



## MEDIA CONTACT

Kimberly Barbano; [Kimberly.Barbano@heifer.org](mailto:Kimberly.Barbano@heifer.org), +1 202-316-7928

Nancy Moss; [nmoss@burness.com](mailto:nmoss@burness.com), +254 729 991 028

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## **New 11-Country Report Reveals African Farmers Missing out on AgriTech Innovations that Could Supercharge the Sector with Opportunities for Youth**

*Survey from Heifer International finds budding crop of young Africans rapidly producing new high-tech farming tools—and identifies new ways to connect them with farmers; study also gauges pandemic impact on African agribusinesses*

**LAGOS, NIGERIA (August 12, 2021)**—While there are a wide range of agritech innovations that could propel African farmers to profitability, only 23% of youth engaged in agriculture are using any form of agricultural technology—noting a lack of financing and training, according to a new 11-country survey by Heifer International.

The report, “[The Future of Africa’s Agriculture: An Assessment of the Role of Youth and Technology](#),” released on International Youth Day, includes responses from almost 30,000 young Africans and follow-ups with hundreds of farmers and farm organizations. It points to the need for new investments to stimulate access to innovations that could encourage African youth now turning away from agriculture to reconsider opportunities in the sector—especially given the need to generate jobs and repair food systems battered by the pandemic.

“As a continent with a thriving young population, Africa’s agricultural sector must provide the investments in agritech innovations that will encourage youth to embrace agriculture-related endeavors, because they are the key to revitalizing Africa’s food system,” said Adesuwa Ifedi, senior vice president for Africa Programs at Heifer International. “But as this report reveals, Africa is not providing the financing or training to ensure its young people have easy access to the same agritech

tools—like drone technologies, precision soil sensors and digital farmer services—that are transforming food production around the world.”

The report surveyed 29,900 youths, 299 smallholder farmers and 110 agriculture technology startups, innovation hubs and technology organizations in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It identifies challenges faced by smallholder farming communities and potential areas for innovation and growth.

The study also provides new insights into how the pandemic is affecting African farmers. Some 40% of agriculture organizations featured in the survey report that they were forced to close at least temporarily due to the pandemic; 38% experienced a reduction in average purchase amount per customer and 36% still do not have the financial capital to grow back their businesses.

“Youth engagement in agriculture will be essential to recovering from the economic impacts of the pandemic, both to rejuvenate the continent’s agri-food system and develop economic opportunities for young Africans,” Ifedi said.

But despite the challenges they face, the report also provides a window into the many ways young African entrepreneurs across the continent are developing creative, useful agritech tools and services for smallholder farmers. It highlights many young innovators who are boosting farm productivity and profits in Africa via artificial intelligence, remote sensing, geographic information software (GIS), virtual reality, drone technology, application programming interface (API) technology and a variety of precision tools for measuring rainfall, controlling pests and analyzing soil nutrients.

For example, [a company in Ghana](#) is providing drones that offer precision applications of pesticides and fertilizers—they can even serve as “scare crow drones”—and a company in Kenya is making [obtaining a tractor](#) as easy as booking an Uber. Ifedi noted that these and other endeavors explored in the report show the potential to harness home-grown innovation to accelerate a strategic transition to sustainable, profitable farming across Africa.

More than half of Africa’s rural population is employed in the agriculture sector. Young people under the age of 25 account for approximately 60% of Africa’s population and a large share of the 1.8 billion people around the world who are between the ages of 10 to 24 years old, according to the United Nations. Despite current youth migration to urban areas, the report found that young people are still

interested in entering the agriculture sector. But they lack access to finance or training to build businesses that can provide sustainable incomes and rewarding careers.

The report identifies pain-points and critical needs for supporting youth to adopt advanced technologies and build businesses that advance Africa's food security and agri-food systems agenda. It reveals that:

- Access to financial capital, capacity building and land will spur youth interest in agriculture.
- Smallholder farmers will embrace advanced technologies if the tools are affordable, and they can receive training in how to use them.
- Agriculture innovations have a pulling power for every stakeholder in the sector. They can create opportunities for young people who might otherwise ignore agriculture while sustainably increasing productivity for smallholder farmers, which can improve their livelihood and stimulate growth in the wider economy.

The respondents also affirmed the damaging effect of climate shocks (30%); insects, pests and disease (17%); and technology barriers (14%) on farmer productivity.

The report will inform investments in advanced technologies by Heifer Africa, accelerating on-farm adoption and business growth. It also will help guide Heifer International's programs in Africa, including the AYuTe Africa Challenge that will invest up to \$1.5 million in agritech businesses run by young Africans in 2021.

To learn more about the work of Heifer International in Africa, visit the [website](#) or contact [media@heifer.org](mailto:media@heifer.org).

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## ABOUT HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

For 77 years, Heifer International has worked with more than 36 million people around the world to end hunger and poverty in a sustainable way. Working with rural communities across Africa for 47 years, Heifer International supports farmers and local food producers to strengthen local economies and build secure livelihoods that provide a living income. For information, visit <https://www.heifer.org>.

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