



#GROWENTREPRENEURS

#TRANSFORMFOOD



Generation Africa Call to Action

Generation Africa has engaged in in-depth discussions with young entrepreneurs in the GoGettaz ecosystem who are deeply involved in the African agri-food landscape. The conversations have shed light on some significant mismatches between the support provided by various stakeholders in the agri-food industry and the reality of effective, responsive and results-oriented support that young agripreneurs require to grow their businesses successfully.

If Africa is to achieve food systems transformation in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is an urgent need for action. Generation Africa, our ambassadors, and our partners are calling for agri-food industry stakeholders, private sector, and government policymakers to take transformative, impactful, and results-driven actions that will lead to definite and measurable successes for youth agripreneurs across Africa.

Our discussions with youth entrepreneurs have identified holistic youth support, including access to funding, research, and markets, along with government policy reform on land, and more inclusive ICT systems development, as areas where stakeholders may effect tangible results.

Holistic Youth Support

Entrepreneurs highlighted the ineffectuality of short, events-focussed youth support programmes that do not allow for continuous learning. Similarly, organisations that “over-coach or over-mentor” without providing capital to initialise growth plans for these young ventures have minimal impact in generating actual successes.

To drive impact and growth for agripreneurs, development partners need to focus on holistic incubation and accelerator programs for continuous learning that understand the gaps and needs of different start-up companies and provide tailored training and precision financing that will catalyse a measurable and repeatable growth cycle for these agri-food businesses.

Three main shortfalls of youth support programmes according to our youth agripreneurs are:

1. Access to Financing

Africa’s financial solutions are not working for the youth; the traditional financing instruments from banks remain a significant challenge. Most youth agripreneurs do not have collateral to provide a guarantee to the banks. This remains the biggest bottleneck in accessing funds from such institutions. Additionally, interest rates on bank loans are not designed to accommodate longer-term profit horizons, especially in agricultural production. Most youths are looking to the West to access finance. An African solution is needed.

Go
Gettaz

The youth feel grant financing from development partners is effective in providing an opportunity for agripreneurs to scale their businesses. However, a variety of funding mechanisms is required to enable youth agripreneurs to access the funds they need to grow their businesses.

Access to finance is perceived as the most effective contributor to creating employment opportunities for other youth and moving forward in the drive to zero hunger and food sustainability.

2. Access to Research

Many SMEs do not have the resources and capacity to conduct research and rely heavily on third party sources of information. Access to research is especially problematic in Africa. A legacy of low demand for accurate data and a lack of research funding means historical data is scarce, and up-to-date and accurate information is not readily available.

Local universities and research institutions lack the framework to engage the youth and support their research needs. The youth have found working with international universities more friendly than institutions that are within their communities. The African institutions need to create a framework to support innovation, research, and technology for the African youth especially those in the rural areas.

Stakeholders in the agri-food ecosystem should continue conducting research and make existing research available to young entrepreneurs. Access to information is paramount to their learning and growth, and vitally important to inform business decisions they have to make for their start-ups.

3. Access to Markets

Agripreneurs have highlighted that they need support to access markets. Positive and profitable growth is intricately tied with their ability to get their products not only to regional markets but also to higher-yielding international markets.

4. Policy Reform / Policy-Shaping

Access to land and ownership of land is a persistent concern. The youth agripreneurs interviewed felt that unutilised arable lands should be identified and profiled by the relevant government institutions.

Policymakers should make a concerted effort to grant access to these lands to youth businesses who are positioned to tap into the resources. This will encourage youth engagement in the agri-food industry and contribute to both their business growth and their country's economic growth.

Generation Africa's Commitment to Holistic Youth Support

Generation Africa is working toward creating the Generation Africa Fellowship Programme (GAFP) to evolve the holistic incubator and accelerator model. Our goal is to incorporate feedback from youth-led businesses to create an ecosystem where they are connected to everything they need to thrive.

Amongst others, service providers are to include educational and research institutions to bring knowledge and skills, mentors to bring coaching in business services, financiers to bring flexible tailored investment services, off-takers to provide forward contracts for their produce and governments

to champion reforms of policies that shall favour these youth-led businesses.

Generation Africa plans to work with, and support, existing incubators and accelerators who are willing to incorporate youth feedback and adopt this holistic “one-stop-shop” model to create an African agri-food ecosystem conducive to success.

If you wish to learn more about or support this journey, please reach out to the Generation Africa Secretariat through members@genafrika.org

Generation Africa’s Commitment to Policy Reform

Generation Africa is rolling out the Youth in Agriculture Ecosystem Development Framework (Y-EDF). After a successful case study in Senegal and recent implementation of the Y-EDF in Rwanda, Generation Africa partner AGRA is already championing reforms of policy highlighted in the Y-EDF Country Youth Opportunity Reports and Mapping Report.

From the Y-EDF, an *Investment Plan*, also viewed as a *Flagship Report*, shall also be realised. The Government of Rwanda shall then use these recommendations to bring stakeholders together to channel resources to critical technical gaps. In the end, the framework approach will ensure a collaborative and well-coordinated approach towards youth support. The right structure, where all important value chain actors are talking to each other, will be the foundation to create sustainable youth opportunities and jobs at the country level.

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A specific call to action for ICT agripreneurs to embrace inclusive systems development

Our youth agripreneurs have identified language barriers as the primary challenge in the uptake of ICT-based solutions by local farmers. Useful agritech applications are not available in local languages, effectively preventing massive numbers of potential users from benefiting from technological advancements.

In this regard, we raise a specific call to action is for young innovators with ICT solutions to ensure that their applications are available to farmers in the local dialects and also to invest in local dialect educational resources for their applications to assist farmers in discovery and appreciation of the value it offers them. This will foster long term adoption of ICT technologies by farmers and help them sustainably grow their own businesses.

The agri-food industry offers the most impactful and direct avenue to achieve both the environmental, economic, and human goals set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. By enhancing the ecosystem to better support the youth in building resilient businesses for Africa’s food systems, Generation Africa is taking steps to achieve these SDGs. But we cannot do it alone. We need stakeholders across the entire African food system, from local farmers to governments to multinational conglomerates to effect positive transformation.

We call on you to act. Join Generation Africa's mission to support Africa's youth agripreneurs.

Signed:

Generation Africa Ambassadors

- α **Dr Agnes Kalibata** - President, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)
- α **Ada Osakwe** - Founder and CEO, Agrolay Ventures
- α **Dr Eleni Gabre-Madhin** - Chief Happiness Officer, BlueMoon
- α **Gilbert Hougbo** - President, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- α **Dr Ishmael Sunga** - CEO, Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)
- α **Prof. Mohamed Ait Kadi** - President, General Council of Agricultural Development, Government of Morocco
- α **Strive Masiyiwa** - Group Chairman, Econet
- α **Svein Tore Holsether** - President and CEO, Yara International
- α **Pierre Ferrari** – President and CEO, Heifer International
- α **Jens Hartmann** - Head of Bayer Crop Science Commercial Operations Europe, Middle East & Africa

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