

Research Application Summary

Opportunities, practices of Scaling out student's ideas and community engagement for agribusiness innovations

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Abstract

The approach of scaling out students' technologies in the near future will depend on model of training and placement needs of students for internship programs. Nevertheless, forming incubation centers and encouraging research is a critical approach in fitting these innovations in building farmer capacity, and strengthening university outreach potential for research and students idea growth. The internship placement currently is an ongoing concern for every University program across Africa and Uganda in particular. Through this, there are many opportunities as prototype ideas, and technologies that can be developed and scaled out by students to meet local and regional market demands. However, there is limited capacity and funding to facilitate the scaling out.

Key words: agribusiness, attachment, community engagement, scaling out, students, student internship, technologies, V-Hub

Résumé

L'approche de la mise à l'échelle des technologies étudiantes dans un futur proche dépendra du modèle de formation et des besoins de placement des étudiants pour les programmes de stage. Néanmoins, la création de centres d'incubation et l'encouragement de la recherche constituent une approche essentielle pour adapter ces innovations au renforcement des capacités des agriculteurs, et pour renforcer le potentiel de diffusion des universités en matière de recherche et de développement des idées des étudiants. Le placement des stagiaires est actuellement une préoccupation constante pour chaque programme universitaire en Afrique et en Ouganda en particulier. Grâce à cela, il existe de nombreuses possibilités de prototypes d'idées et de technologies qui peuvent être développés et mis à l'échelle par les étudiants pour répondre aux demandes du marché local et régional. Cependant, les capacités et les financements sont limités pour faciliter cette mise à l'échelle.

Mots clés : agrobusiness, attachement, engagement communautaire, mise à l'échelle, étudiants, stage étudiant, technologies, V-Hub.

Introduction

Agriculture is the main sector in all of the five countries of the East African Community (EAC), but with different importance (World Bank, 2011). About 80 percent of the population in the EAC

live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The sector accounts for about 44% of the GDP in Burundi and Tanzania, 30% in Uganda, 24% in Kenya and 38% in Rwanda. Agriculture also contributes to foreign exchange earnings, employment and provides raw materials for agro-based industries. The agricultural sector is dominated by smallholder mixed farming of livestock, food crop, cash crops, fishing and aquaculture with limited reach to markets in region. There is also limited capacities in Universities to transfer knowledge to students on value addition to enhance such existing agricultural potential in the region.

Currently the V-Hub project at Uganda Christian University has implemented RUFORUM Entrepreneurship Challenge Action Program (RECAP) project based on four objectives. The process has involved selecting groups of students each with viable innovative agribusiness ventures, setting-up Incubation enterprises, and UCU building capacity for agribusiness at agribusiness advisory centres.

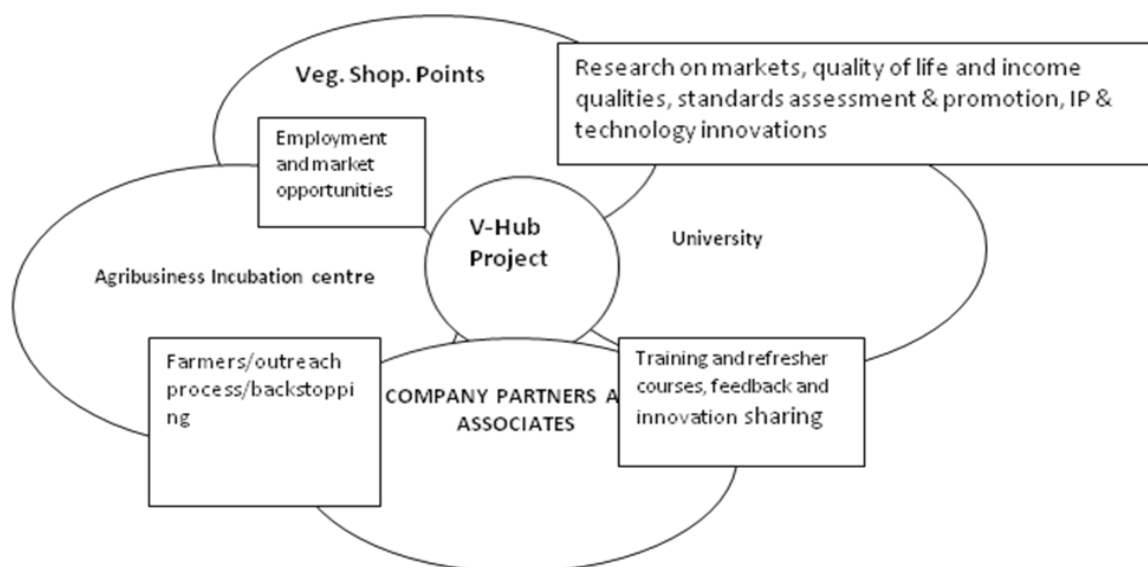


Figure 1. V-hub project MCF@RUFORUM 2018 conceptual framework

The key principal has been the cause-effect relationship resulting from scaling out of innovative agribusiness ideas from students and community engagements. Interactions have had impact in terms of agribusiness innovation through employment creation/ market opportunities for the products. The aim is to create tangible opportunities and practices such as jobs for communities and students in the areas and beyond agro processing during value addition.

Research application. Capacity building in agribusiness innovation, research and training are key components of engaging students and communities in bringing about the desired changes in agricultural production and transformation in Africa for regional and international markets (World Bank, 2011). This approach provides opportunity for University students innovations amongst a group of students, a strong university - community partnerships and linkages with farmers for material supply, skills and processing at a lower cost, especially for SMEs and companies to bring products to markets.

This is being implemented through students startup loans and establishing Agribusiness Advisory Centres (AAC) based on Innovative Agribusiness Enterprises (IAE) practiced within communities (FAO, 2013). This is where students can enhance skills and interactions with farmers and market needs such as marketing and packaging in line with farmer groups and entrepreneurs interest. Students can generate technologies for markets and get linked to other actors to promote research

and packaging while getting leadership skills in enterprises development for local and regional markets.

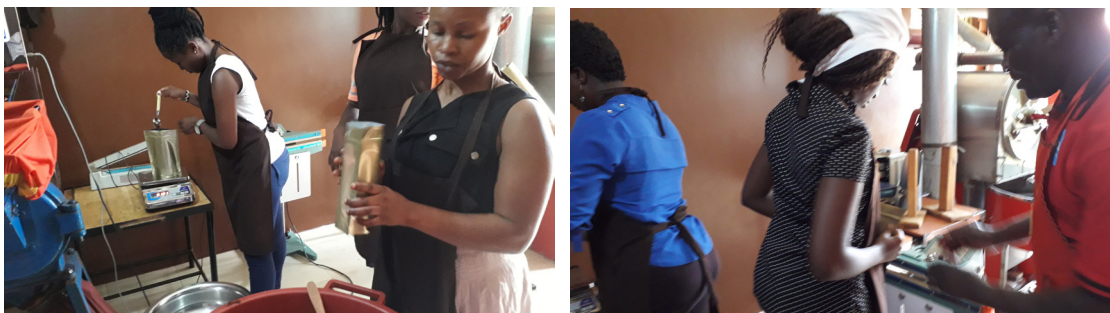


Figure 2. Students under university-community engagement for skills at agribusiness Advisory centre

Conclusion

University community engagement is a tool to strengthen the capacities of University to foster agribusiness innovations in responding to demands of students and smallholder farmers through research and training for output impact-oriented innovations.

Acknowledgement

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