

Youth inclusiveness in agricultural transformation

The case of Ghana

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Youth Inclusiveness in Agricultural Transformation - The case of Ghana

1. Ghana's agricultural sector

With a total land area of 227540 sq. km, Ghana is one of Africa's middle-sized nations. A substantial amount of its surface is used for agriculture and this is still expanding. In 2000, 63.4% of the Ghanaian land area was defined as "agricultural"¹ and by 2007 it had risen up to 67.7%. In 2015, agricultural land spanned 69% of Ghana.² This growth is not the same across the whole nation as [population density greatly impacts the size of cultivated area surface](#). The coastal region for instance – the most population dense region – has less than 10% of total cultivated area, which is the smallest share of income from agriculture and the smallest amount of livestock per capita. The types of [farming systems also varies across the country](#), corresponding to the different agro-ecological zones. In the southern forest zone, tree crops like cocoa, oil palm, coffee and rubber are dominant. The middle belt is characterized by cropping of maize, beans, yams, tobacco and cotton. Cotton and tobacco are also important in the northern sector, and supplemented with food crops like maize, millet, nuts and yams. Rice and livestock are present in all zones although the types of animals varies according to the regional climate.

1.1 Development of the sector

Given the large quantity of agricultural land, it is not surprising that Ghana's agricultural sector contributes significantly to the nation's GDP. However, contrary to the steady growth of agricultural land surface, agriculture's contribution to the GDP has been declining: from 29.4% in 2000; to 29.7% in 2007; to only 21.1% in 2015.³ The economy in general however has seen a gradual growth, which is usually associated with a [shift of the economy](#) out of agriculture and into services. The [slowdown in agricultural development](#) is particularly visible in the crop sector, which is cause for worry as this is the sector that engages most farmers in Ghana. What accounts for this delayed growth remains a topic of debate, although the opposition in Ghana's parliament points an accusatory finger to the government which is said to be "paying lip service to agriculture by implementing feeble, inappropriate and contradictory policies".⁴

What or whoever is to blame for the declining gains of agriculture, steps are needed to provide new impetus to agricultural development. Its current lacking growth rates poses a serious challenge for Ghana's development policy in terms of economic development, employment opportunities, as well as food security. Owing to the explosive population growth in Ghana, the need for food is rapidly increasing. While Ghanaian food production has significantly expanded over the last decade, this growth is not sufficient to match the rising food demand of the population. As a consequence, [Ghana is increasingly dependent on food imports for its food security](#). The country produces 51% of its cereal needs, 60% of fish requirements and 50% of meat, and imports about 70% and 15% respectively of rice and maize consumed. What is more, while Ghana's agricultural sector still engages almost half of the Ghanaian labor force, the proportion of agricultural workers has been declining. Whereas in 2006 almost 60% of the total working population was employed in the agricultural sector, by 2010 this had dropped to 41%. Yet while there was a slight rise in 2013 to 44.7%, this did not necessarily point to relative growth of employment in the agricultural sector as the rise corresponded to a general growth in overall employment across all sectors.^{5,6}

1.2 Accessibility of land

For the development and employment opportunities in the agricultural sector, access to land is a critical component. In Ghana, two types of land ownership are recognized: state (or public) land, which is used for public interest; and customary (or private) land. It is estimated that over 75% of Ghana's territory is held under this customary system, and the arrangements of which are embedded in complex social norms and cultural rules.⁷ Under customary land tenure, land is considered to belong to a certain social group – mostly families or clans – and *not* to individuals. The land is held and administered by the traditional or spiritual head of this group, with state agencies such as the Land Commission of Ghana providing services for land transactions. As a consequence, while members of a particular clan or community can acquire land through traditional rituals, for people from outside the community, acquisition of land is far more complicated. Since these "outsiders" have no inherited rights to communal land, they must enter into a contractual agreement to use a specific piece of an acre for farming.

¹ The FAO defines "agricultural land" as land that is arable, under permanent crops, and under permanent pastures.

² World Development Indicators, 2015.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dr Owusu-Afriyie Akoto, as quoted in [Ghana Business News](#) 2015. Accessed Oct. 13, 2016

⁵ World Development Indicators, 2015.

⁶ Okudzeto, Eline, Radhika Lal, and Kordzo Sedegah. [African Economic Outlook Ghana 2016](#).

⁷ Antwi-Agyei, Philip, Andrew J. Dougill, and Lindsay C. Stringer. "Impacts Of Land Tenure Arrangements On The Adaptive Capacity Of Marginalized Groups: The Case Of Ghana'S Ejura Sekyedumase And Bongo Districts". *Land Use Policy* 49 (2015): p. 204.

The customary system underpinning most of Ghana's land ownership causes marginalization of a significant part of the population due to [lack of land access](#). As the older generation generally possesses the tenure rights, this problem is particularly pressing for young people who form an ever growing share of the Ghanaian population. Moreover, purchasing land is not a viable option for young starting farmers, especially given the high rates of youth unemployment and high land prices. Unsurprisingly, sources that seek to identify the major barriers for youth participation in agriculture invariably point to lack of [access to land as one of the main obstacles](#).

1.3 Key challenges for the agricultural sector

The agricultural sector itself faces a number of challenges, which directly affect Ghana's food security and economic growth. The most important risks and challenges include:

- 1) **Aging labour force:** At present, the total sector engages over 60% of the working population, including farmers, traders and processors. However, the current population of farmers is aging and the youth are generally not willing to engage in agriculture. Combined with the fact that educated people are minimally involved in agriculture, the future development of the sector is threatened.
- 2) **Environmental degradation and climate change:** The [sustainability of natural resources](#) (those of which Ghana's agriculture is dependent) is threatened by certain practices like burnings of bush and misuse of modern technologies like irrigation and agrochemicals. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture reported in 2007 that 69% of Ghana's total land surface is prone to severe erosion and persistent drought which causes great harvest losses particularly in the Northern Savannah.
- 3) **Limited technological development and dissemination:** The continued use of traditional processing and distribution methods due to lack of access to new technologies and market information has resulted in low yields and poor quality products.
- 4) **Poor quality infrastructure:** Movement of agricultural commodities as well as dissemination of knowledge on market prices and technologies is greatly hampered by poor infrastructure in terms of roads, storage facilities and communication technologies.
- 5) **Insufficient access to markets:** Resulting from weak value chains and lack of infrastructure and information, farmers, processors and traders have trouble accessing (international) markets. In addition, low market prices and price volatility pose a serious risk for agricultural stakeholders.
- 6) **Enabling environment risks:** Most particularly, there is weak capacity among state-level institutions that are responsible for managing the most [important risks facing the agricultural sector](#).

2. Youth (un)employment

After describing the key characteristics of Ghana's agricultural sector and its challenges, the following section focuses on Ghanaian demographics, job opportunities for the younger generation and employment in agriculture.

2.1 Ghanaian youth and unemployment

Like most African countries, Ghana is witnessing an explosive population growth. While in 2000 an estimated 18.8 million people lived in the West African nation, today this number has gone up to 28.2 million, and is expected to rise to 36.9 million by 2030.⁸ Corresponding to this rapid growth, Ghana's population is very young. Last year the median age was estimated at 20.6⁹ with 58.3% of the total population below the age of 24, and 19.5% between 15-24.^{10,11}

Despite Ghana's economic growth, unemployment rates remain relatively high. In 2012, the average national unemployment rate was estimated at 3.6%. Especially youth have been affected by joblessness and low-wage employment. For those aged 15-24, unemployment rates in 2012 were 7.4%, and over the last decade youth unemployment has generally been 4-5% higher than overall unemployment rates.¹² This phenomenon of high youth unemployment is not limited to Ghana. All over the world governments struggle to find a solution to this issue.

⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, custom data acquired via website.

⁹ "Median age of total population (years)", United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision.

¹⁰ Following the UN definition of youth: persons between the ages of 15 and 24

¹¹ "Percentage total population (both sexes combined) by broad age group, major area, region and country, 1950-2100". United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision.

¹² World Development Indicators, 2015.

However with elections coming up in November 2016, [at the moment the issue of youth unemployment is particularly pressing](#) in Ghana.

Data shows that among Ghanaian youth, levels of unemployment vary across sexes as well as living areas. In urban areas unemployment rates are significantly higher than in rural areas because young people are often attracted to the cities in search of jobs. In terms of gender, young women face higher unemployment rates than their male counterparts, which seriously undermines efforts towards economic empowerment of women.¹³ Looking at the educational dimension of youth unemployment in Ghana, it appears that unemployment rates are higher among the educated than the less or uneducated youth. Dr. William Baah-Boateng, Senior Research Fellow at the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), points out that this imbalance can be attributed to the fact that those with only basic or no formal education enter into agricultural or informal jobs where entry is not restricted by education. By contrast, wage employment opportunities in the formal sector are very limited and as university and other tertiary graduates seek jobs in this sector, they often end up unemployed. Baah-Boateng links this desire for paid jobs to Ghana's educational system, which fails to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment. And as conditions in Ghana – in terms of access to credit, institutional and regulatory framework and taxes – are not conducive to entrepreneurial development either, it is unlikely that the creation of new enterprises will soon become a viable solution to the country's youth unemployment.¹⁴

Finally, apart from high rates of unemployment, those young people that do work are often engaged in poorly remunerated, informal and vulnerable employments. The high percentage of youth in vulnerable employment (a staggering 90.3% in 2010 according to the Ghanaian Population and Housing Census Datasets) can to a large extent be explained by their engagement in contributing family work mostly in agriculture.¹⁵

2.2 Youth employment in agriculture

While employment opportunities in Ghana are becoming more numerous due to the country's economic growth, the job market remains unable to absorb the rapidly expanding young labor force. Efforts to create jobs for these young people are often separated from efforts to accelerate agricultural growth and improve food security. As concluded in the World Bank report [Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa](#), this type of compartmentalization is damaging and "limits Africa's ability to reap the benefits of its youth dividend". The agricultural sector is seen as having the most potential of catalyzing economic growth and employment for young people, especially given the growing demand for food and raw materials. Yet, throughout Sub-Saharan Africa – and Ghana is no exception – young people do not regard agriculture as a viable job option. Agriculture and farming in particular is perceived as an occupation for aged, illiterate and rural people. "It is not seen as a venture that could provide job security and a stable income", adds Dr. William Baah-Boateng.¹⁶

The persistence of this idea poses a great challenge to future employment of youth in agriculture and therefore to the food security of Ghana in general. "At present", [says Baah-Boateng](#), "agriculture in Ghana is mostly organized on subsistence basis, with very few large-scale agricultural activities". Generally Ghanaian farms are small, family-held businesses that are worked with little mechanization and can barely sustain the family. The land is owned by the older generation and there is little prospect for investments in irrigation, high-valued crops, terracing, and other productivity increasing techniques. Thus, if the sector is to realize its potential and become an attractive venture for youth, the [daily practice of farming must be changed dramatically](#). Such a shift can only be achieved through targeted measures that seek to change the way agriculture is organized and [address constraints faced by young people](#) with regards to the acquisition of capital, land and skills. Although there are programs in place that aim to do just that (see below for examples), [according to the World Bank](#) "efforts to address [these] constraints [...] will have to be redoubled and accelerated, and features to make programs friendly to the needs of the young introduced".

3. Government policy on youth

In November 2016, Ghana will go to the polls to elect a new president and government for the next four years. Apart from worsening fiscal and budgetary deficits and ongoing political corruption, the issue of rising unemployment – youth unemployment in particular – is on the lips of many Ghanaians. The current government is blamed for doing too little too late; but given the experience of the last decade, whether opposition parties will be able to bring about meaningful change remains highly doubtful. This section provides an overview of Ghana's most recent government policies on youth employment, focusing in particular on policies in relation to agriculture. Yet, while the programs in place appear a cause for hope, the final paragraph will show that the situation on the ground is, unfortunately, less encouraging.

¹³ Ibid. 12, p. 3-4.

¹⁴ Ibid. 12, p. 8.

¹⁵ Ibid. 12, p. 5-6.

¹⁶ Quotes from Dr. William Baah-Boateng are taken from an interview held on October 14th, 2016 by Yannicke Goris.

3.1 NYEP / GYEEDA / YEA

The Ghanaian ministries most concerned with youth employment are the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR) and the Ministry for Youth and Sports (MoYS). As part of the overarching National Employment Policy (NEP), these ministries initiated the National Youth Employment Policy (NYEP) in 2006 to develop, coordinate, supervise and facilitate the creation of jobs for Ghana's youth.¹⁷

The NYEP has not been a success and was even described as “woefully inadequate” and “elite-prescribed program” that failed to deal with the problem of youth unemployment in a sustainable fashion. By the end of 2011, approximately 108,000 young Ghanaians had been given a job through the NYEP, which is a minimal achievement considering that this number is statistically negligible and most jobs were of temporary nature. This defect can be attributed in large part to the fact that the program did not provide any broader education and training deemed necessary for a more solid basis for long-term employment. In addition, Ghanaian youth were not included in the program's formulation, nor in its implementation. This meant there was no sense of “ownership” and as a result, participation in NYEP projects remained very low.

In 2013, the NYEP was transformed into the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA), which served to reinvigorate the program and announce the acquisition of substantial World Bank funding. The program's aim was to enlarge the base of Ghanaian entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace at which ventures were created, as this was thought to accelerate employment generation and economic development. However, like its predecessor, the GYEEDA failed to achieve its purpose. The agency was characterized by shady deals, corruption related activities and misappropriated funds. Eventually this led to an official investigation in 2012 and a subsequent termination of contracts with various companies.

Finally, in yet another effort by the Ghanaian government to address youth unemployment, the Youth Employment Agency (YEA) was launched in 2015. This latest initiative is regarded with much suspicion as some fear that it is merely “a cover for the rot and corruption that were uncovered in the GYEEDA and an avenue to perpetuate the same going forward.”

3.2 YiAP

As part of the aforementioned YEA, the MELR has formulated a number of “modules”, each focusing on a specific economic sector. One of these modules is known as the Youth-in-Agriculture Programme (YiAP), which is the result of a collaboration with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD), NGOs and qualified private sector partners. The YiAP seeks to encourage youth to see agriculture as an occupation.¹⁸ To this end, the program: a) aims to attract the private sector to invest in agriculture; b) includes activities that will attract educated youth to seek long-term employment in the sector; and c) provides training and internships in private sector and MoFA agricultural enterprises.

However in a 2013 review of a so-called “block farm program” that was part of the YiAP, researchers concluded that on average only 25% of participants could actually be considered “youth” and activities had little promotive or transformative potential.¹⁹ It thus seems that, like the other government programmes, the YiAP has not been a great success.

3.3 YES

In addition to the programs initiated by the MELR and MoFA, President Mahama has launched his own project to stimulate youth employment. The Youth Enterprise Support Fund (YES) which started in August 2014 is a multi-sectoral initiative operating under the Office of the President. It is a collaborative undertaking that is supported by key agencies, including the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI), the National Youth Authority (NYA), the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Finance. YES Fund aims to support young Ghanaians between the ages of 18-35 years who have a business or business idea for which they require financial support and mentorship. Preferably businesses should focus on agriculture and agribusiness, although this is not a strict requirement.

The launch of the YES Fund was greeted with mixed feelings as many critics feared the program would face the same challenges as the GYEEDA. Moreover, as there is much evidence that a simple grant-financing model does not offer a sustainable solution to (under)employment, whether the YES initiative can generate long term success remains to be seen.

¹⁷ The Ghanaian Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations. National Employment Policy. Accra, 2014.

¹⁸ The Youth Employment Agency of Ghana. Youth In Agriculture. 2015. Accessed Sept. 19, 2016 on <http://www.yea.gov.gh/index.php/en/yea-modules/youth-in-agriculture>

¹⁹ Gyampo, Ransford. "Youth Participation In Youth Programmes: The Case Of Ghana's National Youth Employment Programme". The Journal of Pan African Studies 5.5 (2012)

3.4 Programs in practice

The goals and written plans of Ghana's governmental programs that seek to include youth in agriculture seem very promising. In addition, high officials have emphasized the importance of these programs, both for the nation's future food security as well as for its general economic development. However, as Dr. William Baah-Boateng notes, the policies exist just on paper. "On the ground there is nothing like it", he says, "there are no efficient programs that are able to make agriculture attractive to young people." Despite laudable plans and numerous renewed efforts and changes of direction – which were, some have argued, just for public display – it thus seems that no meaningful effect was realized in practice.

In his work, Baah-Boateng often interacts with Ghanaian policy makers, with whom he discusses the lack of actual interventions on a regular basis. In a recent event on youth employment (see Box 1) organized by the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) and the Dutch Knowledge Platform for Inclusive Development (INCLUDE), many of these policy makers were gathered together and, as Baah-Boateng adds, they had no choice but to concede "there is indeed nothing on the ground." Although many future policy plans were put on the table and some interesting recommendations were made; when discussing the impact of over a decade of youth employment programs, nothing of significance came up. That is, nothing of positive significance came up. Due to the fact that no governmental program on youth in agriculture has so far yielded real results for Ghana's young people; this is a very significant and very worrisome conclusion.

Box 1. Pre-election national dialogue on youth employment

Since youth unemployment is such a major issue in Ghana, providing a solution to this problem runs the risk of becoming one of the most contested topics in the struggle for the upcoming elections in November 2016. In an effort to prevent this from happening, the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) in Ghana initiated the Second National Dialogue on Youth Employment Challenges in Ghana: What do the policy makers and politicians have to say? which took place in Accra on September 29, 2016.

Challenges for youth employment

The event organized with the support of the Dutch Knowledge Platform for Inclusive Development (INCLUDE) brought together representatives of political parties, researchers and relevant stakeholders. Such a joint effort *ahead* of the 2016 elections is a major step forward in the process towards finding solutions to tackle youth unemployment in a sustainable manner. Central to the policy dialogue were three themes, one of which was “agriculture and youth employment”. In relation to this theme, several challenges were identified, including: unfriendly government agricultural policies for young people; delayed income; reduced land for agriculture in favor of housing and mining; and the partisan nature of the “youth in agriculture” policies and programmes, which fail to reach the majority of young unemployed people in the country.

Job creation in agriculture

In addition to the identification of major challenges, the dialogue resulted in a number of constructive recommendations to improve youth employment in agriculture: 1) modernization and mechanization of the sector are necessary for job creation, as is the promotion of sector linkages between agriculture and industry; 2) in order to effectively address the prevailing negative image of the sector, agriculture should be treated as a business in itself; 3) ready markets for farm produce should be created; 4) investments should be made to develop rural areas in order to curb rural-urban migration; and 5) tomatoes, soya beans, almonds, ginger and mangoes are potential crops for investment to generate more jobs for youth.

Future prospects

In terms of attendance, recommendations and intentions, the National Dialogue was a great success but there were some notable limitations. The currently ruling party of Ghana, the NDC, did not participate in the dialogue. Although polls indicate that the NDC is likely to lose the elections, the party's absence does send a clear message about the actual impact of this event. In addition, the question *why* current government policies and projects on youth unemployment fail to deliver was not addressed, which seems like a missed opportunity if the aim is to move towards more sustainable and meaningful policy change. For such change to happen, participants of the dialogue pointed to the need of more active engagement of young people in the design and implementation of new programs. Such engagement is deemed vital to enhance participation of youth in agricultural programs. However as Dr. William Baah-Boateng points out, participation is only possible if there are indeed programs available. Even though *on paper* the government has a number of projects in place, on the ground very little is happening. The outcomes of the *Second National Dialogue on Youth Employment* are certainly reason for hope and optimism, but whether they will be translated into both policy change *and* practical implementation remains to be seen.

Sources:

- Ofori, Percis. 2016. "[Political Parties Propose Solutions To Youth Unemployment Ahead Of Election 2016](#)". ACET. African Center For Economic Transformation. Accessed Oct. 21, 2016
- INCLUDE Secretariat,. 2016. "[Ghanaian Political Parties Propose Solutions For Youth Unemployment](#)". INCLUDE. Accessed Oct. 21, 2016

4. Private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders

In addition to governmental initiatives, there are countless other programs that contribute to the involvement of Ghana's youth in the country's agricultural sector. These programs are initiated by NGOs, private sector companies and other stakeholders, including international organizations like the African Development Bank and the UN. Initially the goal of this section was to provide a general overview of the most important initiatives in Ghana. This however has proven to be a near impossible task due to the decentralized, scattered and often local nature of thousands of programs. Therefore, initiatives that are currently in place (led either by NGOs, private sector or others) will be introduced in broad terms, supplemented with a few detailed case studies of representative programs highlighting key aims, approaches and impact.

4.1 NGOs

"There are a lot of local, national as well as international NGOs involved in youth programs", says Charity Osei-Amponsah, researcher for Wageningen University.²⁰ Generally these programs provide training and resources, for example to support young people in setting up their own enterprise or farm. However, as both Osei-Amponsah and her colleague Alexander Nuer point out, given the sheer quantity and often small size of these organizations, it is very difficult to pinpoint exactly what the NGOs do and what their impact is.

Most organizations work in one specific area and are not active across the whole of Ghana. Moreover, implemented programs are mostly multi-faceted, which means that when looking for projects that aim to involve youth in agriculture specifically, it might not be easy to find many examples. "If there is a project, for instance, on food security", Osei-Amponsah explains, "it will not be targeting youth specifically, but rather rural people in general".⁴² Yet as young people make up a large segment of the population, they will automatically be reached. "Most programs do have a certain portion of their package devoted to youth", Nuer adds, "but it could be hard to find such information anywhere else than 'in the field', especially since there is no central point where NGOs, let alone their impact, are recorded."⁴² Adding to the difficulty is the fact that most programs lack a research component: "Very little scientific documentation on impact and efficiency is generated", Nuer concludes.⁴²

In an effort to draw some general conclusions about the many different NGOs working on youth inclusion in agriculture in Ghana, some key focus areas can be identified. "Capacity building is central to most NGO-programs", says Osei-Amponsah.⁴² This includes skills training – both technical and soft skills – as well as knowledge sharing in terms of best business and agricultural practices. Many programs supplement this component of capacity building with financial support, which helps young people to start their own agribusiness or invest in inputs like seeds and fertilizer. "But of course they need to have their own small piece of land somewhere", Osei-Amposah notes,⁴² suggesting that little is done by NGOs about the challenge of limited land access that many young Ghanaians have to face. Most importantly, Osei-Amposah and Nuer emphasize NGOs aim to have youth take up agriculture as a business. In that sense, the NGOs working on youth inclusion in agriculture directly impact food security. By encouraging youth to approach farming as a profitable business venture, they are stimulating increased productivity and thereby elevating the sector beyond subsistence level.

²⁰ Quotes from Charity Osei-Amposah and Alexander Nuer are taken from an interview held on October 20th, 2016 by Yannicke Goris

Box 2. Africa Youth Network for Agricultural Transformation (AYNAT)

One of the most visible NGOs currently working on youth involvement in agriculture in Ghana is the *African Youth Network for Agricultural Transformation (AYNAT)*. The core of the network is made up of young people trained in the “Champions for Change Leadership in Agriculture”, a program by USAID’s Africa Lead II (see below). The organization’s objectives and projects provide a good example of an NGO that is trying to engage young people in Ghana’s sustainable agricultural transformation.

The Youth Network aims to strengthen the capacities of youth in agriculture, foster a favorable environment for sustainable agribusiness, and at the same time, act as an advocacy group for the development of better policies related to youth in agriculture. Through its methods, AYNAT is not just trying to improve the lives and employment opportunities of Ghanaian youth; it is also promoting change towards food security and sustained economic growth.

Programs

The objectives of the AYNAT can be seen in four different projects:

1. **Agribusiness incubation center.** At these centers, young people that want to set up their own agricultural business are provided with training in technical, marketing and soft skills (e.g. leadership and negotiation). In addition, events are organized that bring together youth, potential investors and companies to foster strategic partnerships.
2. **Agri-business Fair.** At this fair, the AYNAT provides a networking forum for actors working in the agricultural value chain, including farmers, exporters, suppliers, processors and regional and national government agencies. It gives young people the opportunity to meet potential partners and fellow entrepreneurs and as such creates a platform for knowledge sharing and network building.
3. **The Youth Parliament for Agriculture:** Based on the view that “youth are the future leaders, the future farmers, and future policy makers”, AYNAT has developed The Youth Parliament for Agriculture (TYPA). TYPA offers a platform for youth involved in agriculture to discuss possible solutions to the challenges they face and voice their views to stakeholders and government institutions. At the same time, it prepares them to take up their future roles as policy leaders in agriculture.
4. **High level youth policy dialogue:** AYNAT organizes policy dialogue events that are meant to provide an inclusive platform for young people to engage in a dialogue with decision makers and at the same time facilitate partnerships with government and development partners in implementing youth policy. In addition and by means of the policy dialogue, this increases public pressure on the Ghanaian government to make good on its political commitment to promote youth participation in agriculture.

USAID reported that in spring 2016 the AYNAT organized a very successful first high-level Youth Policy Dialogue Forum. The dialogue served as an exchange platform for youth to critically examine and challenge the implementation of Ghana’s Youth in Agriculture (YIA) program to date. One of the outcomes was the establishment of a Policy Monitoring Committee where AYNAT recruited a number of youth members, and those participants will spearhead policy advocacy campaigns and strengthen the mutual accountability mechanisms around the implementation of the YIA.

Sources:

- Africa Lead II Team,. 2016. [Feed The Future: Building Capacity For African Agricultural Transformation \(Africa Lead II\)](#). Quarterly Report. October - December 2015. USAID Bureau of Food Security. Accessed Oct. 27, 2016
- [“African Youth Network for Agricultural Transformation”](#). AYNAT, 2016. Accessed Oct. 27, 2016

4.2 International organizations

In addition to NGOs, many other parties are working in Ghana to improve the agricultural sector, improve youth employment, or a combination of both. In this respect, big international organizations like the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and USAID constitute the most important sources of large scale programs and funding. These large scale initiatives are mostly and not specifically targeted towards youth, but do include some youth specific projects. [The USAID program Africa Lead](#), for instance, focuses on capacity building and skills development within Africa's agricultural sector. The program in Ghana includes workshops on best agricultural practices, technical assistance to improve productivity and food security, leadership courses, as well as training program specifically targeted at women and youth. In addition to its own projects, USAID supports many existing organizations such as (among others) the Savanna Integrated Rural Development Aid, the Ghana Livestock Development Network and the Africa Youth Network for Agricultural Transformation (AYNAT).

Another major donor for the Ghanaian agricultural sector is the AfDB. As part of its ten year strategy covering the period 2013-2022, the bank identified five priority areas, one of which is named "[Feed Africa](#)". This program aims for long-term agricultural transformation to unlock Africa's agricultural potential and tackle the persistent threat of food insecurity. In order to achieve these interconnected goals, the AfDB is investing in multiple activities, including multi-sectoral interventions (e.g. infrastructure development, mechanization, enhanced access to credit and improved land tenure systems), policy reforms, establishment of an integrated value-chain, and promotion of women and youth-employment. As the AfDB's Feed Africa strategy shows, involving youth in agriculture is not always identified as a goal in itself, but can be seen as instrumental for achieving sustainable transformation of the agricultural sector or combatting food insecurity. Recently however, the AfDB did launch a new program where youth inclusion in agriculture is taking central stage: the Empowering Novel Agri-Business-Led Employment for Youth in African Agriculture (ENABLE Youth) program. [Through ENABLE Youth](#), the AfDB has begun to establish "incubation centers" where young people are to be provided with life-skills education (effective and functional job training), technological assistance, and are encouraged to exchange knowledge and experiences with one another. [As the first practical steps](#) of the program were only taken a few months ago, whether ENABLE Youth will achieve its goals remains to be seen.

Although formally an NGO and due to its scope and work method, the MasterCard Foundation is discussed here with the other "international organizations". In December 2015, the MasterCard Foundation launched its "[Youth Forward Initiative](#)" (YFI). The YFI is a five year \$74 million initiative which aims to reach more than 200,000 economically disadvantaged young people aged 15-24. The YFI focuses on those youth living on less than \$2 per day, who are out of school, unemployed or underemployed, and are seeking quality employment or the opportunity to start their own businesses in the growing agricultural and construction sectors.²¹ The YFI's main activities include market relevant skills training, mentorships and provision of financial services. As was the case for the AfDB's ENABLE Youth, given the program's recent launch not much has been done so far. However, it is clear that the program will be implemented in both Uganda and Ghana in collaboration with Solidaridad, Global Communities and other smaller organizations. In addition, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Participatory Development Associates of Ghana (PDA) have been engaged to develop an [evidence informed understanding of the needs of young people in Ghana and Uganda](#) and how the program can best meet those needs.

What these three examples show is that in addition to a vast number of local and national NGOs, several international organizations are involved in the development of Ghana's agriculture and the improvement of food security and youth employment. In addition to offering substantial financial support to existing projects, these organizations are introducing their own programs as well, and thus adding even more parties to the already complex and crowded domain of development initiatives in Ghana.

4.3 Private actors and partnerships

When discussing actors involved in Ghana's development, and agricultural development specifically, the private sector cannot be overlooked. Many critics argue that the private sector should take a more active role in Africa's development – or, alternatively, should be more actively engaged by NGOs and governmental actors. It is definitely true that Africa's economy, and the agricultural sector in particular, could benefit from more support from the private sector and public-private partnerships. At the same time however, current investments by private sector companies are already making a difference and are of crucial importance for the continued existence of quite a number of development programs. In addition to donations, many private sector parties have launched their own initiatives, mostly in partnership with local NGOs or local government institutions. However since these initiatives are as varied as they are numerous, and are often very small and intertwined with existing NGO projects, it is difficult to identify their scope and impact.

While some multinational companies such as Mondelēz International (see Box 3) have established their own separate foundations devoted to sustainable agricultural development; others have made the sector development part of their actual businesses. One such example is [Farmerline Ltd.](#), a Ghanaian social enterprise that develops

²¹ In the Ghanaian program, 70% of funds will go to the construction sector; the remaining 30% are invested in the agricultural sector.

ICT to communicate and collect data to and from smallholder farmers in rural regions of West Africa. It offers small farmers easy access to critical agricultural information, including best farming practices, weather forecasts, regional market prices and financial tips. The company is founded and lead by young Ghanaians (mostly students) and in addition to its “regular” business, it is empowering the youth through skills training.²² Even though it is a small company, Farmerline has managed to reach over 5,000 smallholder farmers in Ghana and has a number of contracts with ministries, international NGOs and bilateral organizations, including the German Welthungerhilfe (WHH), USAID and Ghana’s Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA).

In addition to initiatives by private actors themselves, partnerships between the private and public sector are of major importance. The provision of traineeships and hands-on education for youth, for instance, benefits such partnerships because training can take place within existing agri-businesses (offering young people actual job-experience and potential employment), while at the same time be a part of more comprehensive development programs. Moreover, partnerships can change the actual structure of the agricultural value chain, create better employment opportunities for young farmers, and improve the livelihoods of rural populations in general. In Ghana’s cocoa sector for example, such developments are already visible. Research has found that recent decentralization of Ghana’s cocoa value chain has led to a growing role for non-state actors in the governance of this chain. These non-state actors, including NGOs, international partners, as well as private companies, are [forming partnerships](#) that facilitate “shar[ing] of knowledge and financial and human resources, as well as the creat[ion] of standards and certification processes geared towards enhancing cocoa production, yield, and the sustainability of cocoa farming and rural livelihoods”. As a result, the cocoa value chain has shifted from a top-down structure to a mixed bottom-up/top-down structure, which means there is more consideration for the needs and demands of local farmers. Moreover, in aiming for sustainable growth of the sector, the newly formed partnerships actively try to engage young Ghanaians in the cocoa value chain because the continued development of the sector depends on their labor force in the future.

²² Charity Osei-Amposah, as stated in the interview held on October 20th, 2016 by Yannicke Goris.

Box 3. Cocoa Life

Mondelēz International is an American multinational company mostly known for its chocolate and snacks. In 2013, the company invested \$400 million to set up its program to ensure a sustainable future for chocolate, *Cocoa Life*. Although not a specific youth program, Cocoa Life takes a holistic approach and explicitly recognizes that “without the next cocoa farming generation there is no cocoa”, thus young Ghanaians are automatically included.

Cocoa life is an excellent example of how a private sector company works together with government and NGOs to achieve a common goal. In addition to working with the Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), the international NGO Solidaridad is actively involved in the design and implementation of Mondelēz International’s project.

The program

Cocoa Life’s aim is to create empowered and thriving cocoa farming families and ensure a more sustainable supply of cocoa. In order to reach these goals, the organization has identified five focus areas:

1. **Farming:** Through skills training and the distribution of improved planting material, Cocoa Life helps farmers improve their yields and earn higher incomes.
2. **Community:** Men and women are supported to transform their communities *together* by means of gender equality education and building a sense of ownership within communities.
3. **Livelihoods:** Cocoa Life provides access to microcredit so that farmers can develop additional sources of income and reinvest in their businesses.
4. **Environment:** The program invests in the protection of land and forests, and promotes efficiency rather than expansion to maintain ecosystems for future generations.
5. **Youth:** Cocoa Life stimulates school enrolment for children and provides training for youth to make it easier to find employment in the cocoa sector once they have finished school.

With regards to the young population of Ghana, Cocoa Life’s objective is twofold. On the one hand, the program is aiming to safeguard the future of cocoa production and therefore tries to attract youth to the sector. On the other hand, Cocoa Life focuses on the general development and needs of the community, meaning that the organization is working hard to keep the “very young” *out* of the cocoa sector. That is, based on the assumption that education for children inspires the next generation of farmers, fighting child labor and stimulating school enrolment for children is high on the organization’s agenda.

Impact evaluation

In contrast to small and local NGOs, a large multi-stakeholder program like Cocoa Life has the resources to invest in evaluation research. A first impact study by a research team from Harvard University indicated that between 2009 and 2014, Cocoa Life made significant positive difference where farmers’ incomes almost tripled (49% more than the income rise of non-beneficiaries) and cocoa yields increased as well. Other results including those about the effect of Cocoa Life on employment opportunities of Ghanaian youth are still on their way, but preliminary assessments suggest that youth are benefitting from Cocoa Life’s approach.

Just recently, Embod, an independent international consultancy agency that specializes in social protection, development, business and human rights, published a research report on the effect of Cocoa Life with regards to child labor in the cocoa sector. Mondelēz International’s program was heralded as a promising approach, fostering transformation of communities over time and helping tackle the root enablers of child labor. The report concluded that Cocoa Life sets itself apart from other approaches through its comprehensive framework and multi-year partnerships with international non-governmental organizations.

“[Its] most distinguished feature is its direct work with communities with a broader intention than cocoa farming and child labor. Due to this holistic approach, as well as the significant financial and technical investment being dedicated to the program, Cocoa Life holds the potential to make a significant difference to hundreds, if not thousands, of communities and their children.”

Sources:

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