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CALL FOR APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS

HARNESSING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO ACCELERATE YOUTH AGRI-ENTREPRENEURSHIP & BUSINESS GROWTH

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Call for Applications and Nominations

Announcement in Brief

HARNESSING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO ACCELERATE YOUTH AGRI-ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS GROWTH

Course Type : Online Course

Programme Area : Digital Agri-Entrepreneurship

Date : 29th November – 20th December 2021

Duration : 4 Weeks

Language : Bilingual (French - English)

1 Application Deadline : 22nd November 2021

African Union , FAO-RAF and IDEP strongly encourage and supports the participation of suitably qualified female officials in its capacity development and training programme.

PROGRAMME RATIONALE

The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) in collaboration with the Private Sector Development and Finance Division (PSDF); the Women, Youth Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) of the African Union Commission, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Regional Office for Africa, is organizing this training to support digital transformation of youth agribusinesses which will provide catalytic drivers for an accelerated achievement of full employment and sustainable and inclusive growth as pursued by African countries.

Agricultural transformation is a priority in the Development Agendas (2030 and 2063) of African governments in their quest to meet the challenges of food and nutrition insecurity, climate change, youth unemployment and overall economic growth. With the right policies, combining digitalization, innovation and investment, the continent's agriculture could be transformed into a powerhouse not only to feed a growing population but to create decent employment for millions of young people.

The importance of agriculture for the transformation of the continent is indubitable. The sector offers for now the best prospects for an inclusive growth and employment. As youth underemployment has increased and generated various socio-economic challenges, governments and development stakeholders need to reengage in innovative strategies, and sound rural and agricultural development policies to effectively address the employment and growth challenges. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has what it takes to tackle these challenges by creating more jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for the young African population.

In this context, the digitalisation of agriculture is offering diversified opportunities to effectively engage the youth, increase the performance of businesses, boost agricultural transformation and economic growth (AGRA, 2015; FAO, 2020, World Bank, 2021). Digital agriculture services are being increasingly adopted in African Agriculture. The CTA – Dalberg's "Digitalisation of the African Agriculture Report" (2019) has informed that currently at least 33,1 million farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa are reached by these services.

Digital tools help them to have increased access to market, benefit from enhanced advisory services, access to finance, and develop resilience to agro-climatic shocks. While the figure above is still weak compared to the large population of smallholder farmers in Africa, the trend is increasing, and more and more farmers are benefiting from digital agriculture, especially the younger generation of producers. As a matter of fact, digital tools have provided strong resilience to many farmers and youth in face of the COVID-19 pandemic (AfDB, 2021). This has resulted in calls from a variety of national and international stakeholders such as the African Union, UN FAO and the African Development Bank, for a stronger investment in digital agriculture.

Digitalisation offers the opportunity to transform businesses, increase their performance and thus generate higher revenues and profits. It also provides climate-smart solutions that help the agricultural sector to off-set an important part of its carbon footprint. Youth engaging or operating in agribusiness are more in position to better use digital tools to transform their businesses than the older generation of producers and agribusiness leaders.

Therefore, supporting digital transformation of youth agribusinesses appears as a very effective strategy which will provide catalytic drivers for an accelerated achievement of full employment and sustainable and inclusive growth as pursued by African countries.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide a platform for young people to drive the African Development Agenda in the context of digital agriculture
- Facilitate the understanding of digital agriculture pillars through case studies and analysis of emerging trends
- Demonstrate ICT services and tools' transformative power for production and access to market for smallholder farmers, agricultural cooperatives and agripreneurship activities
- Facilitate the development of digital strategies and services for youth agribusinesses

CONTENT

The course aims to provide practitioners, policymakers, officials from civil service and any other interested stakeholder with clear understanding of the following:

- Module 1: Agriculture in digital era: key elements for understanding (various D4Ag use cases)
- Module 2: Design and Pilot digital agriculture program successfully, illustrated with case studies
- Module 3: Digital innovation strategy for youth Agri-entrepreneurship
- Module 4: Emerging trends: what opportunities for precision agriculture
- Module 5: AUC Youth Empowerment and Development toolbox.

SKILLS TO BE IMPARTED

At the end of the course, participants will have:

- Skills to drive implementation of digital solutions to agricultural barriers in local communities
- Capacity to use effectively emerging technology for successful agribusiness

- Capacity to conceptualize and design a digital agriculture strategy for youth agribusinesses with large impact
- Capacity to effectively support digital transformation for youth Agri-entrepreneurship
- Capacity to propose strategy to support digital innovation ecosystem (funding, lab, startup, incubation, hub tech) for youth Agri-entrepreneurship
- Context and landscape analysis of Africa's youth development, identifying actors, institutions, and actions for the awareness of participants
- Capacity to inculcate the overarching sense of purpose and urgency of youth action in the minds of participants

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH AND MODE OF DELIVERY

The course will be delivered through the IDEP e-learning platform and the AU Learn platform for one month including one week for the final evaluation. The course will be moderated asynchronously on a weekly basis and participants are required to participate in the weekly on-line discussions. The lessons are designed in a way that learners are also able to self-assess their understanding through practical exercises which will be in the form of case studies that will support active learning. Additional resources such as bibliographies, web links and optional readings are provided for participants who wish to deepen their knowledge of the course topic.

The course will be delivered in English and French. The course is structured to run over a period of four weeks. The following fifth week will be dedicated to the final evaluation. The pedagogical team will include a Course Director, a team of moderators and Resource persons with first-hand knowledge of the historical and contemporary issues on digitalisation vs agricultural production in Africa. They also come with strong comparative insights from other regions of the world. In line with the IDEP pedagogical philosophy, the presentation of the course modules will combine a knowledge-building component with experience-sharing among participants.

CERTIFICATE AND COMPLETION

A Certificate of Completion will be issued by IDEP & AUC (Youth Empowerment and Development Certificate) to all participants who successfully complete the course-related self-assessments presented for each module.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target participants are as follows:

- Young agripreneurs looking at leveraging digital tools to enhance their business operations

- Middle and senior level policy officials and, practitioners directly connected with digitalization, digital transformation, ICT as well as innovators in agricultural value chain, development and policy planners, socio-economic researchers, statisticians, etc.
- Officials of national and para governmental agencies and non-state actors with a professional interest in ICT and agriculture Services related issues.
- Digital development specialists

ACCEPTANCE OF THE COURSE

Until the registration deadline, participants are accepted to the course on a rolling basis and subject to availability of slots. Please refer to the section above to see priority target group. Applications must be completed exclusively on IDEP online application platform at <https://www.unidep.org/?apply>

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Access to internet is an essential condition for participation. The following specifications, as a minimum in terms of hardware and software, are required to take this e-Learning course, please consult your Network Administrator or Systems person to ensure that you have the following:

- Platform: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, ME, XP or superior; Mac OS 9 or Mac OS X; Linux
- Hardware: 64 MB of RAM, 1 GB of free disk space
- Software:
 - o Adobe Acrobat Reader
 - o Adobe Flash Player
 - o Microsoft Office (Windows or Mac) or Open Office
 - o Browser: Internet Explorer 7 or higher or Firefox 36 or higher
- Modem: 56 K
- Note that JavaScript, Cookies and Pop-ups must be enabled

IMPORTANT DATES

- Deadline for Applications and Nominations: **22nd November 2021**
- Course Period: **29th November to 20th December 2021**

CONTACT INFORMATION

Training and Research Division

Tel: +221 33 829 55 00 / Fax: +221 33 822 29 64

Email: catherine.lalyre@un.org with copy to lou.zah@un.org



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