



United Republic of Tanzania



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Policy Brief

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Strategies to Promote and Support Youth Engagement in Agriculture

Reclaiming Agriculture as a Career of Choice for Youth

Key Message

Youth engagement in agriculture is essential for Tanzania's economic transformation, yet young people continue to face systemic barriers, including limited access to land, finance, technology, and organized support structures, that limit them from fully participating in and benefiting from agricultural opportunities. With youth making up more than 60% of the labor force, reclaiming agriculture as a career of choice requires targeted interventions that make the sector more attractive, profitable, and technologically advanced. Tanzania's recent initiatives including the BBT-YIA program, Agenda 10/30, curriculum reforms, and land repurposing for youth, provide a strong foundation, but greater impact will depend on strategic public investment (in infrastructure) incentivizing the private sector and NGO participation, availability of good doing business environment including simplified business formalization procedures, strengthening youth-focused financing mechanisms, expanding digital agriculture, and establishing coordinated national platforms for youth programs. Implementing these strategies will unlock youth entrepreneurship, create decent jobs, shift attitudes toward agriculture, and position young people at the center of inclusive and sustainable agricultural growth.

Situation Analysis

Improving youth participation in agriculture and food systems is a key goal for countries with rising youth populations, like Tanzania. Youth aged 15 to 35 years, as defined by the African Development Bank, make up 62.4% of Tanzania's active workforce (ILFS, 2021). However, they still face multiple challenges, including limited access to productive land, inadequate financing options, the effects of climate change, and ongoing inequalities in food security, nutrition, and employment outcomes (ILFS, 2021; FAO, 2021; URT, 2022). The World Bank (2024) estimates the national youth unemployment rate at 3.4%. Despite their active role in agriculture, many young people are still excluded from development opportunities like grants, credit, and land leasing schemes, mostly because they operate individually instead of within organized groups or cooperatives; models often required to access and manage these support programs effectively.

The horticultural subsector is one of the subsectors appealing strongly to youth because of its higher value returns, integration of modern technologies such as mobile soil testing and crop spraying, and potential for innovative land use compared to traditional field crops. Strengthening market linkages, promoting climate-smart production systems, and supporting access to technology packages that boost productivity and extend harvesting periods will further establish horticulture as a dynamic entry point for youth participation and agripreneurship. This will significantly contribute to accelerating agricultural transformation and promoting inclusive sector growth. Besides horticulture, other subsectors such as livestock, aquaculture, and poultry farming also offer significant opportunities for youth engagement, especially through smallholder-led value chains, climate-resilient production systems, and access to expanding domestic and regional markets.

Recent Government Initiatives in Support of Youth

The Government of Tanzania has embarked on several initiatives to address youth employment in agriculture. These initiatives include:

- Building a Better Tomorrow Youth Initiative for Agriculture which targets 2000 profitable agribusinesses in 12,000 villages with employment indicators.
- Agenda 10/30 which aims for a 10% growth rate in the agriculture sector and youth employment target of one million by 2030.
- Officially agriculture has been reintroduced as a subject in secondary schools in the new competence-based curriculum.
- Re-purposing of land to be allocated to young farmers.

Best Practices

- Access to Land, Finance, and Inputs: In Nigeria, NIRSAL and AGSMEIS agricultural schemes provide credit guarantees and subsidized loans to youth agripreneurs. By 2021 N101 billion had been disbursed to 26,274 applicants and the NIRSAL model has helped restore lender confidence in agriculture and agribusiness, making more value chains financeable (Onuba, 2021).
- Agripreneurship and Agribusiness Incubation programs: In India Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centers (ACABC) offer business training and startup support for young agricultural graduates. By 2022 the scheme had trained about 82,673 candidates and has supported the establishment of 35,716 agriventures (Gagana et al., 2024).
- Integration of Digital & Smart Agricultural Technologies: Uganda has AgriTech apps and drone spraying services led by youth groups. In Luwero district for example, a youth-led digital advisory hub trained young people and served around 500 farmers as a result, tomato farmers in the district reported increased yields by almost 20% in 2024 using precision-tools (Global Agriculture, 2025).

- Youth Agribusiness Competitions and Seed Funding: International programs such as African Youth Agripreneurs Forum (AYA/ENABLE Youth – AfDB) and Youth Agripreneurs Project (YAP) -Global Forum on Agricultural Research – GFAR have business plan competitions and regional incubation programs that supports innovative youth projects globally. These programs encourage creativity, motivate innovation, and link youth to potential investors (GFAR & YPARD, 2017).
- Youth Skills Development & Internship-to-Employment Model – Tanzania (WorldVeg & TAESA Partnership): Tanzania has a successful youth internship and skills development model implemented through the WorldVegetable Center in partnership with TAESA. Since 2022, over 70 young graduates have completed a structured 12-month hands-on internship program, with several transitioning into employment and establishing registered youth-led agribusiness enterprises such as VIABLE, Mbegu Nzuri, and Zanzibar Organic Herb. More than 1,060 youth and women have also received TOSCI-certified training in vegetable seedling production and QDS seed systems.
- Local government budgetary allocations (4-4-2) to support youth business including agribusiness.

Policy Recommendations

- Provide incentives to private sector players and NGOs that support youth employment. These incentives could include: Corporate tax reductions for firms hiring or training youth, VAT exemptions for inputs, machinery, or digital platforms used in youth employment projects, priority access to low-interest loans through agricultural credit guarantee schemes and simplified registration and licensing for youth-led enterprises and their supporting partners.
- Allow NGOs and the private sector to leverage on existing infrastructures i.e. agricultural training institutions to provide modern and advanced technical trainings to supplement government efforts.
- Inclusiveness of private sector in the implementation of existing youth programs such as the BBT for sustainability and impact to scale.
- Inspire youth to engage in agriculture (on-farm and off-farm) through the implementation of a communication strategy that would rebrand agriculture as an opportunity for sustainable livelihood while making it more appealing to youth.
- Formalization of youth owned enterprises -reviewing current regulations around formalizing businesses allowing for more practical and straight forward registration (consider how telecom companies have done this through the Wakala registration processes).
- Accelerate the development of the national start-up policy which will create a more favorable environment for youth start-ups. This will facilitate seamless online registration procedures while streamlining licensing and access to finance.
- Provision of at least one year grace period for youth start-ups to be exempted from corporate tax.
- Strengthening the coordination and increase mobilization of more resources for youth innovation funds like the Agricultural Inputs Trust Fund (AGITF).
- Promote digital integration in agriculture as a strategy to encourage greater youth participation.
- Strengthen youth agribusiness and market linkages by developing incubation and accelerator hubs within the agricultural training institutes to provide youth with mentorship, business development services, market linkages, digital skills, and post- incubation support.
- Develop a national coordination platform for youth in agriculture that will bring together the government, private sector, NGOs, youth networks, and financial institutions to harmonize initiatives, track progress, and avoid duplication.

Policy Implications

- Enhanced youth employment and entrepreneurship as a result of increased private sector and NGO participation driven by fiscal and regulatory incentives.
- Growth in youth-led startups and agribusiness ventures.
- Increased awareness among youth in the existing opportunities agribusiness and at least 50% of youth will have a positive attitude towards agriculture.
- Enhanced institutional capacity and coordination.

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