

C2A Notes

Training the rural youth to develop family farming

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The socio-professional integration of the youth and agriculture are major challenges. Children under the age of 15 in countries of the South represent 28% of the global population and 47% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa (demographic growth of up to 3%/year). There is a massive rural exodus of young people towards slums, leading to the ageing of farmers. In 2050, 27 million young Africans will arrive on the job market every year, most of them without any qualifications (only 40% were enrolled for the first year of secondary school in 2011). Developing an educational and professional training offer is crucial to their future. This topic is gradually making its way onto the international agenda.

A challenge for employment and food sovereignty

Agricultural and rural training is one of the elements that will contribute to meeting the food sovereignty challenge that lies ahead. Access to healthy and sufficient food for all is partly contingent on subsistence farming's capacity to increase the production and income of poor peasants, the first to be hit by hunger. Learning new techniques, the command of farm management and environmental protection are vital to meeting these objectives, and training the younger generation will afford the renewal of competences over time. Finally, farmers need services upstream and downstream from production, and need para-agricultural occupations to emerge, partly to ensure a good quality of life in rural areas.

It is therefore crucial to encourage the youth towards all farming and rural occupations and enable them to build a future as citizens and professionals. Yet the rare dedicated farmer training schemes in the late 1980s were crippled by structural adjustment plans. Moreover, in qualitative terms, the training provided does not match the issues surrounding youth integration in rural areas. The farming models offered to young people in training are often out of touch with the peasant conditions in which they will find themselves. Of greatest concern is the low

number of young people in agricultural training who will become farmers, as they are primarily steered towards civil service and higher positions (technicians and engineers for cash crop management). In Benin, for example, only 10% of the 490 young people trained in agriculture by the State in 2002 became farmers.

Did you say "training"?

Occupational training is a particular field that needs to be distinguished from popularization, where a technique (e.g. cover-cropping) is taught, or a theme (e.g. managing a chicken farm) examined.

Based on the learner's personal project in connection with a territory, professional training is aimed either at youth in school (initial training) or working youth or adults (in-service training) and provides training for a specific occupation (farmer for example). This requires time to support the learner's project and develop their competences.

The conditions for a suitable agricultural and rural training offer

Occupational training is a lever for socio-professional integration and must be organized around this aim, taking young people into account when drawing up their integration project. In order to avoid the mismatch often witnessed, it is essential to adopt an engineering approach to setting up these competence-based training programmes¹. Associating professionals of the sector, like in Cameroon for the elaboration of the Exploitant agricole frame of reference which defines the farmer's occupation and required competences, is a prerequisite for graduates' profiles to match the area's needs. The training centre must then build its own training plan to tailor its offer to local particularities (seasonality, speculations, modes of consumption, etc.).

General training for sustainable integration

For the integration of rural young people to be sustainable, their training in human skills is fundamental. Beyond technical knowledge, this requires general core knowledge (literacy, mathematics, management, citizenship, health, etc.) to broaden the mind, acquire social recognition and be able face changes in the occupation. In farming, this means being able to develop one's farm by diversifying the crops and through non-farming activities, to be more resilient to climate change, to join a peasant organization so as to secure the supply chain upstream and downstream of one's production, etc. This core knowledge is all the more important given the mass of young people who leave school early (43% of pupils do not complete primary school in Burkina Faso). Agricultural and rural training must be articulated with basic education by providing pathways that take into account the orientation expectations of these young people and their families. Trainers must therefore master the professional sector concerned but also be good teachers and be attentive to the youth.

Promoting all the components of the farming profession

Agricultural and rural training must match the particularities of the farming profession. Most farmers are versatile (diverse productions, livestock-crop combination, etc.) and often practice several activities (processing, carpentry, masonry, etc.). This means dimensions linked to rural craft need to be integrated for the youth to be able to generate income in the dry season. When it is possible to specialize activities, the training offered must be diversified to include

occupations linked to the upstream (seed and provender production) and downstream (processing, commercialization) aspects of agricultural production.

An approach to agricultural and rural training: the Maisons familiales rurales (MFR, Rural Family Homes), local development tools

MFRs are family associations that take care of the entire education and work-study professional training of youth and adults. Rooted in their territory, they build alliances to integrate these young people, for example vegetable growing cooperatives in Morocco. They also facilitate socialization by providing students with boarding houses during their time at an MFR. In each country, they join forces through a national union and convey rural populations' concerns to the authorities.

Over 1,500 MFRs in 41 countries offer agricultural training and are diversifying towards other trades (mechanics, wood, electricity, etc.).

The benefits of MFRs' work-study approach to education

The work-study approach to education (called integrative education) positions young people as actors at the heart of the system. During a set period, they alternate between internships in socio-professional settings and stays at an MFR ("succeeding then understanding"). With a teaching approach based on inquisitiveness and contact with others, involving the students' families, internship supervisors and MFR supervisors, this work-study training is experience-driven, promotes local know-how and gradually introduces innovations. Finally, the professional training provides concrete support for general learning. Specific learning tools facilitate interaction between socio-professional environments and training centres.

Young people's socio-professional integration is prepared during their training. The centre helps them find direction through the discovery of agricultural and rural occupations, allowing them to reconsider or confirm their initial project.

¹ Competence relates to action and arises from a combination of knowing how to act (knowledge, know-how and social skills), being able to act (context) and wanting to act (motivations). Training provides people with the "capacity" to develop "competences".

Providing a training-integration continuum to ensure takeover from family farmers

Most young people start their training with a poor image of farming ("there's no money"). During their training they become aware of the activity's social and economic value: they become proud to be peasants, "a real occupation" as a young Cameroonian put it. Trainers' role is to help young people draw up their socio-professional project: modules on entrepreneurship for them to progress autonomously; external contributors (producer organizations, microfinance institutions, etc.); and personalized support for each trainee.

The necessary complementarity between post-training actors

While training centres must support young people once their training is complete, they are neither responsible for financing graduates nor competent to do so. These centres must therefore be in touch with the other actors of rural development, which vary from one country to the next: professional organizations and integration platforms for support and advice; and microfinance institutions, banks and national funds for funding (e.g. the National Employment Agency in Mali). Training centres can also encourage groupings of alumni to support the integration of graduates from following years.

The lack of land, capital, guarantees and infrastructure often hinders the integration of young people in countries of the South. As the main lever, their families play a crucial role: access to land, human, financial or material support to start out, etc.

Integration is also social: the young people aspire to build their own family, to have their own home. Entering the "adult world" is therefore a long and complex process.

Additional obstacles for young girls

Training centres must make sure they offer suitable training for girls, particularly for industries socially targeted towards women (food processing, services in rural areas, etc.). According to studies carried out in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Madagascar, there are more constraints to their integration: they do not always have the right to inherit land, and getting married sometimes hinders the development of their activity.

Non-linear paths

As the rural economy is largely informal, young people seek resources to become self-employed. As the specific needs of young people are difficult for microfinance institutions to take into account, they rather turn to schemes like the Regional Agricultural Development Fund in Madagascar, the Fonds national d'appui à la jeunesse (national youth support fund) in Chad or the National Programme to Strengthen Family Farming in Brazil. But the complexity of applications to these schemes is a hurdle. They therefore try to gather start-up funds for their activity on their own, through an intermediary activity (moto-taxi, cattle vaccination, mines, etc.) which sometimes requires mobility (neighbouring town or country). All this makes their paths non-linear.

Mobilizing the actors of the territory for a post-training scheme

In Haiti, on the Central Plateau, the papaya peasant movement has a dense network of facilitators, points of contact for its 60,000 members. These facilitators are trained to provide post-training support and follow-up to young people starting their activity after obtaining credit and a subsidy as part of the regional scheme to assist new farmers (currently at the testing stage). This scheme is steered with the local agricultural service to ensure good consultation with the different training and post-training actors.



Young Madagascan planting taro - © Julie Erceau/MFR

Towards rural development policies that integrate professional training issues

Recommendations

- Integrate professional training in all areas of rural development policy, through governance mobilizing all the stakeholders (young people, families, professionals, training centres, ministries, etc.)
- Develop a coherent policy framework in each country (frames of reference, post-primary school pathways, qualifications, funding) for quality agricultural and rural training courses, following a territorial approach that preserves local particularities and the complementarity of training offers (public, private and from civil society)
- Put young people and their project at the heart of the schemes by taking into account their expectations and strategies
- Articulate training and integration through practices to support young people (analysing the reality of their paths and of agrarian systems) and the synergy of actor networks
- Set up clear policies promoting the integration of young family farmers: land preservation and access, access to subsidies or credits at concessional rates, farming advice, local outlet guarantees, etc.

These changes can be achieved through the formalization of national strategies and public programmes (AFOP in Cameroon, FormaProd in Madagascar). The creation of national agricultural and rural training networks is valuable for consultation between public and

private stakeholders around training policies. This allows civil society to form alliances and to convey the concerns of young people, their families and rural professionals.

Who will feed the world in 2050?

New-borns in rural areas between 2010 and 2030 will be the farmers of 2050. To face the growing food quantity and quality challenges, they must have access to training courses that also allow them to build a future in which we may all live in harmony.

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As part of its mission to support the collective advocacy of its members, Coordination SUD has set up working committees. The Agriculture and Food Commission (C2A) brings together international solidarity NGOs working to realize the right to food and increase support for smallholder farming in policies that impact world food security: 4D, ACF, aGter, Artisans du Monde, AVSF, CARI, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, CFSI, CIDR, CRID, Gret, Inter Aide, Iram, Oxfam France, Peuples Solidaires in association with ActionAid France, Réseau Foi et Justice Europe, Secours Catholique, Secours Islamique, Union Nationale des Maisons Familiales Rurales, and one guest : Inter-réseaux.

The aim of the Commission is to coordinate the work conducted by its participants and to facilitate consultation among its members for their advocacy work with social actors and international policy makers. The members of the Commission reach agreements on who represents Coordination SUD in a range of arenas (Concord in Europe, FAO, WTO, UNCTAD) and share information on current international issues. The Commission is mandated by Coordination SUD to formulate the positions taken by the group during the major institutional meetings on the subject of agriculture and food.

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