

# Government ratchets up youth drive into agriculture

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The government has put in a fresh push to have youth engage in agriculture.

In a five-year strategy, the government is refreshing its project plans and strategies in order to include Youth in Agribusiness components.

Agriculture Cabinet secretary Willy Bett said the ministry is committed to increasing mainstream ministry activities to include initiatives of bringing youth into agribusiness as envisaged in the draft strategy 2017-2021.

"As a ministry, we commit to identifying innovative ways of addressing the risk concerns that have made private sector lenders reluctant to be-

come co-investors and offer financing to smallholder farmers, youth and local agribusiness," said Bett during the launch of Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2017-2021 at Kenya Commercial Bank Leadership Centre on Tuesday.

More than 500 youths from across 47 counties joined interested parties, the Council of Governors and development bodies to study the strategy, review it and furnish the ministry before it is validated and availed for launch.

"It is my hope that this can be done within a month. We will then launch the final strategy under the Joint Agriculture Sector Steering Committee framework soon," said Bett.

The strategy recognises challenges

technical capacity, limited access to data and information, limited access to markets and at the margins of policy and dialogue spaces which, if addressed, could greatly build their capabilities," said the CS.

He said these challenges, as signified in the draft Youth in Agriculture Strategy, must be resolved.

Agribusiness encompasses agrichemicals, breeding, crop production, inputs distribution and the food value chain, all that provide opportunities for youth to engage in.

"New technologies in an expanding food industry are creating numerous opportunities for the youth not only to find employment and entrepreneurship, but to also help grow Kenya's food industry," said Bett.

**Sh2.7b**  
**Amount US Agency**  
**for International**  
**Development is investing**  
**in youth employment.**

that have kept youth away from active farming including insufficient financial support, inadequate technical capacity, limited access to pre-established markets and weak implementation of policies.

"Besides seeing agriculture as a preserve for the old, young people often get discouraged from venturing into agriculture due to insufficient financial support, inadequate

United States Ambassador to Kenya, Robert Godec said his government through the US Agency for International Development is investing about \$26 million (Sh2.7 billion) specifically to address youth employment in Kenya.

"We are doing this through six major projects where up to 500, 000 young people are being directly supported in agribusiness," said Godec.

The activities, according to the ambassador, include business advisory support and mentorship; nurturing local innovations, building linkages to domestic, regional and international markets, and technical training on how to cultivate high value crops on the farm and operating agro-processing plants.