

The Digital Revolution: Communication technologies and the future of agriculture

By: Kathlee Freeman

“For Africa to realize a food secure future, the majority need to take part in agricultural solutions, and that means young people,” according to Seble Samuel, Communications and Knowledge Management Officer with the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security’s (CCAFS) East Africa region.

Indeed, young people are having something of a moment. From an increased focus on youth in agriculture by a number of international development agencies to Rwandan-born, U.S.-based choreographer Sherrie Silver celebrating the [powerful role of young farmers](#). One thing that sets young people apart is their comfort with information and communication technologies (ICTs), including cellphones and their use to access the internet.

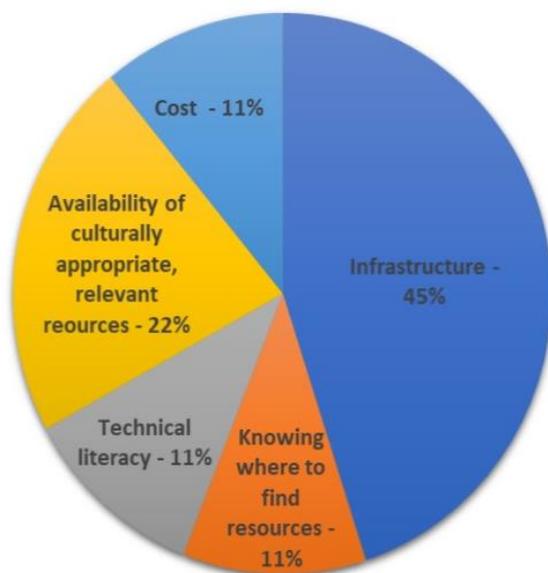
“Show a young person a lucrative and promising market you will be surprised where they will get resources, products will be delivered!”
Mike Mugendi, online discussion participant

This trend was explored through an [online discussion](#), held between 15 April to 17 May, on the Climate & Agriculture Network for Africa (CANA) platform in the run up to [World Telecommunication and Information Society Day](#). Participants responded to questions about barriers to youth participation in agriculture, the role of ICTs in agrobusiness, and how non-farmers can use ICTs to support agriculture. Continuing this online conversation, a webinar was held on 29 May to further discuss youth, agriculture, and ICTs.

Panelists included:

- Catherine Mungai, Partnerships and Policy Specialist with CCAFS East Africa
 - Joan Kerr, Director for the Foundation for Building Sustainable Communities (FBSC)
 - Victor Mugo, Country Coordinator with the Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network (CSAYN) in Kenya and an Agricultural Risk Management Associate with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
- Seble Samuel (moderator)

The main barrier for young people to access and use technology for agricultural purposes is:



Audience members were invited to ask questions, which ranged from how to incorporate innovative financing into ICT projects to engaging stakeholders in youth-led agriculture initiatives.

During the webinar, participants were also asked to provide their thoughts on barriers for youth adoption of ICTs. The majority of those who responded, 45 percent, felt infrastructure was the most serious constraint young people faced when trying to incorporate ICTs into the agriculture sector. Availability of culturally appropriate, relevant resources was another barrier to ICT use by young farmers.

The importance of education was made clear by panelist Kerr. “Agriculture education sows the seeds for elevating the status of young farming professionals to prosper,” she explained. Indeed, in a follow-up survey for webinar participants, training, along with costs and gender concerns, were noted as areas of interest for future discussions.

To watch the entire recorded webinar, click [here](#). You will be prompted to provide your name and email address, and then taken directly to view the webinar.

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