



## THE SECRETARIAT

FOR AFRICA'S FOOD SECURITY, YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS WILL BE VITAL.

By Beatrice Gakuba

**On International Youth Day, it is disappointing that in Africa, the average age of a farmer is 60, despite the continent's average age being 19.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned out to be not just a health crisis but an Economic crisis. The African Development Bank, in its latest economic outlook for Africa has warned that the continent may lose between 25 to 30 million jobs this year depending on the level of economic contraction due to the effects of the pandemic. This compounds economic challenges for the continent's 1.2 Billion, over 60% of whom are below the age of 25.

The World Bank estimates that at least 10-13 million African youth enter the job market every year with only 3 million of them finding a job. In the post COVID-19 world, the continent has a chance to change this, through investment in youth entrepreneurship especially in the Agriculture sector.

Investment will mean helping the young people of both gender access affordable capital to start and grow their enterprises without the current red tape of asking them for some form of collateral as we are well aware when you are young, you have no assets, no credit record and no land title to produce as guarantee for a loan application.

At AWAN Afrika, we believe, Agriculture has the potential to take advantage of Africa's youth bulge and create employment. Already, agriculture is rural Africa's main source of income contributing at least a quarter of the continent's Gross Domestic Product.

The Agricultural sector is therefore more effective in reducing poverty. We are already playing our part in making agriculture not just attractive but profitable, this we do by equipping them with skills through our four pillars, financial inclusion, market access, trade facilitation and Agri-technology.

Through our under 30 champions (youth of either gender engaged in agribusiness), in 42 African countries, we have seen economic transformation in the countries where they are based.

These young people are not just farming, they are using new technologies like drones, mechanisation, new production technologies like aquaponics, permaculture, aeroponics, hydroponics, applying the Internet of Things (IoT) in agriculture among others to increase productivity along the value chains.



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**AWAN Afrika continues providing service to its members linking them to financial institutions that provide flexible finance, equipping them with skills that enable them keep abreast with changing technologies, market requirements on all aspects of agribusiness including quality standards.**

**In Post COVID-19, with the right support Small and Medium sized Enterprises could significantly boost Economic Recovery. Governments, Donors and the Private Sector can help capture this opportunity.**

**Africa's population is expected reach a third of the world's population by 2050, we must therefore act fast if we are to feed ourselves involving young people in Agribusiness will be key to Africa's food security.**

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