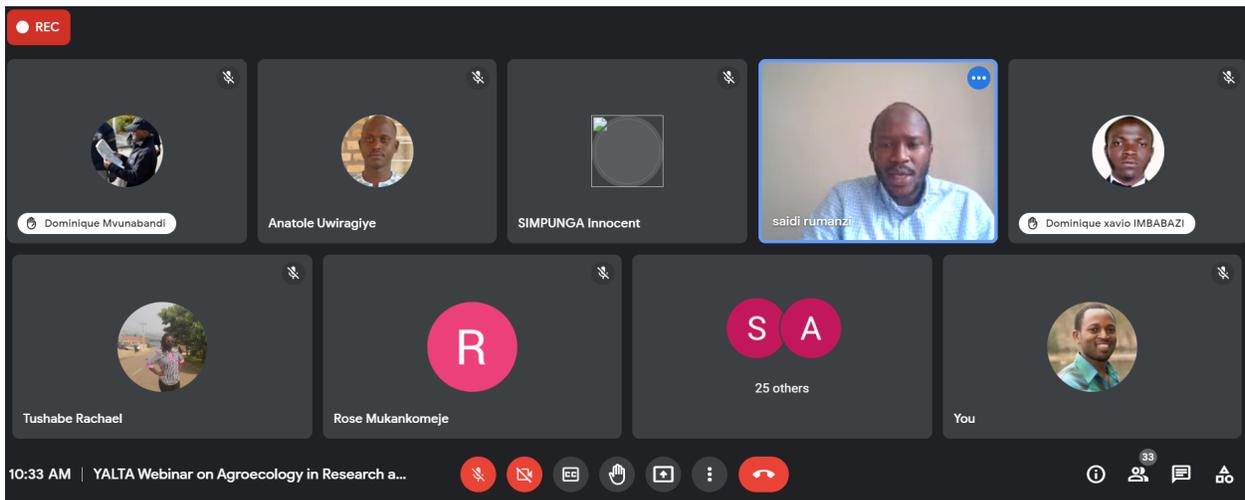


INCREASING THE ATTENTION FOR AGROECOLOGY IN RESEARCH AND INCLUSION OF AGROECOLOGY IN THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION CURRICULA IN RWANDA.

Topical Deep Dive Report



Date: July 29, 2021,

Time:9.00-11.30am CAT

Venue: Google Meet

Report Prepared by YALTA Rwanda

1. Background

With reference to the activities of the formed coalition that targets mainstreaming agroecology in research and education in Rwanda. Youth in Agroecology & Business Learning Track Africa /Rwanda chapter in partnership with coalition members including higher learning institutions, researchers, and the government agencies organized a topical deep dive on **increasing the attention for agroecology in research and inclusion of agroecology in the agricultural education curriculum in Rwanda**. The event was held online on Thursday, July 29, 2021, from 9.00-11.30am using Google Meet. A total of 38 participants representing key Rwandan government agencies, academia, private sector companies, as well as local and international non-profit organizations and development partners participated in the meeting.

YALTA is an initiative of the Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) to support young agripreneurs to apply agroecological principles and to co-create networks around them thereby contributing to increased sustainability of food systems and youth employment in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda.

This 3-years initiative is targeting to achieve 4 main objectives:

- Improved business opportunities for Youth in agroecology
- Improved capacity of Youth to apply agroecological principles
- Youth feel more involved in initiatives on agroecology
- Increased effectiveness and efficiency of initiatives on Youth and agroecology
- Increased attention for Youth and agroecology in research, policy agendas, and educational curricula

Find more details [about YALTA Initiative](#)

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

- Explaining the current status by presenting the policy brief and understand the current status of Agroecology in the research and education system for higher learning institutions in Rwanda.
- Set a common agenda and define the desired status for further advocacy
- Create connections between stakeholders and coalition members.
- Establishment of coalition leadership.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE POLICY BRIEF AND PLENARY DISCUSSION

3.1. Opening Remarks (By Dr. Guillaume Nyagatare, Principal, University of Rwanda-College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine)

In the opening remarks, Dr. Guillaume Nyagatare emphasized the importance of the agricultural sector in Rwanda; and highlighted current gaps. He noted that while agriculture employs 70% of the population, it contributes only 1/3 of the country's economy. Dr Guillaume further explained: *“one-fifth of the population is food insecure. While 90% of the rural population is in small-scale farming, but their productivity is low and their knowledge. On the other hand, the challenged the chemistry-backed agricultural production systems that are not sustainable”*

Dr Guillame elaborated on agroecology. Talking about the current status of AE in education and research, he highlighted that though *“agroecology might be there in the curricula”*; its application is not well articulated in the current agricultural education. For example, agricultural education has for a very long time focused on chemistry-based soil fertility; making agroecology very much neglected, especially in soil science education. He added that agroecology principles are not mainstreamed in irrigation education, making practitioners rely on informal knowledge.

Based on these, he emphasized that it is the responsibility of the College of Agriculture, Animal Sciences, and Veterinary Medicine (CAVM) and other agricultural education institutions to find a way of promoting agroecology within the agricultural education system in Rwanda.

As far as Rwanda is concerned, he admitted that we are still at the beginning of our understanding of that field; and it has to evolve with time. He stated that it is an opportunity to conduct more research in that area and adapt agroecology principles in our own context of Rwanda, a small country with a diverse range of agroecological zones.

While concluding his remarks, he officially opened the meeting, stating that it is a window for all agroecology players to collaborate, exchange, and work together to ensure that this field thrives in Rwanda.

3.2. Presentation of the Policy Brief (By consultant, Eng. Anatole UWIRAGIYE)

The policy brief on *“Increasing the Attention for Agroecology in Research and Inclusion of Agroecology in the Agricultural Education Curricula in Rwanda”* was presented by Eng. Anatole Uwiragiye, a consultant who also served as one of its authors. In his introduction, the consultant highlighted the following key points to consider:

- The policy brief calls for Increased attention for agroecology in research agenda and Education curricula in Rwanda
- The assignment focused on the assessment of agroecology policy provisions, the levels of agroecology integration in Rwanda’s agricultural research agenda, and in education curricula both formal and adult literacy programs.
- Main policy documents evaluated include but not limited to the national agriculture policy, education policies, Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA4) 2018-2024, National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) 2017-2024, and the Vision 2050.
- The review found a significant level of agroecology considerations in Rwanda’s policy commitments in the agriculture and education policies and other related development frameworks and programmes.

During his presentation, he focused on the following key points:

- Agroecology and Rwanda contextual analysis
- Agroecology and Rwanda policy provisions
- Agroecology, research, and agricultural education curricula
- Recommendations

According to the consultant, agroecology is well articulated in Rwanda’s agricultural policy and research agenda. The big issue, however, is the huge gap between policy and practice, and this is where concerned stakeholders should convene power for further advocacy. Find highlights of the Policy Brief in the following [PRESENTATION](#)

3.3. Insights from the participating expert invitees

Dr. Rose MUKANKOMEJE/ Director General of Rwanda Higher Education Council (HEC)

- Every engineer destroys for a reason and then returns to rebuild. She praised the youth for jumping on board and incorporating the concept of agroecology, which is not far from sustainability. She mentioned how peasants used to live in harmony with the environment by using natural fertilizers, pesticides, etc. To increase output, the use of chemicals was adopted, destroying the environment. She urged young people to take the initiative and bring the change.
- With regard to agroecology inclusion in the curriculum, she recommended that this discussion should be extended not only to the University of Rwanda/College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (UR-CAVM) but also to other actors such as Rwanda Polytechnic and other higher learning

institutions. She also noted that such Agroecology should start when kids are so young, and therefore recommended that Rwanda Education Board (REB) and Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) should be involved in the planning. She also recommended the coalition members check the resource called Education for Sustainable development of Rwanda TVET Board.

- She also emphasized collaboration between key stakeholders: For example how RAB and MINAGRI are working with UR-CAVM and other actors.

Rachel Tushabe / Rwanda Environmental Management Authority

- Madam Rachel refers to the definition of Sustainability and explained that it is all about meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of the next generation to meet their own needs. Building on the example of the agronomists/graduates who set up shops of agrochemicals and sleep in the same shops, she recommended that these graduates selling agrochemicals should be aware of the impact on their own health to be able to advise farmers. *“We cannot do awareness campaigns for the farmers alone, we have also to educate these agronomists about the safest use of these agrochemicals”* Rachel explained. In addition, she noted that many of our farmers have the mentality that they have to use chemicals to have high productivity, and she called for joint efforts to change get the mindset. of our population.

Dominique Mvunabandi/UNESCO Rwanda

- The issue is that agroecology has is related to its follow-up; and the sustainability of existing AE best practices.
- He noted that Rwandans have been following agroecology practices. He noted that Rwanda has even a map of agroecological zones that can inform how and where to apply specific agroecology principles.
- He also highlighted that one of the best practices would be to start to showcase young role models in agroecology and support in scale-up of their initiatives.
- He talked about the possibility of working with youth platforms such as RYAF, RARICO, etc. to set up agroecology model sites in each province, for example, based on different AE zones; and youth can own that and teach other farmers at the household level; with monitoring and evaluation being owned by young people themselves.

Dr. Saidi Rumanzi MBARAKA / UR-CAVM Lecturer

- We have the policies in place, we have the government’s commitment in place, but we lack the practice. We still have tremendous soil erosion, excess use of pesticides and chemicals, our soil has become acidic due to practices of our farming systems. This policy brief is an advocacy tool to include AE in our education sector, research, and extension, private sector, international partners. He encouraged the players to come in and advocate for the practice of agroecology at all levels.

Dominique Xavio IMBABAZI /Golden Insect Ltd

- As an entrepreneur, he recommended that universities should include a course about insects and conduct community outreach activities. He noted that insects are usually studied as harmful organisms but there are very beneficial insects.
- Youth need financing to support their AE ventures and from there we can achieve the sustainable farming system we want.

Innocent BISANGWA/MINAGRI

- He explained agroecology that is well stated in existing policies such as PSTA4 or national agricultural policy and encouraged coalition members to use this document as a financing tool. “Pillar 2 of the PSTA talks about resilience productivity and this is an entry point for agroecology promotion

in Rwanda. The ministry is ready to work with whoever is interested in agroecology initiatives. MINAGRI has been working tirelessly to support youth in the agriculture sector.

Isaac MUBASHANKWAYA/University of Technology and Arts of Byumba

- He is very supportive of agroecology inclusion in agricultural education as a way to teach sustainable agriculture. On the education side, he noted that other East African higher learning institutions and Hubs are even introducing degrees or certificates in agroecology. This is a time to learn from neighbors and improve ours. Talking about agroecology as a movement; he noted that more organizations have been already engaged in educating farmers about applying agroecology principles. This is time to convene the power of different stakeholders.
- He re-emphasized the need of Agroecology model farms so that they can serve as learning tools.
- He called for the people in academia to really include agroecology in the main courses they teach at all levels.

Dr. Antoine KARANGWA /Dean, School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, UR-CAVM

- Talking about AE in education; he called upon the formation of a well-coordinated multi-disciplinary team; because the agroecology advocacy needs forces coming from all concerned parties. He gave a concrete example of current practices involving environmental damages. He also noted that CAVM is planning to undertake a curriculum review where agroecology will be considered in all courses and gender-sensitive.
- He noted that their contribution in teaching should go beyond the actual domain, and go on to include everyone; so that all parties (health, etc) and engage everyone in playing his/her role in promoting agroecology.

4. SETTING A COMMON AGENDA AND DEFINE THE DESIRED STATUS FOR FURTHER ADVOCACY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF COALITION LEADERSHIP

The participants agreed that working through a coalition is the best way to advocate for the increase of attention for agroecology in research and education. It was suggested that YALTA can approach concerned institutions that are willing to work through the coalition and specify their delegate in this initiative to strengthen future activities of the coalition.

On the discussion about the formation of the coalition leadership, participants suggest that YALTA should keep playing a facilitation role in this process and invite at least 7 active coalition members (key institutions such as MINAGRI, REMA, HEC, UR/CAVM, UTAB, Rwanda Polytechnic, and other international organizations such as FAO, UNESCO, as well as private sector companies).

Participants agreed that the leadership will be chaired by various actors on a rotational basis. They requested YALTA Rwanda to keep supporting the coalition in planning and implementing activities like organizing seminars, field days as well as mobilizing resources.

Dr. Rose Mukankomeje (Rwanda High Education Council) advised that the best way forward should emphasize supporting youth to practice agroecology, and move from theory and this will change the mindsets of many farmers. Youth should be involved in the coalition. She reiterated that HEC is ready to work with UR-CAVM and other higher learning institutions to do their role in the inclusion and validation of agroecology in their curriculum.

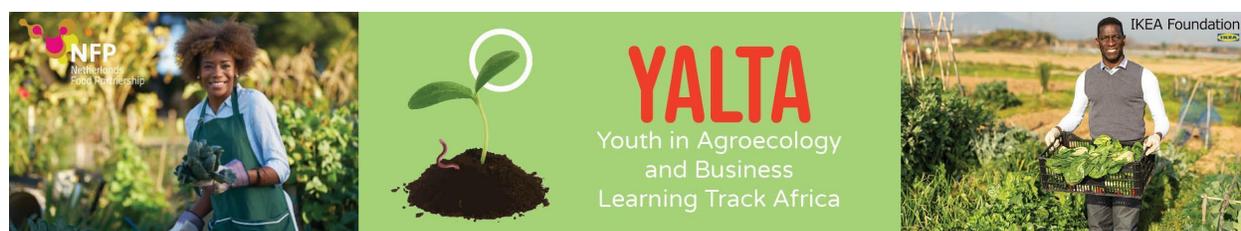
5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, the topical deep dive facilitated participants to understand the current status of agroecology in the research and education system for higher learning institutions in Rwanda. Based on their inputs at least 100% of the participants receive insights into the challenge and feel more involved in the coalition activities to solve this challenge.

The topical deep dive also raised awareness on incorporating agroecology in the education curriculum and as a result, UR/CAVM committed to reviewing the current curriculum and Rwanda Higher Education Council (HEC) promised to approve the updated curriculum upon the request of the University of Rwanda.

YALTA was recommended to officially approach concerned key institutions represented in the meeting to be part of the coalition so that the involvement of their delegates can be formalized.

YALTA to organize the next meeting of coalition members to establish coalition leadership and make an action plan for coalition activities.



ANNEX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

#	First Name	Last Name	Organization
1	Innocent	Bisangwa	MINAGRI
2	Dianah	Nyamwiza	
3	Dieudonne	Mutaganda	YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR
4	Fiston	Nishimwe	University student
5	Dominique Xavio	Imbabazi	YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR
6	Innocent	Simpunga	Institut catholique de Kabgayi
7	Jean Marie	Ntakirutimana	AGRITERRA
8	Jules	Kazungu	RCDI, research center
9	Grace	Kabera	
10	Antoine	Karangwa	UR-CAVM
11	Clare	Katwesigye	ActionAid Rwanda
12	Abias	Maniragaba	UNILAK
13	Manasseh	Manirakinga	TEARFUND
14	Justine	Mbabazi	SALI company
15	Isaac	Mubashankwaya	UTAB
16	Dancilla	Mukakamali	ARECO Rwanda Nziza
17	Rose	Mukankomeje	HEC
18	Thacien	Munyamahame	YALTA
19	Dominique	Mvunabandi	UNESCO
20	Noel	Nizeyimana	Young agripreneur
21	Arcade	Nshimiyimana	YEAN Rwanda

22	Guillaume	Nyagatare	UR-CAVM
23	Odile	Karekezi	FAO Consultant (FFS)
24	Parfaite Irene	Uwonkunda	
25	Patrice	Habinshuti	ENVISAGE Hub
26	Peter	Rwibasira	UR-CST
27	Rachael	Tushabe	REMA
28	Jean Marie Vianney	Rukundo	
29	Saidi	Rumanzi	UR-CAVM
30	Espérance	Rutwaza	
31	Sylvia	Mirembe	YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR
32	Thierry	Ngendakumana	Rwanda Agrobiodiversity
33	Abdu	Usanase	AGRIRESEARCH
34	Anatole	Uwiragiye	CONSULTANT
35	Vincent	Sinduhunga	CCOAB
36	Grace	Uwamwezi	FAO Rwanda
37	Janet	Murungi	ACTIONAID
38	Damien	Ndizeye	ADECOR