



## **African Youth Agripreneurs Forum and AgriPitch Competition**

### ***Demonstrating Success of Agribusinesses in Job and Wealth Creation in Africa***

#### **Concept Note**

##### **Background**

Africa has the world's youngest population with about 60% of the population being under 35 years old. Today, the majority of youth in Africa do not have stable economic opportunities. There are 420 million youth aged 15-35 in Africa. Of those who are not students, one-third are unemployed and discouraged, another third are vulnerably employed, and only one in six is in wage employment. On the other hand, the average age of farmers in Africa is alarmingly high (60 years) for a continent hoping to feed itself and to eradicate malnutrition by 2025. In the agriculture sector, lack of access to land, finance, markets, technologies and practical skills are barriers to youth participation. In addition, there is a perception among the youth of farming as an unattractive career path, which is characterized by hard labor, long hours and poor remuneration and scant social recognition.

There are existing opportunities to empower the youth into each stage of the agricultural value chain as "agripreneurs," by harnessing new skills, technologies and approaches. The result would be more jobs for young people, increased food production for a growing population, less reliance on food imports, and a healthier trade balance for African countries. The business approach to agriculture that the Bank has committed to would help improve productivity, competitiveness and entrepreneurship among Africa's youth. The ENABLE (Empowering Novel Agri-Business-Led Employment) Youth Program has shown evidence that with greater access to the agribusiness enterprise youth can become the driving force of agricultural transformation in Africa. With the right skills, improved access to credit and an enabling environment, young African men and women can become the proud owners of profitable agribusiness enterprises. The success of young entrepreneurs can help address such serious social issues as the rural and transatlantic migration and soaring youth unemployment and curtail the associated risks to society.

There is a proliferation of incubation and accelerator initiatives across Africa in recent years. However there is currently no continent-wide forum/framework to connect the programs. The African Youth Agripreneur Forum (AYA Forum) therefore intends to serve as a platform for aggregating agripreneurs across Africa and escalating the impact of their activities. The



AYA Forum will comprise of the following: (a) the AYA Forum, a two-day Conference/Workshop with thematic discussions and presentation of success stories; (b) Agri-Pitch Entrepreneurship Competition that will lead to a selection of three finalists for presentation at the Bank’s annual meetings in India in May 2017; and (c) side events including a mentor and incubator training program. The AYA Forum will become a flagship element of the ENABLE Youth Program that highlights the key features and success stories as well as the impact of the Bank’s investments across Africa for youth Agripreneurship. The AYA Forum will also showcase the strength of collaboration and partnership with key institutions such IITA, AAIN, CTA, and others.

**Purpose and Objectives**

1. Demonstrate/showcase success and business potential of agribusiness across Africa for job and wealth creation; and
2. Connect agripreneurs to business and development organizations.

**Expected Outcomes**

1. Demonstrate and showcase successes and business potential of agribusiness across Africa for job and wealth creation;
2. Connect youth agripreneurs to business and development organizations and linkages with potential markets as off-takers within and outside Africa;
3. Promote linkages among entrepreneurs, with possible Letters of Intent to collaborate between clusters of agripreneurs;
4. Run an Agri-Pitch competition where the 3 top competitors will be invited to the AfDB Annual Meetings in India in May to present their proposal and receive an award.

**Target Participants**

This Forum is organized to attract and showcase the youth in agribusiness across Africa, mentors and incubator managers for training, investors in agriculture, National Governments, agribusiness development organizations, universities and other learning institutions teaching agribusiness and development partners.

**Criteria for the Selection of Participating Youth and Selected Collaborators**

The forum will bring together a total of about 200 youths in Africa. The youth will be selected taking into consideration a number of factors including:

- Youth active in agribusiness or agriculture sector or related value chain;
- Promoting own innovation for increased production and marketing;



- Have current membership in a youth network or association;
- Possess skills to share and disseminate agribusiness information and knowledge;
- Be a youth mentor and/or incubatee through incubation activities;
- Have the ability to pitch and share the business value proposition among other actors;
- 50% women and 50% men;
- Participants from all African countries.

The above factors and considerations will be shared with key development partners engaged in agricultural transformation and agribusiness value chain development activities to nominate participants for the Forum. This will allow the Forum to engage various youth agripreneurs and organizations that support them for sustainability of the Forum moving forward. The organizations contacted will include but not be limited to:

- Representatives of the African Union Youth Desk and NEPAD; IITA Agripreneurs; CTA Agrihack & Youth Farmers Network; AAIN Incubates and Mentors; AGRA Youth in Agribusiness and Advocacy Network; Africa Lead (USAID) for Youth Champions in Agribusiness Network; Y-PARD for Young Professionals in Agriculture; ANAFE Students on internship and incubation; FARA Youth in Agriculture Network; African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD); RUFORUM youth and agribusiness students; FAO supported Agribusiness youth networks and mentors; EYE University Network in Nigeria; Ministries of Agriculture from various countries per region.

## Modalities of the Forum

### 1. AYA Forum – 2 day Conference

- Speakers will address the objectives of the Forum, representing the private and public sectors related to Agriculture.
- Each region in Africa will have speakers to share experiences and connect the Forum with the socioeconomic realities in each region and prepare the way forward to increase success stories and impact of agribusiness on job and wealth creation.
- The venue for subsequent AYA forums will rotate to different regions of the continent.
- Workshops, panel sessions, keynote addresses and pre-recorded videos will be used to engage participants.
- There will be plenary panel presentations by the youth and to the youth, to showcase how they designed solutions addressing the typical challenges that young people face when getting into agribusiness, e.g. challenges in accessing finance, land, knowledge and skills, markets, supportive policy environment, etc.



- vi. There will be exhibitions at the Forum, with Agripreneurs and others showcasing products, tools, innovative solutions, research findings, financial products, etc. These form a core activity of the Forum. The exhibitions will promote prearranged B2B meetings between the entrepreneurs and investors.
- vii. Some entrepreneurs will arrive early, to participate in a 2-day pre-conference training on selected themes such as business management, intellectual property rights regarding their businesses, etc. These group sessions will enhance their skills and exposure to best practices.
- viii. A leader's dialogue will feature the AfDB President and other prominent personalities providing a Vision for a New Africa.

## 2. Agri-Pitch Entrepreneurship Competition

- i. Participants will comprise African youth (aged 18–35) eligible to participate and to pitch their innovations. There will be three categories of winners to be presented at the AfDB Annual Meetings in India in May 2017. These participants will all be fully sponsored by the AfDB. Contest proposals will need to be submitted online by 20 March 2017.
- ii. Prizes will be awarded after a rigorous pitching by representatives from across Africa. They will pitch on innovation in agriculture which could cover ICT, production, harvesting and processing, marketing, logistics, research, financial services, etc.
  - a. Selection criteria will ensure sufficient representation by both genders, and may include all or some of the following criteria: value proposition and innovation rationale; sustainability and scaling-up; project feasibility; professionalism and presentation of the proposal; sustainability, Gender and youth inclusiveness, etc.
- iii. Applications will be provided online to the Forum participants. Assessments of submitted pitches will be done by a selected panel.
- iv. Final selections will be made during the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the Forum, with criteria including:
  - a. Level of sufficiency of verbal defense.
  - b. Ability to withstand scrutiny for authenticity and ownership
  - c. Drive and commitment of entrepreneur(s) to the initiatives.
- v. Entries may be by individuals or groups of 2–3 entrepreneurs.
- vi. The judging will be done by notable leaders in the sector and criteria and method of selection will be agreed by the Technical Committee using the guide above.
- vii. The top three contestants will be invited to the Bank's annual meetings in India to present their pitches and the top prize will be handed over by the President at the Annual Meetings.