

# Youth the key to transformation in agriculture

The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) says more must be done to promote farming as a career choice to the youth if we want to promote a productive and profitable professional sector.



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Leaders of farmers' organisations in Southern Africa unpacked this issue at a SACAU Annual Conference held last month in Swaziland, under the theme 'Youth, Technology, and Agricultural Transformation'.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), young people aged 15 - 24 make up 14% of the global population.

Speaking at the conference, SACAU CEO Ishmael Sunga said it was time to change perceptions of agriculture in order to bring in a younger generation into the sector: "Engaging the youth would provide greater opportunities to modernise agriculture and make it more productive and competitive," said Sunga.

"With an aging farming population and low productivity, youth are vital in improving agricultural productivity," adds Sunga. Therefore, farmers' organisations need to promote farming as a career choice as this will ensure participation in agricultural activities by the youth. In order to enable transformation, the sector will need to be professionalised, particularly with respect to the development of a new generation of farmers.

“The youth, who are viewed as the potential users of modern ICTs, could be used as a key to drive transformation in farming,” said Sunga.

“The deployment of ICTs in agricultural development is perhaps the catalyst that is needed for the involvement of the youth in this sector,” said Dr. B. Sibusiso Dlamini, prime minister of Swaziland. Farmers’ organisations need to build bridges between the relatively inexperienced young farmers and the older farmers who have invaluable experience.

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