



ENHANCING YOUTHS WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN AGRIPRENEURSHIP

A POLICY BRIEF

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Nigeria has a huge youthful population. This important part of the demography is facing high rates of unemployment or underemployment and poverty. If the agriculture sector and the rural economy employs more youths as modern agripreneurs, it would increase domestic food security as well as develop the rural economy and engender national economic growth.

But some people worry that Nigeria's young people are not interested in farming anymore.

In contrast, this new study has found that undergraduate students are quite willing to engage in agripreneurship, especially given a favourable business environment and outcome.

Northern Nigerian Youths Are Willing to Enter Agribusiness

This brief results from a 2018 study that assessed the determinants of youths' intention to engage in agripreneurship. Final year students of agriculture in higher institutions of learning across north-western region of Nigeria were surveyed. Quantitative data was collected from the students using a structured questionnaire. In addition, qualitative data was collected from successful young agripreneurs who served as key informants. The findings are presented here vis-à-vis the existing policies in the country.

Students of agriculture in higher institutions in north-west Nigeria do intend to engage in agripreneurship after graduation. This contrasts with previous findings from the south-western part of the country, where a majority of final-year students reported aspirations for occupations other than agriculture (Akintayo & Lawal, 2015). It supports previous findings about youth in the north-central part of Nigeria (Saliu, Onuche, & Abubakar, 2016). Like them, the respondents are willing to engage in agripreneurship if conditions are favourable.

What Motivates Students to Become Agripreneurs?

First, what doesn't have anything to do with students' intentions to become agripreneurs? One, a students' sex is insignificant: young women are just as likely as young men to report an intention to engage in agriculture after graduation. Two, social pressure, known as 'subjective norms' by social scientists, also have no significant effect. Finally, being one's own boss/self-employed --'perceived behavioural control' according to social scientists—does not appear to be a significant motivating factor.

ATTITUDE

The most significant determinant of a student's intention to become an agriprenuer is attitude. Students who have strong positive attitudes about agripreneurship are significantly more likely to intend to become agripreneurs.

COMPETENCE

Another significant determinant is competence. Students who are confident they have the knowledge, skills and abilities to succeed in agricultural professions and agribusiness management are more likely to intend to become agripreneurs. Ideally, youths

trained in faculties and schools of agriculture in universities and polytechnics acquire such competence.

FACILITATING CONDITIONS

Youths are willing to enter agribusiness as long as the conditions are favourable, such as:

- favourable land tenure conditions,
- access to productive resources, and
- support from government and other private sectors.

ASPIRATION

Young people aspire to be wealthy, respectable and important personalities who contribute to the development of their societies (Filmer & Fox, 2014; IITA, 2014; Losch, 2016). The qualitative aspect of this study found that successful young agripreneurs had high aspirations while growing up. Those high aspirations led them to succeed. The quantitative aspect of the study documented the positive relationship between high aspirations and the intent to engage in agripreneurship. Studying agriculture and becoming an agripreneur is a way to achieve high aspirations.

So, What Can and Should be Done?

According to the National Youth Policy (FGN, 2009, p 12) employment is a right of Nigerian youth. Despite this too many young people are unemployed and/or underemployed. Given the evidence summarized above, the following recommendations are hereby put forward:

1. Increase national efforts to promote positive perceptions and attitudes about agriculture and agripreneurship. Use mass media, social media, mentorships and symposia.

PROMOTE

2. Increase the emphasis on practical and pertinent agribusiness skills in the curriculum. Equip all graduates with the skills competencies needed to establish and manage agribusiness enterprises. Make sure the curriculum is up-to-date with respect to the needs in the agribusiness labour market. Embark on continuous training and re-training of teachers at all levels. Agricultural curricula should emphasize hands-on training that equips graduates with the relevant skills.

EQUIP

3. Engage civil society organizations and youth groups in enlightenment campaigns that inspire youth to achieve their aspirations by training and becoming agripreneurs.

INSPIRE

4. Invest in conditions that facilitate agribusiness. Soft loans should be made more available to young agripreneurs. Existing tenure systems could be revisited to increase access to land by emerging young agripreneurs.

INVEST

Youths are critical stakeholders in employment policy. They know what barriers exclude them and what conditions motivate them. They have innovative ideas and reasonable suggestions. Their voices should be heard.

ENFRANCHISE