



From the Executive Director's Desk

Greetings from AWAN-Afrika,

On August 12th, the world marked International Youth Day, a day set aside by the United Nations to draw attention to a given set of cultural and legal issues surrounding the youth.

This year, the day was marked differently – most of the activities were virtual due to the covid-19 Pandemic. At AWAN Afrika, we marked the day engaging with our #YouthinAg Under-30 champions, connector and #Agri-trailblazers and shared their journeys as young Agripreneurs on our social media handles (@AWAN_AFRIKA on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn)

Watching them and listening to their testimonials, it confirmed many of the reactions I got from readers, colleagues in the agri-sector and youth organizations in the continent. Some were surprised, others shocked and most of them disheartened by the statistics I shared in my opinion piece, which you can find here.

It is disappointing that in Africa, the average age of a farmer is 60, despite the continent's average age being 19.

Our propositional bet is that the youth are the ones that are going to change the face of agriculture in Africa.

They are bringing in new ideas, taking risks and embracing new technologies. AWAN-Afrika is bringing a positive wave of change into the agricultural sector in Africa.

Through our #YouthinAg AWANunder30 Initiative that started in November 2018, our online Incubation Hub strives to define and establish sustainable systems for networking and mentorship building on AWAN Afrika's comparative advantage. This is stated clearly in our pillars, to mitigate the hurdles faced by youths in agriculture and agribusiness.

In so doing, the Initiative #YouthinAg AWANunder30 has seen an increase in the number of youths involved in agribusiness and policy dialogues in agriculture in many countries where we have champions. Furthermore, with 40% of our membership being under 30, with technical and financial support from Development Partners and Private Sector, we will be able to scale up rapidly by using the existing Country Agribusiness Clubs of Agri-trail blazers and connectors.

These young people are not just farming, they are using new technologies like drones, efficient mechanical tools, new production technologies like aquaponics, permaculture, aeroponics, hydroponics, applying the Internet of Things (IoT) in agriculture among others to increase productivity along the value chains.

Join me in celebrating our young champions!

Have a safe September!

Beatrice Gakuba

Executive Director, AWAN Afrika



www.awanafrika.com

TEL: 0705362738/ Email: info@awanafrika.com



Awan_afrika



@Awan_afrika



Awan afrika



STEERING THE WHEEL OF AFRICAN FOOD SECURITY: AWAN AFRIKA'S YOUNG CHAMPIONS FIRMLY ON THE WHEEL

The under 30 champions who shared their experiences in agribusiness were drawn from the regions where Awan Afrika has membership. If you missed their journeys into agriculture, you can still find them in format video on both our Twitter and Facebook social media pages.

In Uganda, Julius Kabugo is making money rearing poultry in the capital, Kampala. Kabugo is a founding member and Managing Director of Msingi Poultry Limited. Apart from the eggs and chicken sales, Msingi makes organic manure from chicken waste.

Like many businesses globally, Msingi was not spared the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. He says, the price of eggs fell from three US dollars per tray to one dollar per tray due to lack of demand. This saw a drop in revenue for the business as well profits for business expansion.

To adapt to the changing business environment and to keep afloat, Msingi Poultry Limited begun planting and packaging organic vegetables. His argument,

"People may not buy eggs in quantities that they used to, but they need tomatoes, cucumber and lettuce for salads."

Post Covid-19, Kabugo says, the farm will open to the public for educational visits to give those who would like to learn about poultry farming, an opportunity to gain firsthand experience.

Kabugo says, Msingi Poultry Limited is also working on opening up an online shop to cater for the new normal. He says, even as young people look for governments to bail them out, they must be ready to rethink their business models to fit in the new world under COVID-19 and its accompanying restrictions.



Msingi Poultry Farm, Kampala, Uganda

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, Christian Songwa**, runs Ndunda aquaponics. Aquaponics is a combination of aquaculture (growing fish and other aquatic animals) and hydroponics (growing plants without soil). Aquaponics uses these two in a symbiotic combination in which plants are fed the aquatic animals' discharge or waste.

Ndunda Aquaponics grows organic vegetables and also rears fish, both of which he packages and sells to clients in and around Kinshasa. Ndunda says, the method of farming is good because it uses less space and is good for the environment.



In July this year, the organisation won the Pierre Castel Prize for Agribusiness in Africa for the work that Ndunda Aquaponics has done in fighting food insecurity, creating economic opportunities and training the youth.

While COVID-19 slowed demand for their produce, the farm saved on electricity bills, which Songwa says helped them increase the diversity of their produce.

Christian Songwa envisions many young African youth trying out Aquaponics, encouraging the consumption of locally grown food, especially at home in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Ndunda Aquaponic Farm, Democratic Republic of Congo



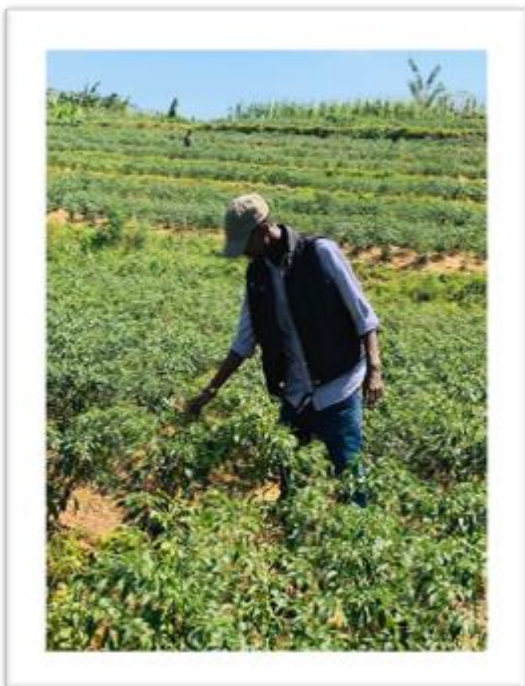
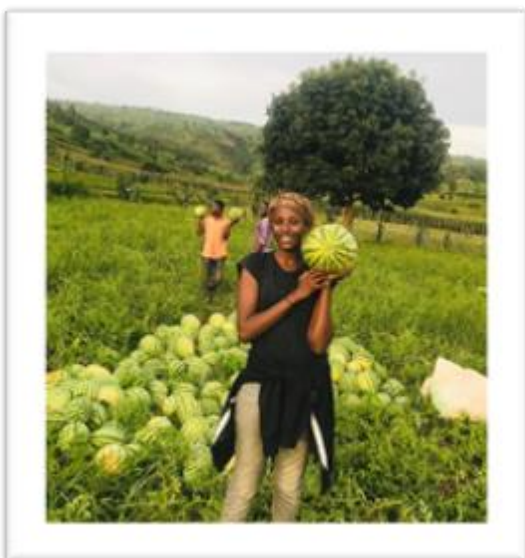
In Rwanda, Gloria Mutozo, a graduate agronomist ventured into agribusiness first by trying out her hand in Chili farming. The venture however faced several headwinds, one was scarcity of water to irrigate the farms because Busegera District where the farm was based, is a semi-arid area. During heavy rains, the chili farms would flood, destroying the entire crop.

It was time to shift gears and Gloria opted for watermelon farming. Research had shown her that there was high demand for the fruits, not just in Rwanda but also across the borders. Together with her two partners they opted to do agribusiness professionally. They began by consulting an agronomist who advised them on the need for soil testing. They then began the process of neutralizing the soil with agricultural lime. They also shifted to another part of the country.

They started off growing watermelons on one hectare of land and have since increased to three hectares. During the planting season, they employ up-to 100 casual labourers. They now have a permanent staff of five – mainly women and youth.



The three now have their eyes set on the export market. They are proof that agriculture can create employment and help Africa in ending poverty.



Iwacu modern Farm, Rwanda

In Ivory Coast, Phillipe Agoussi, the founder of Ivoire Agro-Forever Consulting and Agro-ecological incubation Centre, deals in organic agriculture, which includes the production of vegetables in Nieky near the capital, Abidjan.

Agoussi combines farming with training on modern farming techniques, organizing of agricultural seminars as well as the distribution and sale of seeds and organic phytosanitary products.

One of the main attractions in his farm and also of great interest to his students, is snail farming, also known as heliciculture. Indeed, Agoussi is fondly known in Nieky as Mr. Snail.



He won 2 Prizes, one last year and the Pierre Castel 2020 3rd edition!

COVID-19 had a negative effect on some aspects of the business. Agoussi and his team could not conduct trainings or organize seminars due to restrictions on social distancing put in place to contain the spread of the disease. However, ever since the restrictions were lifted, face-to-face training has resumed, only that the classes are by law required to be smaller than before.



Agoussi says, when the first case of COVID-19 was announced in Ivory Coast, like everywhere else in the world, people ran to stock up on food, evidence that we all cannot do without the farmer.

He appeals to his government, other African governments as well as donors to focus on youth driven agribusiness, to secure the continent’s food security situation.



Ivoire Agro-Forever Consulting and Agro-ecological incubation Centre, Abidjan, Ivory Coast

NEWS ROOM

FOR AFRICA’S FOOD SECURITY, YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS WILL BE VITAL

By Beatrice Gakuba

<https://www.awanafrika.com/post/for-africa-s-food-security-youth-involvement-in-agriculture-and-agribusiness-will-be-vital>