

Partner Event Report - Connecting young digital innovators in the agri-food sector to FAO Programmes in Africa

Partner Event Number, Date and Time:

7 September 2020
11:00 – 13:00

Partner Event Title and Organizers:

Connecting young digital innovators in the agri-food sector to FAO Programmes in Africa

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA), Generation Africa

Key speakers/presenters:

Dickson Naffali, Head, Generation Africa

Ade Freeman, Regional Programme Leader, FAO Regional Office for Africa

Tony Nsanganira, Youth Employment in Agri-food system Specialist, FAO Regional Office for Africa

Ken Lohento, Senior Programme Coordinator, Youth Agripreneurship - ICT4Ag, CTA

Alima Bawah, Co-founder and COO, Cowtribe Inc

Edeh Dona Etchri, Founder, e-Agribusiness

Main themes/issues discussed

Many young people have developed innovative digital solutions in response to the challenges experienced in the agricultural sector. However, they often struggle to gain a foothold in the market. The event provided an opportunity to highlight the different challenges facing Africa's agri-food system e.g. food insecurity, high dependence on food imports, etc., but also the many opportunities that exist for young people, in particular in the area of digital technologies and innovations. Some of the related enabling initiatives for African youth were presented e.g. the Global Network for Digital Agriculture and Innovation Hubs, as well as National Digital Agriculture Strategies.

Summary of key points

The event highlighted that digital opportunities are an opportunity to increase the participation of youth, who make up the overwhelming majority of Africa's population, in the agricultural sector. It was stressed that development partners must support innovators in order to help them scale up their solutions and create jobs and opportunities for Africans. In addition, it is important to connect young innovators to their target group: farmers. FAO, academia and other partners can play a key facilitating role to connect innovators to the field in order to properly assess the needs and challenges that their innovations can respond to.



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A key highlight of the session was the bilateral discussions held between nine agro-innovators (Farmignite, E-Farms, Kitovu Technology Company, Profish Ghana Limited, Arinifu Technologies Ltd, Raino Tech4impact, Shamba Records, Cowtribe Inc., and Agrinfo Company Limited) and FAO technical experts. These discussions offered the youth a chance to pitch their companies and ideas to FAO officers in charge of projects and programmes, and for FAO officers to offer advice on areas of improvement, and inform them of the wide range of project portfolios to which the digital innovations could potentially contribute.

Call to Action Key Points

The young innovators, FAO and other partners will continue to discuss collaboration opportunities. In particular, the participants of the bilateral discussions have agreed to further network at country-level, share relevant guidance and knowledge materials, explore opportunities to further pilot youth services in FAO projects, particularly in the framework of a regional roadmap being initiated by FAO for promoting digital agri-food systems in Africa.