Due to the globalization of social media, campaign took place on different social media through quoting perceptive people's different insights on stated theme and share them on different social media to reach out large audience as long as social media was our strongest weapon in this outstanding campaign.

Due to covid-19 Pandemic, during this campaign, students from UR/CAVM, Youth Agricultural Innovators, Youth forums and other institutions were reached out through webinar and got insights on theme **“contribution of youth in Agriculture to the world's pathway of success”**.

A webinar on Youth Engagement in Agriculture led to their mind-sets change and this will help in the contribution to the world's pathway of success as it was our main target. In order to ensure widespread impact of the campaign country widely, Agriresearch has approached Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF) as a Forum which has mandate of change and challenge the current mind-set among the youth vis-à-vis the agricultural sector, while orienting youth to raise awareness on the practice of business- oriented agriculture and to take up opportunities that the agriculture sector offers.

The partnership has created remarkable synergy which has made the campaign to be successful based on the feedback we have received thereafter.

Skills and experiences of the host institution

AGRIRESEARCH is a youth National Non-Governmental Organization. It carries out agricultural research and extension services. In addition, it is a legally authorized to work in every territory of Rwanda, with 25 founder members who have professional background in agriculture. This organisation of graduates in different fields related to agriculture has undoubtedly the ability to use skills, knowledge and experiences gained at University to change youth's mind-sets and motivates them to join Agribusiness.

Within AGRIRESEARCH's missions of fostering the research culture in youth, increase youth engagement in agriculture, diversify crop production, increase crop productivity, and reduce post-harvest losses. This campaign was one of the ways to accomplish them.

PARTICIPANTS IMPRESSION AND CAMPAIGN FOLLOWERS THROUGH SOCIO MEDIAS

The main social media platforms that were used during the campaign are YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. Besides of social media, webinars were used which brought together private sectors, farmer organizations, different institutions, individual youth and farmers. More than 30,000 people with the majority of youth were reached during the campaign.

← Tweet activity



AGRIRESEARCH
@AGR_RESEARCH
#Day 2
Agriculture is beyond just being in a farm. Young people posses diverse skills either technicians, engineers, medical doctors, etc They can embrace opportunities in agriculture. What do you think about this?..... 🙌

#YouthInAgriculture
#AgriTransformation
#AgriForChange
pic.twitter.com/t60V1YKFe4

Impressions 21,836
times people saw this Tweet on Twitter

Total engagements 2,117
times people interacted with this Tweet

[View all engagements](#)



Promote your Tweet

Your Tweet has 21,836 total impressions so far.

RESULTS

Areas that benefited from the campaign

A) YOUTH

The campaign took together the youth with access on social media, start-ups and open-minded entrepreneurs in the agriculture sector. Some young people revealed mind-sets and got inspired by Experts in Agriculture on the upright interests in the agriculture production, value addition, agro-input supply, and agro-processing, etc. The campaign has targeted young innovators, marketers, youth leaders and youth who are by now and not yet passionate and motivated about agriculture and are ready to be change-makers in developing the youth contribution in agriculture sector.

Here are some ideas exposed by Youth on agriculture.

Jean Claude NIYOMUGABO, a student and aspiring agripreneur from RICA Rwanda on Agriculture:

Agriculture is an important source of livelihood in most parts of the world. It involves tough work but contributes to food security and health of the nation. If you think agriculture, don't think about hoe and machete only. Nowadays agriculture is becoming attractive than before.

Educating youth and instilling an interest in agriculture is about recognizing and investing in the future of our country.

NTAKIRUTIMANA Leon on youth engagement in agriculture:

Agricultural growth is a proven driver of poverty reduction. Agriculture stimulates growth then growth is twice as effective in reducing poverty but some people ignore that.

TURINZWENAYO, Agriculture and sustainability Expert:

For youth we really need to have passion (Love) of what we want to do and at entrepreneurship step note that passion is important. The good news is that agriculture is diverse with all kind of opportunities.

Jean Baptiste NIYOMUGABO on youth engagement in Agriculture:

The youth's participation in the Agriculture is more critical in reduction of poverty and malnutrition as well as building sustainable economic development. Youth engagement in Agriculture is becoming a prominent issue as we have become disenchanted with agriculture worldwide. Let us prove it to those who doubt.

MUHIGIRWA Mireille, a student in year 4 crop production at UR-CAVM:

If Agriculture is a major economic sector in our country with over than 70% depending on it, we need to change our mind-set on agriculture, the way we do it, and increase the number of youth in Agribusiness.

RUSARO Clever – University of Rwanda Alumni, BIG BROTHER On twitter; Idea on the contribution of youth in Agriculture transformation:

Young people are the centre of transformation and this should be translated in all areas of development including the economic background of our country.

Nadia MUKUNDENTE, Student in Crop production at University of Rwanda-CAVM on agriculture mind-set:

I grow up thinking that medical services are the best job that can make me feel like I have achieved my dreams. Agriculture was boring for me, but I realized that challenges never put us down, our persistence and hardworking are always needed to feed the world and it's our pleasure as Agriculture scientists. We must be proud of what we are doing and excited to do much more and open up to tell the world the secret of doing agriculture.

Eric RUKESHYA, a student from RICA Rwanda On financial problem in Agriculture:

One of the best way to solve financial constraints which hinder small scale farmers to access quality inputs is to involve in small saving and lending associations at Village level.

Faida Zoubeda, an advocate for youth and greener spaces; message on the role of youth farmers towards climate solution:

Youth are the stewards of tomorrow. Let's do environmental friendly agriculture which are less climate sensitive. Youth must think of innovative solutions of doing agriculture in protecting the climate and restoring nature.

Jean Bernard MUKUNDENTE, Documentarian at RYAF, media and communication professional on Agriculture impact on Health:

If you ate, you should thank a farmer, this means Agriculture is our lives. No Agriculture, no life.

GIRAMATA Isiaka on Agriculture mind-sets:

We have to change our mind-set. As youth, we should not use social media only for posting comedy, love story, chatting but also to advertise source of our basic needs especially Agriculture on the top.

B) AGRICULTURE INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Arcade NSHIMIYIMANA, Executive Secretary at YEAN-RWANDA, One of the speakers in the webinar:

Young people are the cornerstone for development in any field. In agriculture, youth energy and passion is needed to be enhanced for many purposes like research and innovation development, improving nutrition status and promoting sustainable agriculture, implement innovative programs in extension and strengthening the capacity of farmers in value chain.

Olivier MUVANDIMWE, RYAF Program Manager' message as one of the speakers in the webinar:

We want to see more youth engagement, Agriculture and all related businesses are the biggest lifetime opportunities. Youth are the partners in global efforts.

In his closing remarks, he said we must think out of the box because our sector feeds 7 billion people worldwide, three meals per person per day. More researches and innovations are needed and I believe youth have enough skills to contribute to food production and to work in all Agriculture value chain.

Valere NZEYIMANA, Senior water development and Management officer at UN FAO, Regional office for Africa and participant in the webinar on Youth Engagement in Agriculture Campaign:

To empower youth with Agriculture skills, we must establish an effective knowledge and implementation platform. We must take agriculture as a sector with broad benefits for society but without destroying natural environment.

Having a small land doesn't identify a root cause of poverty and hunger. The country has invested much in youth; it is the youth's turn to contribute back to the country especially boosting the performance of existing farms and other agribusinesses to answer challenges facing food system development.

C) PRIVATE SECTOR

Through a webinar, TWAHIRWA Dieudonne (Diego), Managing Director at Gashora Farm PLC, Chilli and chilli products producer represented the professional community.

He shared his journey and the story was important to understand the full impact of Agriculture. He promised the audience technical assistance and business development support to small farmers.

He ended the speech asking youth to do more research and come up with new product that are competitive on the international level.

THE MOST OF CHALLENGES FOR THE YOUTH HIGHLIGHTED IN THE CAMPAIGN

Beyond –optimum skills, experiences and all abilities of AGRIRESEARCH Organization as the host, during the campaign we faced some challenges that can be barriers to Rwanda Agriculture transformation and Youth engagement in Agriculture:

- In collaborations on technical level, simply new technologies are not adopted due to lack of skilled people, and lack of continuous capability development of manpower in technical dimensions
- Lack of funds – Youth are not able to afford conditions and rules required to access Bank or Microfinance loans thus widening the finance gap needed to invest in start-up business
- The structure of communication in agriculture – it doesn't meet the diversified needs and interests of rural audience which is large in size and grew over the years, and there is no information on the latest techniques of increasing production in all important farm enterprises, constructive agricultural and social programmes for betterment of rural life
- Limited Extension agents and their face to face contact with a number of youth at a time limit the sharing of knowledge, experience , meeting youth individually, on fixed place, day and time result in no change of opinion, mind-sets and mental horizon
- Limited financial literacy among youth is a barrier to financing the support needed by rural youth communities for effectively use finance in accessing and using new technologies needed to alleviate poverty through agriculture.

Therefore, trainings on the use of finance especially for start-up agripreneurs among rural producers should hence be actively promoted

- The inability of commodities to meet high-value agriculture market demand and prospects, cause a majority of youth producers with small farm to get left behind. In addition, the cost of agricultural inputs is not appropriate to youth with start-up businesses so that they can produce for family and for market. All of This result in unaffordable market access
- Limited agriculture field practices by the youth is a critical challenge highlighted. Besides enhancing agricultural production, field practices and trainings also give youth awareness that improve their farming behaviours, some also got employment on the basis of training while others start agriculture-related businesses on small scale level.

COMPAGN HINDERING FACTORS AND LESSON LEARNT

1. Hindrance factors

While the benefits of online campaigns include the potential to reach a large audience and the ability to measure results, during the conduction of the campaign we faced some hindrance factors including the following:

- **Distraction**

Some of the participants had opposite goal in mind or a specific target to distract youth and pull their attention.

We faced a disruption of misdirection of the webinar content and in few minutes it goes beyond our ability to protect networks, and all devices from that cyber threats or what we can call digital attack

- **Technical viewing problems(=less participants)**

The targeted number of youth participation especially rural youth was not enough in comparison to our expectations. The majority of rural youth do not access research findings and scientific farming information and they don't understand the business behind. They get farming knowledge passed on from parents. This is just because the majority of rural youth lack digital tools such as smart phones and computers to access new information and technologies available for them. As results, they lack the opportunity to discuss key issues and learn new skills from professionals.

2. Lesson Learnt

AGRIRESEARCH has been impressed by how this campaign made such a big impact and difference in Agriculture and to the youth as well as the whole country, and how many on social media came together to help the event in achieving the targets which made our campaign through the used hash tags to come into tweeter trends from 17 to 21 May 2021. However, the achievement was not a 100% according to the plan. Through different flaws, we learnt a lot that promise the better working of related coming campaigns. The following are the lesson learnt:

- **Informing and building capacity of the host team stronger**

We learnt that we still need more capacity building and trainings. In the future events, we should take time to understand youth's challenges and be sure to structure programs that address those challenges and needs, and develop youth-friendly programs with a content. "Your life is your message to the world, make sure it's inspiring". That is why we still need to learn new skills to build stronger farmer communities through research culture and extension services as our core missions.

- **Collaboration and involvement of the government**

Some challenges faced are at another level for an organisation to provide solutions. So, Government is part to solve those critical issues in any way or another. In addition, it is in its responsibility to create and strengthen enabling environment and provide a framework for Agricultural institutions operating in the country. Therefore, involvement of the Government is truly significant.

- **Better workshop preparation and Establishing a platform to get feedback and ideas from the audience**

- **Role models influence in engaging youth in agriculture**

Youth consider perceptive insights, successful stories and experiences from successful agripreneurs as impressive and as a memorable learning experience. During such event, we have recognised how they have a direct impact and bring real-value to Agriculture.

- **Create a community on social media**

We learnt that when you want to get and master a large audience especially youth on social media, "consistent communication" is a key. Keeping the targeted audience up to date on upcoming event releases or changes to existing plan on time enables them to be ready as well as collaborative.

- **Building a strong partnership**

We should develop a close and committed relationship with other Agricultural institutions. More and more, we have learnt that partnership with other institutions is one way of reaching additional youths. Because of that, having many partners in the field help in mass communication and engagement strategy. This is a crucial lesson learnt for an increased success of the future events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. To Youth in agribusiness

- Participate in research centres, extension, advisory and development programs
- Youth in agribusiness should provide practical suggestions for youth not engaged in agriculture by improving agriculture's image and create a better food system to make stronger communities, be part to solve critical issues facing African youths and help African countries achieve development goals
- Youth in agribusiness should keep on creating innovations in agri-focused industry
- To address challenges and present a wide range of solutions for the modern farmer, Youth in Agri-business should explore the use of social media to reach a mass audience particularly youth with agriculture misconception.
- Youth in agribusiness must develop a relationship with agriculture institutions and other professionals in the industry for the main reason of betterment of their practical skills

B. To Universities and Higher learning institutions

- Foster learning that create student-farmer linkages as central tool to gain field practical knowledge
- Promotion of seminars that addresses the opportunities and challenges of youth to engage in agriculture and providing home-grown solutions. These will help in clearing the social norms and mind-sets which are mostly preventing youth to engage in agriculture.

C. To Agricultural institutions and Agricultural private sectors

- Agriculture Institutions should boost the use of social media , as a leading road to conveying agriculture information's, engaging youth in agriculture and many more achievements enhancing agriculture resilience
- To inform the rural women and young people on improved agriculture, on supporting and encouraging them to participate in decision-making for progress of scientific farming
- Enhance technologies and methodologies to work together and bring up a system that link youth in agribusinesses, farmers and experts in Agriculture.
- Training youth to become agripreneurs, including them in Research, extension and Advisory services.

D. To the Financial institutions

- Facilitate youth access to credit by regulating interest on loan and formalities in getting loans.
- Banks and microfinances should have scripts of flip books that can help youth in getting behavioural insights on the correct use and management of money, customize advices and providing one-on-one counselling
- Help in building financial capability and connect people to providers
- Financial institutions must keep youth and their needs at the centre. They should revise and provide feedback whenever they need financial support to achieve their goals

E. To the Government

- Increase research centres, extension, advisory and development programs
- Control of the better performance of value chains in order to develop market-oriented agriculture production and possibly improved exports products (Export Market).
- Information, best practices, manuals should be better disseminated to existing and potential farmers and investors.
- Control the cost of farm inputs to make them accessible to young and small farmers
- Provide young people with the chance to market their products to potential investors
- Offer agricultural training that are attractive to youth especially on climate-smart agricultural practices , sustainable agriculture and profitable new agribusinesses

