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### YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND AGRIPRENEURSHIP INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITIES IN MODERN AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

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#### ABSTRACT

Youth empowerment through agripreneurship represents a critical strategy in revitalizing the agricultural sector in the face of global food insecurity, rising youth unemployment, and rural poverty. This study explores the intersection of youth innovation, agricultural entrepreneurship, and the emerging opportunities enabled by modern agricultural technologies and value chain integration. Through literature review and case studies across Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, this article highlights how digital tools, sustainable practices, and access to finance are transforming agriculture into an attractive enterprise for the younger generation. The findings emphasize the need for supportive policies, innovation ecosystems, and capacity-building programs to unlock youth potential in agribusiness and contribute to inclusive rural development.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains a critical driver of economic growth and food security in many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia where it employs a significant portion of the population. Yet, paradoxically, agriculture continues to be

characterized by aging farmers, low productivity, and a persistent lack of innovation in rural settings. Against this backdrop, youth unemployment has reached alarming levels, with many young people migrating to urban areas in search of better opportunities, often ending up in informal or precarious work. The disconnect between youth and agriculture has created a demographic and economic paradox: while young people are in dire need of employment, the agricultural sector is in desperate need of rejuvenation. This has prompted a re-examination of agriculture not merely as a survival strategy, but as a promising arena for entrepreneurial innovation—thus giving rise to the concept of agripreneurship

Agripreneurship, or agricultural entrepreneurship, is emerging as a transformative strategy that combines the economic potential of agribusiness with the energy, creativity, and adaptability of young people. It offers an integrated approach to rural development that goes beyond traditional farming by incorporating innovation, technology, value addition, and market orientation. In this regard, youth are no longer perceived as passive recipients of agricultural policies but as active drivers of change capable of modernizing value chains, enhancing food security, and creating employment for themselves and others (Anyidoho et al., 2012; FAO, 2020,). Their inherent digital literacy, risk tolerance, and openness to experimentation place them in a unique position to capitalize on emerging trends such as climate-smart agriculture, precision farming, agri-tech platforms, and e-commerce integration in food systems

However, despite the promising potential of youth-driven agribusiness, significant structural and systemic barriers continue to constrain participation. These include limited access to land and credit, weak technical and business skills, inadequate rural infrastructure, social stigmas surrounding agriculture, and policy frameworks that fail to recognize or support youth-specific needs. Moreover, gender disparities further marginalize young women who face dual exclusion due to age and gender. These challenges demand a holistic and intersectional strategy that not only empowers youth economically but also addresses the socio-political and institutional dynamics of rural agrarian systems.

Innovation is central to overcoming these barriers. Digital technologies, including mobile-based advisory services, precision irrigation, and blockchain-enabled traceability, are redefining how young people interact with agriculture. Platforms such as Hello Tractor, AgroCenta, and e-Choupal demonstrate how youth-led innovations can enhance efficiency, transparency, and profitability across agricultural value chains (World Bank, 2019,). In tandem, youth incubators, agritech hubs, and entrepreneurship accelerators are emerging as vital

platforms to nurture ideas, provide mentorship, and link startups to investment. These institutional innovations are especially important in creating an enabling ecosystem where youth can thrive as entrepreneurs, rather than remain trapped in cycles of dependency or informality.

Furthermore, agripreneurship aligns with broader global development frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 13 (Climate Action). By fostering youth entrepreneurship in agriculture, countries can advance inclusive economic growth while simultaneously building resilience in food systems. The demographic dividend—the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population’s age structure—can only be realized if youth are equipped with the tools, resources, and environments they need to succeed. Thus, youth empowerment in agribusiness is not merely a policy choice; it is a strategic imperative for sustainable rural transformation.

This study seeks to critically analyze the nexus between youth empowerment, agripreneurship, and innovation in the context of modern agricultural enterprises. It explores how young people engage with agricultural value chains, the challenges they face, and the innovations that enable their participation. Drawing from empirical literature, case studies, and development reports, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and constraints in fostering youth-led agribusiness. By doing so, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge that informs policy-making, program design, and institutional support aimed at transforming agriculture into an engine of inclusive growth driven by the next generation. The agricultural sector, long perceived as labor-intensive and low-income, is undergoing a technological and entrepreneurial transformation. Amid a growing global population and heightened demand for sustainable food systems, agriculture is increasingly seen as a field of innovation and opportunity. At the same time, youth unemployment remains a pressing concern worldwide, particularly in developing regions where over 60% of the population is under the age of 30 (FAO, 2020, abdinote). Empowering youth through agripreneurshipentrepreneurial activities in agricultureoffers a dual pathway to address both food security and unemployment while promoting rural economic development.

Modern agribusiness is no longer confined to traditional farming; it encompasses a wide range of enterprises including agro-processing, digital agriculture, biotechnology, and logistics. However, barriers such as limited access to land, finance, market information, and agribusiness education hinder youth participation (IFAD, 2019). This article aims to examine

how innovation and institutional support can create pathways for youth involvement in agripreneurship, ultimately transforming agriculture into a sector of prosperity and sustainability.

## METHOD RESEARCH

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive research approach combined with secondary data analysis. Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, reports from international organizations (e.g., FAO, IPCC, World Bank (2020)), and documented case studies from agribusiness sectors worldwide. Data were analyzed thematically to identify major climate change challenges and strategic responses. This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study approach focusing on three developing countries: Kenya, Indonesia, and India. Selection was based on the presence of active agribusiness initiatives involving smallholders. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 45 stakeholders, including smallholder farmers, cooperative leaders, agribusiness managers, and policymakers. Additional data came from field observations and analysis of secondary sources including reports from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and national agricultural departments.

The data were analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring patterns across cases. Triangulation was used to validate findings from different sources and enhance reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethical clearance was obtained, and informed consent was secured from all participants..

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### RESULT

#### Youth-Driven Innovation in Agribusiness

Evidence from across regions reveals a surge in youth-led innovation in agriculture. In Kenya, platforms like *Twiga Foods* connect farmers directly to retailers through mobile technology, reducing post-harvest losses and improving income (World Bank, 2020, abdinote). In Nigeria, *FarmCrowdy* enables crowd-investment in agriculture, allowing young farmers to access working capital through digital platforms. Similarly, Indonesia's *Habibi Garden* applies IoT devices to monitor crop health, empowering youth to manage smart farms more efficiently.

#### Access to Finance and Land

Innovative financing models such as digital microcredit, mobile-based insurance, and agritech venture capital have begun to address the funding gap for youth agripreneurs. Yet, land access

remains a formidable challenge, particularly for young women and rural youth. Programs such as the Youth Agribusiness Incubation Initiative (YABII) in Uganda have piloted models where communal land is leased to youth groups under cooperative structures (IFAD, 2019, abdinote).

### **Education, Mentorship, and Ecosystem Support**

Capacity building remains central to successful agripreneurship. Integration of agribusiness education into secondary and tertiary curricula, along with non-formal training, has shown promising results. Mentorship programs and innovation hubs such as *AgriLab* and *YouthAg Summit* play pivotal roles in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and linking youth to investors and markets. Governments and development agencies must scale such platforms to ensure continuity and growth.

### **Gender Inclusion in Agripreneurship**

Gender disparities persist in agribusiness. Young women face added constraints due to cultural norms, lack of property rights, and exclusion from training and finance. However, targeted programs such as *SheFarms* and *AgriGirls Initiative* in Sub-Saharan Africa have demonstrated that women-led agribusinesses can thrive with appropriate support, thereby contributing to both gender equity and food security.

## **DISCUSSION**

Youth agripreneurship is increasingly recognized as a strategic entry point to revitalize agriculture, reduce rural unemployment, and catalyze innovation in food systems. As global agricultural value chains modernize under the influence of digitalization, climate change, and evolving consumer demands, youth offer the dynamism and adaptability required to drive this transformation. However, translating potential into reality involves navigating complex socio-economic, structural, and institutional barriers. This section analyzes key themes emerging from the intersection of youth empowerment, agribusiness development, and technological innovation.

First, it is essential to recognize that youth possess unique capabilities and perspectives that can accelerate agricultural modernization. Their digital fluency and openness to change make them ideal adopters of precision agriculture tools, mobile-based extension services, and climate-smart farming techniques (Mabaya et al., 2017). Platforms such as FarmDrive in Kenya or e-Soko in Ghana demonstrate how youth-led digital innovations can provide market intelligence, credit scoring, and weather forecasting to smallholders, thereby reducing risk and improving decision-making. These innovations not only enhance

productivity but also reposition agriculture as a data-driven and knowledge-intensive sector, thus challenging traditional stereotypes of farming as laborious and low-tech.

Despite these advances, one of the most persistent barriers to youth agripreneurship is **access to productive resources**, particularly land and finance. In many developing countries, land tenure systems are rooted in customary law or family inheritance, which tend to disadvantage young people—especially young women—who are not recognized as rightful landowners. Even in countries with land reform initiatives, bureaucratic processes, corruption, and patriarchal norms often limit equitable access (Ahaibwe et al., 2013,). Without land, youth cannot qualify for most agricultural loans, nor can they meaningfully participate in mechanized or commercial agriculture. Innovative models such as cooperative land leasing, digital land registries, or public-private land banks may offer solutions, but they require strong governance and legal support.

Financial inclusion is equally critical. Traditional banks often perceive young farmers as high-risk due to lack of collateral, limited credit history, and market volatility. However, fintech platforms and crowdfunding models are disrupting this narrative. Startups like FarmCrowdy (Nigeria) and Agrikore (West Africa) allow youth to attract capital directly from individuals or institutions, leveraging digital trust and performance data rather than

## CONCLUSION

Youth empowerment through agripreneurship holds transformative potential for modern agriculture. By leveraging digital innovation, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship education, young people can redefine agriculture as a viable and profitable career path. However, realizing this potential requires systemic support from governments, the private sector, and civil society. Policies must address land access, financing mechanisms, and ecosystem development to lower entry barriers. With coordinated efforts, youth-led agribusinesses can become engines of innovation, rural revitalization, and inclusive economic growth..

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