

Independent Dialogues – Nigeria 2021

2nd Edition

YOUTH INCLUSIVENESS IN AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA



A Second Series of Independent Dialogues in Nigeria that Promotes Youth Inclusion in Agriculture

6th May 2021

CONCEPT NOTE

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African Youth Commission

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**“YOUTH INCLUSIVENESS IN AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION FOR
 SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA”**

CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction

Population growth remains a constant and unchanged factor driving global food scarcity, particularly where there is no complimenting increase in agricultural produce outputs. The youth population in Africa stood at 225 million in 2015 (about 20% of the continent population)¹. In 2019 almost 60% of Africa’s population were under 25 years². This rapid growth is increasingly becoming a key priority on the continental development agenda³.

The “youth bulge” poses challenges on the demand for qualitative education, training, employment and for food security but also tremendous cash-outs were positively and effectively harnessed. However, a pressing concern is the fact that this young population faces excessive challenges in society and in shaping their own futures. In many African countries and Nigeria particularly, the situation is very urgent. Nigeria’s youth are more often unemployed, the country’s education curriculum does not match with labour market demands. Young entrepreneurs have greater constraints in accessing land and finances.

Despite oil, agriculture remains the base of the Nigerian economy, providing the main source of livelihood for most Nigerians⁴. In 2017, farming alone accounted for about 68% of rural income in Africa and about half of the rural income in South Asia. Agriculture remains the largest sector in Nigeria contributing an average of 24% to the nation’s GDP between 2013 - 2019. The sector also employs more than 36% of the country’s labour force. While the Nigerian agricultural sector is mainly focused on crop production, which accounts for 90% of output, the value chain across the sector remains highly untapped⁵.

The agricultural sector is still one of the sectors that offers most employment opportunities in general and for youth in particular. It is commonly said that youth are turning their backs on agriculture and that the sector should be made more attractive for youth. However, the agricultural sector is still constrained by factors including low farm productivity and profitability associated with the limited use of modern technology and poorly functioning rural institutions. These constraints have both grave immediate consequences for the young generation and also for the future of Nigeria and other African countries in general. Research has pointed out opportunities of agricultural transformation, such as an increase in the level of agricultural productivity by nature-positive productivity-increasing technology and inputs, development of markets structures and a well-functioning private sector, financing, regenerative farming and Agritech.

About the Food Systems Summit Dialogues:

Food brings us together as families, communities and nations. It underpins our culture, our economy, and our relationship with the natural world. The world’s food systems touch every aspect of human existence - making them not just essential but also valuable and important instruments of change. Notably, food is a common thread linking all 17 SDGs, given the interconnected economic, social and environmental dimensions of food systems.

In 2019, the UN Secretary-General called for a Food Systems Summit and engagement process to unleash the power of food and deliver progress on all 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

¹ UN Statistics <https://bit.ly/3djl3Z8>

² 2019 Ibrahim Forum Report <https://bit.ly/3m73lx2>

³ African Union: Youth Development <https://au.int/en/youth-development>

⁴ FAO in Nigeria: “Nigeria at a glance”

⁵ Transforming Nigeria’s Agric Value Chain www.pwc.com/nghttps://bit.ly/3m73lx2

In preparing for the Summit a diverse range of stakeholders - from youth activists to indigenous leaders, smallholder farmers to scientists and CEOs - are invited to identify the most powerful ways to make food systems stronger and more equitable; ultimately driving progress in all of the SDGs.

As every one of us continues to adjust to the impacts of COVID-19, the Summit is an opportunity to focus on the fragility in food systems that are being exposed by the crisis - and to regenerate these systems in ways that respond better to people's needs.

Problem Statement

As Nigeria and most African countries are still dependent on subsistence farming, the growth of Africa's rural population is expected to grow, even a real decline in the percentage of young people working in agriculture could still mean an increase in the absolute number of young people who are living in rural areas, as an IDS-report⁶ highlighted. This is also an important group to bear in mind when discussing the need for structural change in youth participation in the agricultural sector and the factors that constrain it.

Nevertheless, the problem of youth unemployment is widespread throughout the African continent. Hundreds of thousands of youths enter the labour market as new job-seekers every year but the market simply cannot keep up. This can partially be explained by the fact that highly educated youth have higher expectations in terms of jobs. As their expectations often cannot be met, these youths prefer to wait for the right job rather than settle for insecure, badly remunerated informal employment or starting their own business. At present, the school systems in Nigeria are producing graduates whose skills and wishes do not match with the demands and opportunities in the labour market. This is particularly visible in terms of attitude towards agriculture. While there are a number of other reasons for youth to regard agriculture as a job "of last resort", one potential cause is their education. The general education curriculum does not include practical agricultural training, nor does it stimulate learning skills on entrepreneurship or self-employment. Rather it prepares students – in terms of skills as well as expectations – to enter a formal wage labour market, a sector which only a small number of graduates eventually find employment at this point.

Still, in these dialogues it is important not to make generalized statements that all youth should or want to become an entrepreneur. The question, therefore, is how can youth obtain the right capacities and skills to have better job opportunities and to be part of more productive sectors, including the agricultural sector as well as along the entire value chain so we can secure our food systems?

Rationale

Considerable policy and program framing and responses to the "problem" of young people and agriculture in Africa are still hampered by a lack of (context specific) evidence and therefore, often fall back on "common knowledge", assumptions and narrative that we need to change in these dialogues. Nevertheless, it does present some interesting insights in the current situations and contexts in Nigeria and other African countries and gives some potential outcomes on how to include youth better in the steps ahead in agricultural transformations. A recent IDS report has concluded that most programming meant to encourage young people into agriculture still fails to acknowledge the diversity that is evident among both rural young people and rural areas in Africa.

The World Bank Report "Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa"⁷ highlights that Africa's growing labour force can be an asset in the global marketplace. "Youth not only need jobs, but also create them".

⁶ IDS Research Report. Vol. 2016 No. 82

⁷ Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa <https://bit.ly/3w71dtG>

Youth are often envisioned as the changemakers of this transition through Agri-entrepreneurial programs. But how can young people really be included in a trend that reinforces agricultural transformation in Nigeria and Africa? All these important issues and question are still on the table, and while recent policy debates have emphasized the urgency to start acting upon them, in many cases the knowledge needed to do so is fragmented.

In this second edition of our Independent Dialogues, we want to provide some new and practical insights to tackling the challenges of the agricultural sector, food security and youth unemployment. It also looks at the extent to which current policies and programs are addressing these issues with the aim of stimulating forward-thinking and constructive dialogues and debate sin Nigeria and across Africa.

Objectives

- ✓ Bridge the gap between the disenchanting youth and an unproductive agricultural sector.
- ✓ Create more alluring employment opportunities in the agricultural space with gender mainstreaming.
- ✓ Ensure food security through investment in smart agriculture.
- ✓ Augment the demographic dividend and Strengthen higher education in agriculture.
- ✓ Create platforms and policy frameworks that would allow youth determine the parameters of what, according to them, would be a successful agricultural transformative engagement.

Format of the Independent Dialogue - Nigeria

The UN Food System Summit Independent Dialogues – Nigeria is organised as follows:

Plenary Session

During the plenary session, high-level guest speakers give their remarks and share their thoughts on food systems in Nigeria and the African continent. What solutions their organizations offer or are willing to commit to in creating opportunities for young people participating in the agricultural value chain in Nigeria and the continent as well. And in doing so answering the following questions;

- Should policies and programs focus on making agriculture more attractive or facilitate youth in achieving their future prospects in terms of jobs and entrepreneurship?
- What would agriculture in Nigeria need to look like in order to be compatible with young people's aspirations?
- Should gender mainstreaming take centre stage in agriculture?

Breakout Sessions

Action Track #1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all

Action Track #2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns

Action Track #3: Boost nature positive production

Action Track #4: Advance equitable livelihoods

Action Track #5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

Link to action tracks for more information: www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/action-tracks

Expected Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the Independent dialogue, participants should:

- Gain a new perspective on innovation and understand myths and barriers, risks and benefits and a better understanding of the importance of innovation and emerging technologies in agriculture and food security for the socio-economic development of youth in Nigeria and across Africa;

- Be able to contribute to discussions on agricultural technologies and innovation at national, sub-regional and continental levels that attracts youth involvement;
- Be able to identify, assess and evaluate new and emerging technologies relevant to their country's food security frameworks and demonstrate proficiency in engaging in public conversations;
- Be able to provide technical advice for harnessing emerging technologies and mainstreaming science, technology and innovation into national policies and programmes relevant to AU Agenda 2063.

Dialogue Announcement Link of Food Systems Summit Website <https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/10249/>

Registration link <https://bit.ly/3fCajZx> (for speakers and participants)

CONVENORS:

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Proposed High-Level Guest Speakers:

- Mrs. Olusola Idowu – National Convenor, Food Summit Systems Dialogues (Nigeria)
- Dr. Akinwunmi A. Adesina – President, African Development Bank
- His Excellency, Seyi A. Makinde – Governor of Oyo State
- His Excellency, Benedict O. Alabi, FSIB – Deputy Governor, Osun State
- Prof. Adeniyi Olayanju – Vice Chancellor, Landmark University
- Wamkele Mene – Secretary General, ACFTA
- Simbarashe Mhungu – Chief Operating Officer, CBZ Agroyield, Harare
- Michellee Fox - Chef & Business Development Manager, FoodBayTV
- Hart Jansson – President, Malnutrition Matters
- Natalie S. Mukundane – Executive Chairperson, African Youth Commission
- Fisayo A. Fakayode – Human Rights Lawyer/ ESCR Expert, AI Nigeria
- Michael Ogundare – Founder, Crop2Cash
- Uka Eje – Founder, ThriveAgric
- John Nsikak – Head, Enterprise Innovation Hub (The Nigerian Stock Exchange)
- Kefilwe F. Moalosi –Nutrition & Food Safety Specialist, AUDA-NEPAD
- Dr. Dara Akala – Executive Director, Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND)
- Isaac Boateng – Market Section Manager, Palladium: Make It Possible
- Zanak Sankey – Founder, IndulgeNaija
- Audu Maikori – Angel Investor, BeatDrone
- Country Director, GIZ – GIAE Project Nigeria