

# ERA OF PROCESSES FOR YOUTHS IN AGRICULTURE: LESSONS FROM THE FANRPAN 2013 POLICY DIALOGUE

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Young people from across Africa stole the show at the 2013 Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) Annual High-Level Regional Multi-stakeholder Policy Dialogue held in the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho from 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

The theme for the Policy Dialogue was Climate Smart Agriculture, a timely theme given the pressing challenges resulting from the changing climate. However, it was the Youth Day that “made” the dialogue and ingrained memories sure to last a life time in participants’ present and virtual, following through various social media platforms.

The focus on youth day was not only on [FANRPAN Youth in Agriculture projects](#) but also on exciting agriculture initiatives driven by the youth and some lessons from beyond Africa.

The guiding question that kicked off the day was “What could be done to bring youths on board in agriculture?” **Mr. Lawrence Ndambuki Muli** of the African Union Commission Youth Division noted that there was a number of young African who are getting opportunities to visit developed countries to learn how young people are being engaged in not just agriculture but development in general. This has both negative and positive implications for the continent. He drew lessons from his Japan youth agricultural experiences, which are summarised below:

## **Selected Japan Youth Agricultural Best Practices:**

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- Agricultural projects informed by research studies, capacity needs assessments and baseline surveys;
- Youth in agricultural schools given the opportunity to implement practical projects;
- Promotion of agriculture and tourism (agro-tourism);
- Intense Awareness campaigns;
- Well-built infrastructure;
- Efficient value chains: processing harvested carrot and taking them to farmer markets; and

- Ageing farmers' biggest challenge though small scale and medium scale farmers have great profits from community supplies.

### **Recommendations for Youth in Africa:**

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- Youth Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) or agriculture advisory board: coordinated to strengthen the capacity of member states to respond to youth priority needs;
- A Youth pre-CAADP Partnership Platform side event;
- Collaborate on a youth supplement to the Ministerial meeting that will capture the issues of the youth;
- Implement a know your democratic rights for youth on issues of green entrepreneurship and provision of funds for start ups; and
- The National Youth Councils and other youth platforms must be supported to be depoliticised and increase the representation of young people in public space for youth participation.

**Mr. Maruthelane Rantsoabe** presented the Lesotho Youth Case study report, observing that youths have a negative attitude towards self-employment and therefore government is the main source of employment. Regarding youth perceptions of agriculture, he noted that (i) agriculture related challenges are exacerbated by the disengagement of youth in decision and policy making processes; (ii) the majority of youth in Lesotho are unaware of agriculture policies and opportunities in the sector; (iii) there is a need to address youths needs (e.g. through internships and information and communication technologies (ICTs)); and (iv) agriculture is not professionally bound (i.e. farming does not need formal qualifications)

### **Mr. Maruthelane recommends the following:**

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- Expose the youths to existing policies and opportunities;
- Mentor and coordinate relationships between youth and experienced personnel in agro-value chain;
- Align youth budgets with agriculture and ICTs; and
- All ministries policies should have a youth and gender focus. There should be no overlapping policies.

Next was **Mr. Isaac Chanda** from the Ndola Youth Resource Center in Zambia. He argued for a mindset change, from viewing young people as problematic to viewing them as assets so as to accelerate economic

and social development. Young people are social and economic actors in their own right. When working with youths in agriculture, patience is needed because youths are adults in the making. Mr. Chanda stressed the need to consider the nature of young people. Youths struggle with many issues such as HIV and AIDS, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol and therefore when talking youth engagement in agriculture a holistic approach is required.

**Ms. Ligia Mutemba**, of Mozambique gave a stimulating talk on young people in her country. Young people in Mozambique are well-organized and have a voice through the National Youth Council. However, agriculture is not the business of the National Youth Council. Her cry was that young people are not taking advantage of ICTs to harness entrepreneurial opportunities in the agriculture value chain. She ended her talk with an apt quote, *“All value chains in Mozambique is an opportunity”*.

**Mr. Gift Mafuleka** of Mphiwe Siyalima from South Africa gave evidence to the enterprising spirit of youths. The message which resonated with the audience as he gave his talk was *“influence from within”*. He noted that the value chain is wide and open.

#### **Mr. Mafuleka recommends the following for the youth:**

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- Let's trade what we want with our skills;
- If agriculture is to be an engine of economic growth, then young professionals (YP's) should:
  - be at the forefront as new entrants into farming;
  - champion and pioneer agricultural research and development across the sector; and
  - Use our skills, experience and be the drivers as farmers.

**Ms. Eness P Mutsvangwa-Sammie's** presentation on “Youth engagement in Agriculture: Real Life Experiences Research for Development” highlighted that that agriculture is not just extension because it is very diverse (economics, crops, animals and engineering). She went on to say during her post-graduate studies she learnt that smallholder farmers had a lot working against them.

#### **Her key messages were:**

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- Youths need to claim our space as young professionals and not use the young professionals' status as a crutch;
- Youths should aim at optimally utilising available resources;
- Youths should focus on what works instead of getting stressed on what is not working; and
- In order to succeed one has to be prepared to make sacrifices.

**Ms. Emelder Tagutanazvo** introduced the gender dimension in her talk on “Gender in Research for Development”. She noted that the involvement of women in management institutions has been under scrutiny. The question being: Are women involved and to what extent? The challenges faced by women researchers are: (i) culture – cannot cross examine males; (ii) Gender - cultural sensitivity / male respondents interviewed by a female researcher; (iii) Gate keepers – postpone meetings or even denying access to participants; (iv) funding – determines time frame for data collection hence compromises methods used; and (v) publications – inconsistency.

### **Her lessons learned were:**

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- Gender power dynamics vary with institutions, culture and level of management;
- Gender plays a part from supervision, data collection, analysis and even the recipients of results obtained; and
- Women play a crucial role towards agriculture.

### **Recommendations:**

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- Blending of gender sensitive life skills will go a long way to empower young professionals;
- Context specific mechanisms should mirror values of specific societies; and
- Youth should be the ones to fill in research gaps by doing comparative studies and establishing data bases that will inform future research.

On “Youth Engagement in Agriculture: Real Experiences - Social media”, **Ms. Nawsheen Hosenally** noted that social media turns communication into interactive dialogue.

### **Impact of social media on [Nawsheen’s] Agricultural activities:**

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- Have a brand and space in the agricultural sector;
- Indirect job and other opportunities;
- Increased networking;
- Better understanding of different issues related to agriculture (policies, challenges, opportunities, initiatives, etc); and
- Improved communication skills.

### **Conclusions:**

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“Even though the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho is small it can do great things”, remarked one delegate at the close of the Youth Day in Agriculture. Learning about agriculture and development in general, is a

never ending process. The energy, creativity, and passion of youth speakers and delegates present were a confirmation that youths are in the “era of processes”. Youths should grab these capacity building processes without further delay and hesitation. The 2014 Annual High-Level Regional Multi-stakeholder Policy Dialogue will be held in island of Madagascar.

***Further Information:***

[www.fanrpan.org/projects/youth-in-agriculture/](http://www.fanrpan.org/projects/youth-in-agriculture/)

[www.fanrpan.org](http://www.fanrpan.org)

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