Implication of Limited Input Access and Quality on Youth Participation in Agriculture

Key Message

Limited access to good quality inputs remains a major issue in agriculture despite the efforts by government through legislation and several initiatives to mitigate it. Some of the policies that have been enacted to address this issue include the National Feeds Policy, 2005, National Fertilizer Policy, 2016, National Veterinary Drug Policy, 2002; The Animal Breeding Act, 2001; National Bureau of Standards Act, 1983 (Amended in 2013) and National Agriculture Policy, 2011. This is largely due to weak implementation and enforcement linked to inadequate institutional capacity, weak intersectoral coordination and inadequacies in the policy process, limited public awareness and existing policies having no specific reference to strategies for improving access among youth. The 2016 draft National Seed Policy has not yet been enacted thus constraining the strengthening the seed quality control system.

What needs to be done to improve access to inputs by youths and quality of inputs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gap/Issue</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Government Role</th>
<th>Role of EAYIP and other non-state actors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 2016 Draft of the Seed Policy has not yet been enacted.</td>
<td>• Enact the National Seed Policy.</td>
<td>Fast track the process.</td>
<td>Advocacy.</td>
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<td>Public unawareness about legislation on inputs, their use and ongoing initiatives.</td>
<td>Sensitization and public awareness campaigns.</td>
<td>Provide resources and support for sensitization.</td>
<td>Sensitization of the public especially youths.</td>
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<td>Inadequate institutional capacity.</td>
<td>• Increase staffing and funding from local level to all the involved institutions in regulating and implementation in the input sub sector.</td>
<td>Provide resources and support for sensitization.</td>
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<td>Weak enforcement of input legislations.</td>
<td>• Scaling out of initiatives such as the “KAKASA” initiative.</td>
<td>Provide the funding, support and the regulatory mechanisms.</td>
<td>Advocacy and sensitization of the public.</td>
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<td>A gap in the implementation of government programmes targeting improved access to good quality inputs especially the OWC.</td>
<td>• A proportion of inputs (30%) should be allocated to youths.</td>
<td>Fast track the implementation of the recommendations.</td>
<td>Advocacy.</td>
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Background

Uganda has one of the fastest growing and youngest populations in the world with about 78% of the population below the age of thirty (Ahaibwe et al, 2013) and 64-70% of the youth are unemployed. Input access and quality affects production, productivity, returns and extent of youth participation in agriculture. The interviewed youths reported to make on average 44% losses in expected output due to unauthentic and adulterated seed, 43% loss due to fake pesticides, 43% loss of bird stock due to fake vaccines and 35% loss due to poor quality cassava cuttings. While use of authentic inputs is likely to give up to 50% average return on investment, use of unauthentic fertilizer leads to a negative return on investment implying that the farmer would be incurring a loss.

To attract youth into agriculture, deliberate efforts by government and agri-support agencies need to be undertaken to make inputs such as clean seed, fertilizers and basic mechanization available, affordable and of high quality.

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Magnitude of the problem

Youthful farmers are mostly engaged at agricultural production with a relatively lower percentage using improved inputs (such as improved seeds, fertilizers, agricultural chemicals and veterinary drugs) which has stunted their productivity and constrained them to subsistence farming (Ahaibwe et al., 2012). Youths interviewed in the current study ranked limited access, high cost of inputs and adulterated or fake inputs with high severity in their effect in agriculture. This could be attributed to weak market regulations and quality enforcement mechanisms, seasonality and limited availability of raw materials for inputs such as feed, limited reliable information on input quality, negligence of suppliers and fraud.

In Uganda, only 3.2%, 10.7% and 36.6% of the agricultural households in Uganda use inorganic fertilizers, agro-chemicals (pesticides, herbicides and fungicides) and commercial seed respectively, with usage non-dependent on gender (Sheahan & Barrett, 2017). Timely and convenient availability of these inputs (MoFPEd, 2014) and their quality are critical factors for attaining production targets in the sector. In sub-Saharan Africa, counterfeit (fake) agricultural inputs account for more than 30% of all retail agro-input purchases. It has been established of recent in Uganda that the vast majority of fertilizers available is of substandard quality (Jack & Tobias, 2017). Bold, Kayuki, Svensson, and Yanagiwara-Drott (2015) assert that the average input quality in Uganda is poor, considering hybrid seeds and fertilizer. They reported that adoption of these inputs by small holder farmers is not profitable at current prices, and this is a major reason why most farmers in Uganda are not adopting modern agricultural inputs. Urea fertiliser, the most common type on the market, typically has 33% less nitrogen content compared to what is stated on the label while the average small bag of hybrid seeds is of the same quality as bag that contains 50% hybrid seeds and 50% (lower quality) farmer seeds.
Poor quality inputs though may not directly influence participation of youths in agriculture, it largely affects the productivity and thus returns from agricultural enterprises. Results from Bold et al. (2015) assert that a farmer only expects to buy fertiliser that is only two thirds as potent as advertised while the average yield of sold unauthentic hybrid maize seed bought from retailers produced almost 11.4% lower yield than the authentic maize, almost halfway between what is attainable using farmer saved seed and that of genuine hybrid seed. The interviewed youths reported that over the past two seasons, they made on average 44% losses in volumes expected output due to unauthentic and adulterated seed, 43% loss due to fake pesticides, 43% loss of bird stock due to fake vaccines and 35% loss due to poor quality cassava cuttings. While use of authentic inputs is likely to give up to 50% average return on investment, use of unauthentic fertilizer leads to a negative 12% return on investment implying that the farmer would be incurring a loss (Bold et al., 2015).

In response to these issues, most farmers have continued to use their traditional practices which have resulted into the persistent low productivity and thus low returns.

National Policies relevant to youth, input access and quality in agriculture

Vision 2040 identifies agriculture as one of the country’s key opportunities to harness and strengthen the Ugandan economy and transform the society from a peasant country to a modern and prosperous country; while the National Development Plan II (2015/16-2019/20) recognizes agriculture as key to increasing wealth creation and propelling the country into middle-income status by 2020 through commercialization with one of its priority areas being increasing access to and effective use of critical farm inputs.

The National Youth Policy, 2016 is the country’s main policy that explicitly targets youth and provides strategies towards addressing their key issues as well as engagement in national development. The goal of this policy is to provide a framework for harnessing the full potential of the youth for improved productivity and equitable socio-economic and political development; this is to be achieved through these objectives, i) to improve youth accessibility to quality services, ii) to enhance the productivity and employability of youth for sustainable livelihood, iii) to promote equitable participation in decision-making processes that impact on youth and community at all levels and iv) to promote effective coordination and programming of youth interventions at all levels.

National Veterinary Drug Policy, 2002: the overall objective is to provide an enabling environment for the manufacture, procurement and proper usage of good quality veterinary drugs by all stakeholders in Uganda. The priority areas for this policy include Animal Drugs supply (quantification, manufacture, procurement, storage, distribution and usage), quality assurance (To ensure that veterinary drugs in use are of the appropriate quality; To protect the animal population from harmful effects which may be caused by the use of poor quality drugs), safe disposal of expired or otherwise unwanted veterinary drugs and materials, Research in Veterinary drugs and ethnoveterinary medicines, veterinary drug information management system, correct and safe use of veterinary drugs and licensing of people handling veterinary drugs. However, issues of poor quality and fake drugs are still reported.

National Feeds Policy, 2005: The broad objective of this policy is to promote, support and guide the manufacture and marketing of animal feeds. Its specific objectives include to, i) stimulate increased feed production and availability; ii) ensure quality animal feeds on the market and protect end users against improperly formulated, contaminated, decomposed and deceptively packaged and labelled feeds; iii) put in place strategies for reducing production costs and ensure that producers cater for their interests as well as those of the livestock farmers with regard to feed prices and profitability; iv) build capacity among private and public sector for the development of the animal feeds industry. This is to be achieved through stakeholder empowerment, decentralization of delivery of services such as training, regulation, among others to local government, strengthening private sector participation, gender and environment considerations.

National Fertilizer Policy, 2016: The objectives include, i) To strengthen the capacity of farmers to engage in safe, profitable and sustainable fertiliser use; ii) To strengthen the capacity of suppliers to deliver fertilisers at the right quantity, quality and time and in a cost-effective manner; iii) To enhance the regulatory and institutional capacity to ensure the quality, environmentally safe supply and use of fertilisers to achieve sustainable productivity and production; iv) To effectively manage fertiliser-related knowledge.

The National Agriculture Policy, 2011 envisions a competitive, profitable and sustainable agriculture sector with the objective of promoting food and nutritional security and improving household income. Some of the strategies under the second objective; To increase incomes of farming households from crops, livestock, fisheries and all other agricultural related activities include strengthening the certification and regulatory system to guarantee the quality of agriculture inputs at all levels and promoting the growth of a vibrant private sector led agricultural input supply system that is responsive to farmer and sector needs. Within the National Agriculture Policy framework, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) developed the Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan, that prioritizes priorities increased agricultural production and productivity and increased access to critical farm inputs.

The Animal Breeding Act, 2001: Enacted to establish the National Animal Genetic Resources Centre and Data Bank, to provide for the promotion, regulation and control, marketing, import and export, and quality assurance of animal and fish genetic materials and generally to

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**Source:** Kilimo Trust, 2018

*"In Amuria, a stakeholder reports that last year, 2017, the cassava cuttings that were brought were of poor quality and failed to sprout leading to farm losses".*

Samuel Kitagga, a young farmer in Kiboga said "I gave up on using some inputs because even when the inputs are of poor quality, they are too costly".

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**Percentage losses in volumes and stock due to use of poor quality inputs**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Percentage Loss</th>
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<td>Fake pesticides</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fake cassava cuttings</td>
<td>35%</td>
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provide for the implementation of the national breeding policy in Uganda; to repeal and replace the Branding of Stock Act; and to provide for other matters connected with the foregoing. What is observed not only on the market but related to severe price fluctuations, low quality, low returns, low adoption, and delayed delivery of inputs.

Policy on Import tariffs: Uganda adopted a three-tiered duty structure for imports from outside the East Africa Customs Union (EACU) under the terms of an East African Community (EAC) agreement, with most finished products subject to a 25% duty, intermediate products facing a 10% levy while raw materials (excluding foodstuffs) and capital goods may still enter duty free. Imported goods are also charged a value-added tax (VAT) of 18%, a 6% withholding tax, which is excisable and a 1.5 percent infrastructure tax.

The Uganda National Bureau of Standards Act, 1983 (Amended 2013), established the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) to promote and facilitate trade and industries; promote the quality and competitiveness of locally manufactured products, and enforce standards to protect farmers and ensure fairness in trade. The amendment was to reduce the number of members, provide for terms of service for members, provide for deduction penalties for offenses under the Act, empower the bureau to administer the weights and measures Act, provide immunity to officers of the Bureau for acts done in good faith, empower the director to suspend or seize premises for non-compliance with national standards or to destroy perishable goods not in compliance with national standards and detrimental to health and safety of consumers, empower the minister to ban commodities, products and process detrimental to health and safety of consumers and regulations for related matters.

The major gaps in these policies and legislations are the fact that they do not specifically target youth and youth interventions even in their strategies except for the National Youth Policy; 2016; there has been poor implementation of the set strategies which could be a factor of inadequate resources and institutional capacity, poor intersectoral coordination, inadequacies in policies and general system inefficiencies.

Some of the Government Initiatives to combat limited access to and poor-quality inputs in agriculture

Overtime, government interventions have been established to address access and quality of inputs. This has been through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) arrangements as in the Vegetable Oil Project, community procurement under NAADS and Operation Wealth Creation (OWC); and the MAAIF through provision of seedlings; and the private sector and cooperatives (MoFPED, 2014).

Operation Wealth Creation, whose inception was in July 2013, is under the command of the military and one of its specific objectives is to distribute production inputs equitably and timely to boost production and productivity at household level. Though massive distribution of inputs has been achieved, quality of inputs is still an issue. Borrowing from the experience of NAADS whose distribution drive of free inputs neither spurred technology adoption nor enhanced productivity and commercialization with poor quality of “improved” inputs that NAADS was distributing to beneficiaries widely cited as the major discouragement of adoption and cause of low productivity (Barungi, Guloba, & Adong, 2016), thus achieving the objectives of these initiatives requires ensuring the quality of distributed inputs. Some of the current challenges with this programme include delivery of non-demand driven inputs, no specific proportion of inputs actually allocated to youths and delayed delivery of inputs.

ACDP (Agriculture Cluster Development Project)-2015-2022: The project objective is to raise on-farm productivity, production, and marketable volumes of selected agricultural commodities (maize, rice, beans, cassava and coffee) in specified geographic clusters. One of the priority areas of the project is distribution of inputs in the selected value chains such as fertilizers, pesticides, and coffee pruning equipment, among other inputs to selected farmer groups. This will be improved access to agricultural technologies (seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, farm equipment, /materials and mechanization services) facilitated by the use of the eVoucher Program.

KAKASA initiative to address poor quality and fake inputs: To deal with this illegal and unscrupulous behavior, KAKASA, a service of Uganda National Bureau Standards (UNBS) in partnership with USAID, REN Publishers and mPedigree was initiated to increase the use of high quality agricultural inputs in Uganda and decrease the prevalence of counterfeit seeds and pesticides and therefore increase yields in the agriculture sector. Kakasa or E-Verification was a brand protection system that used a unique scratch code packaging label containing a 14 or 16-digit verification number which when sent by SMS to the number indicated on the label, a message was sent confirming whether the product is genuine or not. If the agro-dealer had purchased the product for resale to farmers, a complaint then would be lodged to ensure the necessary action was taken against the supplier. However, the gap lied in its limited reach and unawareness among the public. All the interviewed respondents were excited about the KAKASA idea, however, none in the target districts was aware of its existence and operations.

Deploying the agricultural police to address the issue of poor quality and fake inputs: This was established as a unit under the Uganda Police to enforce the quality regulatory mechanisms, to fight the selling of counterfeit seeds and inputs in general. However, its operations are barely observed. Among the youths interviewed, only 3.3% of respondents in Luwero district were aware of its existence and operations while none of the respondents in the rest of the districts were aware of the agricultural police and its operations.

Conclusion

Limited access to good quality inputs are major constraints to youth participation in agriculture that severely affects their output, scale of production and extent of involvement in agriculture. Quality is a major problem in the agricultural inputs market and due to this and the disproportional price, most youths give up on agriculture if they make losses after investing in inputs that do not yield expected results due to poor quality. Through the suggested recommendation, government, private sector, development agencies and other actors should address these input related issues.

References