

Last year, Yara, Econet and AGRA launched Generation Africa. In this piece the three leaders argue the need to develop the right ecosystem to support the continent's youth

Young agripreneurs are transforming Africa's future - Let's support them

It's hard to see into the future. For families on the edge of poverty, for businesses chasing the next investment round, for countries whose growth is slowing, the concerns of today can consume us. Yet to focus on our own feet is to miss the activity that is swelling around us in Africa: a new generation of innovative, connected and resourceful young people whose ingenuity and talent can reshape the continent.

Much of this potential lies at the intersection of the agri-food sector and the current technology revolution. Never has there been a more powerful moment in history – nor a more digitally-capable generation – to transform how we grow, transport, store, improve, sell and eat food. This new generation of agripreneurs can help deliver the jobs, prosperity and food security that are vital to Africa's future.

These entrepreneurs can thrive where they find supportive ecosystems: where they are inspired to see the agri-food sector for all its potential; find the networks, skills and resources; and attract mentorship, investment and customers. With the right enabling environment, Africa's next generation can drive transformative, tech-led, inclusive growth in the agri-food sector.

Yet such innovation ecosystems are still nascent across the continent. They are energised by the exponential potential of digital technologies and buoyed efforts of a handful of skillful organisations and governments, but also hampered by fragmentation, inefficiencies and inadequate funding. In researching our recent landscape report we heard from young Africans about the gaps they face, including the need for role models and stories to craft an inspiring new narrative about the sector, the opportunity to better connect the structures of support around agripreneurs, and the investment gap for transformational businesses seeking to scale.

That's why we co-created an initiative called Generation Africa, alongside youth and partners, to strengthen the ecosystem for young agri-food entrepreneurs traveling the perilous journey from idea to scale. We're working to inspire more entrepreneurs to enter the sector; enable more small, medium and micro enterprises to sustain steady growth; increase capital investment; create jobs throughout the value chain; and increase adoption of innovation and technology in the agri-food sector.



We've already gotten to work to support the dynamic young African agripreneurs we call "Go-Gettaz". In 2019 we reached over 50 million people through an inspiration campaign and established an online platform engaging over 2,000 GoGettaz with opportunities and resources. We held a first GoGettaz Agripreneur Prize – showcasing inspiring finalists with businesses ranging from dairy alternatives made from insects, to preserves made of underused indigenous fruits, to affordable technologies for farmers – and awarding two \$50,000 grand prizes for young agripreneurs alongside the

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prestigious Africa Food Prize. We established a high-level ambassadors group to advocate for young agripreneurs' needs and a members group to better coordinate institutions' initiatives.

In 2020, hosted by the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF), we'll expand these efforts in response to the needs and opportunities of a growing community of GoGettaz. We are building a coalition of committed partners and we welcome additional institutions to engage with us.

We are cultivating a movement to revolutionise entrepreneurship in Africa's agri-food sector, led by the next generation. No single actor can do this alone; it will take new forms of partnership and ecosystem-building. The potential is tremendous to transform Africa's villages and cities into prosperous, creative hotspots for food innovation. We want to be part of that future; don't you? ■

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