

130 Launch a Coalition for Youth in African Agriculture

The Solution: A Coalition for Youth in African Agriculture that will convene youth-led and youth-serving networks, associations and organisations, coordinate youth action, eliminate fragmentation, build talent in the sector, amplify youth efforts, and accelerate their work on the continent.

Source(s) of the Solution: The solution was generated through reports like CERES2030, which showed that up to double the current size of public and donor investment will be required until 2030 to prevent 490 million people from experiencing hunger, double the incomes of 545 million food producers and their families, and limit GHG emissions in the agriculture sector. The CERES2030 Report also summarises that for the required funds to be effectively channelled for meaningful impact, it is more effective to create integrated portfolios of interventions rather than seek improvements in isolation from one another. Given that 80% of Africa's food consumption is marketed and handled mostly through private operations, driven mainly by the youth, it becomes imperative that there is coordination and aggregation of the various youth initiatives across the continent.

Problem addressed within food systems: Currently representing the largest demographic group on the continent, youth hold the key to transforming the African food system. Despite their fundamental role in producing, processing, and distributing food on the continent, young people struggle to raise funding and access critical resources and opportunities to scale their interventions and truly transform the food systems. This is largely because many such youth interventions are micro, small, and medium enterprises, associations, and organisations that are both informal and fragmented. The small size and fragmented nature of the youth interventions increases the transaction costs and risk for potential investors who find it difficult to implement solutions and provide meaningful support across the silos.

However, the continent is awash with examples of young scholars, entrepreneurs, and professionals developing innovative and unconventional ideas, approaches, and initiatives that are transforming how the continent produces, adds value, stores, sells, and consumes food. In the same vein, there are bodies of youth associations that have emerged in the landscape to provide support to these various youth interventions. Leveraging their power of convention and local, national, and regional networks and knowledge, youth associations connect with the various youth categories in ways that other organisations cannot. The Coalition will convene and coordinate youth actions and foster the proliferation of youth-led innovations and solutions in the food system, critical to driving hunger reduction and increasing the flow of nutritious foods to low-income populations.

How this solution will address that problem: A Coalition for Youth in African Agriculture will eliminate fragmentation in the ecosystem, thereby reducing the transactions costs and risks for potential investors. The aggregation of the various youth interventions through youth-serving and youth-focused organisations will provide a centralised one-stop hub that lays out investible opportunities for investors and stakeholders to sustainably engage. Thus, the Coalition will generate visible investment areas and impactful propositions for these investors through a series of interconnected activities. The Coalition will engage in a range of services (outputs) to support youth in agriculture across Africa, including attracting investment, advocacy, knowledge transfer, and capacity building and strengthening.

Through the Coalition, increased investment in the food system can be realised. Further expected outcomes include increased production and distribution of nutritious foods across the continent; development of a sustainable talent pipeline for the sector; increased income and resilient livelihoods for smallholders and SMEs; and an increase in innovation in and adoption of technology in agriculture.

Solution's alignment to the 'game changing and systemic solution' criteria: Impact at scale: The Coalition provides a unique alliance that will drive impact at scale through aggregation. The Coalition will represent a conveyor belt that identifies, develops, supports, and engages youth across all

categories vertically (including i) rural youth, ii) young people in academic and vocational training, iii) young professionals, and iv) innovative start-ups and SMEs) and horizontally across all geographical areas and key value chains on the continent. As such, the Coalition will create the required integrated portfolio of interventions that reduce transaction costs and risks for investors while ensuring that impact can be adequately tracked and measured.

Actionability: Due to the vertical and horizontal approach of the Coalition, multiple country actions are possible. Donors, investors, and other stakeholders will be able to find and support more interventions across multiple areas.

Sustainability: The Coalition is uniquely positioned to effectively deliver on its mandate over the long-term. By engaging youth across all ages and geographies, the Coalition will ensure the availability of a reliable talent pool, food systems solutions, and investment pipeline, thereby future-proofing African food systems beyond 2030. In the short to medium term, the Coalition will require a blend of public and private financing and technical support from the respective country governments and development partners to set up activities and raise its profile. In the long term, the Coalition will be sustained through annual membership fees from member organisations, programme implementation, and fundraising efforts.

Existing evidence: The CERES2030 Report provides evidence that investing in youth in agriculture is critical to transforming food systems in Africa. Also, the African Green Revolution Forum in September 2020 brought together youth groups at its Summit to deliberate on youth solutions; however, follow up was difficult due to the considerable fragmentation in the landscape – again, alluding to the need for coordination. In March 2021, Nourishing Africa partnered with the African Green Revolution Forum to engage various youth-led and youth-serving networks in agriculture in a virtual roundtable discussion to examine the potential of a Coalition as a solution to shared challenges. The roundtable participants, consisting of 15 youth organisations across three African regions, unanimously agreed that a Pan-African Coalition is critical to coordinating actions and developing investible solutions for stakeholder engagement and support.

Current/likely political support: It is expected that the Coalition will draw support from national and regional governments across Africa, in whose interest it is to drive youth engagement in agriculture on the continent. The Coalition will also rely on support and anchorage with relevant pan-African or regional organisations, including the African Union, the African Development Bank, the Africa Green Revolution Forum, the Economic Community of West African States, the East African Community, and the Southern Africa Development Community.

Contexts where this is well/not well suited: The Coalition will have a national and regional focus on Africa and is particularly suited for youth in Africa's food and agriculture sector.