

Concept Note and Agenda

Opportunities and Support Needs for Young Women Agripreneurs in Eastern Africa

Regional Focus: Eastern Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda)

Date and Time: Thursday, 03 November 2022 | 11h00-14h00 EAT

Background

The youth population (15-24 years old as defined by the United Nations) has reached the unprecedented figure of 1.2 billion, accounting for 16 percent of the world's population (31 percent when adopting the 15-35 age range¹). Generating better jobs for youth is an urgent priority to harness this demographic dividend. The agricultural sector is predicted to grow in tandem with the population and rising food demand.

The development of sustainable agriculture and food value chains has the potential to create profitable entrepreneurship and wage employment opportunities for young women and men in both farm and off-farm value-adding activities. However, limited access to training, credit, markets and business development services, as well as poor policy and programmatic coordination, are critical constraints.

Young women often face more difficulties due to, among others, land ownership rights, limited mobility and triple work burden (reproductive, productive and community management roles) that cluster them in lower value activities of the value chain. Despite a growing evidence that investing in young women's education, skills and economic empowerment would generate immediate and long-term social dividends, they remain disproportionately affected by poverty and inequalities.

Globally, young women are less likely than young men to become entrepreneurs, due to cultural and societal barriers in some countries, but also due to lack of necessary business and entrepreneurship skills. They often end up in smaller informal businesses and low income generating activities that they need to combine with unpaid household responsibilities. Empowering young women to become not only wage-earners but also job-creators is imperative for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, young women are largely underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions, including in rural organizations and youth-led networks.

In particular, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will trigger a shift from subsistence-oriented production systems to more market-oriented ones and offer new opportunities to youth and

¹ African Union definition



women in agribusiness. Nevertheless, the formalization of trading practices that the AfCFTA will enforce could negatively affect those who rely on informal cross border trade and trading systems for their livelihoods. As both women and youth tend to be concentrated in informal markets and micro and small businesses, a gender-and age-blind implementation of the agreement could end up sidelining them. The global COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing global food crisis has already exposed how vulnerable women's and youth's informal businesses and MSMEs can be, and it has highlighted how it is necessary to support them, strengthen their businesses model and skills and integrate them fully in the formalized economy.

In 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations (FAO) and the African Women in Agribusiness Network (AWAN) joined forces to initiate a mentorship and coaching program targeting young women agripreneurs and rural champions in three Eastern Africa countries, namely Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. The webinar will present the results and lessons learned from this experience, with the aim to generate a broader debate on the opportunities and support needs for young women agripreneurs in Eastern Africa.

Webinar objective

This webinar aims to highlight common challenges faced by young women agripreneurs across Eastern Africa and identify existing and emerging opportunities, good practices and priority interventions that can inform policy recommendations to support young women in their journey to embrace agriculture as a decent and profitable means of livelihood. The discussions will also inform the development of a policy brief on the same.

Webinar format and focus

Building upon the experience and lessons learnt during implementation of the joint FAO-AWAN project, the webinar will be an opportunity to share testimonials from young women agripreneurs and engage in fruitful dialogue with other relevant stakeholders in the region. The main areas of support covered under the FAO-AWAN partnership have been Financial Inclusion and Financial literacy, Market Access and Soft Skills in agriculture entrepreneurship. The workshop will therefore focus on those three thematic areas for panel and plenary discussions.

The workshop will consist of two panel sessions, introducing a broader interaction and debate with the audience. The first panel discussion will focus on young women agripreneurs, highlighting their specific challenges, roles and opportunities in the African food systems and the risks of gender-blind programming and policy interventions. The second panel discussion will focus on concrete policy recommendations to enable young women agripreneurs to harness current and future agripreneurship opportunities in agrifood systems, with focus on good practices and lessons learned in relation to agripreneurship support and financial inclusion.

Expected outcomes

The main outcomes of this webinar will be the following:

1. Share experiences and lessons among a range of stakeholders engaged in supporting young women entrepreneurship in agrifood systems, including lessons learned from the FAO-AWAN Afrika initiative;
2. Garner guidance for future policy work on this topic, such as suggestions for programmatic actions and policy recommendations, to inform a policy brief on enabling young women in Eastern Africa to harness current and future entrepreneurship opportunities in agrifood systems.

Target Audience and participants

The event will gather government officials from Member States, the UN System and development partners, private sector, together with young women agripreneurs, rural women's leaders and groups, representatives of civil society organizations and research.

Who we are

FAO

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a UN specialized agency leading international efforts to defeat hunger. FAO's mission is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. FAO's Strategic Framework seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable, agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

Youth are a priority target group for the organization and a crosscutting theme in FAO's Strategic framework. The link to FAO Rural Youth Action Plan is available [here](#).

Further, FAO's vision of a world free of hunger cannot be attained without simultaneously working on realizing gender equality in the agriculture and rural sectors. Gender equality is crucial to end hunger, malnutrition and poverty and to achieve the SDGs. FAO works on advancing gender equality and supporting the empowerment of rural women as a key component of its programme of work. FAO policy on gender equality is available [here](#).

AWAN-AFRIKA

AWAN-Afrika is a non-profit organization limited by guarantee. Its network comprises of individual members' businesses including producers, processors, aggregators, export companies and input suppliers among others across the continent and globally. The organization provides women-owned/led and youth-owned agribusinesses with a platform for them to access markets, information on trade, markets, agro-technology and innovative finance so as to leverage opportunities to increase trade in the regional markets, tap into the newly created Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the global market. #AWANAfrikaUnder35 champions are African youth of either gender engaged in agribusiness.



AWAN-Afrika team has a combined experience of over 100 years in areas of Gender Agricultural economics and Agribusiness, Program development, planning, management and implementation. Our strength is working under harsh conditions and remote areas. The team will be composed of experts from both institutions who will design the Theory of Change, which will take into account the impact of COVID-19.

What we stand for:

Our propositional bet is that the youth are the ones that are going to change the face of agriculture in Africa. They are bringing in new ideas, taking risks and embracing new technologies. Among all our members, 25% are youth below 35years of either gender. Read more [here](#).

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Tentative Agenda

Webinar Facilitator: AWAN-Afrika Communications Team

Time	Agenda Item	Speaker(s)
11:00-11:05	Introduction	Facilitator - AWAN Afrika
11:05-11:10	Opening remarks	Dr. David Phiri, FAO Subregional Coordinator for Eastern Africa and Representative to the AU & ECA
11.10 – 11:20	Keynote: Setting the tone for Young Agripreneurs - The role of coaching and mentorship in agripreneurship	Dr. Janet Edeme, Head, Rural Development Division, Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (ARBE), African Union Commission (AUC)
11:20-11:40	Project background: Summary	Ileana Grandelis, Programme Officer, FAO-ESP Beatrice Gakuba, Founder & Executive Director, AWAN-Afrika
11:40- 12:30	Session 1: Contextualizing Young women agripreneurs in East Africa today	Facilitator: AWAN Africa Panelists (8 minutes max) 1. Alejandra Safa, Gender and Value Chains Expert, FAO-ESP



		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Lucy Muchoki, Executive Director, Pan-African Agribusiness and Agroindustry Consortium (PanAAC) 3. Faith Ajema, AWAN Afrika Lead Trainer, Kenya 4. Federica Emma, Technical Analyst, Youth and Social Inclusion, IFAD 5. Testimonials from women agripreneurs in beneficiary counties (3) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Benie Ange Iradukunda, Rwanda Agripreneur ii. Rhisper Akwale, Kenya Agripreneur iii. Awor Sarah, Uganda Agripreneur
12:30 – 13:20	Session 2: Young Women Agripreneurs' Economic and Financial Inclusion: which policy recommendations?	<p>Facilitator: AWAN Afrika</p> <p>Video by AWAN-Afrika - testimonial from LoA work</p> <p>Panelists: (8 minutes max)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Experience sharing from Government representatives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Mrs Pamella Beatrice Onyango, Assistant Director, Internal Trade, Ministry of Industrialization, Trade & Enterprise Development, Republic of Kenya ii. (Rwanda) 2. Marie Aline Iraguha, Representative of young women agripreneurs (Rwanda) 3. Equity Bank Regional representative, TBC 4. Anne Rose Gathara, Medium agripreneurs from AWAN-AFRIKA Network (Kenya) 5. Nomathemba Mhlanga, Agribusiness Officer, FAO-SFE 6. Diana Ntamu, Makerere University Business School
13:20-13:50	Q&A and discussion (focus on panel discussions)	AWAN-Afrika
13:50-14:00	Wrap up, summary and closing	<p>Victoria Mwirichia, Policy & Partnerships Specialist, FAO-SFE</p> <p>Beatrice Gakuba, Founder and Executive Director AWAN AFRIKA</p>