

Exploring youth in agriculture

Different Dutch Diamond stakeholders are involved in (funding) interventions on youth in agriculture in low and middle income countries. Several of these stakeholders have expressed an interest to meet and link with others in order to gain a better insight in what initiatives have been done in this field so far. The Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP) and AgriProFocus network decided to use their complementary strengths and organize a meeting to facilitate alignment and coherence in concrete activities of different stakeholders, and to identify possible knowledge questions.

A focus on youth

The meeting built on previous work done by the F&BKP and AgriProFocus, considering the growing interest of engaging youth in agriculture with the aim to increase employment and food security in the long-term. AgriProFocus organized a seminar on this topic together with the Center for Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University, the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD). Following the second seminar in January, the F&BKP has made an [inventory](#) of the ambitions of key international organizations in the development sector that are engaged with youth in food systems. This [mapping](#) provides a systematic overview of international organizations involved. This [exploration](#) additionally provides an overview of focal areas as based on the [key document of FAO, CTA and IFAD](#) and the specific areas these actors are working on.

The aim of the preparatory work, as well as the May meeting, was to firstly gain insight of initiatives and interventions on engaging youth in agriculture and food systems. The second aim was to outline key knowledge questions that can be abstracted from the work of various organizations.

The inventory is based on document research and a short inquiry into the F&BKP network. The meeting also served to complement the mapping for a better understanding and overview of Dutch Diamond actors in this field. The specific objectives of this meeting were:

1. To gain an overview and insight into current initiatives of Dutch Diamond public and private stakeholders in regards to youth in agriculture in low and middle income countries.
2. To discuss strengths, niches, complementarity, overlap, and gaps.
3. To explore alliances for present or future (knowledge) initiatives and build a Community of Practice.

In total, 18 different organizations joined this lively and explorative meeting (see Appendix 1 for participants). Many interesting issues and questions were highlighted. This report provides a summary of key outcomes per thematic area.

Gallery Walk and Open Space

The moderator of the day was Ama van Dantzig, Co-Founder of the international innovation studio, Dr. Monk. Of the different approaches from the meeting, the Gallery Walk was used to display the current initiatives and interventions of different stakeholders in the area of youth in agriculture. During the Open Space sessions, five thematic areas were discussed in groups, including: youth in agribusiness; access to finance; access to (green) jobs; access to knowledge, education and skills; and youth in policy dialogues. Each session was introduced by a short pitch prepared by one of the participants.

Youth in Agribusiness and access to markets

'Pitcher' Judith Jacobs from the Centre of Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University introduced this Open Space. In this session, best approaches to integrate youth in agribusiness were discussed. A dilemma was raised on whether it would be more effective to develop separate youth-based value chains (creating new hubs) or to integrate youth into existing ones. Another dilemma discussed was whether a focus on entrepreneurship or employment for youth is the way to move forward. Not everyone is an entrepreneur and pushing every small-scale farmer towards "agri-entrepreneurship" is not always effective. There are many non-producer activities in agribusiness for which service providers are needed (such as ICT or transport), which provides an interesting niche.

A real challenge for youth interested in agribusiness is a lack of resources (such as funding or land), which also came up in the access to finance discussions. Another challenge is the improvement of access to (context specific) technology.

Opportunities can be found in a more integrated approach by engaging youth in the enabling and supporting environment of a specific value chain or sub-sector. Another approach would be to search for more synergies between younger and older farmers and combine their best practices and knowledge. Organizing young people in

cooperatives or saving organizations creates opportunities, which was also discussed in the access to finance group.

Knowledge questions

An important question raised was that it is not clear what the incentives are for young people to start a business, formally or informally. Support and long-term benefits should be balanced better as to avoid a too strong focus on quick wins only. Furthermore, participants advocated for learning from case studies on youth in agribusiness and entrepreneurship throughout the value chain as a way to explore differences in support needed. Another question brought forward focused on the relationship between youth entrepreneurship and poverty alleviation and employment at the bottom of the pyramid.

Access to finance

Frank van Kesteren from the [INCLUDE platform](#) gave a short pitch introducing this topic access to finance. The INCLUDE platform has a thematic focus on [productive employment](#) and a dossier on [youth employment](#). Access to finance is a recurring issue and many participants were interested to discuss it further. The session first focused on success stories. For example, Woord en Daad explained their programme of “additional services” in agriculture where youth have a clear role. Another example shared was the possibility to become more creditworthy by making data available via mobile phones.

Challenges identified by participants included the current publicity of financial opportunities in developing countries, as well as the lack of trust in banks to invest in youth. Currently, many loan programmes in Kenya for example are not effectively used as there is a lack of knowledge on the application procedures. Services like data collection, input supply and advisory services could therefore be important to further develop.

Building on these examples and challenges, the different roles of Dutch Diamond actors were extensively discussed. The role of NGOs was seen as being a “connector” between service providers and beneficiaries (of loans and credits), as well as making data and other (research) information available to banks to provide proof of success stories. This evidence would then serve as an incentive in providing tailor-made services for young people.

An opportunity was found in the mechanisms around youth cooperatives. Issues of trust and the downsides of too large expansion were mentioned. Nevertheless, youth funding cooperatives could play an important role in organized savings and access to other funds. At the same time, they also play a role in increasing access to markets and involvement in policy dialogues as discussed in other Open Space sessions. Another opportunity could be to interest young people who are not yet active in the agricultural sector to become active in the sector. When more money is invested in agriculture, this could be an incentive.

Knowledge questions

A better understanding of the role of cooperatives related to policy and access to markets, as well as current constraints for creating of cooperatives, was identified as an interesting research question. The participants felt that context specific research could benefit their work the most.

Access to green jobs

This Open Space session was introduced by Eelco Baan from [SNV](#) and focused on access to (green) jobs. SNV has many [programmes on youth employment](#) and thus shared some experiences working in this field as did other participants in this Open Space.

There was an interesting debate about whether to focus on entrepreneurship or employment. In low and middle income countries, there is a huge lack of jobs for young people and self-employment is often the only option. How to deal with this? Also, not everyone is an entrepreneur. Furthermore, when providing jobs to young people, would the direction be job creation or job rotation (for example, a job vacancy is now filled by a young person but would it be otherwise filled by someone else)?

Scaling up of the production could create options for more jobs as well as increase food production. At the same time though, if there are other job opportunities, people should tap into those prospects as well. Thus either moving up (scaling) or moving out (non-agriculture). For example, a man in a sesame value chain made extra money and with this money he set up a barber shop. Now he has three shops that employ several people. Is this a success? It is not employment in the agriculture sector but SNV sees this as a success story. Though it does provide challenges in measuring results of programmes from a donor perspective.

There could be an opportunity in creating more publicity in the different types of jobs available in agriculture. Different skills are needed in service delivery as opposed to farming, for example. This links to the access to knowledge, education and skills Open Space which highlighted that different jobs in the value chain require different

skills and therefore education. Heifer Nederland has had positive experiences with an inclusive agri-hub approach, which over time has generated more jobs around the hub center for youth in transport, processing and packaging, construction, and shop keeping. Another possibility would be to stimulate the diversification of farmers' strengths. For example, producing fresh and dry products. This could open new job opportunities for youth to be involved in processing.

Machteld Schoonenberg from YPARD highlighted that perhaps the present farmers will not be the farmers of the future. Currently, many young people from cities are moving to rural areas to start producing crops or to become active in poultry or livestock. It is important though that farmers transfer their knowledge to young people to ensure that their experience is not lost.

Knowledge questions

Currently, there seems to be a disconnect between competences of young people and the demand from the market. It would be interesting to study the "pull" factor for the private sector to engage with youth further and what kind of skills are then needed. The development of this type of workforce should be explored further.

Access to knowledge, education and skills

Bertil Videt and Mundie Salm from the International Centre for Development Oriented Research in Agriculture ([ICRA](#)) opened the access to knowledge, education and skills Open Space by highlighting that education and proper access to knowledge and information is crucial for youth to be successful in agriculture.

One of the first challenges discussed was that education is increasingly funded by tuition fees. This prevents youth from poorer families in receiving a proper education – or they become indebted for life. How do we overcome this economic hurdle? Furthermore, the quality of relevant information and training is an issue. Often the curriculum of formal education does not include agriculture related topics. In addition, there is also the challenge of how to make agriculture information, communication and education accessible and more attractive to youth.

One needs to be quite innovative in education programmes to attract more young people to participate in agricultural activities. In this session, several examples were given of training programmes as well as innovative ways of providing information to youth. For example, through video, television programmes as well as a cartoons to stimulate entrepreneurial ideas in agriculture.

An opportunity identified was to make better connections between different levels of education. By starting at the primary and secondary levels, a more positive attitude towards the agricultural sector could develop over time. For example, stimulate interest of agriculture in primary schools through home grown school feeding programmes. Questions were raised as how to bridge the gap between schools and producers. Videos were suggested as an innovative approach to link both worlds. Moreover, agriculture is more than production and it is therefore important to identify which skills are needed for which roles in the agricultural sector in the broad sense. Agricultural education in general should provide skills about how to become more entrepreneurial and innovative.

As with the other topics discussed, this Open Space resulted in finding two major challenges: how to get more youth involved in the policy discussions around agricultural development; and how to get more access to funding (including tuition fees) to young people? It was also mentioned that everything starts with education and access to knowledge and therefore all these topics are obviously linked to each other.

[ICRA gave a positive evaluation](#) of the meeting as they were able to reflect on their work where they saw possibilities in linking with current youth networks from YPARD and AgriProFocus to better adjust their programmes to meet the needs of youth. This is a very positive example on how synergies and complementarities can be strengthened. The insights from this discussion also highlighted the need for reframing present initiatives and engaging more with what already is done within the network in order to find out how to reach more youth and how to involve them in designing programmes aimed for them specifically.

Knowledge questions

There was a clear need for more insight into innovative ways of knowledge sharing and the use of multimedia tools to facilitate this, such as a digital platform and the use of videos for learning. Better access to agricultural data, such as what [Digital Green](#) is doing, was mentioned as a way to attract youth and improve the image of agriculture.

Youth in policy dialogues

Improving access and involvement in policy dialogues and policy-making is essential for paving the way for young people to become leaders in agriculture and food systems. This Open Space session focused on how to include young (rural) voices in new agricultural trends, developments and policies.

Several challenges were discussed. Firstly, "youth" is still a "container" concept. Who are they? Who are we working with? The challenge of marginalization of youth was discussed as that "youth" is not a homogenous group.

Secondly, several barriers remain for youth participation at higher level policymaking dialogue. Part of the discussion focused on who to involve. For example, how to ensure that not only educated, privileged young people can be included in policy dialogue, but also how to reach disadvantaged youth.

How to get youth interested in agricultural production was another topic of debate. As well as in the access to finance Open Space, cooperatives and youth committees were mentioned as a way to make agricultural production more interesting for young people. Becoming part of the whole value chain can be more attractive. Also, framing is very important as that food systems are not the same as agriculture.

There could also be opportunities in more awareness raising on the rights of youth to be engaged in policy dialogues, as well as creating a more enabling environment. NGOs could have a place in enhancing the role of youth and strengthening existing models. For example, Oxfam has the "My rights, my world programme" which enables young people to claim their rights and become advocates.

Young people should be more present at conferences, and there should be a better integration of different generations in general. Youth sessions tend to be attended by mostly young people. Therefore, youth needs to be present at conferences and seminars and without the label of "youth", and not as a side event.

The session had three main outcomes for opportunities: developing inclusive mechanisms for youth; mentoring of youth by more established persons; and training young people to speak up (in a conference). A blend of young people in this high-level policy process is necessary for future developments.

Knowledge questions

A question that remained was informal versus formal economy: should young producers be involved in the formal sector to make their voices heard? Are current structures sufficient or should new structures be created?

Insights and ideas for follow up

As Ama van Dantzig summarized: "A lot has been discussed, it is an important topic. A lot still needs to be done, there is a need for reframing; of understanding agriculture better; enabling youth; and creating more opportunities for them to be involved in the agricultural sector. It is about sustainability. Without youth in agriculture what will we eat tomorrow?"

The meeting resulted in many lively debates and interesting discussion topics. Many activities were added in the Gallery Walk, which are integrated into the [F&BKP exploration and mapping](#). All of the organizations present are one way or another active in this field and were able to share valuable insights from their experiences. Many people expressed their interest in a joint collaboration on a specific area. For example, Woord en Daad are looking for a collaboration on ICT and data collection in agribusiness for which CTA expressed an interest. Also, AgriProFocus proposed to organize an international expert meeting on Youth in Agribusiness in 2017 and several organizations present indicated they are interested to co-organize, including KIT, CDI, YPARD and Agriterra.

Furthermore, many interesting knowledge questions have been raised that could have follow up, for example by initiating a (case) study or by organizing regular get-togethers in a Community of Practice (CoP, more on this in the box below). The meeting clearly showed the interconnectedness of the topics as many questions reoccurred in different discussions. Overall, more research is needed in order to gain a better understanding on the different contexts, in which it is important to address youth as a specific category. Partly, this knowledge could be distracted from international research and partly new studies could be set up. A few of the key knowledge questions and possibilities are highlighted below on the direction of where follow-up could go:

Important opportunities to explore and discuss within a Community of Practice could include:

1. How can young people be best prepared for involvement in the agricultural sector, given the food and nutrition security challenges of the future?
2. What is the employment scenario for young people in the agricultural sector within 10 years from today? How can more publicity be created on the types of jobs available in agriculture?
3. Would it be useful to stimulate producing fresh and dry products to open new job opportunities for youth in processing?

4. What are the differences in support needed for youth in agribusiness and entrepreneurship in the value chain?
5. How can we promote the involvement of youth in all activities?

Box: How to become involved?

AgriProFocus and the F&BKP hope this explorative meeting and further steps will result in more synergy and coherence in this field. For the next phase, further inquiry into specific needs of different stakeholders will give direction for the follow-up trajectory.

In addition to the need for an overview, various actors working in the Netherlands have announced an interest in exploring a (Knowledge) Community of Practice (CoP) in this field in order to strengthen their work activities. This group might, for example, focus on mapping what are essential drivers to involve youth in agriculture and what can be learned from previous experiences.

The F&BKP and AgriProFocus can facilitate such a CoP for interested organizations and professionals. Also, when organizations are interested in exploring a specific knowledge question together in more detail, the F&BKP can help to set out a study or support a knowledge trajectory. The F&BKP offers an [online Knowledge Portal](#) where you can upload important publications around youth in agriculture. AgriProFocus has already (youth) networks in 12 countries in Africa and Asia. On their ["youth in agribusiness" online platform](#), you can share your ideas, initiatives, experiences and publications regarding this topic. For organizations interested in organizing specific activities or (expert) meetings, AgriProFocus is able to facilitate this with support of their country networks.

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Appendix 1

YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

Participants workshop May 12, 2016

NAME	ORGANIZATION
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Bertil Videt	International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA)
Caroline van der Molen	AgriProFocus
Catherine van der Wees	Independent consultant Gender Smart Solutions
Cor van Beuningen	FoodFirst
Daphne Heijdelberg	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Eelco Baan	SNV Netherlands Development Organisation
Esther van Duin	Oxfam Novib
Frank van Kesteren	INCLUDE Platform
Gijs Paaimans	Heifer Nederland
Judith Jacobs	Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation (CDI)
Karlijn Muiderman	The Broker
Machteld Schoonenberg	Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD)
Marianne Heselmans	Impact Reporters
Mundie Salm	International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA)
Nynke Humalda	AMID
Renske Franken	Dutch Agricultural Development & Trading Company BV (DADTCO)
Roselie Schonewille	Oxfam Novib
Sander Hees	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Seyi Ala	The Sun Barter
Vanessa Nigten	Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP)
Wim Simonse	Woord en Daad
Wouter Kleijn	KIT (Royal Tropical Institute)
Organizers	
Annette van Andel	AgriProFocus
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Facilitator	
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