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Review

Challenges and opportunities of agricultural sector among youths in the twenty first century: The case of Nigeria

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Abstract

African continent is still faced with many challenges such as food insecurity, emerging effects of climate change and rampant land degradation. Therefore, Farmers across Africa need better access to finance, markets, and an enabling policy environment that affords them the social protections many of us across the world take for granted. Agriculture was the pillar sector of the Nigerian economy which accounted for more than 70% of the Cross Domestic Product (GDP) and more than 75% of Nigeria's export earnings before Nigerians' independence in 1960s. However, Agriculture accounted for 62.50% of the nation's GDP from 1960-1964 and thereafter its contribution to GDP started decreasing from 1970 to 1975 as a result of oil boom in Nigeria. There has been a dramatic increase in the incidence and severity of poverty in Nigeria today, and this occasioned by the dwindling performance of the agricultural sector where the majority of Nigerians relied on national cake (oil boom) for their daily income. Youths are the essential resources for every nation, especially for sustaining agricultural productivity as an important sector for the development. Unfortunately, this category of people is virtually left out in policies and programmes considerations even though this is a critical stage for this group of people for transition into adulthood. Agriculture being one of the foundation pillars of any society can only function as such if this insufficient youth participation is reversed. Presently, the current situation of agriculture in Nigeria is despicable, deplorable, unspeakable, disgraceful, deceptive, tragic, retrogressive and not even befitting a nation that is rich and endowed with natural resources. As a matter of these, this paper used available literature to review the challenges and opportunities of agricultural sector among youths using Nigeria as a reference point. It also recommended that: The image of agriculture as dirty, non professional course as regarded by other professionals and laborious work with little returns must be changed. So that youths should be seeing agriculture as an inspirational career choice for African youths. There is the need for every well to do persons to support the youths in participating actively in agricultural production and to help them prevent those major factors that militate against their participation and Youths should be deeply involved in policy formulation.

Keywords: Challenges, opportunities, youths, agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Before the advent of oil boom in the 1970s, Agriculture was the major sector upon which majority of Nigerian population relied on for their livelihood (Udemezue and Anedo, 2015). Agriculture was able to grow at a sufficient rate to provide enough food for the increasing population, raw materials for industries, increasing public revenue and foreign exchange for government and employment generations for the teaming population. There has been a dramatic increase in the incidence and severity of poverty in Nigeria today, and this occasioned by the dwindling performance of the agricultural sector where the majority of Nigerians relied on national cake (oil boom) for their

daily income. The role of Agriculture in accelerating economic growth and the development process of any nation should not be taken for granted, because it is the bedrock upon which countries depend on for their economic growth and restructuring. Therefore whatever affects agricultural sector indirectly affects the country's economy directly and this could bring about food insecurity in totality

Over the last decade, millions of small families farms in Africa have experience big changes. These farms are the continent's main source of food, employment, and income. Many African governments have put agriculture back to the top of the development agenda, and from a growing revenue base, they have increased the proportion of their national budgets going to this vital sector. Private companies have invested heavily in Africa's agriculture value chains in recent years, paving the way for a renaissance in Africa's agri-food systems that multiplies the options for farmers in terms of the seeds they plant, the fertilizers they use, the markets they can now tap into, and the information services now available to help them manage their farming activities. Agricultural growth in Africa has also expanded livelihood opportunities for millions of people now engaged in the growing off-farm stages of the agri-food system. Offering a glimpse of future success, these advances have helped inspire a new vision for Africa, one in which farming realizes its potential to help make the continent sustainable and hunger free (Thomas and David, 2016)**.**

According to McMillan, Rodrick and Verduzco (2014); Gollin, Jedwab and Vollrath (2016), a fundamental point is that increased employment growth in the non-farm economy does not arise spontaneously. When most of a country's population engages primarily in farming, agri-cultural productivity growth is generally necessary to generate transformative income growth and money circulating in rural areas to stimulate the growth of non-farm goods and services. In much of Asia, Green Revolution technologies and supportive government policies kick-started rural economic growth processes, primarily in irrigated lowland areas. As millions of rural farmers had more cash to spend, this stimulated the demand for non-farm goods and services, created new jobs in the non-farm economy and pulled millions of people off the farm into more productive jobs. Over time, the gradual shift of the workforce from farming to non-farm sectors has transformed the economic and demo-graphic structure of much of Asia. Agricultural productivity growth in these areas of Asia is widely regarded as a major catalyst to this structural transformation process. As will be shown throughout this report, these growth processes are now clearly visible in most of the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as well. Economic transformation has also been accelerated in areas with favorable conditions for export-oriented manufacturing (e.g., textiles in Bangladesh), highlighting that there are many diffe-rent pathways of transformation and that we should not expect all of Africa to follow the same patterns. Moreover, evidence suggests that urban-based growth in countries such as Angola, Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea has at times been driven by primary product exports (e.g., oil and mining) which are not based on solid economic synergies with surrounding rural areas, leading to urbanization without industrialization or poverty reduction (McMillan, Rodrick and Verduzco, 2014;Gollin, Jedwab and Vollrath, 2016;).

Agricultural transformation in most areas of the world has generally been an important component of broader economic transformation processes (Thomas and David, 2016**).** Agricultural transformation is the process by which an agri-food system transforms over time from being subsistence-oriented and farm-centered into one that is more commercialized, productive, and off-farm centered (Timmer, 1988 in Thomas and David, 2016). The important facts about the role of agriculture within the broader economic transformation process are:

The process generally starts with growth in agricultural productivity at least where farming is the primary source of employment for most of the population. Productive farmers with enough resources to produce a surplus lead this process. The money they spend from their rising surplus production stimulates demand for goods, services and jobs in the various off-farm sectors of the economy. This induces a gradual shift in the labor force from farm to non-farm activities, rural urban migration, and a slowing of population growth in rural areas (Thomas and David, 2016).

The agricultural transformation process in a country is generally associated with the following seven trends: (i) some farmers move out of farming to take advantage of better economic opportunities, while farmers remaining in production become more commercialized; (ii) farms transition from producing a diversity of goods motivated by self-sufficiency to becoming more specialized to take advantage of regional comparative advantage, and in the process they become more dependent on markets (market performance thus exerts a greater influence over the pace of agricultural transformation); (iii) the ratio of agribusiness value added to farm value added rises over time as more economic activity takes place in upstream input manufacture and supply and downstream trading, processing, and retailing; (iv) more medium to large farms begin to supply the agricultural sector to capture economies of scale in production and marketing, and mean farm size rises with the exit of rural people out of farming and consequent farm consolidation; (v) the technologies of farm production evolve to respond to changes in factor prices (land, labor, and capital) as a country develops (in most cases as non-farm wage rates rise with broader economy-wide development, farms be-come more capital-intensive as the cost of labor and land rise and the cost of sourcing capital declines); (vi) there is a transition from shifting cultivation to a focus on more intensive, sustainable and management-intensive

Table 1. Annual growth in agricultural value added and total factor productivity, 2005–2012, selected African countries

Agricultural value added, annual % growth (2005–2012)	Agricultural total factor productivity, annual % growth (2005–2012)
Burkina Faso	6.0	-0.08
Côte d'Ivoire	-1.75	3.06
DR Congo	3.13	-1.17
Ethiopia	8.35	2.68
Ghana	3.56	1.44
Kenya	2.72	0.56
Malawi	3.30	2.93
Mali	6.34	2.17
Mozambique	6.31	2.18
Nigeria	6.15	-0.47
Rwanda	5.26	6.19
South Africa	1.95	3.15
Tanzania	3.97	1.46
Uganda	1.40	-2.68
Zambia	0.33	3.14

Source: *World Bank, (2015); USDA, Economic Research Service Total Factor Productivity Database compiled by Keith Fuglie*

cultivation of specific fields; and (vii) the agri-food system becomes more integrated into the wider economy. Many of these transformation processes have accelerated since 2005 in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Agriculture remains fundamental to poverty reduction and economic growth in the 21st Century (WorldBank, 2008). However,75% of the world's poor are from rural areas and most are involved in farming, an activity which requires sustenance especially by the youth who are the leaders of tomorrow. Youths aged 10 to 24 years, are 27% of the world's population and 33% of the population in Africa. According to Nugent ,(2006) African agriculture is beset by a host of challenges. Experts identify lack of market access, low productivity on-adoption of modern farming systems, climate change, low fertilizer usage, inadequate storage and processing facilities as being the most crucial (Francis, William and Mathenge, 2015).

African farmers are ageing and the implications are negatively staggering; not only for food security but also for transfer of necessary knowledge, skills, expertise and techniques and for employment and economic development. The average age of a farmer in Brazil is 52, 57 in the USA and 60 in Africa (World Bank, 2008). The case for Africa is worsened by the non-attractiveness of agriculture to the youths who should replace the old farmers. Akpan (2010), asserts that there is no conscious succession planning, thus the old farmers may literally work themselves into their graves. This trend is not limited to small-holder farmers. Many agricultural research institutions have a disproportionately large number of staff close to retirement age. This short-sightedness is presently impacting the agricultural sector, with increasingly fewer qualified mentors to pass on knowledge and skills to the new generation (Ashford, 2007).

According to Bertow and Schultheis (2007), people as the central players amongst the factors of production occupy a critical position. They possess the entrepreneurship to combine and utilize the other factors land, labor, machineries and inputs in an efficient and effective manner to achieve sustainable food production. Their levels of agricultural knowledge, skills, innovation, technological and technical know-how therefore determine how well they do this. Youths by their very education, talent, innovation, energy, openness to new agricultural techniques and technology are better poised to be more effective and efficient agricultural producers. They are thus able to combat the scourge of food insecurity ravaging Africa (Francis, William and Mathenge, 2015).

African continent is still faced with many challenges such as food insecurity; emerging effects of climate change and rampant land degradation. Therefore, Farmers across Africa need better access to finance, markets, and an enabling policy environment that affords them the social protections many of us across the world take for granted (Thomas and David, 2016).

More so, recent cross-country data from Africa suggest that at least some aspects of this agricultural transformation process are well underway. After decades of stagnation, much of Africa has enjoyed sustained agricultural productivity growth since 2005 (Table 1). Signs are emerging that poverty rates are declining in many countries such as Ghana, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Burkina Faso, but not in others. Africa's workforce is shifting, in some cases quite rapidly, from farming to off-farm sectors, similar to Green Revolution in Asia. The number of medium- and large-scale farms is increasing rapidly and account for a sizeable and rising portion of total farmland in many African countries. Agri-business and downstream food systems are responding

dynamically to population growth, urbanization and changing food diets associated with income growth. This point highlights the evidence behind these major trends, which generally indicate that agricultural transformation and broader economic transformation are now underway in much of the region while at the same time challenges of food insecurity are looming on the sides of other African countries such as Nigeria. In view of these, it behooves this study to review the Challenges and opportunities of agricultural sector in the twenty first century using Nigeria as a reference point.

Opportunities and prospects in Agricultural Sector

Agriculture was the pillar sector of the Nigerian economy which accounted for more than 70% of the Cross Domestic Product (GDP) and more than 75% of Nigeria's export earnings before Nigerians' independence in 1960. However, Agriculture accounted for 62.50% of the nation's GDP between 1960-1964 and thereafter its contribution to GDP started decreasing from 1970 to 1975 as a result of oil boom in Nigeria (Okonkwo,2015).Presently, the current situation of agriculture in Nigeria is despicable, deplorable, unspeakable, disgraceful, deceptive, tragic, retrogressive and not even befitting a nation that is rich and endowed with natural resources.

Agriculture is the backbone of Africa's economy. About 70% of Africans and roughly 80% of the continent's poor live in the rural areas and depends mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. The sector accounts for about 20% of Africa's GDP (Nchuchuwe and Adejuwon, 2012), 60% of its labor force and 20% of the total merchandise exports. Agriculture is the main source of income for 90% of rural population in Africa. Agriculture represents a great part of the Africa's share in world trade. On the list of 20 top agricultural and food commodity importers in 2004, 60% are from Sub-Saharan Africa. African countries represent also 50% of top 20 countries, in terms of the Share of total agriculture/ total exported merchandise in the world (economic commission for Africa) (ECA, 2007). Agriculture improves food security in many ways, most fundamentally by increasing the amount of food but also by providing the means to purchase food. Through growth in agricultural productivity and higher farm profits, the rural poor can generate additional income to purchase more food, including more diverse kinds of food. Agriculture contributes immensely to the African economy in various ways; namely, in the provision of food for the increasing population; supply of adequate raw materials to a growing industrial sector; a major source of employment; generation of foreign exchange earnings; and, provision of a market for the products of the industrial sector among others (Nchuchuwe and Adejuwon, 2012).

Agricultural growth doesn't only benefit the people in rural areas and farmers. It also benefits the rest of the economy and creates employment for large numbers of people, thereby curbing youth unrest, and the pull factors that result in high rate of urbanization. In many developing countries, the money that goes into the pockets of consumers comes primarily from agriculture. This, in turns, produces the wealth to sustain local manufacturing and the purchase of local produce as well as stimulate export growth. Agriculture can be the "cow" that feeds the people in the early decades of a country's economic development. As agricultural output increases, there will be associated benefits, including opportunities for the manufacture and marketing of products such as fertilizers, pesticides and seeds as well as a demand for food processing services such as grain refining (Raj, 2015). Therefore, whatever affects agriculture indirectly will automatically be affected economy directly because it is the pillar that stands a country's economic growth.

Challenges of Agricultural Sector in Nigeria

It is almost axiomatic or otherwise empirical to state that Agriculture has a very vital role if not central position in the economy of any country. For agriculture to play its all important role it must not be neglected or made occupation of the poor but should be accorded a prominent place in the national policy and development plans. Nigeria along with a host of other countries are described as less developed or developing economies and still have a rural economy with large proportions of their population still employed on the land. Therefore, there are urgent needs for strategies for raising rural income through agriculture from the stand point of renewable resources; it is clear that Nigeria is still primarily an agriculture base country. This stand point is accepted by people who are not deceive by the recent contributions of non-renewable resources especially petroleum to the country's economy (Nwankwo, 2014).

Nigeria is one of the most highly blessed nations in Africa. That she has not been able to solve, even her own problems of food and agriculture is a matter of very great concerns.

Despite the strategies adopted by various governments in Nigeria to address agriculture and rural underdevelopment problem, the story remains the same. There are still inequality and poverty particularly in the rural areas. There are a lot of public complaints on the underdevelopment situations of many rural areas which constitutes a threat to Nigeria's vision of becoming one of the twenty strongest economies by the year 2020 (vision 2020). A lot of resources (financial) have been injected, but all in vain (Yakubu, 2009).

According to the United Nation (UN), as many as 24 countries are contending with food crises across sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly 240 million people in sub-Saharan

Africa, or one person in every four, lack adequate food for a healthy and active life and record food prices and drought are pushing more people into poverty and hunger (Raj, 2015). These problems are only going to get worse as the upward trajectory of urbanization casts its shadow across most of Africa which will require more food to be transported and distributed within cities, increase demand for water and also increase demand for agricultural and food products. The demand for food staples is predicted to double by 2020 as urban populations grow by 4% each year. Much of that growth is made up of low-income earners who spend the majority of their pay on basic food items. Africa is a net importer of food. Today, Africa does not grow enough food to feed its own population and African countries have tended to satisfy increasing demand through more expensive imports from the global market. The agriculture sector in many African countries like Nigeria is in a parlous state. It's a situation primed for hunger and unrest. It is stating the bleeding obvious that the solution to the food crisis in Nigeria is for Nigeria to grow more food locally. However, Nigeria has the ability to grow enough food not only to feed itself, but also to help solve the worldwide food deficit (Raj, 2015). However, the problems of food crisis in Africa is not beyond redemption because many African countries have the advantages of fertile soil and the possibility of year-round farming and more than one harvest per year. This, together with the fact that a successful agriculture sector can have a multiplication effect and the potential to create significant employment and transform a country's economic fortunes (Raj, 2015).According to_Orji (2013), the challenges of agricultural sector in Nigeria are as follows

Poverty

One of the major problems of food production in Nigeria today is poverty. On the other hand, one of the simplest and a doubtless truth that you can easily know about Nigeria is the fact that over 75% of her rural dwellers are full-time Farmers. Nigerian farmers and Nigerians in general are really hard-working and industrious. A very great variety of delicious species of organic foods, fruits, vegetables and cash-crops abound in the country. In fact, the nation is so highly blessed, and there are very large Acres of fertile agricultural lands all around the Country. Nigerians honestly are not really lacking Food. What they really lack there is the money to buy the Food; the money to Produce the Food; and, or even the money to procure small Piece of land to grow the food.

Ignorance

In Nigeria today, agriculture is still greatly and relatively undermined and even over-looked as a mere "back-yard business". Some Nigerian youths even see farming as: "An odd Job that is meant only for the illiterate rural people ". In the eyes of some of Nigeria's wealthy class, farming is, ignorantly underrated or abhorred as "Poor Peoples' Job". The very worst is that the governments in Nigeria are, pretentiously doing very little or nothing in terms of solving the nation's food and agricultural problems.

Illiteracy

The greatest number of dedicated full-time farmers in Nigeria can neither read nor write. The Local farmers there are even as uninformed as they lack modern agricultural education. The climax of illiteracy there, is Nigeria's total negligence and, or her non-usage of native languages in the nation's Pursuits for modern education. In this modern world, people that still Studies in foreign languages have not really started Learning, and this level of illiteracy and unawareness do often constitute some serious set-backs, even in Nigeria's food production efforts.

Use of manual farm tools methods /crude farm implements

Average Nigerian Farmer is still making use of only the same out-dated manual farm tools - like cutlass and hoe - as their Fore- fathers used since many Centuries ago instead of using some affordable modern agricultural techniques or simple machines that could bring change in productivity. In short, their use of these kinds of archaic and out-dated tools and techniques constitutes a very great set-back in the country's food and agricultural out-puts.

Lack of road, water and electricity

The rural farming communities in Nigeria lack access road, water, electricity among others. Some do not even have hospitals or schools around them. The agony of not having these social amenities could make farmers contribute less to economic growth through agricultural production.

Lack of food storage or processing facilities

Many delicious and juicy fruits, vegetables, and cash-crops are largely produced from Nigeria's local farming communities and a very great percentage of these delicious organic farm produce often get damaged or Wasted before they reach their Final Consumers. In this kind of situation, one of the major problems that is facing

the helpless local farmers there is lack of adequate food storage or processing facilities.

Lack of modern farm machines / techniques

Another major problem of Nigeria's food and agriculture is lack of modern farm machines or techniques. As said earlier, the farmers in Nigeria are still making use of ancient agricultural tools / techniques while there are low-cost modern farm machines / techniques out there for use as better substitutes.

Lack Of scientific and technological know-how

In Nigeria, scientific and technological Know-how is relatively very low. Many schools there in Nigeria do not even have science laboratories. Hence, a great majority of students there rather theorize sciences than practicalize them. In fact, this Problem of Nigeria's under-development in Science and technology often leave the country to depend largely on importation and this equally, is part of the major Problems and challenges of the country's food and agricultural developments.

Disorganization and unaccountability

Organization and accountability is one of the basics of better and successful management but, till this age of modernization and civilization, Nigeria is still internally disorganized. She lacks, even a valid and a well-organized documentations of her citizens or properties or marriages or births or deaths. In the same vein, a majority of farms there in Nigeria lacks organization or records and accountability. Some farmers there are merely planting without any sort or kind of a Farm records or organization; or measurements or, at least; an account for an easier identification of the possible reasons behind their agricultural gains or losses.

Lack of leadership and neo-colonialism

One of the most serious of all the major problems of food and agriculture in Nigeria is lack of Leadership. Mismanagements, corruptions and embezzlements of Public Funds are very common within Nigeria's government officials. Patriotism; trust, honesty; organization and careful management have often led the success and prosperity of modern man. But here in Nigeria, all you can easily see or notice is the plain fact the nation has “No Leaders". Another serious Problem there in Nigeria's food and agriculture is the fact that the nation has never ever been her real self. Her colonial masters simply granted her independence. But indirectly, Nigeria's resources, economy, Politics, language, culture and many more, are still suffering new methods of mental colonization or say, neo-colonialism. In this same vein, even her major problems of food and agriculture have no real solutions until Nigeria is fully and unreservedly, in control of her own self and destiny.

Industrialization and Privatization

Modern conversions and privatizations of food and agriculture into a very big and expensive industry or conglomerate, is also of the major contributors to Nigeria's food and agricultural set-backs. In one hand, the modern global waves of industrialization and privatization of food and agriculture really produces surplus food that is more than enough to feed, even the entire world population. On the other hand, food and agricultural industrialization and privatization, really added greatly to global hunger and poverty. The reasons are because agric industrialization and privatization results in an uneven distribution of food. Uses much of the produced food in feeding animals is wasteful and destructive as it is only after quantity. Favors the haves and disfavors the have-nots.

Global Warming

Global warming is also part of the major problems of food and agriculture in Nigeria. Forest destructions and over-grazing of animals have really turned a lot of Nigeria's farmlands into deserts. Like in other countries of the world, several lakes; rivers; streams and rain forests have actually disappeared. Many Nigerian farming communities that only depend on rainfall are now faced with severe droughts, erosions, landslides; deforestations and an excessive massive loss of crops and animals. All these are some of the real impacts of global warming on Nigeria's agriculture and food production.

On the other hand, Nwankwo (2014) saw the problems confronting agriculture in Nigeria as the followings;

Number and Quality of Farmers

The bulk of food supply in the country lies in the hands of ageing and illiterate farmers whose number are on the decline. The young or the youth and the educated are no longer interested in farming or agriculture because they consider it to be job for the poor or less privileged.

Land Tenure System

In many areas, ownership of land is not clearly defined, but the land belongs to the family. Consequently, fertile land/soil may be left uncultivated and fragmentation of land may cause low productivity.

Number and Quality of Extension Staff

Inadequate number of trained agricultural extension staff to educate the youths on the modern technology of farming is a major constraint in agriculture.

Inadequate Financial Resources

Majority of farmers are poor and thus cannot afford to buy tractors and its accessories which makes agriculture easy and more productive.

Inadequate Storage and Market Facilities

Marketing facilities are provided for export crop alone. If a farmer can easily market their product in local market their income will increase and they will invest more on agriculture, thus increasing their productivity.

Lack of Incentives and Credit Facilities

Credit facilities are not provided adequately to satisfy farmers. The agricultural credit schemes are not effective because of stringent demand for security which is beyond the reach of the beginners in the farm business.

Level of Rural Development

Lack of rural development encourages able-bodied men and women to migrate from the villages to the cities where there are better amenities such as pipe borne water, electricity and centers for recreation.

Sociological and Psychological Effects

In West Africa, as in many other developing regions, peasant farmers are considered to occupy the lowest rank of society.

Communication Network

Lack of adequate information media such as radio, cinema, and television also adversely affects agricultural productivity, as they could be used to inform the farmer on timing and on methods of planting, distribution and prices and markets for his products. Education is the bedrock, the point upon which all development rest. It is indispensable in agricultural development. Agricultural education is a basic to the development of agriculture in any community. It also serves as a weapon of liberation from ignorance, poverty and disease and that any improvement in tropical agriculture must involve education for the youths. Farmers' training are most effective when it is adapted to the needs of those who have both the means and incentive to farm (Nwankwo, 2014). The youths who are farmers in communities can neither be said to have the means nor the incentive. They need current agricultural education as a means of government recognition and assistance as an incentive.

Youths are very important resources for every nation especially for sustaining agricultural productivity and an important sector for the development (Francis, William and Mathenge, (2015). The youth is a stakeholder in the development process especially in view of the great assets of youth, resilience, resourcefulness and perseverance. Unfortunately, this category of people is virtually left out in policies and programmes considerations even though this is a critical stage for this group of people for transition into adulthood (Food and Agricultural Organization) (FAO, 2009). For instance, the unemployment rate of this group globally ranked 12.6% compared with 4.8% as the rate of the adults in 2010 and this has the potential of tempting most youth to embark on migration especially to urban centers and beyond since this act creates room for accessing job opportunities (United Nation) (UN,2011) in Francis, William and Mathenge, 2015). This group of people is over 1.8 billion in the world today, 90% of whom live in developing countries, where they tend to make up a large proportion of the population and needs to be empowered since this is an important means of improving food security, youth livelihoods and employment. There is insufficient youth participation in the agricultural sector even though this class of people is the most productive of any society as it contains people in the prime of their lives physically and mentally (Mangal, 2009). Agriculture being one of the foundation pillars of any society can only function as such if this insufficient youth participation is reversed. For instance improving youth productivity in the agricultural sector and exploring effective livelihood diversification is imperative. Also, investing in the youth by promoting good habit is crucial if they are to realize their full potential. This is in view of the fact that the number and proportion of the older persons is growing faster than any other age group (UNFPA and Help Age International, 2012).

In Africa, 20% of the population aged between 15 and 24 years, comprising more than 20% of the population and a large majority lives in rural areas. Being 37% of the

working-age population, rural youths who are attached to agriculture are disadvantaged and this is because consideration of the youths as future farmers in Africa has not received adequate attention. This category of people is the driving force behind economic prosperity in future decades, only if policies and programmes are in place to enhance their opportunities (Ashford, 2007). According to Dr Namanga Ngogi, President of Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), 60% of Africa's population resides in rural areas and the large majority of this population is made up of youths, and the poor participation of this group of young people in farming is a threat to the future of agriculture and rural economic transformation on the continent (Ghana News Agency, 2012).

Involvement of youth in agricultural activities has the potential of reducing the problems of the ageing farm population and decreasing youth unemployment. This calls for securing the interest and participation of young people in agriculture in the form of deliberate shift in policy, training and promotion that specially targets the youth. This category of people are not only the productive backbone of every society, the major source of ideas and innovation, but also the main market for food consumption and very often the leaders and drivers of public opinion, public policy and action (Akpan, 2010).

In the light of the above, Francis, William, and Mathenge (2015) however saw the factors militating against this as multi-faceted and can be grouped into two major sub-headings namely: - Exogenous – Endogenous. Endogenous factors are factors that emanate from the youths themselves as being reasons for their non-engagement with Agriculture. Strong messages emerging from primary research with young people in rural areas under the project – a four-year study across ten developing countries - and from the Future Agricultures Consortium youth theme, focusing on young people and agricultural policy processes in sub-Saharan Africa, shed light on young people's attitudes towards agriculture and the likelihood of being able to address food security concerns via engagement of young people with the sector. These factors include:

Disinterest

Agriculture is not considered to be delivering the types of lifestyles and status that young people desire and expect. Agriculture is not considered able to deliver via incomes and working conditions the kinds of lifestyles young people need, expect and desire in the 21st century. In this respect, agriculture is regarded as a poor person's activity, going beyond living standards to people's sense of pride and self-respect. These are important dimensions of wellbeing and take us beyond narrow, one-dimensional conceptions of what it means to be poor, marginalized and disadvantaged (ILO 2012). If agriculture is not able to deliver either the desired living standards or the prospects for upward mobility, then the likelihood of attracting young people into or retaining them in the sector is low.

Doubt

Youths do not have strong conviction that agriculture can be a lifelong career choice able to provide their needs and wants. Thus, they stay aloof and un-involved even when they are well-poised by education or experience to make a living out of it. Most young people have no interest in agriculture, not within their own visions for their future. This is often echoed by their parents. By agriculture, people invariably think of farming as a backbreaking work, low input, 365 days a year for little or low return.

Negative Perception

Youths perceive agriculture negatively. As something you do if you fail in school, as migrants in town or abroad, or by the side with other non-farm businesses. Or may not even be an option at all pressure on resources, especially land scarcity, pose serious barriers to entry for young people. An apparent sense of insecurity around farming, related to unpredictable climate variability, volatile food prices, rising costs, further acts as a deterrent.

On the other hand, exogenous factors refer to factors that are outside the control of the youths which affect their ability and capacity to engage with Agriculture. They include the following:

Dearth of infrastructure

Rural areas are notably more deficient in physical and social infrastructure than urban areas leading to rural-urban migration with the attendant removal of youths from the rural areas where agriculture is mostly practiced. Young people are aware of lifestyles in other regions within their countries and globally. As long as urban areas offer a more attractive destination for young people desired lifestyles, more youths will continue to leave the rural areas. Availability of good roads, constant electricity, recreational facilities, internet, potable water, affordable housing and qualitative healthcare in rural areas will go a long way in retaining youths in rural areas and improve their engagement with agriculture.

Generalizing the youth demographic

One of the key obstacles to sustainable youths' engagement with agriculture is the generalization of the

"youth" demographic by policymakers. Attitudes of young people towards agriculture vary extensively and some of the distinguishing factors are largely geographic location and land ownership. Even with campaigns to stimulate interest or raise awareness to the positive prospects of agriculture, there is a crucial need to segment the "youth" so the right message can be communicated to the right audience. The reality of the matter is youth who have been exposed to agriculture e.g. those from rural settings where subsistence farming is largely dominant will probably understand the value of agriculture and its role as a key component of food security but might feel that it is not very progressive as most people in their communities might still be subsistence farmers who are struggling to not only carry their financial needs but also progress from subsistence farming to commercial farming. On the other hand youth in urban settings might have little or no exposure to agriculture which requires a different marketing approach.

Land tenure and access

The land tenure system in most African countries makes access to land for agricultural purposes a herculean task. Agricultural is a land-based activity and youths are excluded from easy access to adequate and suitable land. This effectively dissuades them from engaging with the sector.

Lack of information on agribusiness opportunities

A lot of young people struggle to access information on agriculture and agribusiness. They are not even aware of the enormous range of opportunities obtainable in the sector. Most perceive agriculture from the production part only. Massive emphasis need to be invested in making information easily accessible in schools, libraries and local municipalities. There is also equal demand for the information to be in languages and grammar the youth understands and to span the full range of areas where youths can engage with agribusiness.

Exclusion of youth from policy-making processes

The youth need to be part of dialogues focusing on agricultural policies. If we acknowledge their vast population dynamics surely we need to include them in the formulation and implementation of policies affecting their future. In addition while there is also a need to look into new policies that best reflect the current economic, social and political climate equal focus needs to be invested in the implement of these policies as in some instances a lot of policies have not seen the light of the day.

Capital, finance and collateral

Most young people do not have access to funding for agricultural purposes. They usually are not able to access finance from financial institutions because they do not possess collateral acceptable to banks and other financial institutions.

Poor marketing and media relations

Another challenge is the poor promotion of agriculture. There is a need for more coverage in print and electronic media, radio and television, local and national stations. Programming needs to be shown during prime time, if expensive at least when young people are watching. There is a need to make programming that makes agriculture look "cool", the lifestyle that is. We also need testimonials of successful young farmers. The internet particularly social media can also be good tools to promote agriculture if used effectively. With the surge of internet access among the youths, institutions promoting agriculture need to acknowledge the youth's shift from traditional mediums especially newspapers. Nowadays most young people get their information from the internet so the internet would be one of the best platforms to market and promote agriculture to reach the youth demographic.

Ineffective career guidance

The absence of effective career guidance in schools is one huge component that derails youth participation in Agriculture. The poor promotion of agriculture in schools as a tertiary study unit is another key component that adds to the poor interest. How can this be addressed? Institutions that promote agriculture need to hold career expos in rural and urban settings to promote agriculture as a study unit, they need to make electronic and print media available to the youth.

Disconnect between agricultural education and practice

Higher education levels overall mean that young people are being educated on the agricultural systems in use locally and globally. With higher levels of education they seek jobs with higher skill levels than those of the smallholder farming activities that are available locally. But higher unemployment levels, especially among the youth, suggest that work and education are failing as key routes by which people move out of poverty, and as crucial mechanisms linking economic growth to poverty reduction. More children than ever go to school, but what they learn appears to be far removed from the skills

needed in the 21st Century. This is true for agriculture sector skills as any other. African agricultural graduates often lack practical skills and competences required for successful agropreneurship.

More so, East Africa Farmers Federation (2009) observed that youth who aspire to farming as a livelihood face many obstacles – some common to all small-scale farmers, others particularly pertinent to their age group. In an East Africa regional youth consultative workshop held in Uganda (East Africa Farmers Federation, 2009) a number of issues were identified that make it difficult to attract young people into agriculture. Shortage of production resources – land, finance; Negative attitude about agriculture; Limited agricultural knowledge and skills as well as leadership and managerial skills; Limited youth groups and associations/cooperatives; Youth involvement in decision-making still low; Attraction of quick gains especially from white collar jobs; Lack of youth policies; Lack of support from elders for youth in agriculture; Lack of experience and skill sharing; Lack of market accessibility; Lack of supportive social services and infrastructure; Unwillingness of educated youth to engage in agriculture; and Absence of youth departments in national farmer federations.

Wong (2009) identified the following as being the barriers to youth engagement in agriculture: Farmers' club lack coordination, harmonization and adequate funding for these initiatives was reported; Negative perceptions, limited access to production resources and lack of institutional support and incentives towards farming; Lack of political will, accountability and support mechanisms to youth concerns in the sector was noted; Many youths perceive farmers as uneducated, unskilled and as physical laborers who receive low returns from farming when compared to other formal and informal forms of employment; Institutional issues were also identified to include; lack of a sector youth policy, failure to include agriculture among the thematic areas in the National Youth policy, as well as lack of emphasis on agriculture in the current education system; and there are also no role models in the sector and majority of the out of school youth interested in agriculture face numerous constraints in regard to access and control over the resources needed to engage in viable agribusiness.

In view of the above, the constraints militating against youths' participation in agriculture in Africa are as follows; inconsistent government policy and administration, underfunding of agricultural research institute, embezzlement of agricultural fund by politicians and government officials, false representation of agricultural image by other professionals, lack of maintenance of agricultural infrastructures, death of young farmers' club in some states in African countries, youths' perception and orientation on agriculture, lack of accommodating youths in policy formulation, poor marketing and communication channel, ineffective mentor on career guidance, lack of mechanization, individual attitude towards agriculture and death of some agricultural projects in Africa.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Agricultural growth doesn't only benefit the people in rural areas and farmers. It also benefits the rest of the economy and creates employment for large numbers of people, thereby curbing youth unrest, and the pull factors that result in high rate of urbanization. Based on this, the paper recommended that: The image of agriculture as dirty, non professional course as regarded by other professionals and laborious work with little returns must be changed. So that youths should be seeing agriculture as an inspirational career choice for African youths.

There is need for joint efforts among all the sector players towards enhancing youth participation in agricultural. These efforts include: the use appropriate strategies to support creative and exciting agribusiness opportunities for the youth, attitude change and enhancing youths' access to resources, review of the National Youth Policy and its implementation strategy, to be followed by dissemination of these documents to all development partners.

There is the need for every well to do persons to support the youths in participating actively in agricultural production and to help them prevent those major factors that militates against their participation.

Youths should be deeply involved in policy formulation. To this end, the youths should be encouraged to voice out their constraint to livelihood and also come together to form cooperatives for the purpose of sourcing loans for establishing farm.

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Transparency and accountability should also be encouraged through adequate supervision, monitoring and evaluation to avoid embezzlement of the fund allocated to agricultural projects.

Youth's organization example, young farmers club should be encouraged and strengthened in some African states in order to obtain moral education and material assistance needed for agricultural transformation.

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