

Motivating Agribusiness Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Benin

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The Challenge and the Opportunity

- Youth unemployment remains a critical challenge in developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where the rate of youth unemployment is one of the highest in the world (Pieters, 2013).
- Graduate unemployment is a major concern for the government of the Republic of Benin.
- Agribusiness – i.e. all economic activities that generate a marketable surplus of agricultural production (Fontan Sers, 2011), is a good opportunity for self-employment in Benin.
- Despite the opportunities for self-employment in agribusiness, too many young graduates in the Republic of Benin still seek scarce desk jobs, which leaves so many unemployed.

Observation

- A survey of 350 students showed 56% are not willing to start their own agribusiness venture, but 44% were willing.

- The older the student, the higher the possibility of becoming an agribusiness entrepreneur – the age factor.
- Public university students were more likely to express interest in agribusiness entrepreneurship than private university students.
- Students with prior experience in agribusiness were likely to show interest in becoming agribusiness entrepreneurs after graduation.
- Students who had a friend or a role model in agribusiness were also more likely to express interest in becoming agribusiness entrepreneurs after graduation.
- The more hands-on experiences and personal connections students have with agriculture and agribusiness, the more likely they are to plan towards pursuing agribusiness entrepreneurship after graduation.



Recommendations

- Incorporate entrepreneurship into the curriculum of agricultural faculties and universities.
- Involve agribusiness professionals and entrepreneurs in all agriculture-related degree programs.
- Showcase young entrepreneurs in agriculture by, for example:
 - a. Holding national competitions for young agribusiness entrepreneurs;
 - b. Present events such as “Agri-Enterprise Week” at universities;
 - c. invite young agribusiness entrepreneurs to share their experiences with the next generation by experience sharing and mentoring programs with students in entrepreneurship classes.
 - d. Establish agribusiness entrepreneurship clubs in agricultural faculties and universities. Help club

members engage in agribusiness entrepreneurial activities during their school years.

Also, more young people would be interested in agribusiness, youth employment would rise, and domestic food security could improve if the government also took steps to improve the overall agribusiness environment by, for example:

- a. invest in infrastructure that improves the competitiveness of the economy in general, and is essential for agribusiness in particular, such as roads and market places;
- b. offer tax breaks to young agri-entrepreneurs;
- c. underwrite insurance to offset unavoidable agricultural risks, such as bad weather;
- d. liberalize long-term credit - for land acquisition or improvement; and short-term credit - for production costs, for example.

