

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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PRIORITIZING THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS IN NORTH AFRICA REGION



The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE) of the African Union Commission in collaboration with the Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Co-operation

and Development (OECD) organized a webinar on Youth Employment Opportunities in Agri-food Systems in North Africa on **Tuesday, 29 March 2022**. The objective of the webinar was to shed light on the opportunities and challenges faced by youth in the agri-food sector in the North African region in light of the COVID-19 crisis and to explore policy options to prioritize youth employment opportunities as countries embark on post-COVID recovery strategies. Additionally, the webinar provided a general overview of youth in agri-food systems related policy priorities, strategic programmes, and frameworks of the African Union Commission including youth related aspirations in the Agenda 2063, the Malabo Declaration, the African Agribusiness Youth Strategy and the Africa Common Position to the UN Food Systems Summit.

Dr. Simplicie Nouala Fonkou, the Head of Agriculture and Food Security Division delivered opening remarks on behalf of Dr. Godfrey Bahigwa, Director of Agriculture

and Rural Development of the AUC-DARBE. He highlighted that youth related megatrends of around 480 million young people are living in the continent today and with the figure expected to double by 2050. He noted that while 10 to 12 million youth enter the workforce each year, the continent is creating only 3.1 million jobs annually, leaving the vast majority of youth unemployed. He further noted that the African Union Commission (AUC) had developed several policies and strategies to support youth in agri-food system related activities, that need to be prioritised and implemented by Member States.

In her opening remarks, Ms. Ragnheidur Arnadottir Director of the Development Center of OECD stated that youth related issues remain a high priority on the international and national development agenda. Ms. Arnadottir further stated that COVID-19 crisis has particularly caused detrimental impact on youth, and that the OECD recently updated its youth action plan, by identifying key priority areas for action, that include; helping youth transition into the labour market and to also support the economic wellbeing of youth. She further pointed out that this webinar is the beginning of a regular dialogue on how to unleash the full potential of agri-food systems to promote local economic development and job creation.

A presentation on “ Youth priorities in the AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and other specific youth in agri-food systems related policies, frameworks, and strategies of the Commission, was delivered by the AU Commission, as part of its project to the COVID-19 response and recovery.

The OECD also presented the employment challenges of youth in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, including the available opportunities in the agri-food sector in the region, calling on the youth in the North African Region, to seize the opportunities and advance the agri-food sector in the region.

A round table discussion was moderated by Dr. Janet Edeme, the Head of Rural Development Division in the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission. The panelist highlighted issues such as;

- The expected impact of the conflict in Ukraine on the food security and welfare across the region;

- The impact of COVID on labour markets in the North African region and public policies put in place during the crisis that needs to be sustained as part of a recovery strategy.
- The local employment and youth employment impact impact and motivations behind NextProtin agritech startup that produces insect-based protein using organic food waste. the environmental and social the business model
- The bottleneck to unleash the local agro-food industries in the region.

They panelists, further highlighted game changing solutions to over comes the expected challenges to increase the employment opportunities in agriculture for the youth in the regioan and in African as whole.

Ms. Nalishebo Meebelo, Executive Director, Secretariat of the Regional Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes (ReNAPRI), provided updates on the countries that are meeting the CAADP investment targets and those that are not. She further emphasized the need for public policies that can support young people to take part in rural and agricultural transformation.

For further information, please contact:

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