



Africa's rural youth – An underutilized resource for the transformation of African agriculture

A session organized by the Program of Accompanying Research on Agricultural Innovation (PARI) at the Center for Development Research (ZEF) of the University of Bonn at ICAE 2018

2 August 2018 | 14:00-15:30

Rural youth are an important yet underutilised resource for agricultural growth and economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The prevalence of vulnerable, low-quality jobs, rather than the relatively low unemployment rates, constitutes the main labour market challenge on the continent. The International Labour Organization estimates that among the working youth in Sub-Saharan Africa as many as 80% are employed in the informal economy, typically considered a more vulnerable employment, and close to 70% are poor. Many of those young people live in rural areas. Given that the agriculture sector remains the most important economic sector in the region, strategies and investments that support the sector's development and increase the human capital of rural youth can significantly improve employment opportunities and quality in the future.

In this session, researchers from ZEF will offer insights from their research on **how to incentivize and enable young people in Africa to stay and economically engage in rural areas**. Each of them will bring their own priorities to the discussion, while debunking some commonly held views in this area.

Target audience: The session is aimed at academics who are undertaking research related to agricultural innovation and development, job creation and rural-urban migration in developing countries as well as practitioners engaged in related policies and programs.

Format: In order to stimulate a lively debate, the session will be organized as a moderated panel discussion to give the researchers an opportunity to challenge each other and be queried by the audience. The panelists will be encouraged to make minimal use of PowerPoint presentations so as to leave sufficient time for an interactive and dynamic debate. The focus will be on identifying evidence-based strategies for youth engagement in rural Africa.

Chair: Till Ludwig, ZEF

Panelists:

Dr. Oliver Kirui (Kenya) contends that the agriculture sectors in Africa will only develop if the technical knowledge and skills of the youth are improved. This requires a fundamental reform of the agricultural vocational and training systems on the continent to provide the necessary skills not only at the farm level, but along the entire agricultural value chain.

Dr. Tekalign Sakketa (Ethiopia) shows that the motivation of farmers that is induced by the performance of others plays an important role in the adoption of agricultural technologies. Investing in lead farmers

can offer role models for farmers to aspire to and show them how to utilize the available resources to improve their livelihoods.

Dr. Georgina Wambui (Kenya) indicates that gender sensitive institutional and technological innovations along agricultural value chains in Africa can help address the cultural and resource related constraints that especially poor women face along value chains. A gender lens is therefore essential to accelerate women's participation in value chain development programs thus improving productivity, increase food security, incomes, and general wellbeing.

Essa Mussa (Ethiopia) finds that working during childhood can positively impact people's earnings later in life, provided that the work does not come at the detriment of schooling. In particular those engaged in non-farm low-skill jobs can benefit from entrepreneurial skills developed as children.

Thomas Daum (Germany) shows that there is not *one* youth. Instead, young people have very diverse aspirations with regard to agriculture, rural life and cities. Policymakers and development practitioners need to pay much more attention to this diversity to avoid well-intended but misguided policies.

SYMPOSIUM AT ICAE 2018

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Speakers:

Dr. Oliver Kirui on the role of technical knowledge and skills

Dr. Georgina Wambui on opportunities and challenges for young women

Dr. Tekalign Sakketa on the importance of motivation in technology adoption

Essa Mussa on the implications of child labour on future earnings

Thomas Daum on the aspirations of rural youth

