EUCORD european cooperative for rural development

AGRICULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Engaging Youth and Women

Smallholder farmers in Africa often find themselves without the necessary experience and skills to run a business or to deal with actors, such as banks or large enterprises. Young agri-preneurs are a key category to address for coaching and business support, as more than 60 percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa is under the age of 25.

Agriculture has the potential to engage the growing number of young people in entrepreneurship and innovation, generating employment opportunities for the rural youth, yet this group tends to lack the required resourcesand training to launch their own business. The same happens with female entrepreneurs whose potential is further limitedby the socio-cultural context, which restrains their autonomy and self-confidence as entrepreneurs, as well as their access to education, finance, and land.

Entrepreneurship for Development

Addressing this challenge calls for targeted, gender-sensitive vocational training, skills development, and mentoring that can change mindsets and enhance entrepreneurship potential. Agricultural entrepreneurship capabilities are crucial for the youth - and smallholder farmers in general - to gain access to new markets and business service providers. These include, developing farm plans and partnering with farmers' organizations, to conduct market analysis or identify financing, sales and business opportunities.

Who we are

EUCORD is a non-profit organization registered as a cooperative in the Netherlands, whose mission is to increase farmers' capacity to sustainably grow quality crops matched to the commercial needs of the agribusiness sector and in doing so, increase food security, develop the private sector and improve the livelihoods of rural communities. Working since 2003, EUCORD has four fulltime staff in Brussels and over 60 in-country staff based in Africa.

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EUCORD's agricultural experts support the development of management and entrepreneurial skills of young and female farmers in Africa, by providing training and mentoring to entrepreneurs to help turn an idea into a business, adopt an entrepreneurial mindset, apply gender-sensitive approaches to entrepreneurship, carry out market studies and develop and implement a business plan.

CURRENT AND PAST PROJECTS

EUCORD brings twenty years of experience on agricultural entrepreneurship development in Africa:

- In Mali, EUCORD provided business development and financial mediation supportto a producers' organization (Feed the Future Mali Sugu Yiriwa Activity).
- In Guinea, EUCORD provided business development support to potato producers, seed producers, service providers and a processor. Over 100 entrepreneurs developed business plans and submitted loan applications to MFIs or banks (Potato Entrepreneurship Project, PEP).
- Also in Guinea, EUCORD addressed the constraints women face when running a business by providing literacyand financial training (Women Entrepreneurship Project, PEP-FEM).
- In Ethiopia, EUCORD designed and implemented an input sourcing business model for an animal feed producer. Agri-business leadership training was provided to more than 40 maize and soya meal suppliers.
- In Sierra Leone, EUCORD implemented a sorghum value chain project in partnership with Sierra Leone Brewery Ltd, which included business training of nucleus farmers (CREATE).

"EUCORD trains us on good harvest and post-harvest practices which helps us to reduce post-harvest losses and ensure the quantity and quality of maize."

WAY FORWARD

Climate change, environmental degradation, demographic growth and global energy challenges will only increase the need for entrepreneurship skills for smallholder farmers in Africa, especially among youth and women. EUCORD will therefore continue to:

- Support farmers to develop business plans to expand their business, establish relationships with suppliers and clients and create market linkages through targeted training and mentoring. Focus on introducing environment-sensitive agronomic practices and services to help farmers optimize their net revenue, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions e.g. by connecting farmers to solar-powered irrigation service providers.
- Facilitate access to micro-finance to smallholder farmers, and coach them on presenting funding requests to banks or MFIs.
- Empower the role of women and youth in agricultural entrepreneurship through vocational and skill development training, financial support, technology and market linkages.
- Build the capacity of farmers organizations and promote an entrepreneurial mindset among rural people.
- Spread the use of digital platforms to facilitate business development.

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