

Young People, Farming & Food Conference

19th - 21st March 2012
Accra, Ghana



Conference Newsletter #2 / Tuesday 20 March 2012



Ambassadors lend a hand

In the second plenary session of the day, after cocoa, tea and coffee, four panel members from the private sector shared experiences on how they engaged with young people.

Ruth Adjei, General Manager of Blue Skies Ghana, renowned for its export of cut fruit to major retailers in Europe, emphasised how young people bring creativity and dynamism to its workforce. **Leticia Osafo Addo's** presentation on Samba Foods highlighted her own determination to succeed in setting up an SME but the difficulty of obtaining financial support.

Nick Railston-Brown of TechnoServe-Ghana stated how, in the US, 80% of new businesses fail and, even if entrepreneurial spirit is encouraged in young graduates, the chances of failure are likely to be high. The highlight of the session was provided by the five youth ambassadors who accompanied **Yaa Amekudzi** of the Cadbury's Cocoa Partnership. Delegates heard the ambassadors relate how they have helped encourage young people to engage more in cocoa production (generally an activity for older farmers) through seminars, setting up nurseries as businesses, and encouraging entrepreneurial spirit and ideas. There is a real gap in policies to support young people in the cocoa sector, stated Yaa. But, she said, *"if we fail to empower communities through young people, we will be unable to sustain cocoa production in Ghana."*

Opportunity knocks?

Exciting signs of how young people are responding to income earning opportunities continued to be evident in a number of papers presented in today's panels on livelihoods and engaging young people. This was seen in the marketing of high value gum and resins traded in the pastoral areas of N. Kenya highlighted by **Yasin Mahadi** as well as in the horticultural sector in Ghana presented by **Abdul-Halim Abubakari** and in youth common interest groups (CIGs) in Kenya highlighted by **Judith Libaisi** which also provided evidence that youth are attracted to high value agricultural production value chains due to higher income earning opportunities.

But an underlying question was whether young people are sufficiently encouraged by the education system, their parents and communities to engage in the agri-food sector? **Tassew Woldehanna** suggested that an educated labour force can be more productive but that Ethiopian children and parents ask why invest in education if only to end up in agriculture? This was echoed in the study presented by **Sam Mpiira** on young adults in Central Uganda. **Kadenge Lewa** highlighted evidence from the coastal region of Kenya which shows that investment in school farms and young farmer clubs could be one way of achieving change in livelihood choices. However, **Lydia Biriwasha's** paper indicated that primary and secondary curricula fail to provide an updated view of agriculture and its opportunities.

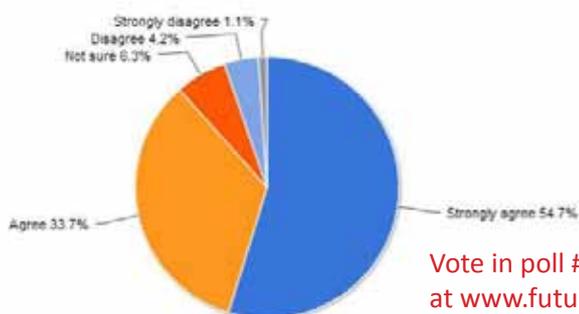
The voice of youth

Thembi Mwamakamba (Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network), opening the proceedings on day 2, presented a video from the 2011 FANRPAN youth policy dialogue held in Swaziland. The dialogue was informed by case studies from Malawi, Mauritius, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia and provided an open space for the youth to share their views. The dialogue resolved to document what is happening with agriculture in youth; make information available to them; specifically engage the youth in policy platforms; engage the youth in providing evidence to inform agricultural policies; and harness the knowledge of the youth on ICTs to further develop the agricultural sector. She concluded that FANRPAN is to focus on collecting information of interesting initiatives where young people are engaging with the agri-food sector to inform policies and determine what can be further supported and upscaled. She admitted that it is difficult to engage with the African private sector so they have started to engage with the NEPAD Business Foundation.

Jim Sumberg admitted during the open discussion that he was struggling with the language of 'the youth', and that the categories used (farmers, women etc.) are not always particularly useful as they hide tremendous differences. What is the new language that we should be using? By the end of the conference, he challenged the delegates to provide answers.

Online Poll #1: the results

Young people in Africa should play a central role in formulating agricultural policy.



Vote in poll #2
at www.future-agricultures.org

Entrepreneurship and employment

Three presentations analysed the issue of employment of young people in agribusiness. **Elosy Kangai** highlighted opportunities and challenges for Kenya's youth to meet GlobalGAP standards in horticultural production. **Isaac Jambo's** presentation provided insights on how the active engagement of Malawi's youth into the new bean markets is transforming the region's agriculture. The paper recommended a shift in priorities to integrate the youth within research to maximise the bean market opportunities. The final presentation, by **Francesca Dalla Valle**, called for stronger representation of young people in all spheres of policy debates.

Labour and migration

An ambitious agricultural scheme in Senegal to tackle illegal migration of young Senegalese to the Canary Islands was part of the discussion in the labour and migration panel, which looked at innovative ways of responding to Africa's labour crisis. The REVA Plan presented by **Mohamadou Sall** shared experiences in engaging young people in farming while tackling illegal immigration. **Habtmu Simesh** shared lessons from Ethiopia on the notion of surplus peasant farmers who are more successful in absorbing young people into jobs, but less effective in causing fundamental labour transformation. **Amadou Ndiaye** looked at the non-family workers (Sourga) who either seasonally or permanently provide labour in Senegalese agriculture. He called for formalization of their status to improve employment conditions. And a presentation by **Luis Montilla** on international contracts between African states and foreign direct investors on land deals drew interesting debate. Luis' study, which analysed around 80 contracts with Direct Foreign Investors, revealed loopholes which could undermine African livelihoods dependent on the land.

Land, policy and unrest

Gaynor Paradza presented research from Zimbabwe which explored young people's engagement and activism in the face of land transactions and land grabs, often from foreign agencies. Rights and claims on land are often intangible and hard to see, but attacks on them provoke strong reactions. These range from violent protests to more media-savvy campaigning and "naming and shaming" of those involved in often secretive deals.

Mike Mortimore told the recent story of Kwara State in Nigeria, where 13 white Zimbabwean farmers were invited in 2005 to farm 1000 ha each over long leases. Nigeria faces a policy dilemma where enough food can be produced, but people are unable to afford it. The career aspirations of young people have changed to: agricultural graduates expect to go and sit behind a desk, not work on a farm. There may be need to be more weight given to business management, and to present farming more effectively as a business opportunity.

Climate and cornflakes

What role do young people in Zimbabwe play in climate change adaptation - and making decisions about it? **Conrad Murendo's** evidence suggested that, although the youth do much of the work (average 3 hrs a day) on conservation agriculture, harvesting and weeding, their role in decision-making is low. **Esther Kihoro** talked about opportunities in Kenya for



young people to engage in work on adaptation. She suggested that young people's readiness to take up technology and to innovate work in their favour. The motivations for young people to get into agriculture are diverse. But successful initiatives need more support to "scale up", and more training is needed to motivate young people.

Laura Pereira showed the changing face of processed food through a selection (Cornflakes, French jam and Milo) gathered from the morning's breakfast. Supermarkets change tastes, innovate and push others out, and a few large companies control a disproportionate part of the food value chain. South Africa offers an interesting microcosm of these global changes, as a leader in agribusiness yet with high inequalities between rich and poor. New markets and products (eg cassava beer) are being created by innovative companies but consumers need more education to know what they're buying and eating.

Big issues, big questions

At the end of the day, delegates looked again at the key debates. Do we need a common definition of young people, or is youth a relative concept? Should we, given the structural nature of some of the problems, broaden out the debate beyond farming to other sectors? Or should the focus remain on what can be done in agriculture? In the closing session, Laura Pereira and Grace Mwaura remarked that education was a recurring theme in many sessions. Getnet Tadele reminded us to avoid the twin dangers of putting the blame on apathetic youth, or treating them as victims. Finally, Ian Scoones highlighted the importance of the politics arising in the context of dispossession, joblessness and low access to land, giving rise to major conflicts, and the danger of ignoring this political dimension.

"Young people today are completely fed up with being told what to do" - Ben White

Blogging the conference

The Future Agricultures blog has comment, opinion and analysis from many of the sessions, written by and for conference participants. Blogs are being uploaded daily as the conference progresses. Join in now and comment at www.future-agricultures.org/blog

Tweet of the day

@karugaj: #africa youth involvement in #agriculture driven by varying motivation to do old things differently #ypff2012