Developed jointly by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), the Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA) programme answers to a dedicated call for accelerating efforts in the area of job creation for African youth, especially through agribusiness and entrepreneurship development.

The multi-level approach (continental, sub-regional, national) reflects the need for a concerted effort between public institutions and the private sector on capacity development, access to resources, improved coordination and linkages, and knowledge generation and dissemination.

OYA works towards removing access barriers for young entrepreneurs by developing activities at the micro, meso and macro levels through OYA’s areas of intervention:

**Capacity Building**
- Increasing employment opportunities through skills development

**Incubation services**
- Developing successful and innovative business models & products

**Market access**
- Creating B2B opportunities to eliminate market access barriers

**Access to Finance**
- Increasing financial literacy and networking with investors and business angels

**Inclusive value chains**
- Encouraging PPP in value chains with high job creation potential for youth

**Policy support**
- Fostering competitiveness through enhanced youth policies and strategies

**Value Chains**
- Cocoa
- Maize
- Fruits
- Fish

**KEY TARGETS**
- 5’000 youth engaged
- 100 Trainers trained
- At least 100 MSMEs supported
- 4 national institutions supported
- 15 meso-level organizations supported
- 50% young women beneficiaries

**National Youth Authority (NYA); Ghana Enterprise Agency (GEA); Government parastatals; Meso-level institutions; Private sector**

[Website](www.oyaprogramme.org)
[Twitter](@OYAProgramme)
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Development Objective:
Increased decent employment and self-employment opportunities in agriculture (on- and off-farm) and agribusiness for young women and men in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas.

Outcome 1. Employability (on- and off-farm) and self-employment capabilities of youths in agriculture and agribusiness are enhanced.

Outcome 2. Existing and emerging youth-led agribusinesses and SMEs in agriculture have increased access to finance and are better integrated into local, regional and international markets.

Outcome 3. Agricultural value chains and agri-food systems that create decent employment and self-employment opportunities for youths are strengthened.

Outcome 4. Policy, institutional and programmatic frameworks are strengthened at the national level to support decent youth employment creation and entrepreneurship development in agriculture.

Main challenges
Mismatch between youth education and industry requirements
Limited access to market, capital and finance
Limited access to technology or ICT
Low attractiveness of business environment for investment

Main opportunities
Favorable policy environment for youth development
Overall growth of the agribusiness sector
Developed production and export sectors for agricultural goods
High potential for agro-processing & value addition
Existing successful youth initiatives and projects

Youth inclusive value chains were selected based on their potential in attracting youth, creating job opportunities, and addressing cross-cutting issues such as such as gender mainstreaming and climate resilience:

- **Cocoa** is the most important agricultural commodity contributing to 30% of Ghana overall export revenues.
- **Fruits** carry a high potential for job creation along the value chains with the development of processing and export.
- **Maize** can provide opportunities in the domestic market as 60% of Ghanaian production is exported.
- **Aquaculture** has a high potential for job creation given the increasing investments in modernizing fisheries and aquaculture.

An OYA baseline analysis showed that focused, strategic, short- to medium-term and long-term responses are required to address current unemployment and underemployment challenges. Effective coordination and synergies among youth employment programmes are needed to avoid duplication of effort while the country’s economic structure transforms. Effective private sector participation in skills development and employment programmes is recommended.

OYA Country Action Plan for Ghana was validated at the occasion of two workshops held in 2021, in presence of government counterparts, young agripreneurs and CSOs.
Gender equality and women empowerment have a significant positive impact on sustained economic growth and sustainable industrial development, which are drivers of poverty reduction and social integration. As such, OYA ensures that women, who play a significant role in agricultural production in Ghana, benefit equally as men from investments in agriculture. Gender is factored in the selection of beneficiaries and some social dynamics, such as land ownership, are viewed through a gender lens.

**Women account for:**

39% of the engaged young agripreneurs

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**Innovation & Digitalization**

Digitalization also impacts agriculture and agribusiness, through smart agriculture, which increases productivity and resource efficiency at all levels of the value chains, from farming to transformation, marketing and export. Therefore, OYA promotes innovation and digitalization by strengthening young entrepreneurs’ capacity to use innovative solutions and digital tools.

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**Environmental sustainability**

OYA encourages new approaches to sustainable consumption and production to ensure sustainable use and management of natural resources along agricultural value chains. Moreover, the promotion of green jobs and the introduction of circular economy practices (circularity) are mainstreamed in the value chain support.

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**Public-Private Partnerships for Sustainability**

Strongly anchored in an integrated public private partnership approach, OYA responds to the need for a concerted effort between public institutions and the private sector on capacity development, inclusive access to economic opportunities and resources, improved coordination and linkages, and knowledge generation and dissemination.
Capacity Building

247 young agripreneurs from selected value chains in Ghana and Kenya were included in the expanded pilot of FAO’s Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on agripreneurship for Africa. This pilot tested the MOOC’s impact on agripreneurial self-efficacy, agripreneurial planning, agripreneurial action, and business practices. With a focus on peer-to-peer learning and exchange between the trainees from different countries, the training also adopted an active learning approach where the trainers acted as facilitators to the exchange between the trainees.

Market Access

OYA Executive e-marketing course equipped 20 young entrepreneurs (75% women) from Ghana, Kenya and Zambia with tools and analytical techniques that helped them strengthen and expand their businesses. The beneficiaries improved the visibility of their business on social networks and deepened their knowledge of the digital environment, hence facilitating the reach of customers and dramatically increasing sales.

The training also included the training of three trainers from Kosmos Innovation Center so it can be duplicated and reach more beneficiaries.

I am extremely impressed with the e-marketing course and how practical it is. As a trainer, I feel that this course provided me with the knowledge and confidence to support startups to make improvements within their businesses and grow their online customer base. I look forward to passing on the tons of information and resources to start-ups within our acceleration program—particularly women-led small businesses.

Linda Austin
Business Development Specialist, Kosmos Innovation Center (KIC)

OYA Business Club gives [young agripreneurs] the little push they need to grow and access markets at the national, regional, continental and even international level. They can develop and grow their business and boost their careers through learning opportunities and sharing best practices.

Nadia Mrabit
Co-Founder, Business Club Africa

OYA Business Club for Young Entrepreneurs offers opportunities to 56 young entrepreneurs to deepen their networks and access new markets / business opportunities, while benefitting from a range of capacity-building events. Connected to more than 6,000 decision-makers from Africa and worldwide, beneficiaries have access to a unique market place to promote their products and services.

OYA will leverage on Government’s initiatives such as YouStart, led by the Ghana Enterprises Agency (GEA), to support young entrepreneurs to access capital, training, technical skills, and mentoring to operate their businesses.

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OYA collaborated with FAO programme preparing agripreneurs to participate competitively in the AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area) in Ghana. Indeed, the AfCFTA holds the potential to contribute significantly to eliminating poverty, creating jobs and improving food security by establishing the largest free-trade area in the world which aims to enhance intra-African trade, facilitate investment, improve continental economic integration, and boost African countries’ competitiveness in the global market.
Developing Inclusive Value Chains

OYA contributes to fostering youth engagement in selected value chains through the development of specific trainings, in collaboration with national authorities.

As such, 90 participants (47% women) benefited from a workshop organized in collaboration with the National Youth Authority to strengthen entrepreneurial skills in sustainable agriculture production and promote self-dependence.

Adopting a youth-to-youth mentorship approach, young, and experienced agripreneurs took the beneficiaries through production, processing and marketing processes.

At the end of the training, beneficiaries were offered starter packs including inputs and equipment to further practice and launch their startups.

I learnt about the strong potential of agriculture value chains in terms of income- and value-creation, in the food sector but also other domains such as medicines. I wish to cultivate mushrooms for medicinal purposes, using technologies to develop smart solutions to increase productivity.

Following this three day workshop, 40 beneficiaries (58% women) were selected for further hands-on-training in the mentors’ farms.

Agritech Challenge Pro was very impactful and definitely a step in the right direction. We run [the company] more professionally, it equipped us with confidence [and] gave us a better and clear perspective of what we can actually do in the Agri space.

Team BOOD
Funds raised: 20'000 USD (Cargill)
Jobs already created: 42

OYA is developing training and investor readiness sessions that will equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills to access financing. Throughout the programme, beneficiaries will get familiar with accounting software, pitch decks and financial models. OYA will identify potential investors for each startup accelerator and organize a pitching event as well as one on one investor readiness sessions to effectively raise funds.

Local meso-level institutions will also be trained to ensure the replicability and viability of the activity.

Access to Finance

43 startups, for a total of 137 beneficiaries, from Accra and 5 regions across the country, enrolled in Agritech Challenge Pro. 24% of the selected businesses are led by a woman CEO and 30% of the total number of entrepreneurs are women.

Equipped with the right tools, funding and support, participants could bring their business ideas or products to market and prepare them to scale.

At the end of the programme, Cargill and MasterCard Foundation invested between 10,000 and 50,000 USD in the different businesses, amounting to a total of 250,000 USD. Other startups benefited from in-kind investments and were provided space to locate their business.

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OYA works in strong collaboration with the National Youth Authority (NYA) to support Government’s efforts to accelerate job creation for youth through agribusiness and entrepreneurship development.

Potential synergies with national initiatives that aim at building a better enabling environment for Ghanaian youth are also explored. As such, OYA is in contact with the Youth in Agriculture Programme, the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Challenge, Planting for Foods and Jobs, or YouStart Programme.

The OYA programme also raises awareness about the importance of youth employment and entrepreneurship promotion, as well as about its successful initiatives in multiple global and regional fora.

- OYA supported agripreneurs from Ghana to attend Food and Retail West Africa, a virtual exhibition and B2B Networking Event organized on 10-12 February 2021, providing them with opportunities to extend their networks and access new markets through B2B networking sessions. They could also participate in the three Masterclasses organized and animated by OYA.
- OYA also collaborates with Afrilabs, a network organisation supporting Innovation Centers across African countries since 2011 and which first annual gathering was held in Ghana. As such, OYA powered several side-events during Afrilabs 2021.
- Other conferences, workshops and masterclasses powered by OYA included participants from Ghana.

Mathias Kofi Blay
Greater Accra Regional Director,
National Youth Authority (NYA)