

Session title:	Positioning African Youths to Transform Food Systems Through Technology
Session number:	8
Type of session:	Livestreamed
Day:	Monday, 6 September 2021
Time:	11:15-13:00 EAT
No. of participants:	74
Session Organizers:	Heifer International
Moderator:	Leticia Mpoya
Rapporteur:	Muyiwa Moyela
Relevant outcome:	
Objectives:	<p>Heifer International's 2021 survey report, "The Future of Africa's Agriculture: An Assessment of the Role of Youth and Technology", reveals that "smallholder farmers will embrace advanced technologies if the tools are affordable, and they can receive training in how to use them."</p> <p>The report reveals the urgency of new investments to stimulate access to financing and technology innovation as a means to rejuvenating Africa's food systems and develop economic opportunities.</p> <p>The side event will review key findings of the report, discuss actionable solutions and chart new pathways to the future of food - fundamentally heralding a generational shift in African agriculture.</p>
Speakers: (*Name, Title, Organization)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peninah Wanja, Founder/CEO, DigiCow 2. Pierre Ferrari, CEO, Heifer International 3. Adesuwa Ifedi – SVP, Africa Programs at Heifer International 4. William Matovu – Country Director, Heifer Uganda 5. Ewurabena Yanyi-Akofur – Ag. Country Director, Heifer Ghana 6. Leticia Mpuya - Country Director, Heifer Tanzania 7. Elisee Kamanzi – Country Director, Heifer Kenya 8. Mwai Chitete - Country Director, Heifer Malawi 9. George Odhiambo, Country Director, Heifer Kenya.
Main highlights: (*For Insights and newsletter. To be based on the theme of the day. Fill in in bullet form)	
KEY CHALLENGES	

- Climate Change – climatic shocks like drought, tropical cyclones
- Limited or zero access to finance
- Illiteracy and poor agro-knowhow
- Low agricultural tech adoption, low innovation
- Poor access to market information and opportunities

INNOVATIONS PROPOSED

- Use of relevant technology to better harness weather patterns and mitigate climate shocks.
- Farmers and extension service providers need to make data-driven decisions to boost agriculture sector productivity
- More reliance on digital solutions for agriculture value chain activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ NEXT STEPS

- A call for increased investments in Capacity Courses and Programs that deliver training, knowledge and soft skills for farmers and agripreneurs.
- Enhanced information sharing to enable collaboration and timely decision making
- Mentorship / Literacy schemes for farmers and young agripreneurs
- Enable affordable, innovative financing and insurance support for stakeholders in agriculture sector.

Session Summary:

(*To go in final report. Max 300 words. Fill in prose)

The paradox of Africa's economic development is its urban and rural populations who produce most of the food - comprising mostly smallholder farmers practicing subsistence farming - live in extreme poverty.

This scenario scares away Africa's youth from careers in agriculture. Ordinarily Africa's youth should be replacing the aging farming population but this "generational shift" is not happening fast and well enough to secure Africa's food security goals. This youth hesitancy to embrace agriculture is further compounded by the uncertainty that comes with farming. Issues like climate change, lack of technology, illiteracy, and access to opportunities pose a great threat to farmers source of income.

While discussants explored current and post-pandemic ramifications for food systems in Africa, Mwai Chitete, Country Director for Heifer Malawi described the Heifer Report which examined current realities of the agriculture, youth and technology ecosystems in 11 African countries, as the "voice of the communities".

The discourse reflected on the urgency of fast-tracking the development of the continent's agriculture economy by replacing Africa's aging farmers and farming communities with young Africans who are early adopters of technology. Funding, training and access to agriculture technology support is crucial to youth to encourage their involvement in agriculture. These three areas of concern accounted for 38%, 24% and 11% respectively in the analyzed data.

The comments of Adesuwa Ifedi, Senior Vice President for Africa Programs at Heifer International help to situate the importance of positioning Africa's youth to transform food systems through technology. She said, "What happens to Agriculture in Africa in the foreseeable future has implications for global food security. As governments unbundle their economic development plans for the post-pandemic era, Africa's agriculture sector also has a tremendous opportunity to rise to prominence, and become a generator of technology innovation and valuable jobs for Africa's large youth population."

Tweetable quotes with timestamp:

(*For podcast and to go to AGRF Communication for social media. Minimum 3 per session)

- African Heads of State and Governments continue to enable the sector and are tapping into #agriculture to end hunger, reduce post-harvest losses, and enhance nutrition by 2025.
- We need to make agriculture cool, so more youth can be attracted to the sector.
- This Heifer report provides evidence-based data that shows that technology innovation, youth involvement and financing for early-stage Agripreneurs are vital for the next era of agriculture in Africa," said Adesuwa Ifedi, Senior Vice President for Africa Programs at Heifer International. "As the need for food security, domestic and global food demand keeps increasing, African agriculture needs to rise up to the opportunities that these challenges present."

How has the session contributed to the AGRF outcomes?

(*For end of AGRF communique/ Press release. List 3 - 5 top outcomes)

- The session showcased the urgency of mainstreaming relevant technology, young and female agripreneurs, including physically challenged citizens, in African agriculture.
- The session highlighted the need for more Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) arrangements to galvanize improved food systems.
- The need to de-risk farming and agripreneur activities via enablement programs/schemes that provide them with affordable finance and capacity building.
- Highlights the existence of the Heifer International's Impact Investment Fund called Impact Capital which provides a combination of grants and market finance to agric-sector players.

COMMITMENTS

Heifer International remains committed to bridging the financing, youth, technology innovation and skills gaps in Africa's agriculture and nutrition ecosystems systems through our ongoing work to support food systems stakeholders across the African continent.