



Accelerating youth e-agriculture entrepreneurship Partner Workshop

23 to 24 April 2017 – Ibadan, Nigeria

(Pre-event of the AfDB African Youth Agripreneurs Forum 25-26 April 2017)

(Draft concept note)

1. **BACKGROUND**

Creating employment opportunities and decent livelihood options for the youth is one of the most pressing challenges facing governments in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. In this regard, the *Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU* (CTA www.cta.int¹) has been executing various programmes to promote youth engagement in agribusiness, including through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

CTA is currently looking at scaling up these initiatives for more impacts. This workshop is one of the channels through which the Centre is devising strategies in this framework. The two days of the workshop will focus on specific items as presented below.

a) Discussion of a project idea to scale-up youth agribusinesses through ICT business services (Day 1)

One key ambition of CTA has been to contribute to the development of a performant, profitable and inclusive agribusiness in ACP countries. Supporting youth in agribusiness is an important approach in this perspective. Not only does youth labour provide dynamism and innovation in any sector, but youth entrepreneurship is an effective vehicle for new employments if adequate supportive frameworks are in place.

For many years, CTA has been supporting various [youth agribusiness activities](#). It has been observed that many young businesses are struggling to generate enough revenues and reach profitability. Records are not professionally held, access to assets (land, modern equipment, etc.) is a challenge notably due to lack of sufficient capital; business acumen is lacking. Apart from this, youth agribusinesses are facing common agricultural challenges, including weak access to effective advisory services, market information asymmetries, lack of access to market.

¹ The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). Our mission is to advance food and nutritional security, increase prosperity and encourage sound natural resource management in ACP countries.

Various options are usually leveraged upon to address these challenges, including the use of **information technology**. Indeed, in recent years, through the use of ICT for agriculture (ICT4Ag) platforms, a number of solutions have been designed, mainly by young ICT innovators, to contribute to resolve these agrifood systems issues. While many of the technology platforms are still inchoate, others have demonstrated their effectiveness to support the sector. Because the ICT4Ag sector is nascent and because of the profile of their promoters, many young ICT start-ups still need support to better serve agricultural businesses, to reach profitability and scale.

CTA has been designing a model through which young ICT service providers can support young agripreneurs by offering effective services that the latter actually need. Through this model, strong business partnerships between young agripreneurs and young ICT agripreneurs (entrepreneurs offering ICT services to agriculture) can be facilitated to strengthen both businesses.

This approach **linking young entrepreneurs from both sectors** has unique potential to enable a higher adoption rate of innovations in agribusiness for improved incomes and productivity. In parallel, relevant additional business services by professional institutions will still be offered. The approach requires that the ICT needs of young agripreneurs are first identified, and then matched with relevant ICT offering of young (and non-young) service providers. Young agripreneurs targeted in priority are those that are already benefiting from (national) programmes supporting entrepreneurship in agriculture or agribusinesses. ICT services offered will thus complement supports they are already benefiting from and impacts and sustainability will be more attainable. ICT agripreneurs will also be supported to offer those services to agripreneurs.

Supporting both young agripreneurs and young ICT agripreneurs is in line with its Youth Strategy. CTA, through this strategy, has ambitioned to support youth ICT entrepreneurs' so that, on the one side, they generate more income for their businesses, and, on the other side, they support the agricultural value chains by providing effective services.

CTA will explore the development of a project idea on this approach in partnership with invited partners.

b) Reviewing and scaling up the AgriHack Talent initiative (Day 2)

CTA's AgriHack Talent initiative has aimed at strengthening ICT and innovation and entrepreneurship by youth in agriculture. Co-designed with young people and partners from ACP countries in 2013, it has included:

- a) competitions to develop ICT applications for agriculture (hackathons) when there is a need;
- b) a start-up competition (called Pitch AgriHack) targeting companies already offering e-agriculture services;
- c) capacity building, mentorship and incubation opportunities;
- d) promotional and networking opportunities;
- e) access to grants and facilitation of access to investments to scale-up services offered on the ground.

Beneficiaries have the opportunity to be involved in other CTA activities and those of its partners (Apps4Ag, Plug and Play events, etc.). Best start-ups involved so far have benefited from about **USD 1 million** (investment and grants from various national and international parties). **Several hundreds of thousands of farmers** have been reached by services provided through the use of applications developed by the start-

ups involved. In Kenya, FarmDrive has helped farmers to have **access to loans** by helping them improve their creditworthiness and linking them with financial service providers. Other insights on results achieved so far are presented in section 4 below.

So far, some **600 young innovators and entrepreneurs** have been involved in the hackathons and start-up competition. More than 20 ICT hubs or institutions from 15 countries have been involved. The programme has engaged with institutions such as ministries in charge of ICT and agriculture, AfDB, regional organisations (including the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, the AAIN, Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions) and the private sector (e.g. Microsoft, ProHaus Group and Telesur).

In May 2015, ARDYIS project (in the framework of which the AgriHack initiative was developed) won the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society [Project Prize](#). AgriHack was one of the two activities highlighted on this occasion.

CTA is currently looking at scaling up this initiative for more impacts. Learning from previously implemented AgriHack activities will contribute to this.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The Partner Workshop “*Accelerating youth e-agriculture entrepreneurship for improved livelihoods*” aims at discussing strategies to scale up CTA’s [AgriHack Talent programme](#) and to enable stronger business partnerships between **youth agribusinesses** (agricultural entrepreneurs and ICT entrepreneurs that service the agriculture sector). The event is organised in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB), the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the African Agribusiness Incubation Network (AAIN). Apart from these institutions, participants will include partners such as ICT incubators and venture capitals so far involved, some best start-ups involved, ACP agriculture support organisations as well as some international development institutions.

The specific objectives are to:

- Review results of past AgriHack Talent initiatives (particularly Pitch AgriHack);
- Exchange on proposals aiming at supporting youth agribusinesses via stronger youth ICT business services;
- Discuss technical partnership and funding opportunities.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE MEETING

Day 1: Discussion of a project idea on ICT and youth agribusiness – by invitation only, about 20 participants. The project proposal might be focused on two to three countries. After confirmation of the need of the project in the selected countries, questions to discuss to design an outline of the project will include:

- Discussions on specific **targets** (direct and indirect) of the project and their size
- What are the farmer needs, specifically **young agripreneurs challenges needs**, that ICT solutions can address in the selected countries?
- Current youth **agricultural employment initiatives** that can be involved in the project in the selected countries
- Local value chain framework and values targeted beneficiaries can benefit from
- Which commodities to target?

- Current **ICT for agriculture initiatives, notably young ICT Agripreneurs** that we may need to involve or take into account in the selected countries
- Current ICT for agriculture needs that the project can address
- How can the project best enable successful business partnerships between young agripreneurs and young ICT agripreneurs (activities)?
- How to ensure the project can facilitate **employment** creation, **improved incomes** (for agripreneurs and ICT agripreneurs), improved **business processes** and productivity?
- Articulate **objectives** and **activities**
- Possible **donors** and **technical partners**
- Initial discussions on **indicators**, monitoring and **knowledge capitalisation**

ICT services that may be offered (depending on needs) include:

- Market information services (advisory information) via digital tools
- Access to e-commerce platforms to extend markets
- Facilitating access to agricultural machinery via ICT platforms
- ICT and Social media for business and agricultural marketing training
- Use of drones.

The session will be held from 13:00 PM (lunch) to 18:00 PM on Sunday 23 April. Small group discussions may be organised in addition on other days. Prior to the workshop, participants will be requested to prepare insights on these issues.

Participants

A maximum of 20 people will take part in these discussions, coming from the following organisations:

a) Agricultural organisation

- Fédération des Unions des Producteurs du Bénin (FUPRO) - Benin
- Projet de Promotion de l'Entrepreneuriat Agricole (PPEA) Benin
- SOCOOP DEFUSCAM Membre de la CNOP-CAM (Cameroon)
- Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) – Nigeria
- Enable Youth Program / IITA
- FAO Senegal
- Ministry of agriculture Nigeria

b) ICT for agriculture service provider

- LoftyInc Allied Partners Limited/Wennovation Hub (Nigeria)
- Hello Tractor Inc (Nigeria)
- ActivSpaces (Cameroun)
- Etrilabs (Benin)

c) Cross-cutting interests

- African Development Bank (AfDB) – Enable Youth program and beyond
- African Agribusiness Incubation Network (AAIN)
- Advance Consulting (Consultant)
- ProHaus Group (Venture Capital)
- Tony Elumelu Foundation (not yet confirmed)

Day 2: Reviewing and scaling up the AgriHack Talent Programme – Other participants will join, about 35 participants max in total. Exchanges will be organised on the following:

- Presentation and discussions of some results of AgriHack hackathons
- Presentation and results of Pitch AgriHack
- Learning from AgriHack Talent interventions
- Demonstration session of some products developed (to be confirmed)
- How to organise successful incubation and capacity building for e-agriculture start-ups?
- How to leverage capital for e-agriculture start-ups?
- Discussions on actionable impacts for the AgriHack Talent initiative (around income generation for farmers, improved business processes for agriculture stakeholders, successful e-agriculture businesses for young entrepreneurs, increased employment)
- Mechanisms to enable start-ups to impact farmers and agriculture stakeholders
- How to develop partnerships around Pitch AgriHack?
- How to leverage funding and technical partnerships for the AgriHack Talent programme?

4. INSIGHTS ON RESULTS OF PAST AGRIHACK ACTIVITIES

a) The hackathons

The initial AgriHack Talent activities organised were the hackathons, followed by incubations of best talents, in partnership with various partners who implemented the projects on the ground when required (Togo, Nigeria, Benin, Durban, Suriname, Kenya, etc.).

After lessons learned from hackathons, CTA has decided to put the focus on existing apps/services that could be identified notably through competitive processes. The new phase would strengthen results achieved so far and make farmers benefit immediately from existing innovations and help scale up youth businesses. This has led to the launch of Pitch AgriHack.

b) The incubation and capacity building processes

Following winning hackathons innovators were put in contact with ICT innovation hubs (incubators) that CTA has involved in the initiative. Generally, the incubation support provided lasts 6 months and includes elements such as:

- **Customer Discovery:** use of *Human Centered Design tools*
- **User Interface (UI) and User Experience (UX):** Improvement of the look of the platform to reflect the value hypothesis of the start-up
- **Minimum Viable Product (MVP) development to test assumptions:** based on the learning from the discovery phase, the winning teams develop a Minimum viable product to test their value hypothesis with potential customers
- **Networking with (agri)business partners** to favour the establishment of institutional partnerships
- **Financing modeling**

Incubators involved include mLab Eastern Africa, mLab Southern Africa, Outbox Hub (Uganda), Wenvovation Hub (Nigeria), SlashRoots Foundation (Jamaica); Etrilabs (Benin).

Successful apps that emerged from the hackathons and that are currently in use include MoBis (by [Ensibuuko](#) in Uganda), FarmDrive platform (by [FarmDrive](#) in Kenya), [CropGuard](#) (by the Addis Alem Cooperative in Barbados) and [Agrinfo](#) (Tanzania). Other prototypes with potential that are still being improved include Fisher Innove (Benin), [Soja decision](#) (Togo), and [Agrisoft](#) (Togo).

Results of an AgriHack activity

CTA supported FarmDrive to facilitate access to finance for young Kenyan farmers

FarmDrive, a young company offering ICT services to help farmers improve their livelihoods, collaborated in 2016 with CTA to train 500 young farmers on digital records keeping and help them access to credit. Created by young Kenyan students in the framework of CTA's AgriHack competition in 2013, the FarmDrive's application <https://farmdrive.co.ke/> is an innovative credit scoring platform that helps farmers leverage on their farm records to access credits. Farmers who use the app to manage their records improve their creditworthiness and have increased possibility to access finance through FarmDrive's partners. In 2016, through CTA's support, FarmDrive trained 500 youth in 7 counties in Kenya in digital records keeping; about 1,500 farmers were in total reached through awareness raising activities. As a result, about 3000 farmers signed up and a total of 381 loans have been disbursed worth up to 12 million Kenya shillings. An assessment by FarmDrive showed that the income of farmers involved has increased by 31.71% and access to credit has increased by 54.81%. FarmDrive has also attracted investments and grants (at least USD 250 000) from an international institutions including Mercy Corps, Engineers without Borders, Roddenbury Foundation, Safaricom Spark Venture Fund.

c) The first edition of Pitch AgriHack (competition targeting existing platforms)

In 2016, CTA organised the first edition of its Pitch AgriHack. The competition was hotly contested with [25 finalists](#), selected out of 152 e-agriculture start-ups from across Africa and the Caribbean. Before the announcement of winners, finalists benefited from a training bootcamp on 22 November at [Ihub Nairobi](#), focused on offering successful business services in e-agriculture. The finalists were also coached on how to pitch effectively and benefited from capacity building on various business topics including raising capital, IPR issues, etc. On 23 November 2016, they presented their services publicly before a jury and an audience composed of agriculture and ICT experts and institutions, including venture capitals.

Winners of Pitch AgriHack 2016

Early stage category

Winner: Brastorne Enterprises (Botswana), with the [mAgri platform](#): it is a USSD application that gives farmers access to relevant information and to a mobile marketplace. mAgri can be used on any phone including basic feature phones. Currently, the application has about 150,000 users.

First Runner Up: Daral Technologies (Senegal) - Daral is a livestock application. Its web component helps collect and visualise data regarding farmers and their livestock while providing an advisory service platform for farmers. Its mobile component consists of an SMS-based alert system. Daral has been collaborating with the government of Senegal.

Second Runner Up: MobFit (Uganda) - MoBFIT is a GSM-supported agricultural supply chain software, ambitioning to directly connect 20 million smallholder rural farmers in Uganda to buyers in the market at a low cost via SMS and automated voice call technology. Mobfit collaborates with Savings and Credit Co-operatives (SACCOs).

Advanced stage category

Winner: Sooretul (Senegal) - Sooretul is a web and mobile marketplace for agricultural processed products offered by women. The platform ensures a better access of rural women offerings to the urban demand. Customers buy online and products can be delivered at home. Current partners include Orange Senegal and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Other winners: One of the CTA partners for the event, Prohause VC, gave additional prizes to start-ups whose business models they found to be promising. These include [Kuza](#) from Kenya, [AgroCenta](#) from Ghana and [FarmAfriQue](#) from Nigeria.

The African Agribusiness Incubation Network ([AAIN](#)), another partner, will provide incubation opportunities to other finalists start-ups.

New CTA publication to be launched at the Forum
ICT Agripreneurship Guide: A Path to Success for Young ACP entrepreneurs



