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EMPOWERING THE YOUTH IN THE AU ISLAND STATES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS: A CALL TO ACTION AT THE AFRICA AGRIBUSINESS YOUTH STRATEGY DIALOGUE FOR ISLAND STATES



The African Union Commission (AUC) and AGRA made a call for youth empowerment and transforming agribusiness to ensure sustainable opportunities for African Union Island States. Organised by the African Union Commission and AGRA, the Africa Agribusiness Youth Strategy (AAYS) Dialogue for Island States aims at creating a pivotal platform to engage, inspire and equip young entrepreneurs and innovators in agrifood systems in the Island States. Guided by the African Union Agenda 2063 framework, and the CAADP continental programme, the strategy aims to drive food security, economic resilience, and climate-smart practices across Africa's Island states through promoting youth driven agribusiness solution.

The Africa Agribusiness Youth Strategy (AAYS) Dialogue for the Island States co-hosted by the Government of Republic of Mauritius and the African Union Commission was held in Port Louis from 14-16 April 2025.

Addressing the meeting virtually, Dr. Janet Edeme, the Head of Rural Development Division and Acting Head of Agriculture and Food Security Division underscored the point that Africa stands at a pivotal moment in its journey towards agrifood systems transformation, guided by the ambitious goals of the CAADP Kampala Declaration and the broader vision of Agenda 2063. "The recently adopted Kampala Declaration on Building Resilient and Sustainable Agrifood Systems in Africa (2026–2035) reaffirms the continent's commitment to inclusive and sustainable agrifood transformation. It places youth at the centre, aiming to empower at least 30% of young people in agrifood value chains by 2035. This is not only ambitious but necessary", she emphasised.



Dr. Edeme further stressed the significance of deliberate and strategic actions to fulfil the intended goal.

“Tailored Agribusiness Youth Strategies are needed to respond to the specific realities of Africa’s Island States. These strategies must enable youth access to finance, land, technology, and markets—

while also strengthening entrepreneurial capacity and creating policy incentives that encourage innovation and enterprise”, she added.

In her remarks, Ms. Nana Amoah, Director of Gender, Youth, and Inclusiveness at AGRA urged the participants to think of agribusiness as offline and analog. “Youth are not waiting for permission—they are building drone services, e-commerce platforms, AI-powered weather systems. But they need capital with patience, not just grants, and sandbox environments to test and fail forward. We look forward to ensure that AAYS becomes a launchpad for next-gen agripreneurs”, she said.

Ms. Nana reiterated the commitment of development partners to work hand-in-hand with the AU Commission, Island State governments, and especially young leaders to ensure that the African Agribusiness Youth Strategy becomes the continent’s lighthouse for agrifood transformation in a climate-uncertain, opportunity-rich world.

Officially opening the dialogue Hon Mohamed Ehsuan Juman, Member of the National Assembly in Mauritius stressed on the implementation of the developed strategy in to a concrete action. “Today, we stand at a pivotal moment in Africa’s agribusiness landscape, where the potential of our youth who make up 60% of the workforce can no longer be overlooked. The Africa Agribusiness Youth Strategy Dialogue emphasizes not just the vision, but the urgent need for action and implementation”, he emphasised.

“We must empower our young people across our islands with the skills, resources, and opportunities to innovate and lead in agribusiness. By harnessing their energy and creativity, we can drive sustainable agricultural practices, enhance food security, and foster economic growth across the continent”, he urged.

In line with the AU Agenda 2063 framework the AAYS continental strategy seeks to promote the establishment and harmonization of youth in agribusiness initiatives and employment opportunities schemes at Continental, Regional, and Member States levels. Its implementation requires a coherent action at all levels of governance and involving key stakeholders pertinent to achieve the objectives of creating youth jobs and youth agribusinesses at the scale of tens of millions across the continent. This strategy document tackles how to ensure the youth are not left behind but are engaged in agriculture.

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