

Ties required to lift SMEs as key agriculture players

ECONOMY

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Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are pertinent to the attainment of sustainable market systems development and have contributed immensely to strengthening and integrating Kenya into both the regional and global economy.

The contribution of SMEs in job creation, poverty alleviation and rural development is significant.

In the age of globalisation, this contribution can only be more pronounced. The smart thing to do, therefore, would be in instrumentalising and aligning SMEs with changing times and achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Closer home, alignment of SMEs to the Vision 2030 ensures elevated statuses to the SMEs and cements their contribution to economic development of the country based on sound strategies, in this case mid-term plans (MTPs).

This alignment trickles down to the county governments who formulate their County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) based on the MTPs in line with the County Governments Act of 2012. However, to realise the SDGs collaboration is key.

Agricultural value chains in Kenya are characterised by interconnectivity of actors, each addressing a gap. This was hitherto crowded by independent actors, each on its own. While competitiveness of the value chains is key for profit and relevance, collaboration is pertinent to their sustainability.

Collaboration that cuts across policy makers, other facilitators, NGOs, government, markets, research and other private sector actors.

In Kenya, for instance, the contribution of agribusiness to the local and regional economy is significant; approximately 26 percent directly and 27 percent indirectly through linkages to manufacturing and other sectors.

This has cemented agribusiness as an entry point for economy-wide transformation in the county and by extension inclusion. Inclusion not only for common interest groups such as women, youth



Collaboration cuts across various actors such as policy makers and markets.

and people with disabilities but also for gainful investment.

The Kenyan agricultural space has since attracted investment ranging from policy support, private capital investors, skills upgrade, infrastructure to multilateral networking.

Suffice to say, Kenya has also invested significantly in the agriculture sector in creation of a conducive environment for investments through formulation of strategies and policies.

These policies include Agricultural Sector Growth and Transformation Strategy (ASGTS 2019-2029), Vision 2030, and policy framework guiding food safety.

Kenya's agriculture is increasingly market-driven. This implies that it is dependent on the end market demands and standards that often encompass social and GAP requirements.

As such, while recognising the role markets play in achieving economic growth, creating jobs and in alleviating poverty, integration of social and markets standards in daily practice cannot be over-emphasised. There is a need to proactively address and integrate food safety and responsible business conducts within the agri-food value chains.

Responsible business conducts recognise human rights-based ap-

proaches in the spirit and letter of practice.

As a matter of fact, the aforementioned fundamentals are gaining prominence among the urban folk and health-conscious consumers in Kenya as well. So much so that addressing food security has access to healthy and nutritious food embedded in it. Even though the earlier assertion refers to "the urban folk and health-conscious consumers" deliberate measures are being taken to strengthen the capacities of value chain actors and institutions within the agricultural space on issues food safety, compliance, surveillance, and policy.

This will not only empower the actors but act as a multiplier of knowledge to the general public on food safety issues.

Another pertinent question comes in the form of finance and access to it. Most small holder farmers who contribute at least 80 percent of Kenya's food are considered high risk by mainstream financial institutions.

How then do we mainstream these farmers into active, full scale value chain development activities while disproving the perception of risks? Again, this is where innovation comes in.

Innovation at the point of product development, sensitisation and awareness regarding agricultural and green financing and capacity building of relevant financial service providers. With innovative fiscal and financial instruments small holder farmers will not only improve on their production and productivity but in overall economic transformation of the country.

This conversation cannot end without research. Trans- and cross collaboration between research, industry and development practice not only cements theoretical perspectives, but also competence in a field.

The journey to economy-wide transformation of Agriculture in Kenya cannot be articulated without mentioning the SMEs. Their drive to remain competitive while seeking gainful collaboration has been the fire behind this story. Their resilience and strive to become better has directly contributed to economic transformation of the small holder farmers and by extension rural development.



Addressing food security has access to healthy and nutritious food embedded in it"

REBECCA | WRITER

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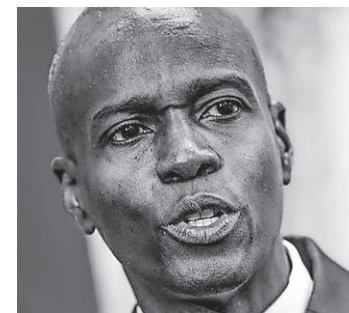


PAUL KAGAME

Rwanda President

New Times, Editorial

This week, Rwandans and Friends of Rwanda across the world celebrated Liberation Day on 4th of July with many young people seeking ways that they can continuously contribute to national development. While the current youth are unlikely to be called to go to battle like their parents were during liberation, the current role is largely around nation building on the foundation of their predecessors.



JOVENEL MOISE

Assassinated Haiti President

Christian Science Monitor

The assassination of Haiti's president on Wednesday seemed to confirm the worst about the impoverished Caribbean nation - that it is ungovernable from within and unfixable from the outside. Even the embattled president, Jovenel Moise, often said his country of 11 million was ungovernable. Yet Haiti is not alone in stoking an impression of chronic instability and potential collapse.



YOWERI MUSEVENI

Uganda President

Ferdinand Lali, Daily Monitor

In reference to the current challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, President Museveni in a recent address to the World Health Summit Regional Meeting in Kampala made remarks about 'a wake-up call' for Africa. There are many advocates of home-grown solutions to our health challenges who will agree with him, even if they may choose a different form of words.