

Youth Agripreneurs: A vehicle to make RTB innovations and an attractive business for the next generation

APPROACH FOR SCALING

Youth unemployment rates in DRC are high and some estimates reveal that only 5% of the eligible youth labor force are employed (World Bank, 2015). In spite of these alarming statistics, young women and men have not been given adequate and sustained attention in agricultural development policies. IITA initiated the youth agripreneur program in 2014 to tap into the potential of the agricultural sector and unexplored power of youth as drivers of economic development. The youth strategy (Figure 1) relies on four key linkages to foster youth entrepreneurship and support community agro-enterprise development. Efforts in DRC will be scaled up to Rwanda, Burundi and Cameroon.

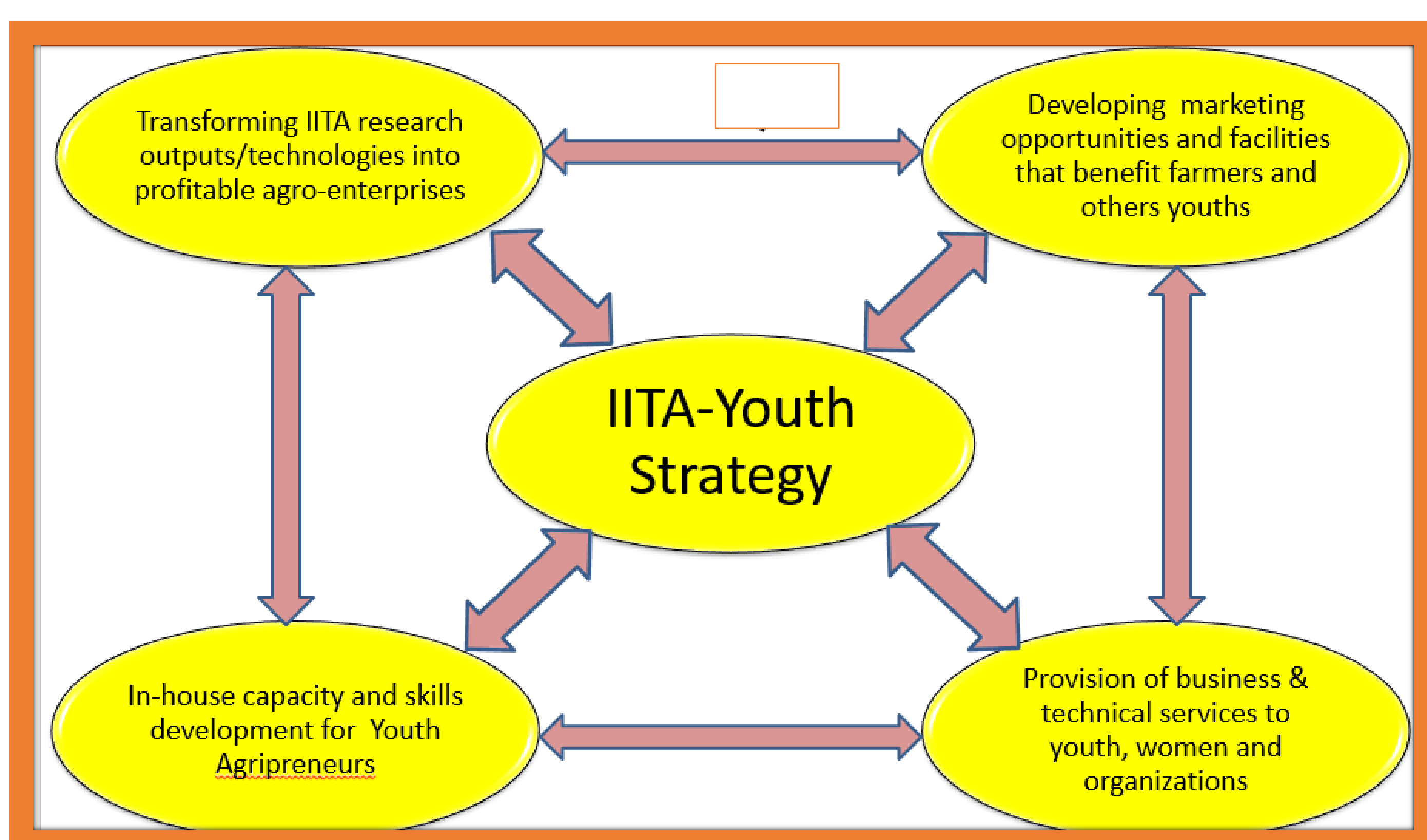


Figure 1. IITA Youth Strategy

INTERMEDIATE USERS & STAKEHOLDERS

Youth Agripreneur activities in DRC occur across five business lines: cropping, fish farming, processing, marketing and agro-services. IKYA identified a business opportunity when they saw that high quality cassava flour (HQCF) was being imported from neighboring countries. Twenty young women and men, aged 18-35, have been engaged in the development of a business model that now links rural cassava producers to urban consumers.

Key steps related to the cassava value chain model included:

- Roots production and stem multiplication using best practices based on IITA research
- Test consumer preferences to identify preferred varieties of HQCF
- Product development (>30 products currently sold in urban selling points)
- Provide processing training to > 350 local NGOs and IITA project partners
- Link suppliers to markets through community cassava processing centers
- Promote sales and marketing of cassava products in urban markets
- Facilitate and support community agro-enterprise development

EVIDENCE OF EFFICACY

Youth agripreneurs have enhanced capacity to:

- Implement best practices in agriculture (e.g., row planting, use of improved seed varieties, use of soybean inoculum, organic fertilizer preparation)
- Use improved processing and quality control methods for cassava, maize, cassava-soybean based products, e.g., bread
- Apply learned business skills, including business plan development, accounting, and marketing

IKYA supports youth & community development through:

- Capacity building efforts with youth through development and support of youth groups using a gender balanced approach
- Activities to facilitate value chain linkages and income earning opportunities for youth and community owned and managed cassava processing centers
- Provision of trainings to improve and increase rural crop production, income and nutrition



Photos (Clockwise): Cassava processing station; IKYA Selling points, Kalambo and Bukavu; IKYA youth with South Kivu governor

CRITICAL GAPS AND NEXT STEPS

IKYA's next steps will include:

- Engage with partners to refine technologies
- Enhance scaling efforts through CGIAR initiatives and projects, including RTB CRP
- Develop an incubation program for youth groups in Rwanda, Burundi and Cameroon
- Strengthen collaboration with development organizations
- Participate and engage in initiatives and projects to empower women
- Reinforce relationships with local governments to influence and gain policy support
- Improve food safety and quality control measures