

AFRICAN YOUTH POSITION STATEMENT | On the Future of Africa's Agrifood Systems

Emerging from the youth conversations on the future of Africa's Agrifood systems

PREAMBLE

We, the **young professionals, researchers, entrepreneurs, farmers, innovators, students** and **development practitioners** who participated in the Youth Conversations on the Future of Africa's Agrifood Systems, affirm that Africa's agrifood systems stand at a pivotal moment. We recognise that **climate change, environmental degradation, population growth, urbanisation, shifting food systems** and **technological advances** are reshaping agriculture across the continent. At the same time, Africa's youthful population represents one of its greatest assets for driving innovation, resilience and sustainable development.

We further recognise that **young people** are **already contributing meaningfully** to **agrifood systems** as producers, researchers, entrepreneurs, educators, advocates and community leaders. Yet many continue to **face barriers** that limit their **access to finance, productive resources, markets, knowledge, technology** and **decision-making processes**.

Guided by the discussions and recommendations emerging from the Youth Conversations convened by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) in preparation for the 9th Africa Agriculture Science Week and the 10th FARA General Assembly, we present this **Position Statement** as our collective vision and call for stronger partnerships, responsive policies and sustained investment in youth leadership across Africa's agrifood systems.

Why This Position Statement?

Africa's agrifood systems are at a critical point in their evolution. Climate change, population growth, urbanisation, changing food systems and technological advances are reshaping how food is produced, processed, marketed and consumed. At the same time, **Africa's youthful population** presents an **unprecedented opportunity** to drive **innovation, strengthen resilience** and accelerate **sustainable agrifood systems** transformation.

Recognising this opportunity, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) convened the Youth Conversations on the Future of Africa's Agrifood Systems as a continental consultation process in preparation for the 9th Africa Agriculture Science Week and the 10th FARA General Assembly. This Position Statement reflects the collective perspectives and recommendations emerging from those conversations. It is intended to inform policy dialogue, strengthen partnerships and encourage investment in meaningful youth engagement across Africa's agrifood systems.

Our Vision

We envision an Africa where **young women** and **men** are **recognised, empowered** and **supported** as equal partners in building **resilient, inclusive, innovative** and **sustainable agrifood systems**.

We believe that transforming Africa's agrifood systems requires policies, investments and institutions that create opportunities for young people not merely to participate, but to lead.

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Our Principles

The recommendations presented in this Position Statement are guided by the following principles:

- **Meaningful youth participation** in decision-making at all levels.
- **Gender equality and social inclusion**, ensuring that no young person is left behind.
- **Evidence-informed policymaking**, grounded in research and local realities.
- **Innovation and entrepreneurship** as drivers of agrifood systems transformation.
- **Partnership and collaboration** across sectors, generations and institutions.
- **Sustainability and resilience** in the management of Africa's agrifood systems.
- **Accountability**, ensuring that commitments translate into measurable action.

Key Messages

► Youth are partners in transformation- not beneficiaries.

Young people are already contributing as farmers, researchers, entrepreneurs, innovators, educators and advocates. Policies and programmes should recognise and strengthen these contributions through meaningful participation in decision-making.

► Invest in young people beyond finance.

Access to finance is essential, but investment must also include mentorship, business development, practical skills training, market access and leadership development.

► Build stronger partnerships.

Transforming Africa's Agrifood systems requires collaboration among governments, research institutions, universities, private sector actors, farmer organisations, civil society and youth networks.

► Promote innovation and knowledge exchange.

Innovation should combine scientific research, indigenous knowledge, digital technologies and practical learning to respond to local realities and emerging challenges.

► Strengthen youth entrepreneurship.

Youth-led enterprises are creating employment, improving food security and driving innovation across agrifood value chains. Greater investment is needed to strengthen entrepreneurship ecosystems

► Adopt integrated approaches.

Climate resilience, nutrition, livelihoods, research, policy and inclusion are interconnected. Effective solutions must address these dimensions together rather than in isolation

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As Young Africans, We Commit To:

- Champion **sustainable** and **climate-resilient agrifood** systems.
- Promote **inclusive leadership** and meaningful **youth engagement**.
- Strengthen **collaboration** across countries and sectors.
- Share **knowledge**, **mentor peers** and encourage **innovation**.
- Advocate for **evidence-informed policies** that respond to the **realities** of **young people**.
- Uphold **accountability**, **integrity** and **responsible leadership** in advancing Africa's agrifood systems.

We Call Upon:

1. Governments

- Strengthen **implementation** of **youth-responsive** agrifood **policies**.
- Increase **public investment** in **youth-led** agrifood **initiatives**.
- Expand **youth participation** in **policymaking** and **governance**.

2. Research and Academic Institutions

- Promote **youth-centred research** and **innovation**.
- Strengthen **collaboration** between **researchers** and **young practitioners**.
- Increase access to **knowledge**, **data** and **training opportunities**.

3. Development Partners

- Invest in **long-term youth leadership** and **institutional capacity**.
- Support **programmes** that **combine financing** with **mentorship** and **enterprise development**.
- Promote **coordinated partnerships** that reduce **duplication** and **maximise impact**.

4. Private Sector

- Invest in **youth entrepreneurship**, **innovation** and **market development**.
- Create **pathways** for **internships**, **apprenticeships** and **employment**.
- Strengthen **partnerships** with youth-led enterprises and organisations

5. Youth Organisations

- Continue **creating platforms** for **dialogue**, **collaboration** and **knowledge exchange**.
- Promote **accountability** and **peer to peer learning**.
- Amplify the **voices of young people** in national, regional and continental **policy processes**.

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Youth Declaration

We believe that Africa's agrifood systems will only achieve their full potential when **young people** are **recognised not merely as beneficiaries of development**, but as **innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers, leaders and equal partners** in shaping the continent's future. We therefore commit ourselves to **collaboration, innovation, responsible leadership and evidence-informed action** while calling upon governments, research institutions, development partners, the private sector and civil society to work alongside us in building resilient, inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems for present and future generations.

Conclusion

Africa's agrifood systems are entering a defining era- one that demands **bold leadership, innovation and collaboration**. Young people are already contributing to this transformation as researchers, entrepreneurs, farmers, innovators, policymakers and community leaders. The challenge before us is no longer whether youth have a role to play, but whether **institutions, policies and investments** will create the conditions for them to realise their full potential. This Position Statement reflects the collective aspirations and recommendations of young Africans who participated in the Youth Conversations on the Future of Africa's Agrifood Systems. **It is both an invitation and a challenge to governments, research institutions, development partners, the private sector and civil society to work alongside young people in building agrifood systems that are resilient, inclusive, innovative and sustainable.**

As preparations continue for the 9th Africa Agriculture Science Week and the 10th FARA General Assembly, we call on all stakeholders to translate these recommendations into concrete commitments and measurable action. By investing in youth leadership today, Africa will strengthen its capacity to **achieve food security**, create **decent employment**, drive **innovation** and **build** resilient agrifood systems for generations to come. The future of Africa's agrifood systems is a shared responsibility. Let this Position Statement serve not as the end of a conversation, but as the beginning of renewed partnerships and collective action towards a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable future.