



AGcelerate Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Forum

A multi-stakeholder partnership for innovation and co-creation of sustainable agri-businesses with a global perspective

Background

“Demographically, Uganda has one of the **youngest populations** in the world, with 60% of people below the age of 18 and 78% below 30 years old. However, youth account for **60% of the unemployed**, while three quarters of working youth are in **vulnerable employment**, cannot negotiate their own wages and, generally, do not hold bank accounts. Even though the national economy relies heavily on agriculture, which employs about 65% of the working population, the engagement of youth in the sector is declining”.*

Low profitability, poor security of land tenure, and high risks are just some of the reasons Uganda’s youth are leaving rural areas to seek jobs in cities, a migration that could lead to a shortage of farmers in the future. Given that agriculture is one of the Africa’s biggest economic sectors, generating broad economic development and providing much of the population with food, this poses a serious threat to the future of farming. Ageing farmers and declining crop yields under traditional farming systems mean engaging youth in agriculture must be a priority. It is young people that have the creativity and dynamism to adopt transformative new technologies to increase productivity whilst reducing environmental impact.

The scale of the problem of unemployment, providing food security and attracting young women and men into agriculture and agri-food, is so great that no one organisation can succeed alone. Collaborative partnerships are the only durable solution.

Development of the AGcelerate Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Forum

In 2017 the Open Impact Institute, Makerere and Gulu Universities, the RUCID Organic Agriculture Training College, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) and the Agripreneurship Alliance started an initiative called AGcelerate based in Kampala, Uganda. A first workshop organised in August 2017. From the outset, AGcelerate was aimed at exploring the creation of a forum where students and their mentors from the global North and South could interact to energise students regarding the opportunities for entrepreneurial activity within the agri-food sector. The second workshop in August 2018 clearly showed that a broader eco-system would be required to leverage the wider academic and research knowledge to forge truly innovative and sustainable youth-led agribusinesses through collaboration and development of marketable products along the agri-food value chain.

The foundations have been laid to develop AGcelerate into a vibrant multi-stakeholder partnership and collaborative ecosystem for innovation and co-creation to enable Ugandan youth to build

sustainable agribusinesses informed by evidence-driven research with a global perspective. Beyond the five founding partners, several other organisations are already involved: The Marula Creative Consultancy, The GUDIE Training Farm, Women of Uganda Network, the Young Farmers Champions Network, the IITA Youth Agri-Hub Ltd and the RUFORUM (Regional Universities Forum for Agricultural Capacity Building).

From the outset gender considerations have been core to the aims of AGcelerate and female representation has always been around 50%. The work of AGcelerate will specifically analyse how to attract women to become entrepreneurs in agri-food and how to address the key constraints that women face.

AGcelerate LAB 2020

The next AGcelerate LAB planned for August 2020 will further build this eco-system with increased participation from the private sector and financial institutions as well as other Universities in Uganda. The LAB will include a Boot Camp, a 2-day workshop and visits will be organised to large scale farms and agri-businesses, organic farms and innovation hubs.

AGcelerate is a unique model that can be implemented in other African countries. Through this project in Uganda, the research learnings will be captured, and the outcomes can be applied in other countries in SSA. Frequently organisations are doing very good work but in isolation, and with time-limited projects, whereas collaborative eco-systems such as AGcelerate can greatly increase impact and the long-standing sustainability.

* <http://www.fao.org/rural-employment/resources/detail/en/c/1069622/> Accessed Jan 22, 2020