



## AFRICA FOOD SYSTEMS FORUM 2024

Innovate, Accelerate and Scale:  
Delivering Food Systems Transformation in a Digital and Climate Era



# AGRA

Sustainably Growing  
Africa's Food Systems



# THE KIGALI YOUTH DECLARATION ON FOOD SYSTEMS, POLICY AND CLIMATE ACTION 2024

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## African Youth Position on Food Systems, Policy, and Climate

This session will present knowledge documents and consolidated voices of African youth, showcasing their contributions and perspectives on food systems, policy, and climate action.

**Date:** Wed 4th Sept, 9:00am

**Venue:** Youth Dome  
Kigali Convention Centre



### 1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is key to Africa's economic growth and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The vision for sustainable food systems in Africa includes achieving resilience to climate shocks, increasing agricultural productivity, and ensuring inclusive growth that benefits all segments of the population, including smallholder farmers, women, and youth. Key components of these systems include sustainable agricultural practices which promote long-term soil health and ecosystem balance and the efficient and optimal use of scarce resources, particularly water, soil, and other natural resources, to maximise productivity while minimising environmental impact.

The opportunity for increased youth involvement in Africa's food systems and agriculture exists in the documented youth bulge that simultaneously poses a social, political and economic risk (as is already evident through the widespread 'Gen Z movement' witnessed across Africa) if not harnessed. The Convenings for Climate Action and Food Systems Empowerment (CAFETYA) initiative under the Youth Entrepreneurship for the Future of Food Agriculture program, therefore sought to collate views and amplify youth voices as a means to enhancing their adaptation and resilience to climate change and providing them with decent jobs. This common position paper synthesises the current challenges and



opportunities faced by youth in agriculture in several African countries, including Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo, and Zambia. It further provides strategic recommendations to support their engagement and development and a call to action by the young people of Africa.

## **2. APPROACH- HOW THIS CALL TO ACTION WAS DEVELOPED**

Country-specific convenings bringing together an average of 50 young male and female participants (between the ages of 18 and 35) drawn from the agricultural sector were held in 2024. To date, 15 country level convenings focused on understanding how to strengthen youth entrepreneurship ecosystems within the agricultural sector in a changing climate have been held. As a starting point, the discussions were framed within the context of the current and forecasted African labour market and the major continental levers for youth employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, centred around strong ecosystems and country actions that accelerate youth access to resources, skills, and information. While these levers were provided, a working group discussion focused on context-specific challenges and opportunities.



The convenings built on previous scoping studies, solutions, and recommendations identified from past convenings, using various tools and discussion formats, including presentations, breakout sessions and working groups. The topic explored included the following:

- i. Political, social and environmental challenges faced by youth in agri-food system
- ii. Barriers to agricultural entrepreneurship for the youth.
- iii. Opportunities that exist for the youth in the agricultural sector
- iv. How government and NGOs can better support the youth in developing climate-resilient agricultural practices.
- v. What existing platforms facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among youth in agriculture.
- vi. How gender-inclusive policies and programs can be designed to support young female farmers.

The country level convenings were followed by 3 regional convenings in East Africa held in Tanzania, West Africa held in Nigeria and Southern Africa held in Zambia. This call to action is a product of a consolidation of the country and regional level call to actions. The analysis presented is a drawn from a youth and climate resilience survey conducted between January and August 2024 with respondents from 28 African countries.

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## 3. LEARNINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

The consensus developed by participants over the multiple sessions across countries was as follows:

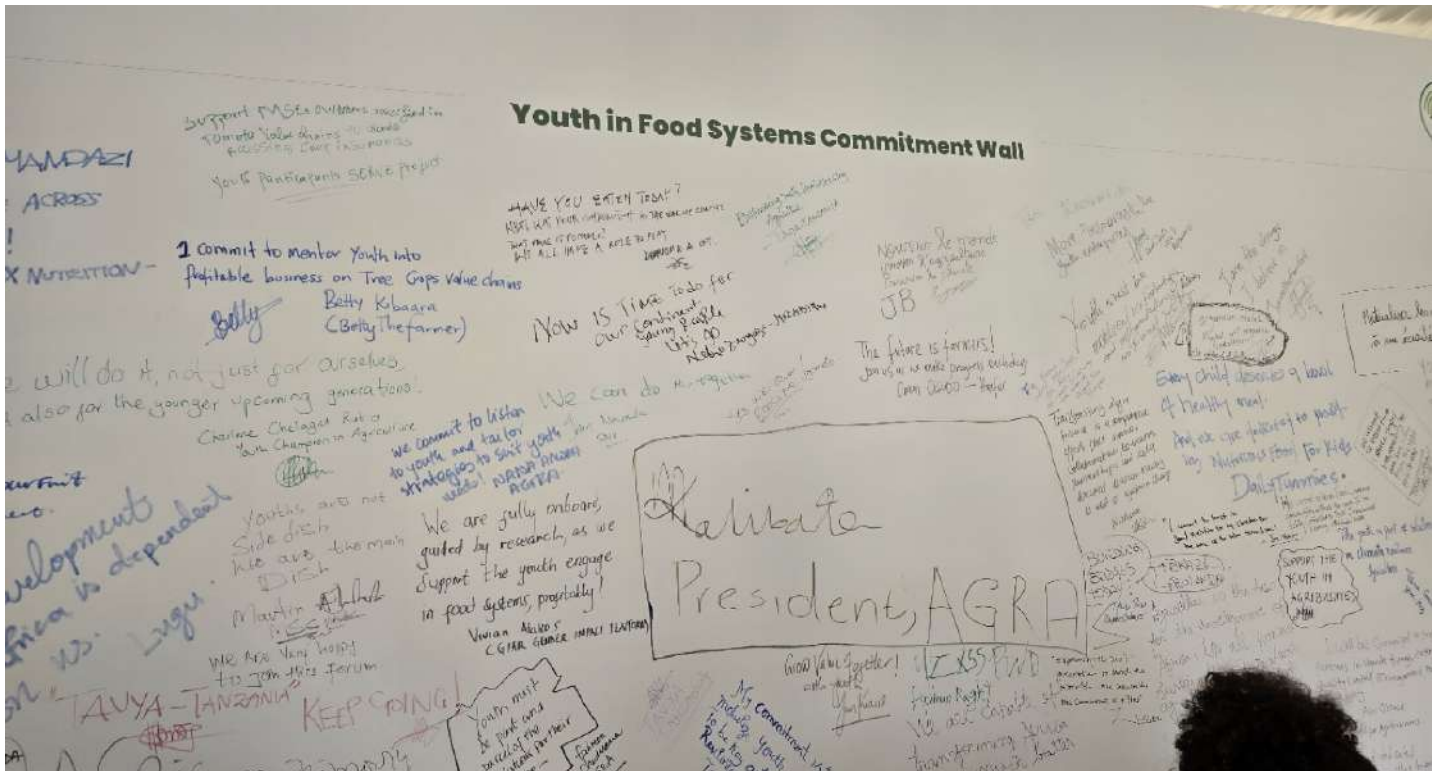
### 3.1. Challenges and Barriers Experienced by the Youth

#### 3.1.1. Policy and Regulatory Challenges:

- 3.1.1.1. The policy implementation gaps lead to a lack of institutional support for young entrepreneurs. Existing policies may additionally not adequately address the needs of young farmers as they are not tailored to their needs.
- 3.1.1.2. There is a general lack of incentives within the policy framework specifically designed to attract and support young people in agriculture.
- 3.1.1.3. In countries that experience political instability, agricultural programs and initiatives may be disrupted, creating an uncertain environment for investment in the sector
- 3.1.1.4. Land tenure systems, legal barriers and ownership structures make land inaccessible to the youth, who often encounter difficulties in securing land for agricultural activities.
- 3.1.1.5. Complex bureaucratic and administrative procedures create obstacles for young people seeking to engage in agriculture, complicating access to subsidies, training and other forms of support.

#### 3.1.2. Economic and Financial Barriers:

- 3.1.2.1. Youth struggle with limited access to essential resources, including financial resources, agricultural inputs, training and modern technology necessary for starting and scaling agricultural ventures. This constraint hampers their ability to adopt modern farming practices and improve productivity.
- 3.1.2.2. Access to finance is particularly challenging due to the heightened perception of risk for this category by financial institutions.
- 3.1.2.3. Infrastructure deficiencies, as evidenced by the inadequate road structure, storage facilities, and market access, hampers the efficiency of agricultural activities. It also leads to significant post-harvest losses as most young farmers lack insurance to cover these losses.
- 3.1.2.4. The non-standardisation of agricultural markets has led to low consumption of local products due to the flooding of markets with imported agricultural goods. This strong competition between local and imported products leads to price instability as local producers are unable to match the prices of imported goods.



### 3.1.3. Social and Cultural Barriers:

- 3.1.3.1. There is a generally negative perception of agriculture as a career option, leading to a reluctance among some youth to enter the sector. Additionally, young people experience social or family pressure towards sectors other than agriculture
- 3.1.3.2. This has also led to widespread urban migration of young people, high unemployment and a lack of opportunities. This migration results in a reduction of the agricultural workforce in rural areas, impacting local food production
- 3.1.3.3. Gender biases and inequalities further restrict young women's access to land as prevailing ownership structures disenfranchise them.

### 3.1.4. Environmental Challenges:

- 3.1.4.1. Due to the impacts of climate change, young people in agriculture face unpredictable weather patterns, droughts, floods, soil degradation, and water scarcity. While these effects can be mitigated, farmers lack the training in appropriate techniques and still depend on traditional methods.



3.1.4.2. Decreasing rainfall and soil degradation threaten the viability of agriculture. The excessive use of fertiliser and chemicals further aggravates the situation. This lack of reliable water supply poses a significant challenge for irrigation and livestock watering.

### 3.1.5. Education and Training Gaps

- 3.1.5.1. The lack of relevant practical training and skills, particularly amongst rural youth and insufficient programs to provide internship opportunities for young graduates was severally flagged as a significant barrier
- 3.1.5.2. There is an additional shortage of extension services to provide ongoing support and technical assistance to young farmers.

## 3.2. Opportunities for Action

### 3.2.1. Technological Innovations:

- 3.2.1.1. Advances in agricultural technologies, such as drones and other precision farming tools, agricultural mechanisation, mobile applications, farm management





systems, and online platforms for selling agricultural products, provide significant opportunities for the youth to improve their agricultural practices and productivity. These technologies enable better monitoring, management, and marketing of agricultural activities.

- 3.2.1.2. Innovations in climate-smart agriculture can help mitigate the impacts of climate change and enhance sustainability. Youth can engage in projects related to conservation agriculture, sustainable land management, and efficient irrigation techniques.
- 3.2.1.3. Opportunities exist in using improved seeds tailored to local conditions and adopting modern agricultural practices like agroforestry and crop rotation. These methods are designed to increase productivity and maintain soil health, moving towards food self-sufficiency.

### 3.2.2. **Access to Resources and Funding:**

- 3.2.2.1. Support youth by facilitating access to various financing mechanisms, including microcredit, crowdfunding, and investment funds tailored to agricultural projects. Government and NGOs can also advocate for favourable financial products catering to young farmers' needs e.g. sustainable agriculture funds, dedicated funds for innovative projects.



- 3.2.2.2. Ensure young farmers have access to arable land and subsidise agricultural inputs and equipment. Simplify land acquisition processes and support legal frameworks that facilitate youth access to land and resources. Providing tools like rain gauges and irrigation systems can help youth manage water resources more efficiently.
- 3.2.2.3. Encourage the formation of agricultural cooperatives among young farmers to help them pool resources, share risks, and access markets more effectively. Cooperatives can also provide a platform for collective bargaining and advocacy
- 3.2.2.4. Provide targeted subsidies for essential agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilisers, and irrigation equipment, to make them more affordable for young farmers. This can help them adopt practices that are both climate-resilient and economically viable
- 3.2.2.5. Introduce insurance to protect young farmers against losses due to extreme weather events. Invest in infrastructure improvements to enhance market access and support agricultural activities. Priority should be given to qualitative rather than quantitative financing

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### 3.2.3. **Agro-Industrial Development:**

- 3.2.3.1. There are opportunities for youth to engage in various segments of the agricultural value chain, including processing, marketing, and distribution in collaboration with agro-food industries. Several government and NGO initiatives exist that support agricultural entrepreneurship and enhance the sustainability of agricultural value chains

### 3.2.4. **Capacity Building, Awareness and Knowledge Sharing:**

- 3.2.4.1. Through academic theoretical and practical training programs, internships, youth networks and platforms where young farmers can connect, and workshops, the investment in agricultural education and training programs will equip youth with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the sector.
- 3.2.4.2. Young farmers should be trained in the use of digital tools, including mobile apps for market access, weather forecasting, financial services, and techniques adapted to climatic variations, such as growing drought- or flood-resistant varieties.
- 3.2.4.3. Establish field schools and demonstration projects where young farmers can learn through practical experience. These projects can showcase the effectiveness of climate-resilient practices and inspire wider adoption.
- 3.2.4.4. Offer continuous technical support and advisory services to young farmers, helping them implement best practices for climate-resilient agriculture. This includes on-site support and remote advisory services through digital platforms.
- 3.2.4.5. Undertake community awareness campaigns to educate young people on the importance of climate-resilient farming practices. Address social perceptions of agriculture by promoting the sector as a viable and rewarding career option.

### 3.2.5. **Policy and Advocacy:**

- 3.2.5.1. Ensure that young people are involved in drafting agricultural policies that take account of climate challenges. Build into these policies incentive measures for sustainable practices e.g. offer tax breaks to young people who adopt climate-smart practices
- 3.2.5.2. Advocate for and implement policies that address the specific needs of young farmers, including access to land, financing, and training. Governments should involve youth in policy-making processes to ensure their voices are heard and their challenges addressed.

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- 3.2.5.3. Develop and promote policies that support adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, ensuring they are accessible and beneficial to youth in both urban and rural areas.
  - 3.2.5.4. These policies should further promote inclusivity and gender equality to ensure equal opportunities for marginalised groups including young women in agriculture.

### **3.2.6. Research and Development**

- 3.2.6.1. Carry out statistical studies of challenges and opportunities per agro-climatic zone
- 3.2.6.2. Provide climate forecasting tools to help farmers anticipate climatic hazards (weather application, drought alerts)

### **3.2.7. Collaboration and Partnerships**

- 3.2.7.1. The young people were able to identify numerous platforms for collaboration and partnership during each convening. The opportunity exists to strengthen this ecosystem to support youth engagement in agriculture.

The convenings focused on collating the youth voice to amplify it to continental and country policy makers to strengthen youth entrepreneurial ecosystem support. The challenges and possible interventions highlighted demonstrated strong consensus amongst the young people across the countries engaged. This consensus highlights the importance of empowering youth in agriculture by addressing their common challenges and leveraging the emerging opportunities for action. While much has been accomplished in the past, the acceleration of strategic actions, including supportive policies, enhanced financial access, gender inclusivity, sustainable practices, and enhancing education and training programs, are key for driving youth engagement and development in agriculture. Through coordinated efforts and partnerships, Africa can build a future where young people play a central role in advancing agricultural productivity, food security, and climate resilience and have access to significant opportunities for decent jobs within agricultural value chains.

## The Kigali Youth Declaration- A Call to Action

Specific Commitments by African Youth:



## 4. CALL TO ACTION- Empowering African Youth for a Resilient and Sustainable Future in Food Systems and Climate Governance

### Preamble

**Acknowledging** the critical situation in which 1/3 of African youths are currently unemployed and another 1/3 are vulnerably employed, this poses significant challenges to the continent's economic growth and social stability. If left unaddressed, the high dependency burden on the economically engaged population will continue to slow the growth of Africa's food systems, stifling innovation and progress.

**Recognizing** that by 2030, African youth will constitute 42% of the global youth population, more than 100 million young Africans will be seeking employment opportunities. This demographic presents both a challenge and an immense opportunity. Properly harnessed, this large youth population could be the driving force behind Africa's economic growth and transformation.

**Further recognizing** that currently, agriculture employs 50% of Africa's workforce and holds the highest potential to absorb the influx of young job seekers. However, more than 25% of youths entering the job market lack basic literacy, which hinders their ability to take advantage of available opportunities. We urge stakeholders to implement strategic actions that enhance

youth literacy, provide vocational training, and promote innovation within the agricultural sector, ensuring that this industry can offer sustainable livelihoods to the continent's burgeoning youth population.

**However**, if nothing is done to economically engage this growing youth population, the consequences could be dire. The youth are at risk of turning to crime and violence, or becoming victims of religious extremism and other forms of exploitation. Therefore, it is imperative to empower and engage young Africans as active participants in the continent's development.

**Therefore**, we call upon the African Union Heads of State and Governments, along with the international community, international organizations, the United Nations, civil society, the private sector, and other key decision-makers (hereafter referred to as 'Key Stakeholders'), to commit to the meaningful, inclusive, and systemic integration of youth engagement in Africa's agricultural and food systems and to address the urgent issue that more than 10 million young people are entering Africa's labor market every year, while only 3 million new jobs are being created. This commitment must extend to embedding youth in climate change frameworks and processes that directly impact the continent's agricultural resilience and sustainability. Furthermore, we urge these stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of the following resolutions, ensuring that Africa's youth are empowered to lead in transforming agriculture and securing the continent's future food security.

## 5. RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Invest in youth-centric food systems and climate policies-** We call upon African governments, regional bodies, and international partners to prioritize the integration of youth voices and leadership in the development and implementation of food systems and climate policies. Youth must be at the forefront of creating and enacting policies that enhance climate resilience, sustainable agricultural practices, and inclusive economic growth across Africa.
- 2. Enhance access to resources and funding for young farmers-** We urge stakeholders to expand access to financial resources, arable land, and agricultural inputs for young farmers. This includes the establishment of youth-focused microcredit schemes, investment funds, and simplified land acquisition and access processes. Such measures are essential for empowering youth to adopt modern, climate-smart agricultural practices and contribute to food security.
- 3. Strengthen capacity building and knowledge sharing-** We call for the implementation of comprehensive capacity-building programs, including practical training, internships, and digital literacy initiatives tailored to young farmers. Establish field schools, demonstration projects, and continuous advisory services to equip youth with the skills and knowledge necessary for climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable development.

4. **Promote technological innovation in agriculture-** We urge the adoption and promotion of technological innovations that enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability. Support youth-led initiatives in areas such as precision farming, agroforestry, and the use of digital platforms for market access and climate adaptation. Technological innovation must be a cornerstone of Africa's strategy to build resilient food systems.
5. **Enhance inclusive and gender-equitable agricultural policies:** We demand the creation and implementation of policies that ensure equal opportunities for all youth, including marginalized groups such as young women and youth with disabilities. Policies must address the unique barriers these groups face in accessing land, resources, and training, thereby promoting gender equality and social inclusion in agriculture.
6. **Accelerate agro-industrial development and value chain integration- we** call for increased investment in agro-industrial development, particularly in processing, marketing, and distribution, to create more opportunities for youth within the agricultural value chain. Strengthening these segments will not only enhance the sustainability of agricultural practices but also generate decent jobs for young people.
7. **Mobilize youth as key actors in climate action-** We urge stakeholders to mobilize youth as central actors in climate action initiatives across the continent. This includes integrating youth in climate governance structures, supporting youth-led research on climate impacts, and ensuring that youth are actively engaged in developing and implementing climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.
8. **Support collaboration and partnerships for youth empowerment-** We call for the strengthening of collaboration platforms that bring together youth, governments, NGOs, and the private sector. These partnerships are key for scaling successful youth-led initiatives, enhancing innovation, and amplifying youth voices in national and continental decision-making processes.
9. **Implement strong policy and advocacy frameworks-** We demand that young people be actively involved in the drafting and advocacy of agricultural and climate policies. Policies should incentivize sustainable practices, address the specific needs of young farmers, and ensure that youth perspectives are reflected in national and regional climate agendas.
10. **Facilitate research and development to inform youth engagement-** we call for targeted research and development initiatives that provide data and insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by youth in agriculture across different agro-climatic zones. Providing climate forecasting tools and other resources will enable young farmers to better anticipate and respond to climatic hazards, thereby enhancing their resilience.
- 11.



**12. Increase the flow of climate action finance** – we call on the global community to double its climate finance to Africa which is a victim of climate change more than any other continent because of its economy which is based on climate sensitive sectors such as agriculture. We urge for mobilization of public and private investments in carbon financing and climate-smart innovations.

Join us in this Call to Action to empower African youth, strengthen their potential, and build a resilient, sustainable future for food systems and climate governance on the continent. Together, we can create a more prosperous, equitable, and climate-resilient Africa. We affirm that African youth hold the greatest potential to grow the continent's food systems through innovation and vibrant labor. By investing in and supporting our youth, we can safeguard Africa's food security and ensure a prosperous future for all.





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