

By Abdukarim Ssengendo

Uganda's youth have been given an opportunity to turn agriculture into jobs and wealth. The African Agribusiness Incubators Network (AAIN), working under the Sustainable Inclusive Youth Employment Pathways (SIYEP) programme led by the Agency for Accelerated Regional Development (AFARD) in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, has unveiled a nationwide skilling and incubation drive.

The initiative named, Market Driven Skilling and Incubation Model, aims to equip more than 25,000 youths, especially women aged 15 to 35, with practical skills to secure decent employment and launch enterprises.

Launched on January 28, the programme introduces community-based points to improve market access and support youth and women's participation in the cash economy. It is expected to positively impact households by increasing incomes, improving nutrition, strengthening food security and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

The initiative directly contributes to skilling Uganda's youth for productive employment, agro-processing and value addition. Other aspects include private sector-led growth, rural transformation, inclusive economic development and digital innovation in service delivery.

SKILLING MODEL

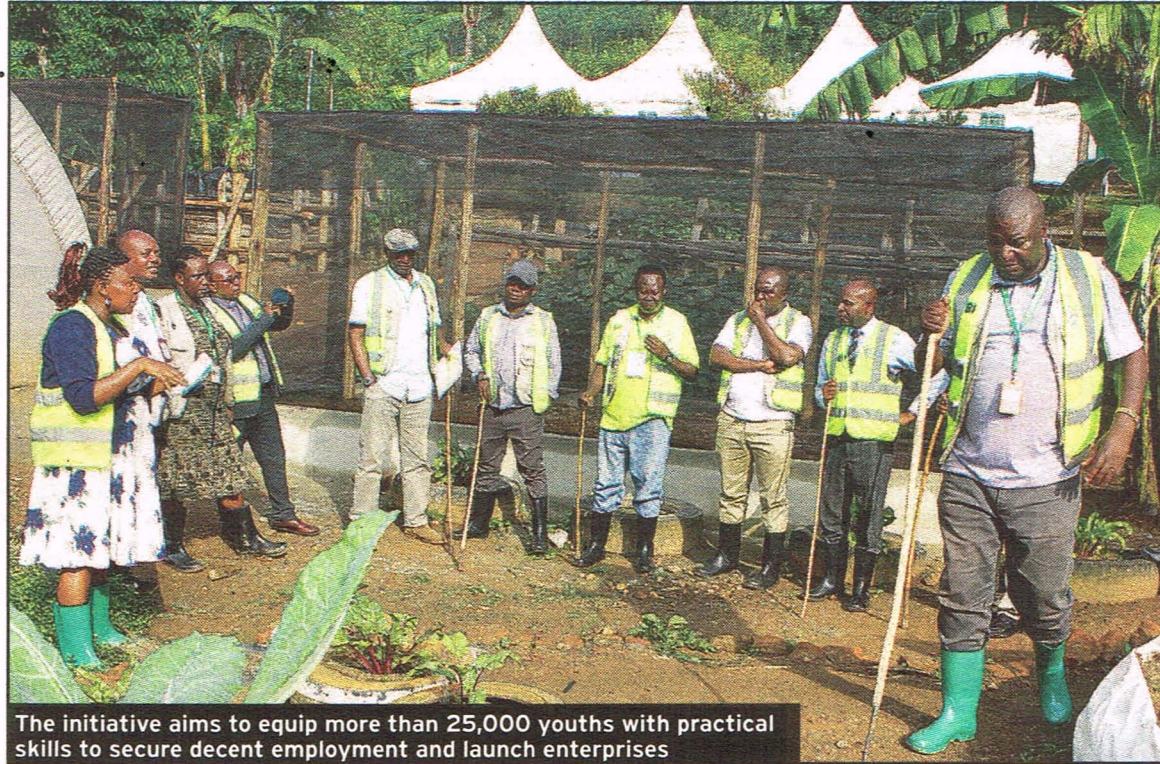
The model was launched at Rwampara Farm Institute in Rwampara district by the AFARD chief executive officer, Dr Alfred Lakwo.

Guests included officials from partner organisations including Mastercard Foundation, Omia, Agromax, TRIDI, Gudie Leisure Farm and district authorities.

During the event, a community-based women's market was handed over to the community to kick-start market access for young women supported by Rwampara TVET incubation and its associate twin incubators in the region.

Delegates toured agribusiness exhibitions showcasing products developed by young women supported by the project. The incubation model enables start-ups to engage in production, value-addition and direct access to markets.

INCUBATION INITIATIVE TO TACKLE HUNGER UNVEILED IN MBARARA



The initiative aims to equip more than 25,000 youths with practical skills to secure decent employment and launch enterprises

The programme is hoped to strengthen incomes and food security.

Speaking at the launch, Prof. Alex Ariho, the chief executive officer of AAIN, said the SIYEP programme will be implemented using four Cs of sustainable business development. These include co-creation, co-implementation, co-financing and

co-learning.

"One of the drivers of economic transformation is ensuring that young people are active participants in that transformation," he said.

He called upon national and international stakeholders, as well as the youths, to actively engage in skilling and incubation programmes to take advantage of locally available resources and partnerships.

Ariho expressed concern over the increasing number of young people leaving Uganda and Africa in search of opportunities abroad, saying Uganda alone loses about 500 youths daily, while an estimated 10,000 leave the continent every day.

The programme will support and build the capacity of more than 25 anchor incubators and over 125 twin incubators across five regions.

Rev. Can. Agasha Muhwezi, the Ankole Diocesan education secretary, welcomed the initiative, saying it addresses the needs of Uganda's youthful population which accounts for over 70% of the country's demographics.

"It is important to remember that the majority of this population is unemployed," Muhwezi said.

Naboth Nuwamanya, the principal of Rwampara Farm Institute, lauded the initiative for it encourages youth empowerment and appealed for additional support to expand the institute's processing facilities to benefit more community members.

On the same day, AAIN and its partners launched the working document of the Business Incubation Management Curriculum Framework for Africa 2026-2030 at Bishop

BENEFITS

According to Prof. Alex Ariho, the chief executive officer of AAIN, the programme will lead to increased youth participation in agribusiness and enterprise development, improved employability and self-employment outcomes among trained youth, strengthened institutional capacity of anchor incubators, increased adoption and utilisation of the Omuzeire Africa digital mentorship and business coaching platform.

"It will also lead to increased access to markets, finance and value addition opportunities for incubates and growth in youth-led enterprises, revenue, jobs created and business formalisation," Ariho said.

He explained that the progress will be tracked and measured through baseline, midline, regular data collection through digital tools and incubator performance reports.

"Some of the key indicators of success will include number of youth enrolled, trained and certified, percentage of youth transitioning into employment or self-employment, number of enterprises started and increase in income levels of beneficiaries," he said.

Stuart University in Mbarara City.

The curriculum was unveiled by the University's Vice Chancellor, Prof. John Mugisha, following a tour of youth-led innovations exhibited at the university's incubation hub.