



**YOUNG FARMERS FEDERATION OF UGANDA
(UNYFA)**

Policy Position Paper

On

**Limited access to markets by the youth in
Uganda**

November 2020

INTRODUCTION

This is a position Paper of the Young Farmers Federation of Uganda (UNYFA) on limited access to markets by the youth in Uganda. It brings out the outstanding marketing bottlenecks of the youth of Uganda, highlights the available opportunities and proposes alternatives for improved policy environment in the agriculture sector with specific emphasis towards enabling youth access markets for their agricultural produce.

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Overview:

It should be noted that Uganda's economy heavily relies on the agricultural sector which employs 59% of the working population, of which 63% are mostly youth in rural areas - agriculture is the major economic activity (NDP II). The National Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture, the National Development Plan 3, the Vision 2040, the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), National Youth Policy 2016, the Agriculture Sector Development Plan, the National Farmers Manifesto 2021-2026 to mention but a few. Youth un-employment is one of the major socio-economic policy challenges facing Uganda's economic growth and development today. Unless this problem is amicably addressed, it will peg back Uganda's ambition to reduce poverty and attain vision 2040.

Aware of this challenge, Government under the Vision 2040 and the second National Development Plan (NDP II) put in place strategies to expand the country's productive base and reduce unemployment and poverty. This is because young people offer a dynamic work force that is innovative; have a high uptake of technological know-how and the ability to take on significant levels of risk. Amidst all these, it is the Agriculture sector that presents a huge opportunity for the creation of employment to absorb the youth and ensure achievement of food security for future generations.

However, the sector is yet to fully exploit the potential of the youth and it remains largely unattractive. The situation is exacerbated by perception of agriculture as a career of last resort, one of drudgery and low monetary benefits. Information on access to markets, factors of production including land and financing remain extremely limited hindering adequate engagement of the youth in agriculture.

Majority of those engaged in agricultural activities are aged between 50 and 65 years and still predominantly practice traditional and subsistence farming practices. The decreasing number of young people involved in farming as an occupation / business is a national signal of distress in the agricultural sector.

This is already negatively impacting on the economy. Researchers have attributed the low interest in agriculture among the youth to the public sector systems that have concentrated more on production with limited value addition, processing and marketing. This concern gives the basis upon which UNYFA comes up with this policy position paper.

The policy brief captures national challenges that are facing the youth in the sector and the available opportunities for agri-preneurship. This policy brief also highlights a number of strategic interventions that are well thought and well-intended to address the bottlenecks that hamper meaningful and sustainable youth participation in agribusiness.

Some of these include but are not limited to the following:

- To transform the mindset and perceptions of the youth towards agribusiness;
- To equip youth with appropriate agribusiness skills, knowledge and information;
- To enhance access to affordable and youth friendly financial services for agripreneurship;
- Enhance access and sustainable use of land for the youth in agribusiness;
- To engage youth in research, development and utilization of innovative agricultural technologies;
- Enhance access to factors of production, utilization of modern technologies and utilization of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) to increase efficiency;
- To increase utilization of agricultural products through value addition;
- Improved access to affordable suitable output markets for the youth;
- Support implementation, reviews and development of policies that create an enabling environment for youth in agri-preneurship;
- Promote youth-inclusive climate smart agricultural technologies and create green jobs for environmental sustainability;
- Promote an integrated approach to address cross-cutting challenges including gender disparities, cultural barriers, alcohol and substance abuse, HIV & AIDS, weak governance and value systems amongst others.

A brief about UNYFA

UNYFA is an umbrella body for young farmers in Uganda started in 2016 and launched in June 2017 as a duly incorporated member-based organization, with a registration number 80020000478713 under section 18(3) of Companies Act 2012. It has over 60 members which are district young farmers associations, farmer youth groups and school agricultural clubs totaling to over 31,000 individual young farmers. UNYFA is driven by the desire to have a holistically transformed youth in agriculture for a sustainable economy: its target group is of youth between 12 to 39 years of age who are rural and/or urban agro-based and young farmers in and out of school/Institutions. Due to diverse interests of farmer groups/farmers' based organizations, young farmers need specific training; UNYFA provides platforms for these youths where they can express and acquire tailor-made training.

Youths have the propensity to move with the changing dynamics of the world and are capable of formulating and taking lead in farmer-based organizations. UNYFA believes that if Uganda is to realize development, the youth need to be involved in development programs so as to reduce the dependency syndrome and to transform youth groups into a productive force.

Acknowledgement of Government of Uganda efforts:

UNYFA commends government of Uganda for Encouraging and supporting youth in agriculture as one of the several strategies that government has adopted to address youth unemployment. There is broader acknowledgement that young people are dynamic, enterprising and very innovative. MAA-IF is collaborating with other stakeholders UNYFA

inclusive to implement programs such as Youth Inspiring Youth in Agriculture Initiative (YIYA) that support the youth to realize their potential in the agricultural sector.

Advocacy issue: Limited Access to markets by the Youth:

Most young people consider agriculture to be unattractive due to the limited access, low returns and lack of a market-led approach in the agricultural sector. In addition, many jobs in the agricultural sector have a strong seasonal component or are categorized as vulnerable. Youth face a bigger challenge of access to markets due to the following constraints:

- Limited access to marketing information
- Non-conformity to agricultural produce and products standards
- Inadequate markets and marketing infrastructure
- Poor post-harvest management
- Insufficient marketing and related entrepreneurial skills.
- Inconsistent quality and high costs of inputs and low prices for produce and products
- Inefficiencies and high transaction costs along the value chains
- Weak farmer organization
- Limited incentives for quality agricultural products.

Additionally, Policy coherence and implementation is still one key challenge arising on the policy level. There is a multiplicity of policies and plans that have overlapping mandates without a central coordinating authority. Especially when considering the system of the multiple semi-autonomous agencies that exist parallel to the MAAIF, such as NAADS, the Dairy Development Authority (DDA), NARO, the Uganda Cotton Development Organization (UCDO) and the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA).

This status of semi-autonomy, when considering the large budget allocations made directly to NAADS and NARO, brings into question the coherence of those agencies and the authority of the MAAIF to orchestrate the agricultural institutional field. This therefore is one clear indicator that highlights the need for more harmonization even within the budget.

These plus the inadequate policies to support youth in agri-preneurship are some of the issues that UNYFA would like government and policy makers to adequately address for the youth in agriculture. The limited participation of youth in policy dialogue makes it a huge task for any developed strategies less responsive to the unique needs of the youth. In situations where policies exist, there are some cultural barriers that hinder productive participation of youth in agribusiness. The above outline of key policy fields and other factors that impact on the development of the agricultural sector significantly has already pointed out a variety of challenges that exist within the agricultural policy environment.

Key Policy Recommendations:

A look at existing government policies to promote agriculture as well as the existing challenges reveals that the government has extensively applied a range of policies to promote the sector. The following is, therefore, a mixture of additions to policy directions, emphasis on policy areas that are not yet effectively implemented and some key directions not adequately captured under the current policy regime.

In light of the above, UNYFA recommends that government fast-tracks the improvement of the physical infrastructures and logistics to transform the agricultural sector. The agriculture sector to be self-sustaining and beneficial to

the populace requires robust infrastructure such as transport systems, ICT connectivity, cold storage & processing facilities, electricity and water. The Government should prioritize investing in these areas synergized by the devolved system of Governance. The participation of the youth in designing such infrastructural networks with sensitivity to innovative agribusiness would be appropriate.

Review of the Education System: The Government of Uganda is currently reviewing the National Education curriculum in all levels of education including Primary, Secondary, T-VET Educational training and University. UNYFA thus amplifies the need to Re – introduce agribusiness studies in the curriculum at all levels which will inculcate the required skills and the appetite for youth in the sector.

To avert the negative perceptions to agricultural activities due to perceived low returns which are not immediate, drudgery nature, and risks associated with it UNYFA urges government and other stakeholders to transform the mindset and perceptions of the youth towards Agribusiness through strategic Interventions such as:

1. Establishing an innovative information and knowledge sharing networks/ platform on agribusiness.
2. Lobbying for integration of agribusiness as a subject in the education curriculum.
3. Reviving and rebranding agricultural clubs in schools.
4. Establishing a feedback mechanism for the sector players to give feedback to learning institutions on the performance and demand based training needs.
5. Establishing national campaign platforms to sensitize the general public on Youth in agribusiness.

6. Establishing an award system recognizing youth champions/ ambassadors/ agri-journalism/ celebrities in agribusiness.

Furthermore, UNYFA appreciates the fact that large population of youth have inadequate skills, knowledge and information regarding agricultural marketing and agribusiness in general. In a bid to circumvent this critical challenge so as to equip youth with appropriate agribusiness skills, knowledge and information, UNFYFA demands that policy makers and sector players consider the following Strategic Interventions:

- Spearhead implementation of youth agribusiness internships and mentorship programs.
- Build the capacity of youth on existing technical and innovative agribusiness skills.
- Develop a central knowledge and information sharing hub/ agribusiness resource centers for Agricultural information.
- Develop and operationalize county agricultural information system hubs
- Support training and research institutions to utilize cutting edge technologies and emerging trends in agricultural sector
- Develop and support a modern youth-inclusive agricultural advisory services models.
- Equip youth with knowledge, skills and information on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

In the same vein, UNYFA recognizes the Low levels of value addition in Uganda. Uganda's main exports in the sector are raw products without value addition, and even the need for internal consumption of value-added agricultural products is met by external imports rather than the national market.

And to increase utilization of agricultural products through value addition, UNYFA urges government to:

- Undertake agro value chain analysis to determine potential products and value addition processes that the youth can easily engage in.
- Build the capacity of the youth to carry out value addition.
- Establish agro-processing and pilot demonstration units.
- Develop and upscale appropriate technologies for value addition.
- Provide supporting services, incentives and infrastructure for value addition
- Support the establishment of youth led PPP on value addition

UNYFA still appreciates the limited access to market information, inadequate market infrastructure and entrepreneurial skills amongst the youth. And as such, UNYFA urges government to consider the following strategic interventions if there is to be an improvement in the access to affordable suitable output markets for the youth:

- Develop and implement sustainable incentive programs for the youth in agribusiness through PPPs.
- Develop linkages/ networks for youth to access niche markets both at local and international levels.
- Support formation and strengthening of structured market platforms
- Support group purchase of inputs and collective marketing of end products to leverage bargaining power and opportunities.
- Build capacities of youth on market driven agricultural enterprises.

- Support development and access to market infrastructure e.g. market information banks.
- Facilitate a collaborative review and integration of agricultural outputs information platforms across the agricultural sector players.

UNYFA recommends that the Ministry of Agriculture should be empowered enough to coherently streamline policy development and implementation. The duplication of government roles and activities under agencies such as the MAAIF, the Ministry of Water and Environment, NAADS, Operation Wealth Creation and the Youth Livelihood Program, has led to a tedious process of policy coordination for a series of policies that could ideally work together to improve agriculture as an economic opportunity for young people. The coherent coordination of government policies, such as NAADS, Operation Wealth Creation and the Youth Livelihood Program, could easily lead to increased participation for the youth in agriculture. Whereas the MAAIF has specialized units and agencies that implement intensive technical and advisory aspects of its broad mandate, they function as semi-autonomous agencies under MAAIF's line of supervision. These agencies include the following: the Cotton Development Organization (CDO), NAADS, NARO, the National Genetic Resource Centre and Data Bank (NAGRC&DB), UCDA and DDA. The agencies are not effectively coordinated and the return to a standard key agency, such as the ministry, having the mandate and manpower to streamline all agriculture-related policy implementation efforts, would be a step towards more effective work on the sector's policy environment. Such improvements in making the policy process more coherent would also enable the ministry, as the overseeing agency, to make targeted efforts to fast-track key policies.

Conclusion:

This policy position paper is not an end in its means but opens doors between UNYFA and the different players within the agribusiness sector ranging from policy makers, extension workers, government agencies, the academia, the development partners, multilateral agencies, donors, financial institutions, Research institutions as well as the private sector with the objective of looking at the various policy proposals so that meaningful and tangible policy options can be adopted for improving the sector for the benefit of all more importantly the young people of Uganda. Bringing youth early into various agricultural practices will inspire posterity for various agricultural enterprises in crop, animal husbandry, fisheries and aquaculture. This will create the next generation of farmers, processors and traders. Once these young people are recognized and given room to bring about their ideas at an early age, they can progress to incubate them and eventually inspire a new agricultural age.

Appeal:

UNYFA appeals to the government of the republic of Uganda through MAAIF to ensure that the policy framework should be responsive and inclusive enough to the needs of the youth and that the policies should be able to support youth in agri-preneurship. Youth therefore must be supported to participate right from planning, implementation, reviews and development of national policies that create an enabling environment for themselves as young agri-preneurs.