

Kenya launches pan-African skills development programme in agriculture sector

Kenya's ministry of education in partnership with a private university and a multinational company launched a training programme targeting mid-level professionals working in the agriculture sector across sub-Saharan Africa.



Kabai Ken via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Senior officials said the two-year programme seeks to strengthen the capacity of Africa's young professionals to revolutionise agriculture value chains grappling with skills gap and low technology uptake.

"We need to empower African youth with knowledge, capital, technology and innovations to enhance their contribution to revamping agriculture value chains such as storage, marketing, value addition and processing," said Zainab Hussein, the principal secretary in the State Department of Post training and skills development.

Strategic deployment of educated youth across key agriculture value chains is key

Twenty mid-career professionals drawn from sub-Saharan African countries will benefit from the two-year agribusiness training programme supported by AGCO Corporation, a United States-based manufacturer of farm equipment. The training will be conducted by Nairobi based private university, Strathmore Business School and seeks to harness the skills and entrepreneurial spirit of African youth to propel the continent's agriculture transformation.

Hussein noted that strategic deployment of youth across key agriculture value chains is key to achieve food security and economic growth in Africa. “This continent requires skilled and youthful workforce to modernise our food production systems. We need trained agronomists, farm managers and marketers to ensure our agriculture sector is commercially viable,” said Hussein.

Nuradin Osman, AGCO vice president and general manager for Africa said that skilled mid-level managers are key to reinvent farming in a continent grappling with hunger, malnutrition and abject poverty among smallholder farmers. “We expect the beneficiaries of the training program to contribute their expertise in critical agriculture value chains like processing, storage and marketing,” Osman said.

Training programme to ensure full participation in agribusiness

He revealed that \$1m will be spent during the initial phase of the pan-African agribusiness training programme to cater for tuition fees, content development and a modest stipend for students.

Kenyan institutions of higher learning are keen to be part of the agricultural transformation in Africa through research, training and deployment of innovations at the smallholder level.

George Njenga, the Dean of Strathmore Business School, said that a critical pool of trained youth is key to boost the competitiveness of Africa’s agriculture sector in light of rapid urbanisation and growing demand for food. “Besides training the youth, we require policy reforms to ensure this demographic has access to land, capital and equipment in order to participate fully in agribusiness,” Njenga said.

Source: Xinhua

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