

NEWS RELEASE

NOTHING FOR THE YOUTH WITHOUT THE YOUTH - SWAZI YOUTH MINISTER

“There can be no solutions for youth challenges without their involvement,” says Swaziland’s Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, Hlobisile Ndlovu.

Speaking at the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) Dialogue in Swaziland today, Ndlovu said young people are not merely the property of the state – they are entitled to all the benefits set out in their country’s constitution.

“We believe that nothing is for the youth without the youth. Swaziland adopted a national youth policy in 2009. It reflects the government’s commitment to youth development in all sectors, including agriculture. It identified three major challenges for youth in agriculture – access to land, finance and literacy. The focus is on resources towards removing these barriers.

“In terms of access to finance, the Youth Enterprise Fund helps create jobs by providing micro-finance to skilled young people. It is a revolving fund with the first 499 young people benefiting from the E15 million (about R15 million) allocated.”

As regards access to land Ndlovu said the involvement of stakeholders like traditional leaders in the design, implementation and evaluation of youth programmes eliminated the challenge.

“Our chiefs support the policies resulting in young people having easy access to land for project implementation. About 70 percent of young people live in rural areas under the authority of the chiefs, so the relationship is valuable.

“Climate change is a major challenge to the commercialisation of agriculture by the youth. They see the unpredictable nature of the climate as a major deterrent to commercial farming. Only 25 percent of the 499 businesses established were agricultural.”

She challenged the youth to take advantage of the opportunities to contribute to their societies.

“You must break the barriers to ensure that Africans have food on the table at all times.”

FANRPAN Chief Executive Officer Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda reiterated the organisations' commitment to step up youth involvement.

"We will ensure that the youth are part of decisions about the future of agriculture in Africa as they are the generation that will have to ensure that the continent's growing population is fed."

The dialogue focused especially on ways how young people can engage with the agrifood sector in Africa as producers, processors, entrepreneurs, employees, consumers and citizens. It also looked at change in different components of the agrifood sector and its implications for young people and at alternative policy approaches to the development of the agrifood sector. These included the role of the youth in markets for Africa's green revolution and their role in safeguarding the continent's natural resources and the environment.

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