

Creating Jobs for Young Farmers



A passion for farming

Nobert Ogutu, 34 years old, has always loved farming. As a young boy in secondary school, he pleaded with his parents to give him his own little patch of land to grow vegetables on. Later, he decided to make his passion a profession and studied Agriculture and Biotechnology at Bukura Agricultural College (BAC). After graduating and working for different organisations in the agriculture sector for some years, where he taught rural communities better farming practices, he was ready to go back to his home village in Kakamega County. "I knew I could do just that at home: Help my community while also doing my own farming," recalls Nobert, who concentrates on maize, African Leafy Vegetables, beans and poultry.

An open ear for the farmer's needs

Back home, he established himself in three areas: He got a job at his alma mater BAC, began farming, and started offering spraying services. Within a short time, he got more requests for spraying than he could handle himself, so he trained and engaged two youths for conducting the

spraying. A few months later he engaged another 13 youths. Today, the team counts 22 young people who are busy year-round and get a good monthly income from their work. While doing his shopping at the agrovets for his spraying supplies, Nobert realized that their products are generally expensive, and he heard farmers complain about the unskilled shop keepers selling them the wrong chemicals. Through a friend he got linked up with the Farm to Markets Alliance (FtMA), who established a farmers support initiative called Farmer Service Centre (FSC) model in Kenya. It is a network of rural agripreneurs that supplies smallholder farmers with last mile inputs and services as well as support for marketing their farm produce. Once Nobert joined the network and opened his own FSC, things started moving fast. Being recognized as an active FSC owner with a promising turnover, he was selected by Agri-Jobs 4 Youth at the beginning of 2022 for a special training and business coaching program with a focus on developing a business plan and establishing connections with input suppliers.

Growing trust, growing sales

Thanks to this support and his own dedication, Norbert added around 135 farmers to his customer base within one year. The farmers know that they get good quality at a good price from him. Handling the increased workload was a challenge Nobert mastered well: "Through the Agri-Jobs 4 Youth coaching sessions, I discovered that I should empower some youths by training them. They can help me serve my farmers better while earning some income," says Nobert. He promptly introduced his "last mile delivery" service: It gives the farmers the advantage of not having to go to the shop while at the same time receiving a field visit





from a qualified youth who can assess their farms and give advice on the right fertilizer or pesticide to use.

After doing a baseline survey to determine the needs of the farmers in his region, Nobert started offering soil testing. He is also an aggregator of soybeans: Through his ever-widening professional network Nobert was contracted to do bulk farming. The farmers gladly sell their harvest to him at a better price and with less hassle, especially since Nobert sends his own young aggregators out to advise the farmers on the best time for harvesting. Nobert offers the same service to the youth organisation he is a member of, which gives the youth a much better market for their small-scale sweet potato harvests. Always looking for ways to support the youth and get them excited about agriculture, he also trains and mentors his fellow members. Lastly, Nobert employs 27 youth for the aptly named “telephone farmers”. They are business people who live away from

their farms and rely on someone to manage the planting, care-taking and harvesting for them. Nobert knows just how to pick the right youth for that: “I give them a small bag of seeds to do their own farming first. If they are willing to work and do well with that, I know they have a heart for agriculture and I can then help them learn all they need.”

Fostering the next generation

“My hope is to create 300 jobs for the local youth within the next five years. I’d be so happy to see young people love agriculture just like I do,” says Nobert. He already has two more potential youths growing in his footsteps: Every day, his children feed the family’s chickens and whenever possible, go along to the farm with their own little hoes.



Agri-Jobs 4 Youth: Unlocking opportunities in the agricultural sector



The agri-food sector is a major employment creator. In order to boost the labour demand for young people in rural Western Kenya, the project focuses on improving the access to inputs, services and markets. This is achieved by promoting innovative business models such as e-extension.

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