



Regional Workshop: Youth-led agricultural entrepreneurship for sustainable rural and urban food systems in West Africa



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP

RIKOLTO, FAO and YPARD proposed to jointly organize a forum for young farmers in West Africa on the business opportunities offered by sustainable agriculture and urban food systems in the region. The forum was held in Saly, Senegal, from 21 to 25 October 2019, being the second in a series of forums, the first of which was held in March 2019 in Uganda for young people from East Africa. There were 36 participants, all engaged in formal or informal agricultural/food activities, from Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal. They were selected by YPARD from 350 applications. The selected young people come from various sectors: production, agri-food and agri-business, post-harvest logistics, seed production, marketing and digital services.

The **objectives of the workshop** were to inspire young people to strengthen rural-urban linkages for sustainable food and agriculture through:

- strengthening their capacities in agricultural production and sustainable use of inputs
- promoting their entrepreneurial skills and improving the nutrition-sensitive value chain
- creating networking opportunities for exchanges among themselves and with speakers on business opportunities, innovations, knowledge and best practices for production and along food system value chains.

Introductory session

In presiding the official opening ceremony of the workshop, the prefect of the department of Mbour launched that "the development of the agricultural sector is once again considered the most effective solution to sustainably absorb these cohorts of urban and rural young people arriving on the labour market".

Mr Waly Diouf, Coordinator of the National Rice Self-Sufficiency Programme (PNAR), representing the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Equipment, called on young participants to take advantage of the many opportunities available in rural areas. He made an appeal to young people in particular to encourage them to create breakthroughs, to change paradigms so that they no longer consider the agricultural profession as an occasional profession that is chosen for want of better.

Session 1. The future of food and agriculture in the era of urbanization

Main challenges and opportunities to achieve the SDGs

FAO, Oumar Syll, Decent Rural Employment Expert

Main challenges identified are

- ✓ Low level of investment in the agricultural sector
- ✓ Insufficient support for family farming

- ✓ Inappropriate land reform that does not secure the land of family farms and preserve land and natural resources for future generations
- ✓ Insufficient implementation of national strategies for local consumption by facilitating access to local, healthy and ecological agricultural products through the establishment of value chains focused on family farmers
- ✓ Low capacity of young people in agro-ecological production

Mr. Syll pointed out that “A territorial orientation in agri-food development planning has the advantage of strengthening the physical, economic, social and political links between small urban centres and surrounding rural areas. Strengthening rural linkages with small towns and rural cities can link producers, agro-industrial processors and related services and other segments downstream of food value chains. Small urban areas account for about 60% of urban food demand. They can also serve as hubs for a flourishing service sector.”

Session 2. Sustainable agricultural practices in the food system - 4 inspiring cases

1. Sustainable inputs: experience of the FRAISEN Network

Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Fall
Coordonnateur Yeesal Agri Hub
Représentant FraiSen

2. Transformation ready to face the future of our food: the case of Multi-Services Agricoles

Mouhamadou BEYE
Multi-Services Agricoles

3. Inclusive trade practices: Arovag bananas conquering Dakar's urban markets - Example of including small producers and low-income consumers in a nutritious and healthy food chain for cities

Cheikh Mambaye SY
Chargé de Programme – Rikolto

4. How to engage young people in agro-ecological practices for climate change resilience ?

Gora Ndiaye
Jardins d'Afrique - Kaydara Agroecological Farm School
<http://asso-jardins-afrique.com>

The new and motivating ideas that participants came up with from the 4 cases presented

- The production of organic bananas and strawberries
- Facilitating access to land for young people
- Agro-ecology: producing, manufacturing your own seeds or fertilizers
- The promotion of local farmers and their access to the market
- Specialization in the production and sale of organic seeds
- The importance of the network for market access or training dissemination

As part of this session we have tested **YOUTH SCAN**, a survey that captures micro-narratives of young people on their potential to contribute with their profession to the development and well-being of their community. Participants were invited to share a specific and concrete experience. Their experience had to reflect something important in their lives that has influenced them and that they find it useful to share. Then they answer a series of questions about the story to help the facilitator understand what the experience they shared means. This SenseMaker® initiative aims to understand young people's perceptions of their professional future. What motivates young people to contribute to the development of their communities or to pursue a professional career elsewhere? What are the drivers, stumbling blocks, opportunities, etc. behind their choices? Results were presented to the participants on the last day of the workshop.

Session 3. Business opportunities and challenges in agri-food value chains

Agricultural entrepreneurship and sustainable food systems in West Africa

Abdourahmane FAYE, Expert FAR & Insertion, IPAR Sénégal

Mr. Faye described the current situation in West-Africa (“We consume what we do not produce, we produce what we do not consume”) and proposed potential fields of employability of young people, both on the demand side (for example: mass training of consultants in family farming) and the supply side (for example: support generational transitions on family farms).

Business opportunities related to urban food systems

Charlotte Flechet, Coordinateur Food Smart City program, Rikolto

Charlotte Flechet described the following potential entry points for rural-urban entrepreneurship:

- Inputs: trade specialized in organic or low toxicity inputs
- Food waste: processing of surplus vegetables into soup, juice, fertilizer (circular economy), or as a support for mushroom production
- Processing: banana flours, baby food, mango snacks, fruit juice, soy cheese, there are many possibilities
- Packaging: trade in recyclable, biodegradable or reusable packaging
- Marketing: local food distribution logistics platform
- Preparation: restaurant specialized in local, dietetic products, in compliance with food safety standards
- Technology & ICT: digital services to support agriculture, information systems for value chains

Session 4. Doing business in the food system

We started by advice of FAO on setting up an agri-food business (by Oumar Syll) and an overview the principles of **Inclusive Business** by Mambaye Sy of Rikolto.

Afterwards we heard 3 testimonies from young entrepreneurs on the creation of their own agri-food company (production & marketing)

1. FRAISEN, a marketing model based on ICT

2. Sarr Sefour, the champion of the sweet potato
3. Drissa Tressougue, transformation of fruit into juice

Participants learnt to use the **Business Model Canvas**, a tool to briefly describe the economic model of one's business, focussing on:

- What you're going to sell,
- with which clients,
- for what purpose,
- in what way,
- and for what benefit.

On day 3 of the workshop, the group participated in 2 field visits

- ✓ **Site 1: 2 young producers supervised by the Kaydara farm in Samba Dia** (Kaydara, an agro-ecology training centre where each student at the end of their training obtains 1 hectare of land to put into practice what they have learned and at the same time be autonomous to provide for their personal needs)
- ✓ **Site 2: Ndoukhoura Peulh – Students organised in Economic Interest Groups**

Session 5. Access to services for agri-food entrepreneurs

The participants heard presentations on business development services targeting agri-food entrepreneurs and access to agri-food markets, including access to sustainable and quality inputs and access to finance for agri-food businesses.

Organic agriculture and Participatory Guarantee Systems by Ousmane Labodja, participant : The Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) is a locally anchored quality assurance system that certifies production on the basis of the active participation of consumers and producers concerned, through trust, the exchange of knowledge in accordance with an established reference system, knowledge and know-how. This way, local products can be certified at a reasonable cost. The role of the support service provider is to verify the quality of products and provide training.

Ivoire Agro-Forever consulting, Jean-Philippe Agoussi, participant: he's active in distribution of organic seeds and plant protection products, training in agriculture, development of innovative products.

Yeesal Agrihub, Abdourahmane Diop, participant: the 1st AgriTech Hub (physical) in West Africa, which is committed to improving opportunities for young people in value chains. The services offered are: identification of challenges; access to information; access to finance; advocacy.

Session 6. ICT business opportunities for youth in the agri-food sector

Dalberg Sénégal told the participants that ICT is mostly used information and advising services (66%), and also in access to finance services (18%), access to market services (9%) and operational optimisation (7%). She also gave some tips for future ICT solution developers:

- ✓ Facilitate access to as many people as possible
- ✓ Segment the target group according to use
- ✓ Always test and adjust
- ✓ Engage your audience
- ✓ Integrate services

Final session: Start-up Challenge

Participants sharing the same entrepreneurial interest form groups of 6 people. Each group developed ideas through an iterative methodology in which they received feedback from the other groups to enrich their ideas. With the proposal finalized, the groups prepared their **pitch presentations**:

1. Quality vegetable nurseries, tackling lack of quality seeds and agricultural techniques
2. Transformation of water near Abidjan into fertilizers, tackling water pollution and youth unemployment
3. Transformation of shea butter into butter, tackling diseases caused by contaminated products
4. Distribution of livestock products, tackling poor animal health and high costs of feeding livestock
5. Marketing of home garden products, tackling poor availability of healthy vegetable products in urban areas
6. Mobile application to offer services 10,000 producers, tackling losses of agri-entrepreneurs due to bad practices

Conclusion and way forward

The FAO-facilitated partnership between Rikolto and YPARD has succeeded in mobilizing interest and enthusiastic collaboration and creating opportunities for the future. It is important to link the initiatives and ideas that emerge from this workshop with different ongoing or new programmes that put young people at the steering wheel of the implementation of innovative actions. The partners should take other initiatives that can reinforce what we have started, such as expanding the network of young African agri-entrepreneurs, strengthening the professionalization and competitiveness of youth-led youth-led enterprises, and improving a political and entrepreneurial environment that is conducive to environmentally sustainable, economically innovative and socially inclusive initiatives.