**Webinar Report: Youth Employment in Agriculture: How Kilimo Trust is**

**Unlocking Opportunities**

**Submitted to: Webinar participants**

Submitted by:

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**Webinar Report: Youth Employment in Agriculture: How Kilimo Trust is**

**Unlocking Opportunities**

**Date: 21st November 2024**

**Time: 2 to 4 PM EAT**

**Platform: Zoom**

**Organizers: Kilimo Trust**

**Moderator: Victor Kiprop, C&KM at Kilimo Trust**

**Total number of participants: 104**

**Below were the key speakers:**



1. **Webinar minutes**

On 21st November, Kilimo Trust hosted a meeting focused on creating youth employment opportunities through agriculture and related sectors. The session brought together diverse stakeholders, including representatives from academia, government ministries, international development organizations, private sector actors, and youth agripreneurs. The meeting was moderated by Victor Kiprop, who set the tone by highlighting the demographic opportunity posed by Africa's young population and the vital role of agriculture in addressing youth unemployment.

Andrew Gashayija, the Team Leader for Kilimo Trust Rwanda, opened the session by welcoming participants and providing an overview of the organization’s work in youth employment within the agricultural sector. He focused on the achievements of the Rwanda Youth Employment Support (R-YES) project, which aims to create sustainable job opportunities for youth in agribusiness. Andrew highlighted how the project leverages partnerships with government institutions, technical and vocational education providers, and private sector actors to address the challenges of youth unemployment. He emphasized that agribusiness offers opportunities beyond primary production, including roles in value addition, marketing, and agritech. Andrew celebrated the project’s success in empowering youth through skills development, market linkages, and access to finance, noting that R-YES has already supported thousands of youth in transitioning from unemployment to meaningful employment or entrepreneurship. He concluded by urging stakeholders to work collaboratively to scale these initiatives and build a resilient, youth-inclusive agricultural ecosystem in East Africa.

Dr. Esdras, Deputy Principal of Rwanda Polytechnic, Musanze College, opened the presentations by emphasizing the significance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in addressing labor market mismatches. He highlighted the need for curriculum development that incorporates industry feedback to align skills with market demands. Noting that only 20-30% of the East African workforce possesses higher skills, Dr. Esdras advocated for expanding TVET enrollment to 60% of educational participation in Rwanda and strengthening partnerships between technical schools and private industries.

Jean Claude Turambane from Rwanda's Ministry of Agriculture in charge of Capacity Building spoke on the government’s strategy to reduce unemployment to 5% by 2050. He detailed initiatives such as the National Employment Strategy, which targets the creation of 1.25 million jobs annually, and the Business Development Fund (BDF), which provides credit guarantees to youth agripreneurs. Jean Claude underscored the importance of empowering youth to embrace innovation and technology in agriculture and called for stronger collaborations between public and private sectors to create an enabling environment for youth employment.

Rahul Antau, Technical Specialist at IFAD, provided insights into a systems-based approach to youth employment. He identified three key pillars of IFAD’s youth strategy: access to productive resources (land and technology), service provision (financial and market linkages), and skills development (technical, entrepreneurial, and soft skills). Rahul stressed the importance of fostering green and resilient jobs, such as organic farming and ecosystem restoration work, to address climatic and economic shocks. He emphasized that partnerships with agribusinesses, financial institutions, and policymakers are crucial for creating inclusive and sustainable employment opportunities for youth.

Donata Mugwaneza, Agribusiness Incubation atKilimo Trust highlighted the importance of partner engagement in creating youth employment opportunities. She shared how the Rwanda Agribusiness Hub, funded by IFAD and implemented by Kilimo Trust using a consortium approach, has created over 5,000 jobs since 2020. The hub collaborates with academia, private sector companies, financial institutions, and government ministries to train, mentor, and employ youth. Donata shared a success story of youth with hearing impairments who, through a partnership with Masaka Creamery and Rwanda Polytechnic, received specialized training and gained employment in dairy processing. She stressed that partnerships are vital in addressing challenges such as youth access to finance, certification, and market linkages.

The session also featured testimonies from two youth agripreneurs who have benefitted from Kilimo Trust's initiatives. Agnes Uwitonze, a tomato farming entrepreneur, shared her journey from working as a housekeeper to becoming a successful agripreneur after receiving training from Kilimo Trust. With increased income from her farming activities, she has supported her siblings’ education and plans to establish a tomato processing factory to enhance the shelf life of her produce. Similarly, Celestine Turimumahoro, an animal feed entrepreneur, recounted how training in animal nutrition enabled him to transition from pig farming to producing animal feeds using agricultural residues. Despite challenges such as the high cost of protein-rich ingredients, he plans to expand his production and improve feed affordability for farmers.

The question-and-answer session provided further insights into key challenges and solutions. Participants raised concerns about youth access to finance, the mismatch between labor market demands and youth skills, and the need for more inclusive policies. Speakers addressed these issues by highlighting existing initiatives, such as credit guarantees through BDF, the integration of industry feedback in TVET curriculum development, and partnerships with private sector actors to create market linkages and mentorship opportunities.

In closing remarks, Andrew Cheboi, the Quality Assurance and Resource Mobilization Team Leader at Kilimo Trust reiterated the importance of collaboration among stakeholders to create dignified and sustainable employment opportunities for youth. He encouraged continued efforts to invest in youth-driven agricultural enterprises, advocate for youth-friendly policies, and scale up successful training and mentorship programs. The session concluded with a commitment to follow up on unanswered questions and share a comprehensive report with participants.

This meeting underscored the transformative potential of agriculture in addressing youth unemployment. Through collaborative efforts and innovative approaches, stakeholders aim to create a vibrant ecosystem that empowers young people to thrive in agriculture and related sectors

1. **Key Contributions from the chat**
2. **Youth Skilling and Job Creation:**
   * **Andrew Gashayija:** Highlighted technical and entrepreneurial training, mentorship, and deployment to industries as critical for youth skilling and job creation.
   * **Donata Kiiza:** Noted that young people are adept at developing software.
   * **Eric Jackson Sseremba:** Emphasized the need for agricultural insurance to address youth discouragement in agribusiness due to weather risks.
   * **Olivier from RYAF:** Proposed a three-pronged approach for youth empowerment: personal development, technical skills, and access to finance.
3. **TVET Scalability and Impact:**
   * **Nicholas Obare:** Discussed the effectiveness of training in job creation and suggested scalable models for TVET programs.
   * **Rachel (Kilimo Trust Uganda):** Stressed the importance of scaling TVET models and integrating financial products for youth.
4. **Regional Integration and Expansion:**
   * **Rachel Kilimo Trust Uganda:** Highlighted Kilimo Trust’s operations in Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, with plans for expansion to Burundi, DRC, South Sudan, and Ethiopia.
   * **Hakizimana:** Shared plans to start working in Burundi.
5. **Entrepreneurship Success Stories:**
   * **Uwitonze Agnes:** Shared her vision for tomato farming using greenhouses and producing tomato paste and ketchup.
6. **Support for Startups and SMEs:**
   * **Claude (BDF):** Shared information on financial products tailored to youth and women agripreneurs, including credit guarantees and micro-leasing.

**Omary Mwaimu** suggested in the chat that those who have been trained through the ARES project and are now self-employed should still receive business development services. He emphasized the importance of linking them with business development service providers in Rwanda to support them in scaling their businesses and sustaining their enterprises. This suggestion highlighted the need for continuous post-training support to ensure that the youth remain competitive and thrive in their entrepreneurial endeavors.

1. **Key Questions and answers**

**Andrew Ebong: Asked how labor productivity for skilled youth is tracked.**

**Dr. Esdras** highlighted the importance of aligning curriculum development with labor market demands and conducting follow-ups to ensure that the skills imparted meet industry needs.

**Donata Mugwaneza** mentioned that youth trained under the R-YES project receive certification, which helps them secure employment and demonstrates their competency. However, there was no detailed discussion on specific metrics or tools for tracking labor productivity after the youth enter the workforce.

**Nicholas Obare: Inquired whether training alone created jobs or if other initiatives were involved.**

Donata Mugwaneza, representing Kilimo Trust, addressed the question regarding whether training alone is sufficient for job creation. She emphasized that while training serves as a foundational component, it is not the sole driver of sustainable employment opportunities. Job creation requires a combination of initiatives that go beyond training. One such initiative is certification, which enhances the employability and credibility of trained youth by serving as proof of their competency and increasing their chances of securing employment.

Kilimo Trust also provides post-training support, linking trained youth with various stakeholders to enhance their prospects. This includes connecting them to private sector companies for employment opportunities, financial service providers to help them access capital, and market linkages to support entrepreneurs in selling their products. Additionally, Kilimo Trust collaborates with institutions like Rwanda Polytechnic and Rwanda TVET Board to ensure that skills development aligns with labor market demands. Private companies further support this effort by offering internships and apprenticeships, providing experiential learning opportunities for youth.

Donata highlighted the importance of adopting an ecosystem approach to job creation, where training is supplemented with mentorship, market access, financial inclusion, and technical assistance. In conclusion, she noted that training alone does not create jobs; it must be coupled with certification, stakeholder partnerships, and a supportive ecosystem to ensure meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for youth.

**Immaculate Tumwiine: Questioned measures in Rwanda to bridge the youth financing gap.**

The government of Rwanda and its partners have implemented various measures to address the youth financing gap, fostering financial inclusion and enabling young entrepreneurs to thrive. One significant initiative is the **Business Development Fund (BDF)**, which expands access to financial products specifically tailored for youth and women agripreneurs. BDF provides credit guarantees, covering a substantial portion of the required collateral, thereby enabling young entrepreneurs to secure loans from financial institutions such as banks and Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs). Additionally, partnerships with financial institutions have been established to develop youth-friendly financial products that reduce barriers to access and offer favorable terms for young people seeking to start or expand their businesses.

Moreover, financial literacy and business development services have been prioritized to equip youth with the necessary skills to manage finances effectively and utilize financial products responsibly. These programs also include mentorship and support for structuring business plans and proposals that meet funding requirements. Complementing these efforts, institutions like Kilimo Trust play a pivotal role in facilitating market linkages for youth entrepreneurs, ensuring they can generate income and sustain their ventures. By combining financial literacy, market access, and ecosystem support, these initiatives create an enabling environment to bridge the financing gap and promote sustainable youth entrepreneurship in Rwanda.

**Tuzanesha Daniel:** Asked about government support for female entrepreneurs like Agnes to launch ventures.

The Rwandan government and its partners have implemented several initiatives to support female entrepreneurs in launching and sustaining their ventures. One key measure is providing access to **financial products and credit guarantees** through the **Business Development Fund (BDF)**, which prioritizes women and youth. This facility helps female entrepreneurs secure financing by covering a significant portion of the required collateral, reducing the barriers they face in accessing traditional loans. Additionally, capacity-building programs tailored for women focus on enhancing technical and entrepreneurial skills, enabling them to start and manage businesses effectively.

Institutions such as **Kilimo Trust** complement these efforts by providing women with mentorship opportunities, market linkages, and access to relevant training. Agnes' success story, for example, highlights the importance of linking female entrepreneurs with supportive networks and skills training that empower them to establish thriving agribusiness ventures. Furthermore, inclusive policies and frameworks within Rwanda aim to ensure that women benefit equitably from these initiatives, fostering an environment that promotes gender-balanced economic growth.

* + **Nicholas Obare:** Asked about cost-effective models to scale TVET graduates' learning for wider **youth inclusion.**

The response to scaling TVET graduates' learning for wider youth inclusion emphasizes **collaborative partnerships and innovative approaches**. A key strategy involves aligning TVET curricula with labor market demands through partnerships between educational institutions, such as **Rwanda Polytechnic and TVET Board**, and private sector companies. These collaborations ensure that training programs are tailored to industry needs, enhancing the employability of graduates.

Additionally, **experiential learning opportunities**, including internships and apprenticeships, are provided through partnerships with businesses. This hands-on approach enables graduates to gain practical experience, making them job-ready. **Certification programs** play a crucial role in validating the skills acquired during training, boosting the confidence of employers in hiring TVET graduates.

To make scaling cost-effective, the model integrates **digital tools and platforms** for training delivery, reducing infrastructure and logistics costs while expanding reach. Furthermore, the **Business Development Fund (BDF)** and other financial mechanisms provide support to graduates, enabling them to access resources for starting their ventures. These measures collectively create a sustainable ecosystem for scaling TVET graduates' learning and fostering broader youth inclusion.

* + **Beril Adhiambo Onona:** Inquired about programs for capacity building and financing for SMEs in Kenya.

Donata Mugwaneza highlighted that **Kilimo Trust** operates across East Africa, including Kenya, and has implemented various programs aimed at enhancing capacity building and financing for SMEs. She emphasized that **Kilimo Trust works collaboratively with private sector companies, financial service providers, and market actors** to support SMEs. Specific initiatives include linking SMEs to **financial institutions** that offer credit facilities and grants to help them expand their operations. Additionally, the organization provides **technical and entrepreneurial training** tailored to address the unique needs of SMEs in agribusiness.

Donata further noted that Kilimo Trust places a strong emphasis on **market linkages** by connecting SMEs with buyers and markets, enabling them to scale their businesses sustainably. Through partnerships with development organizations and local institutions, the organization fosters a conducive ecosystem for SME growth by addressing critical challenges such as access to finance, technical support, and market opportunities.

* + **Cindy:** Asked how agriculture can be made more sustainable.

The question of how agriculture can be made more sustainable was addressed by several speakers. **Dr. Esdras Shimu** from Rwanda Polytechnic emphasized the role of technical skills development and modernized practices in promoting sustainable agriculture. He highlighted the importance of integrating modern technologies, such as mobile applications, drones, and digital innovations, to transform traditional subsistence farming into efficient and sustainable operations. Additionally, he stressed the need to align youth training with the demands of modern agriculture to ensure long-term sustainability. **Rahul Antao** from IFAD focused on the integration of climate-smart and regenerative agricultural practices. He provided examples such as the reuse of agricultural waste by converting rice husks into biochar, which serves as both a fertilizer and a carbon sink. Rahul also underscored the importance of promoting organic farming, green jobs, and resilience to climate shocks, ensuring agricultural systems are adaptable and robust. **Donata Mugwaneza** from Kilimo Trust highlighted the critical role of partnerships in driving sustainability. She pointed to Kilimo Trust’s efforts in building market linkages, encouraging value addition, and enhancing technical capacity to enable youth to adopt sustainable practices. By linking farmers with climate-smart technologies and supporting youth in agribusiness ventures, Kilimo Trust fosters sustainability while reducing environmental impact. In summary, sustainable agriculture requires the adoption of innovative technologies, climate-smart practices, and strategic partnerships to ensure environmental conservation while meeting economic goals.

* + **Bisengimana Ishimwe Fiston:** Sought ideas for designing interventions to meet rural youth needs compared to urban youth.

The question regarding designing interventions to address the specific needs of rural youth compared to their urban counterparts was thoughtfully addressed by **Dr. Esdras Shimu** from Rwanda Polytechnic and **Donata Mugwaneza** from Kilimo Trust. Dr. Esdras emphasized the importance of tailored skills development programs for rural youth, noting that interventions must focus on enhancing their technical and entrepreneurial skills to maximize their potential in the agricultural sector. He highlighted the need to provide training in modern agricultural practices and technologies, ensuring rural youth can transition from subsistence farming to profitable agribusiness ventures.

Donata Mugwaneza supplemented this perspective by stressing the significance of ecosystem-based approaches. She noted that rural youth often face challenges such as limited access to markets, financing, and technical support. To address this, Kilimo Trust collaborates with various stakeholders, including private companies, financial institutions, and academic partners, to bridge the gaps. By linking rural youth to market opportunities, providing financial inclusion support, and creating mentorship programs, Kilimo Trust ensures that rural youth have access to resources and opportunities tailored to their unique challenges.

Both speakers emphasized that rural interventions must prioritize accessibility, inclusivity, and relevance to ensure youth in remote areas can thrive in the agribusiness sector.

* + **Dieudonne Haragirimana:** Asked if Kilimo Trust plans projects beyond Musanze, particularly for Huye College.

When asked whether Kilimo Trust plans to extend projects beyond Musanze, specifically to Huye College, **Donata Mugwaneza**, representing Kilimo Trust, addressed the inquiry. She explained that while Kilimo Trust has a strong presence in Musanze, it operates across various regions in Rwanda and other East African countries. She highlighted the organization's strategy of partnering with key institutions such as Rwanda Polytechnic and other TVET institutions, which includes exploring opportunities in different locations, including Huye College. Donata noted that the organization's primary goal is to scale impactful programs to reach more youth in diverse areas. This involves creating partnerships with local academic institutions and private sector players to expand the reach and inclusivity of their projects. While specifics for Huye College were not detailed, Donata emphasized Kilimo Trust’s commitment to broadening its geographical and institutional footprint to ensure more youth benefit from their interventions.

* + **Gelase Nkuru:** Questioned Kilimo Trust’s activities and future perspectives in other countries.

In response to a question regarding Kilimo Trust’s activities and future perspectives in other countries, **Andrew Gashayija**, the Country Team Leader for Kilimo Trust Rwanda, provided an overview of the organization’s broad scope and regional operations. Kilimo Trust operates across the East African region, including Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi, with a mission to enhance regional trade, improve value chains, and support smallholder farmers and agribusiness actors. Andrew emphasized the organization's focus on critical value chains, such as rice, dairy, maize, and horticulture, ensuring that interventions are tailored to the unique needs of each country.

Adding to the discussion, several participants in the chat highlighted Kilimo Trust's work in promoting agribusiness through partnerships and capacity-building initiatives. **Rachel Ajambo**, Team Leader for Kilimo Trust Uganda, elaborated in the chat that the organization is committed to fostering agribusiness in various regions by supporting youth and women through training, mentorship, and access to financial services. She noted that Kilimo Trust’s integrated approach includes providing technical assistance, facilitating market linkages, and engaging stakeholders to ensure sustainable impact.

Andrew also outlined Kilimo Trust’s vision for the future, which includes expanding its reach and developing innovative, sustainable programs to promote climate resilience, job creation, and market access. The organization aims to deepen partnerships with private and public stakeholders across the region to ensure long-term impacts. This includes fostering inclusivity in agribusiness and leveraging digital solutions to benefit youth, women, and other vulnerable groups in agriculture. Responses from the chat underscored Kilimo Trust's commitment to building on its 20-year legacy to create even greater impact throughout the East African Community (EAC) and beyond.

* + **Emmanuel:** Asked about challenges encountered in job creation systems and their management.

In response to a question regarding the challenges encountered in job creation systems and their management, several speakers provided insights into the key issues and strategies for addressing them. **Dr. Esdras**, Deputy Principal at Rwanda Polytechnic, identified the skills gap as a significant challenge, emphasizing the mismatch between acquired skills and those demanded by the labor market. He highlighted that many youth possess either limited or no skills, making it difficult for them to secure meaningful employment. He stressed the need for tailored training programs that align with market demands and equip youth with both technical and soft skills.

**Donata Mugwaneza** of Kilimo Trust elaborated on the importance of ecosystem-based solutions to overcome these challenges. She emphasized the need for collaboration among public and private stakeholders to ensure that job creation systems are effective. Key challenges mentioned included limited access to markets and finance, which restricts youth and small enterprises from scaling their operations. To address these, Donata highlighted Kilimo Trust's efforts in building partnerships with financial institutions, private companies, and market actors to facilitate comprehensive support for youth, including access to capital, mentorship, and market opportunities.

Adding to the discussion, **Jean Claude Turambane**, from Rwanda's Ministry of Agriculture, discussed challenges related to youth engagement in agriculture. He noted the perception that agriculture is a subsistence activity rather than a viable business, which discourages many young people from participating. To counter this, the government is actively promoting modern, technology-driven agriculture to make the sector more attractive and productive for youth. Jean Claude also pointed out logistical and infrastructural barriers, such as limited access to land and resources, which the government is addressing through policies like financial support programs and youth-focused cooperatives.

Several responses in the chat reinforced these points. Participants highlighted issues such as inadequate entrepreneurial skills, poor coordination among stakeholders, and the lack of supportive policies tailored to youth needs. **Andrew Gashayija**, in his chat responses, emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration to address these systemic issues. He pointed to Kilimo Trust's commitment to fostering public-private partnerships and leveraging technology to build resilient job creation systems that adapt to dynamic market conditions.

In conclusion, the challenges in job creation systems include skills gaps, limited resources, market access, and coordination issues among stakeholders. Effective management of these challenges requires a comprehensive, ecosystem-based approach that integrates training, mentorship, market linkages, financial access, and policy support, as highlighted by the speakers and chat contributors.

* + **Mwonge Michael:** Highlighted the issue of youth not utilizing acquired skills and questioned Kilimo Trust’s strategies to overcome this.

In addressing the concern about youth not fully utilizing acquired skills and Kilimo Trust’s strategies to overcome this, **Donata Mugwaneza** from Kilimo Trust emphasized that their approach goes beyond training to ensure that skills are applied meaningfully and effectively. She explained that Kilimo Trust implements a holistic ecosystem approach that integrates certification, mentorship, and practical exposure. Certified training enhances youth employability and credibility, making it easier for them to access job opportunities. To bridge the gap between acquired skills and their utilization, Kilimo Trust links trainees with private companies, financial institutions, and markets, enabling them to apply their skills in real-world contexts.

**Jean Claude Turambane** from Rwanda’s Ministry of Agriculture supported this by highlighting the importance of mentorship and linking youth with established agribusinesses. He noted that the government, in collaboration with Kilimo Trust and other partners, has created platforms for youth to gain hands-on experience, ensuring that their skills are applied to productive activities. Examples include facilitating internships, apprenticeships, and business incubation opportunities through partnerships with technical institutions and private companies.

In the chat, **Andrew Gashayija** addressed similar concerns, explaining that Kilimo Trust prioritizes experiential learning opportunities as part of their strategy. He noted that they work closely with institutions such as Rwanda Polytechnic to provide practical training and exposure. Additionally, Kilimo Trust collaborates with agribusiness firms to create pathways for youth to transition from training to employment or entrepreneurship. This ensures that skills are not only acquired but actively utilized in a manner that drives job creation and economic growth.

The combined efforts of training, certification, mentorship, and strategic partnerships ensure that youth are equipped not just with theoretical knowledge but also with the opportunities to apply their skills in meaningful ways, addressing the challenge of skill underutilization.

* + **Gloria:** Asked how resilient jobs are categorized and developed by IFAD.

In response to **Gloria’s** question on how resilient jobs are categorized and developed by IFAD, **Rahul Antau**, a technical specialist at IFAD, provided a detailed explanation. He emphasized that resilient jobs are those that can withstand various shocks, including economic, climatic, and political disruptions, ensuring sustainability and continuity. IFAD categorizes resilient jobs as those tied to green and climate-smart practices, as well as those that are adaptable to market changes and technological advancements.

**Rahul** highlighted the importance of adaptability as a key feature of resilient jobs, noting that IFAD integrates this into its skilling programs. The focus is on equipping individuals with technical skills, such as solar panel installation, ecosystem restoration, and organic farming, that are aligned with emerging trends in green economies. He also emphasized that soft skills, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, are essential in enabling individuals to adapt to dynamic labor market conditions.

To develop resilient jobs, IFAD incorporates measures such as social protection schemes and business continuity plans for enterprises supported through their programs. These initiatives ensure that entrepreneurs and employees have safeguards in place to navigate potential disruptions. IFAD also emphasizes partnerships with private sector actors and technical institutions to ensure that training and job creation efforts are aligned with real-world demands and emerging opportunities in green and orange economies (the latter focusing on digital and creative industries).

In the chat, **Rahul** further elaborated on the importance of green jobs, pointing out that they inherently contribute to resilience by addressing climate change impacts while creating sustainable livelihoods. He also discussed IFAD’s commitment to scaling up such opportunities through collaborations with stakeholders, ensuring that jobs created today can withstand future uncertainties.

This holistic approach reflects IFAD’s commitment to building resilience into its interventions, ensuring that jobs are not only created but are sustainable and impactful in the long term.

1. **Screenshots of participants**

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