

Young African Farmers Position on Climate Change



Globally, farmers play instrumental role in promoting development in their communities and countries. In Africa, the rising youth population coupled with high youth unemployment rates necessitate the need to rely on agriculture and agribusiness as game changer for absorbing the large population of unemployed youth. It is projected that by 2030, about 30 million African youth will enter the job market, even though the continent at present is only able to create just 3 million job, leaving a gap of 15 million jobs that can be filled by the agriculture and agribusiness sector. Similarly, agriculture and agribusiness have the prospect of providing US\$1 trillion revenue for the African continent by 2030 while contributing immensely to food security and nutrition.

Indeed, African youth have the potential to transform agriculture and agribusiness on the continent due to their ability to take up innovations and technology, coupled with their knowledge and skills. However, youth engagement in agriculture and agribusiness is hindered by many factors. Climate change and its associated impact on agriculture have been a major barrier to youth engagement in agriculture and agribusiness. The COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened the vulnerability of African youth to engage in agriculture and agribusiness. In addition, African youth face multiple challenges in accessing essential resources such as land and finance.

On 25th October 2022, the Pan African Farmers Organization (PAFO), through the financial support of the World Farmer Organization (WFO) in the context of climakers alliances, assembled young African farmers in Kigali, Rwanda, for the Climakers Africa Workshop, as part of the International Young Farmers Summit that was held from 24th to 29th October, 2022. The participants for the workshop included the representatives of young farmers below 35 years from the five regional networks of PAFO (Eastern African Farmers Federation [EAFF], Plateforme régionale des organisations paysannes d'Afrique centrale [PROPAC], Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs d'Afrique de l'Ouest [ROPPA], Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions [SACAU]) et l'Union des agriculteurs du Maghreb et d'Afrique du Nord [UMNAGRI]. The objective of the workshop was to understand the changing climatic conditions under which young farmers work and the associated impact on their agriculture and agribusiness activities as well as existing adaptation options employed by the young farmers and youth agripreneurs.

The discussions by participants from the five regions of the African continent revealed that climate change and extremes such as droughts, floods, rising temperature, erratic rainfall volumes and patterns as well as the rise in pests and diseases have increased the susceptibility of agriculture and agribusiness on the continent. Most important, Climate change has been shown to have a complex impact on young African farmers and their communities. These include reduced crop and livestock yields; reduced quality of crops and livestock; increased food insecurity and increased poverty, particularly in already vulnerable communities. Added to this is the increase in social violence, such as rape, as a result of climate change. While young African farmers are steadily building resilient farming systems through the adoption of innovations and technologies, the most important of these is the adoption of new technologies. These include improved crop varieties and livestock breeds; greenhouse cultivation and irrigation to reduce the anthropogenic causes of climate change and to reduce its impact on agriculture and agribusiness. But the exclusion of young African farmers from participation in policymaking at national, regional, continental and global levels has serious consequences for their ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- With one voice, young African farmers are convinced that they are key actors in the formulation and implementation of appropriate climate change policies. Therefore, they call for their urgent inclusion in policy discussions on climate change. In particular, they call for the engagement and participation of youth in general, and young farmers in particular, in climate change negotiations at the Conference of Parties (COP 27) held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. An active engagement based on the fact that they bear the brunt

of climate change, have lived experiences, and have knowledge that can influence the negotiations. Young African farmers cannot be passive and discrete observers of the COP27 negotiations. It is time for world leaders and policymakers to consider youth and young farmers as equal stakeholders in addressing global challenges.

- The potential of innovation and technology can reduce the extent of vulnerability of the African continent. It can also fast tracking socioeconomic growth and development on the continent. Therefore, young African farmers strongly call for the need to increase funding for the creation and transfer of innovations and technologies, particularly along the agriculture and agribusiness value chain.
- Bilateral, multilateral and cross-sectoral collaboration between private sector actors, financial institutions, international development agencies and governments should be established and intensified to enhance access to funds for research and development, innovations and technologies. Most importantly, the young African farmers call for the need for polluters (advanced economies), to seriously consider the polluter-pays principle and to show more rigor and interest in promoting climate justice.
- Like any other human right, young African farmers have the right to work and live in conducive climatic environments. Therefore, failure of developed economies to take responsibility to tackle climate change—through funding, technology and innovation—amount to the violation and non-adherence to the rights of young Africans, their agriculture, and agribusiness.

- Young African farmers also believe that knowledge sharing between and within developed and developing countries is relevant for tackling climate change. As such, there is the need to create more avenues for sharing of knowledge and best practices that can enhance their adaptation and mitigation. Existing exchange programs should be intensified while creating new ones particularly for young African farmers to learn from their counterparts in developed economies. The African Union through the African Heads of State and Government should work and collaborate with their donors, the private sector and development partners to intensify exchange programs and learning platforms and avenues for young Africa farmers. Learning from best practices around the world will position young African farmers to build a robust and resilience agriculture and agribusiness system on the continent, thereby helping in tackling climate change and its negative impacts on the continent.