

Don't ignore the youth – FANRPAN chairperson

Paida Mpas*o*, *pmpaso@yahoo.com*,
Mantoe Phakathi, *mantoe_phakathi@yahoo.com*
Carolyn Madoshi, *carolynmadoshi@yahoo.com*

“Failing to recognise and involve the youth in agricultural issues are like sitting on a volcano. “

Officially opening the FANRPAN annual dialogue in Tanzania, Chairperson Sindiso Ngwenya said Africa is mostly made up of the youth and, therefore, ignoring them would mean ignoring agricultural development.

“About 62 percent of the African population constitutes of youths, so ignoring this big part of the population spells disaster. We need to involve them. They need to be empowered and as agriculture is the biggest employer, involving them will improve the economy. I appeal to African governments to respect and implement the youth charter.”

FANRPAN Chief Executive Officer Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda said youths are the leaders of today and tomorrow and cannot be ignored.

“We need to involve them in the agriculture value chain. We don't mean the youths should only go out and till the land, they could be involved in delivering of goods, selling or in the information department – whatever we do, they need to be involved.”

As the youth call for their involvement in the formulation of agriculture and food security policies, a group of African young people is making use of social media to promote stomach politics.

Nawsheen Hosenally from Mauritius is one of the 70 youths from different African countries who are tweeting from the 12th annual FANRPAN dialogue in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. She said the use of social media such as twitter and Facebook is helping in educating the youth so that they take an interest in agriculture, a sector of the economy which is perceived to be less lucrative by the youth.

“Through our tweets, we're able to help thousands of young people throughout the continent to engage in the issues that we're discussing here,” said Hosenally.

And the use of new media technologies will help attract the youth to agriculture because for now few young people are into farming, although they are the group that forms over 60 percent of the African population, said FANRPAN youth coordinator Sithembile Mwamakamba.

“In most of our countries we have an aging farming population which won't be there in the next 50 years. Besides the use of technology to improve agricultural production, there is also a need for countries to come up with financing mechanisms to help young people get into agribusinesses. Countries need to emulate best practices that promote the establishment of businesses by young people.

“Right now it is very difficult for the youth to access funding because they do not own resources that can serve as collateral, such as land. It is, therefore, encouraging that in Swaziland the Ministry of Youth is providing funding for the youth to start businesses,” said Mwamakamba.