

Building a Diversified Agribusiness Step by Step



Seeing the profits agriculture can bring

Kelvin Wamalwa, 26 years old, was one of the over one million young Kenyans who yearly either drop out of school early or, in his case, finish high school and straight away enter the job market without any formal skills. Kelvin made ends meet with casual work in farms, eventually returned home to his village in Bungoma County and did a training on computer packages. Even though he did not end up working in the IT sector, the training marked an important milestone in changing his career and life: His trainer was Paul Wabomba, the chairperson of Bungoma County Youth Visionary Network, a youth organisation engaged in meaningful job creation through agribusiness and other support activities in the agri-food sector. He invited Kelvin to one of their meetings, which turned out to be an eye-opener for the young man: “I saw that there are things I can do in farming to generate money, without waiting for employment. I can even use my IT skills for online marketing of my products,” recalls Kelvin.

Making full use of the value chain

Through his subsequent involvement in the youth organisation, Kelvin got the chance to go to Friends College Kaimosi for a short agribusiness course, which was developed and subsidised by Agri-Jobs 4 Youth. He learned the technicalities of passion fruit farming and seedling grafting, while also being taught about business opportunities along the value chain. After completing the training, he co-founded a business with two fellow youths that includes a tree nursery and seedling production mainly for passion fruit. His customers are very satisfied with the quality of seedlings and the service provided. When it's harvest time, they happily sell Kelvin their ripe passion fruits grown from the same seedlings he sold them. This is a clever way of exploiting the value chain further by processing the fruit and selling the juice with a margin. Within a short time, the business grew and he was able to hire three youths to help in the nursery and the shop where he sells his juice and other products like eggs, peanuts in little snack bags and his own honey. “It's a great start,” says Kelvin, “but I'm aiming much higher: My goal is to get at least 50 to 60 youths from around here employed.”



Accelerating the business growth

With his next business extension plan he is on the right track to achieve this. When Agri-Jobs 4 Youth offered an opportunity for young people who already have a running business and could benefit from a boost of their entrepreneurial skills and knowledge while also giving them access to grants through an incubation program, Kelvin applied and got selected. The peer-to-peer learning, the networking and the guidance on how to write a winning grant proposal were a big win for him. Kelvin had already had plans to increase his juice business, but with his household blender he couldn't satisfy the market demand. Therefore, he chose to apply for a grant for commercial fruit processing equipment, which he won. Always thinking ahead like a good entrepreneur, he already has the next plans drafted out: Once the fruit processor is delivered and his business generates more income, he wants to start saving for a freezer. This would allow him to keep his supply up even during the off-season, by extracting the pulp and freezing it until it's time to prepare it for sale.



Involving fellow youth

Up to today, Kelvin is a committed member of his youth organisation. His former IT trainer, now mentor and friend Paul Wabomba commends him for his efforts: “Kelvin is always ready to support other young members who want to go into the agribusiness sector. He has become a role model for them.”

When asked what advice Kelvin likes giving his fellow youth, the ones who are struggling to find employment or can't afford the college fees to prepare for self-employment, Kelvin doesn't hesitate: “Start something in the agribusiness sector! There are so many ways to get started. Even one chicken will give you eggs to sell, then from there you move forward. Learn from those who already do better than you. Join hands with others – together we can achieve something.”



Agri-Jobs 4 Youth Unlocking opportunities in the agricultural sector



The project enhances the skills and employment prospects of youth in Western Kenya through competency-based, performance-driven modular courses at ATVET institutions. This will boost the supply of qualified labour and shape the careers of young women and men in Western Kenya.

Business development services are strengthened through the promotion of incubation and acceleration programs along youth-friendly agricultural value chains.

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