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PRESS RELEASE

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Second AAIN Conference sets new platform for incubation, features inaugural youth day

Accra, Ghana 6th October 2016. Africa's largest Pan African Agribusiness Conference organised by the African Agribusiness Incubators Network (AAIN) ran from the 4th to the 6th of October 2016 at the Accra International Conference Centre in Ghana.

The conference, which was organised under the theme of turning science into business, attracted over 900 delegates from Africa and beyond.

With a series of events, many businesses were interlinked, partnerships formed and technologies exhibited to the international community.

This was made possible by a synergy of partners including the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the African Union Commission (AUC), national governments and agriculture ministries, FoodAfrica, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the Pan African Farmers' Organisation (PAFO), Rockefeller Foundation, the Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), Pyxera Global, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Embassy of Denmark, Universities, exhibitors, private sector organisations, youth networks and agribusiness Incubators.

African Union commits further support towards agribusiness incubation

During the second day of the conference, HE Rhoda Peace Tumusiime the African Union Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Economy also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with AAIN on behalf of the Commissioner of the African Union Commission to further support agribusiness incubation as a means of addressing youth unemployment and creating wealth for them.

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The AUC-DREA Commissioner signed the MoU on behalf of HE Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and AAIN's signature was penned by Prof Henry Bwisa, the AAIN Board Chairperson.

“We are confident that agriculture can and should absorb 30% of the unemployed youth. The Commission will continue to support AAIN in rolling out the agenda for agribusiness incubation in Africa,” she said.

5th October declared African youth in agribusiness day

At the just concluded second Pan African Agribusiness Conference that was held at the Accra International Conference Center in Ghana from the 4th to the 6th of October, the debate on youth inclusion was given priority.

The African Agribusiness Incubators Network (AAIN), launched the second day of the conference as the inaugural African Youth in Agribusiness Day with Her Excellency Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, the African Union Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Economy.

On the day, hundreds of youth from across Africa were given the platform to exhibit their innovations, lead the discussions on the issues that affect them and also interact with potential investors.

Dr Alex Ariho, the AAIN CEO says that this day was long overdue and is Africa's new opportunity to grow. “This was the missing link in making agribusiness more attractive for the youth. They need a platform to share their own experiences and come up with solutions,” he says.

On the day, Sandrine Mutenzinka of the Gashora Gold initiative and the Rwanda Youth Agribusiness Forum (RYAF) from the Republic of Rwanda was announced best incubatee from the pitch and speech sessions as well as business presentations to the panel of judges that was composed of incubation experts and incubator managers.

Youth thankful, call for more support

In a declaration that was co-signed by over 100 youth, the young people expressed their appreciation of the day and called on sector organisations and governments to rally behind them in making each annual celebration a success for them.

The youth also appealed to African governments to offer more support towards agribusiness incubation, a means by which they are helped to turn their ideas into real businesses.

The declaration was read by a team of youth led by Ghanaian Emmanuel Ansah-Amprofi and some from Guzakuza, a vibrant youth group in Ghana that promotes youth innovations, business growth and linkage to incubation services.

Her Excellency Rhoda Peace Tumusiime the AU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Economy welcomed the idea of a day for youth in agribusiness as an exceptional platform for young Africans today.

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“The youth need to be integrated, mentored and facilitated to create jobs through agribusiness. We will therefore continue to support AAIN in pushing the agenda for agribusiness incubation which we believe is part of the solution,” she said at the official launch.

HE Tumusiime’s attendance was also highlighted by the launch of three youth groups including Farmers Apprentice, Ignite Women and AgriHack which is in partnership with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) an organisation that seeks to empower agricultural and rural communities in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific with knowledge and skills for fighting hunger and increase prosperity.

According to Prof Henry Bwisa, the Chairperson of the AAIN Board, the African youth in Agribusiness day that will be celebrated on the 5th of October every year, will bring together youth from both francophone and Anglophone countries to interact and share ideas.

“We have many youth who can be impactful as entrepreneurs through incubation. However even before the day, we will be welcoming youth to over 120 incubators established for training. We also have a network of over 510 mentors in Africa to attend to the youth,” Bwisa says.

Prof Bwisa also called on participants to embrace such platforms as the conference as ways of making agribusiness more attractive for the youth.

For Africa, this day is the first continental day dedicated to youth participation in agribusiness.

During the conference, the youth were also exposed to the dynamics of social media use and drone technology by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) which also involved tours and actual experiments with the drones which they were helped to launch and control over the farms.

The FAO and AU also held side-events specific to the state of agribusiness incubation and the challenges as well as solutions needed to improve the mentorship component and service delivery at the level of the incubators in Africa.

According to the FAO’s Stephanie Gallatova who delivered the message of the global umbrella’s Regional Representative Bukar Tijani, they are committed to supporting sustainable agriculture and food systems around the world and incubation is a component worth promoting to create more jobs especially for women and youth with partners like AAIN.

To add to this focus on leveraging on the growing youth proportion of the African population, Mark Fynn from the African Union Department for Rural Economy and Agriculture also hinted on the potential of agribusiness incubation to create the much needed employment envisaged in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

The conference was also graced by Hon. Mohammed-Munira Limuna (Alhaji) the Minister for Food & Agriculture in Ghana who called on the media to not only report about agriculture on the surface but look for the facts and figures which he said are available in the government agencies.

“AAIN exists because of the partners that we have. Everyone who joined us for the conference made it a success and those are our partners,” he said.

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HE Tove Degnbol the Ambassador of Denmark to Ghana represented the development partners in highlighting the role of shared input for progress.

“Africa requires the continued commitment of the development partners. We are honoured to not only be a part of the conference but also to work with AAIN and other partners in pushing the agenda of agribusiness incubation for the good of the youth,” she said.

2017 in focus

According to AAIN’s Dr Alex Ariho the prospects for the conference in 2017 are clear and high with the Youth day also included and Senegal more than ready to host the event.

“We have devoted partners who would like to see a change for the young generation. We are now working with them towards 2017. We also be having many more youth groups with us in Senegal,” he says.

The date for the 2017 conference was announced as 4th to 6th October 2017 as voted by the Annual General Meeting of the AAIN members.

Notes to the editors

Defining agribusiness incubation

According to Dr Alex Ariho, the Chief Executive Officer of the African Agribusiness Incubators Network (AAIN) that is convening the conference, incubation is a process through which business ideas are nurtured into economically viable businesses.

“In incubation, the people with the agribusiness ideas or existing businesses are enabled to achieve self-sustaining businesses on an even larger scale of production. The services that are provided to make that possible are given by institutions called incubators and those who go to get the services are called incubatees,” he says.

Prof Henry Bwisa the Board Chairperson further explains that AAIN is a network of incubators with a continental presence that offers incubation to incubators for jobs and wealth creation.

“In Africa today, we have a major challenge of unemployment and relatively high level of poverty. We also have many youth who form 60% of the unemployed people here. On top of that, we have between 10 and 12 million young people who enter the job market every year. Incubation is one of the means of redeeming the situation and creating entrepreneurs in agribusiness,” he adds.

The Conference

The Pan African Agribusiness Conference and Expo is the trademark annual conference of AAIN hosted in close collaboration with partners and members and was first held in Nairobi Kenya in 2015. The just-concluded conference in Accra Ghana was the second and the third will be in Dakar Senegal.

See AAINOnline Flickr page for conference album.