Youth in agribusiness
promoting job creation in Africa
From 20-21 August 2018, in Kigali, Rwanda, a regional conference was held under the theme: “Youth Employment in Agriculture as a Solid Solution to ending Hunger and Poverty in Africa: Engaging through Information & Communication Technologies & Entrepreneurship.”

The conference organized by the Government of Rwanda, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the African Union in partnership with other organizations aimed to raise awareness on the urgency of having more youth engage in agriculture.

This is drawn along the fact that, currently, agriculture in Africa is done by people above the age of 50 years, and in most cases with little or no education. Over 400 delegates including youth agripreneurs, farmers and institutions from different African countries participated in the conference.

Africa is betting on the youth to bring more technological innovations to the sector to increase production and productivity and for creation of more jobs for the youth in Africa who account for 60% of all African unemployed.

With only 330 chickens, his life, that of his family and of the neighbors has been transformed. In this edition of the newsletter, read about a young man in Gisagara District who has been supporting his rural Save sector to end malnutrition and improve the income of his family.

Although, African leaders have pledged to implement and achieve the goals marked out in the regional and global commitments such as, the Maputo declaration, Malabo declaration on Accelerated Agriculture Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), more action is needed on the ground. FAO continuously reminds the continent to do much as regards to funding to the agriculture sector in order to boost development of their economies.

Do you remember what you have done in the last thirty five years?...perhaps, some of our readers had not been born then!

Well, one of FAO Rwanda staff has been pitching up to work for over 30 years! Meet Jeannine Mukamugema who celebrated her Coral anniversary of work, and then...says good bye! And more exciting stories are lined up for you in this edition.

We thank you for your usual contribution - in any form - towards a zero hunger world by 2030, and through working together it is possible!

Wish you good reading!

Gualbert Gbehounou
FAO Representative in Rwanda

Cover photo: A farmer poses in a chili farm in Gashora, Bugesera District, East of Rwanda.
From 20–22 August 2018, in Kigali, Rwanda, the Government of Rwanda, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the African Union, co-organized an international conference, Youth Employment in Agriculture as a Solid Solution to ending Hunger and Poverty in Africa: Engaging through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Entrepreneurship.

Over 400 delegates including youth agripreneurs, farmers and institutions from different African countries participated in the conference.

FAO Director-General, José Graziano da Silva, during the conference stressed the need to create more jobs for youth and build capacity in rural areas to use digital technologies.

He said Africa’s young people are key to achieving the continent’s sustainable development, but realizing this great potential requires creating more jobs for them, including in the increasingly digitalized agriculture sectors.

“We need to take action to make agriculture more attractive to young people. They must perceive agriculture as a remunerative and profitable sector and the dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in rural areas play an important role in this regard,” Graziano da Silva said.

The conference was aimed to foster an exchange among stakeholders on knowledge and best practices regarding the interfaces between agriculture, youth employment, entrepreneurship, ICT innovations in agriculture and rural development.

African countries are still struggling to find jobs for their estimated 1.2 billion young people. Tens of millions of jobs will have to be created each year in rural areas for Africa to harness the dividends of this youthful population.

Rwanda’s minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Mrs. Gerardine Mukeshimana said: “Growth in agriculture is 2-3 times more effective at reducing poverty than any equivalent amount of growth generated in other sectors.”

UNIDO Director General Li Yong stressed the importance of integrating youth in the agriculture sector, particularly in rural areas, to address the challenge of decent and sustainable employment that is coupled with rapid urbanization and work-related migration.

Josefa Leonel Sacko, Commissioner for the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture at African Union (AU), urged African countries to shift to Agribusiness if they are to achieve Malabo Declaration which calls for creation of job opportunities for 30 per cent of the continent’s youth through agriculture by 2025.

More on the story: bit.ly/2PRcEjR
FAO’s Director-General, José Graziano da Silva met with Rwanda’s Head of State, Paul Kagame, on August 21, 2018 in Kigali. Graziano expressed his satisfaction for meeting President Kagame and further thanked him for his will and commitment in fostering rural development and jobs for the African youth.

FAO has been supporting the Government of Rwanda in this sector by providing technical skills to farmers to develop their entrepreneurial capacities among others.

Several youths have successfully entered into agriculture, and serve as role models to fellow youths. During the Youth employment in agriculture conference, some of them shared their motivations, experiences, challenges and successes in engaging in the sector.

Ruramiso Mashumba, is a farmer and a chairperson of The Zimbabwe Farmers Union Young Farmers’ Club.

“Innovation brings efficiency to increase yields. Agriculture is fun. In Africa we drive tractors, in the USA they use GPS driven equipment. Innovations are promoting young people to take up agriculture.”

Dieudonné Twahirwa, Managing Director of Gashora Farm Ltd in Rwanda. The company produces and exports chili.

“Support the young people who are already in agribusiness, and then use them to be role models to inspire others.”

A smallholder farmer and educationist from Zambia:

“We create school farm spaces in senior and junior high schools that provide a learning experience for resilience, and for skills development.”

“Voice of the Youth”
Getting more young people in agriculture for more employment opportunities

When I completed high school, I remained unemployed for one year, because with my secondary school certificate there’s no institution I could apply for a job to.”

Victor, like other youth selected to benefit from the project, received 330 chickens, feeders, drinkers and a poultry house was built for him.

“One day an announcement was issued by the local authorities calling for unemployed youth with a plot of land that has access to water and electricity, because chickens require a lot of water and electricity. I applied and was selected,” he says.

Since then, every day he wakes up between 5am and 6am to feed his chickens feeds, after which, he washes the feeders. At 9am he picks eggs from the poultry house using a bucket.

Improving life at home

“I sold the eggs and got money which I used to buy a piece of land worth RWF600,000 and got capital to establish a veterinary pharmacy. I also sold chicken manure. I saved some money to support the family. I helped two of my siblings to stay in school.”

On weekly basis he gathers over 700 eggs and his weekly supply to the market is about 4,900 eggs. When he deducts all the expenses, in a month he earns a profit of about 150,000 Rwandans francs.

“At home we few people working. We’re a big a family of nine people and my mother is old and unable to do work like digging because that’s what she used to do. The others go to the garden. I tried to improve the family’s nutrition and buying clothes for family members,” Victor explains.

High demand, low supply

He sells a few eggs to some people especially those in the neighborhood collect the eggs and supplies the bulk to Butare main market, the main market in the neighboring Huye District.

To avoid high risk of losing his eggs while transporting them, he packs the eggs in a metal box stuffed with wood shavings and load the box on the motorcycle and drives to Butare.

“The market is big and I cannot satisfy it. I now target is to rear 5,000 layers which will give me a weekly production of at least 25,000 eggs,” he says.

Full story: bit.ly/2CSefD2
He holds a Master’s Degree in Agricultural Engineering, a Master’s Degree in Crop Science, and a PhD in Biology (Weed Ecology). Gualbert joined FAO in 2010 as Agricultural Officer (Weed Management) in the Plant Production and Protection Division.

He outlined his plans, including promoting integrated farming practices where farmers can engage in food production, livestock and fish through efficient use of water.

“Agro-ecology production in Rwanda should be sustainable with increased productivity, while keeping the environment intact,” he said.

Smallholder farmers still struggle with yield and income. What will be your contribution to ensuring that such farmers increase their farm yield?

We know that farm sizes are relatively small in Rwanda, and, at the same time, we need to increase farm production.

If you have a small farm size, the first thing you need to do is to make sure that you adopt, for example, integrated agriculture production model. When I say integrated I mean crop production should be integrated with livestock and aquaculture.

This year, Rwanda launched the six–year agriculture development strategy (PSTA4) designed primarily to significantly increase farm productivity and promote value addition to food.

Gbehounou pledged to support the government of Rwanda to achieve the goals set in the plan through agriculture related programmes.
As staff of FAO Rwanda bade farewell to her we caught up with her to get the glimpse of her journey with FAO.

Take us through how your daily work had been for the last 35 years.

I analyse documents and know which folder they belong to. Paper, audio visual materials and e-electronic files. I also compile an inventory of assets. At times I would assist with administrative office work.

So, finally, the day is here. You are retiring. How do you feel about it?

[Laughs...] I knew one day that day would come. I had prepared myself physically and emotionally about it. Of course, separating from people is not easy, separating from people you’ve been working with for so many years. But yes, it had to be one day.

What was your most exciting experience at FAO?

Meeting and working with people from diverse cultures. The office has staff coming from different countries around the world. The working environment is equally good.

As staff we have a ‘social affair team’ through which we share and celebrate each other and get to know each other. This fostered good working relations among staff at the office. That was a great experience.

Your contribution to Zero Hunger?

My contribution towards ending hunger has been mainly through my daily work, I made sure no document was misplaced or lost. FAO introduced an e-filing system which helps me to synchronize the documents. FAO archive is rich with a lot of resources on food and agriculture.

You see, an office without an archive is not effective.

Away from work, at home I make sure we don’t throw away food and I strive to share food with people because feeding people is also fighting hunger.

What was your most challenging thing in your work?

[Laughs] ... as I mentioned earlier my experience has been in the library, so, around 2008 or a little before, some work was added to me, I was asked to give IT support to the office. At that moment I felt like resigning because I didn’t have an IT background or even training.

But later through support from colleagues from the headquarters and a few trainings I gained some IT skills and knowledge and but eventually an IT consultant was hired whom I have been working with.

Thank you for your time and good luck as you start a new chapter of your life!

You’re welcome!
FAO calls for more political will to increase investment in Agriculture

FAO has called on African leaders to increasing funding to the sector to spur the development of their economies.

While addressing the opening plenary session of the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRIF) conference in Kigali, Rwanda from 5-8 September 2018, David Phiri, Subregional Coordinator for Eastern Africa (SFE) emphasized that although Africa has got a lot of documents but in fact very little is happening on the ground.

“Political will is important to increase agricultural investment in Africa. A lot of progress has been made but if we’re going to make any progress with regards to agriculture transformation the Heads of State and Governments will need to show greater commitments than it appears to be the case right now,” he said.

The African Agriculture Status Report (AASR) released during the conference highlighted that most African countries are struggling to put up a strong political support for agriculture.

The leaders signed the Maputo and Malabo declaration on Accelerated Agriculture Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods in 2003 and 2014 respectively agreeing to put 10% of their resources to agriculture and increase agriculture production to 6 per cent annually, however a few countries have actually achieved that.

Currently, 20 of 47 African Union Member States are on track to achieve commitments made in the 2014 African Union (AU) Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

“Investment follows where investors think the leadership has a policy moving in the right direction. By and large the agriculture sector is in private hands,” David added.

Above: David Phiri (center) on the opening panel of AGRF 2018. He said Youth should see agriculture as a business not that unglamorous activity as the past generations did.

Right: As he delivered his keynote address at the Policy symposium on Women in Agribusiness at AGRF 2018 conference, David mentioned that agriculture transformation should be premised on prioritizing women and encouraged Africans to consume women produced products.

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Upcoming Calendar of Events

- July 04: Liberation Day in Rwanda
- August 03: Harvest Day (Umuganura)
- September 21: International Peace Day