



## Matched for Success

### A chance to learn and change

Around a year ago, the future looked rather dull for Sharon Otieno, 23 years. She had moved back to the village in Siaya County with her parents and was surviving on casual jobs, making and selling chapatis or doing hired farm work like weeding for neighbors. Her chance came when she was offered to participate in a short-term agribusiness training course at Siaya Institute of Technology, funded by Agri-Jobs 4 Youth. Sharon got inspired: “The training gave me the idea that farming can be a business, that working along an agriculture value chain can turn my farming outcomes into money.”

### Discovering new skills

Complementing the agribusiness course, the youth receive soft and employability skills training with Brighter Monday, a Kenyan job platform. It helps young job seekers to get ready for employment by teaching them how to hunt for jobs online, write a CV, and practice for job interviews as well as by preparing them for coping in the work environment. Learning how to present herself was a key benefit for Sharon, who used to be a shy young woman. This has changed: She now communicates freely and with confidence. She knows how to advertise her skills and experience when looking for work, which is especially hard for a young woman in the agriculture sector, where women traditionally face more barriers than men. Shortly after the training, Sharon landed a job through the job matching portal: A tree nursery owner a few kilometres from her home was looking for a Sales and Marketing staff. Without the online advertisement, she would have never heard of this vacancy. Sharon applied with her newly polished CV and got hired after a successful interview. Her task is to prepare the different varieties of seedlings and to promote them to farmers in the local market, which she does very successfully, reaching her sales target every month. She developed a business plan for the growing small enterprise and has put together a group of youth whom she is guiding in helping her with the ever-increasing work in the nursery. It's her way of giving back to the community, where many young people are idle after finishing school.

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



The project helps transform the job market by supporting the adaptation of a digital platform that connects job seekers with employers in the agri-food sector. The supply of qualified labour in Western Kenya is improved through competency-based, performance-driven modular courses at ATVET institutions. Additionally, the project provides various employment services, such as career guidance and job fairs.





## When farming means business

Sharon also does her own maize farming. Having learned the practical skills from her mother, she is taking it one step further and applies the business skills she picked up at the ATVET: Instead of harvesting and straight away selling the maize, she stores it until the supply in the area gets low. Maize is a staple food in Western Kenya, and the demand for it is constant, which results in rising prices when most stores have been depleted. This is the time when Sharon sells with higher profits. Thanks to the monthly income she gets from the tree nursery she has the liberty to wait to turn her harvest into money.

## Leveraging the potential in agriculture

Another side income and, equally, another way of engaging her fellow youth is offering farm services support to other farmers. This includes preparing the land, weeding, and other practical fieldwork. It's not always easy to get a good work team together: "Young people fear agriculture, but I keep on telling them that it's good for them. They should take the job offer or training opportunity and work hard to make something out of it. There is so much potential in agriculture," is Sharon's advice to them. This determination was decisive in her employer's decision to hire her. The tree nursery owner has had good experiences with finding new staff through the Brighter Monday job platform and appreciates how easy it is to reach many potential employees from a wider area in a short time. Once it comes to the job interviews, it shows who really has the desire to work and succeed. Sharon has seen for herself that it pays to be educated and determined and stays positive: "If you keep trying and advertise your knowledge and your skills well, the news that you are good at what you do will spread and translate into new business opportunities."



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