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**TEGEMEO INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL
POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT**

Press Release:

Title

Land Access and Youth Participation in Agriculture

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Key Messages

A recent assessment by the World Bank found that by 2030, serving the food demands of Africa's growing middle class alone will create a market worth \$1 trillion (Sh103 trillion). African "agripreneurs" can own that market if we tap the two assets that should be an unbeatable combination: the world's largest population of young people, and the world's largest holdings of uncultivated arable land. In fact, Tegemeo Institute has conducted a study that has found access to land could dramatically increase youth participation in agriculture, particularly for young women farmers.

There are about 1 million youths entering the labour market annually. They can contribute to significant food security in Kenya if they are gainfully employed in agriculture where increasing population, low agricultural productivity and decreasing arable land in the high and medium potential areas are a threat to food security. Their participation in agriculture has however been constrained by limited access to land in the rural areas. Unlike the rural areas, innovative urban farming takes place even on 0.25 acres of land. This allows rearing of poultry, rabbits and having green houses in urban areas where land is scarce. Such innovative approaches can involve the youths more especially where land is scarce.

Involvement of the young people in farming requires development of a positive attitude towards agriculture. This will help reduce unemployment among the youths because political and social consequences of unemployed youths can be extensive as witnessed by political unrests globally. This would involve equipping youthful agripreneurs with relevant skills to build a sustainable and resilient agricultural innovation system that will respond to unique challenges within their counties. Such skills coupled with access to land enable the youths to participate actively in farming.

The average age of small scale farmers owning land in Kenya is 49 years and the youths who make up 67% of the Kenyan population have no access to land. As such, they are unable to exploit opportunities in farming. This excludes a great majority of the youths who have the capability to work and produce more from land. Most of the youths are from large families and move out to be able to support their families. They settle in larger towns and start businesses from which they earn a living. However, it turns out that the bulk of them don't realize much in terms of returns and are still not able to provide sufficient remittances to their kins from where they migrated. Due to lack of access to land, the youths resort to migration from rural to urban and rural to other rural areas. They have the ability and capacity to farm because they can work to produce food and earn incomes. Studies have shown that about three quarters of youths still inherit land from their parents and only about one third buy land. The inherited land is barely sufficient to sustain a family under the current agricultural production system. The net incomes for those migrating are low and with little surplus income to afford buying land. The majority of parents - 90% in the rural areas have recognized that their farms are the main sources of land access for their children and usually hand down at least part of their farms to them while they are still alive. And even when they buy or access land, the most common land size that's accessible to them is 2 acres. About 80% of the youth's farm on land not more than 2 acres in their counties of residence. It is uneconomical to farm a 2 acre land through telephone farming for this group. The other alternative means of accessing land is through renting which only a small fraction of the youth population does. Majority rely on family land. The resulting inequitable distribution of land particularly among the younger generation alienates them from meaningful participation in farming. The only way to involve them is to avail credit for those willing to farm.

Exploiting the Kenya government's effort of offering the "Agri-Vijana" loan from one of its state corporation, Youth Enterprise Development Fund is one way of empowering the youths to access land. This will create a win-win situation between land lords and their tenants with resultant increase in food production. Such a land market will be key to increasing access to land for the youths. The farms are generally too small to generate sizeable incomes.

Dr Dennis Otieno is a Research Fellow at Tegemeo Institute

For further assistance, more information or if you would like to conduct interviews with any of the authors, presenters or Tegemeo Institute staff, please contact: Judy Kimani, 0720963348, jkimani@tegemeo.org. www.tegemeo.org