



## **Port Vila Communiqué and Call for Action**

### **Promoting Youth Agri-Entrepreneurship in the Pacific**

*Port Vila, Vanuatu  
October 17, 2017*

#### **Introduction**

The Government of Vanuatu endorsed the high-level panel on 'Promoting Youth Agri-Entrepreneurship in the Pacific' which was held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017 during the first ever 'Pacific Week of Agriculture' in Port Vila, Vanuatu. This Side-event was organised by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Pacific Community (SPC), and the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO). Over 65 delegates representing Pacific governments, financial and private sector institutions and youth as well as international and regional development partners, donors and African and Caribbean young agri-entrepreneurs were in attendance. This communiqué and call to action is an output of the deliberations and reflects the aspirations of those who contributed to as well as participated in this event. The legitimacy of the recommendations is based upon their credibility and input.

#### **Youth Entrepreneurship**

More than half of the 10 million population of the Pacific Island States is under the age of 25 years old, and a quarter are between the ages of 15 and 30. Presently, the youth labour force (app. 25%) experiences problems entering the formal and informal labour markets; and women are more disproportionately affected than men. Annually, 16 thousand highly skilled Pacific Islanders leave their countries for better-paid jobs in Australia and New Zealand. Now more than ever, the Pacific needs young people to be proactively engaged in contributing to an innovative and environmentally sustainable agricultural economy as the population is expected to double by 2050, putting further strain on the agri-food and health systems. Youth need to be encouraged to be creative risk takers and pursue entrepreneurial activities. Partnerships across disciplines, ministries, financial institutions, civil society organisations, donors, development partners, geographies and generations are essential.

**The following points motivate the partner organisations and youth representatives to endorse the actionable recommendations of the Port Vila Communiqué and Call for Action:**

- **Pacific governments are committed to youth development and empowerment:**

Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HOAFS) endorsed the first Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy 2011-2015 at their Fourth Regional Meeting in 2010 in Fiji. The Third Meeting of Pacific Ministers of Youth and Sport, endorsed the 'Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023' in New Caledonia in December 2013: The stated vision of which is to create 'a sustainable Pacific where all young people are safe, respected, empowered and resilient'.

- SMEs and entrepreneurs are the main job creators :  
SME's and informal enterprises, account for over 60% of GDP and over 70% of total employment in low-income countries. SMEs make a key contribution to the net creation of jobs, especially youth-led businesses.
- Self-reliant young people build sustainable futures:  
Young people are the future of resilient economies and healthy, productive nations. They can provide life-changing outcomes for agriculture-based island communities.
- Models exist that can be scaled up:  
Models and success stories of the impact of government policies and programmes, private and public investments and small loans as well as development projects in kick-starting youth-led businesses and on job creation can be used to attract additional public and private investments for addressing the challenge of youth unemployment and under-employment facing governments and the wider society.

## **Five key recommendations:**

- 1) **Create the enabling environment**
  - Provide national budgetary allocations that can attract matching private investments in youth enterprise development
  - Develop specialised public-private stimulus packages and other innovative products which can catapult youth-led businesses from one level to the next
  - Support bottom-up, youth-driven inter-ministerial policy planning, development and implementation.
- 2) **Increase access to finance**
  - Diversify financial instruments and modify conditions for business loans/ credit - most funding criteria make youth ineligible
  - Provide targeted micro-financing for unemployed/ underemployed youth
  - Develop new tools/metrics to determine the potential growth of youth-led businesses; go beyond net worth.
- 3) **Increase access to support services**
  - Facilitate the development of social networks of likeminded youth agri-entrepreneurs e.g. a Youth Agri-business academy
  - Support business to business mentorship and peer to peer learning schemes.
- 4) **Invest in Education/Training/Skills/Technology Development**
  - Create conditions for continuous education, learning and innovation - invest in technology space with a focus on ICT enabled agri-enterprise development. Teach technical and business skills from an early age
  - Emphasise personal development as much as professional development
- 5) **Strengthen partnerships between governments, development partners, financiers and youth**