

► JobAgri:

Shaping better policies and investments
based on new evidence on the labour
content in the agri-food sector in Africa

Improved knowledge for informed policy making and investment

August 2023



► Africa's structural and employment challenges and the role of the agri-food sector

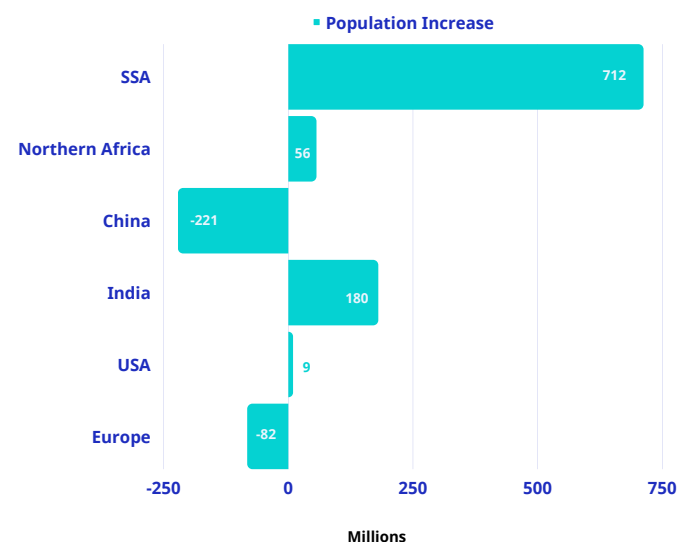


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Africa has been dealing with its structural transformation in a unique context. While the population will continue to grow – with an estimated 1.1 billion increase by 2050 – climate change and the depletion of natural resources have meant that previously navigated transformation pathways cannot be replicated, while global asymmetries and intensified competition handicap economic diversification.

In addition, the long-lasting consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and ever-evolving geopolitical conflicts are resulting in changing globalization patterns and new regional dynamics. This highlights the risks on food supply and the importance of strong local food systems as well as exacerbated employment deficits, particularly among youth and women.

Active population (15-64 years) increase by main countries and regions (2020-2050)



Source: World Population Prospects 2022

¹ World Population Prospects 2022

The magnitude of population growth puts major pressure on the labour market with about 330 million young women and men to reach working age between 2020 and 2030 (and about 760 million between 2020 and 2050¹). Even if urbanization continues to take place with consolidation in North Africa and several sub-Saharan African countries, the majority of the continent's population is and will remain rural in the near future. In fact, rural population will continue to increase in Africa, which is a global exception.

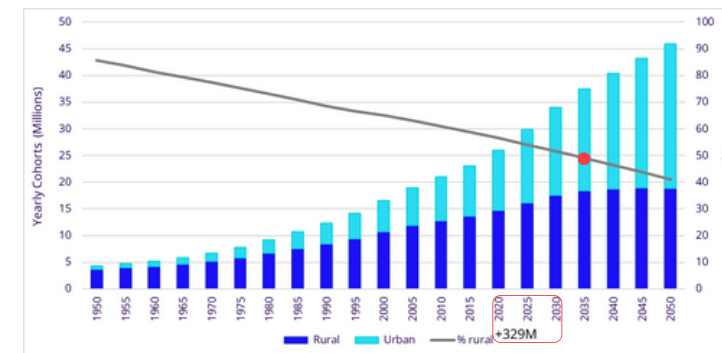
Despite significant changes in the rural economy due to progressive diversification and circular migration, agriculture continues to be central to economy. With the overwhelming majority of rural people engaged, at least partly, in the sector. Therefore, agriculture related activities will be critical to absorb new job seekers in the coming two or three decades. Yet, it will require more attractive jobs and the alleviation of child labour - for boys and girls alike – which continues to occur in agriculture primarily on household farms. The need for decent work means new and better jobs with improved incomes, social protection, and labour conditions. Moreover, African agriculture has to deal with climate change and increasing pressure on natural resources.

In this context, the evolution of agriculture and the agri-food sector and their capacity to create decent employment will be decisive for a transition to a sustainable development model for the region and for its socio-economic stability.

► Deal with the challenges with new generation policies

Reinvesting in development strategies and adequate public policies is critical to deal with the structural and employment challenges in the continent. The main goal of the JobAgri programme is to support new generation of policies based

Evolution of the annual cohorts of new entrants in the working age group (15-64 years) in Africa



Source: World Population Prospects 2022, World Urbanization Prospects 2018

on effective, new evidence that allow the identification of best development options for the agri-food sector to unlock its potential for employment and growth.

► The need for better policies

Virtually all countries in Africa have adopted agriculture and employment policies – and both usually feature prominently in national development plans or other vision documents. Thus, it is imperative that different ministries and units of the governments act deliberately, in a coordinated manner and based on evidence. Yet, in practice employment and agriculture policies tend to operate in silos. Given the critical role of agriculture in addressing (youth and women) employment in Africa, it is key to move towards an integrated approach and to support policy processes bringing on board all stakeholders which have a bearing on employment and agriculture at country level.

JobAgri will support multi-stakeholder dialogues and policy processes, which would be decisive for breaking out of policy silos and for shaping integrated and coordinated public policies that can meet the challenges effectively. A broad range of actors, which are key for employment and agriculture but usually do not work together, will be invited to contribute into the policy space to reach consensus on the core challenges, ensure the acceptance of the different options and agree on solutions. This will also ensure the basis for policy coherence. JobAgri will also ensure that the enabling environment for delivering on these new generation policies is in place, including through securing political buy-in, capacity building and linking with investments as well as national and development partners' budgets.

Policy dialogue and design not only need improved processes but also new evidence to build adequate agricultural and employment responses as part of the solutions to Africa's structural challenges. Different options for the development of the agri-food sector exist, with different outcomes in terms of job creation, working conditions, income distribution and the use of natural resources. These development options are difficult to discuss in present as there is a lack of systematic, consistent, and comparable data on their labour content.

Filling the knowledge gaps will help identify effective job-rich investments and more sustainable and viable production and transformation methods. New data will support monitoring and simulation activities feeding the policy debate and dialogue at different scales (local, national, and international) and between different types of stakeholders. The process will create opportunities for capacity building and will continue to be supported by the programme.

► The need to feed policy processes with new evidence

While there are many agricultural surveys and statistical sources of information on rural areas, very few are dedicated to labour issues. The majority of existing databases mostly offer information on production and farm structures. Upstream (input supply systems and services) and downstream (processing and packaging) activities are rarely addressed.

The JobAgri programme will investigate the capacity of agriculture and the agri-food sector to create decent employment through data collection on the labour content of different agricultural development models. In order to capture the labour content, evidence will be collected with representative surveys based on the sub-national sampling of farms (considering household farms, as well as corporate farms) and the selection of major value chains.

Particular attention will be paid to measuring and capturing the labour content by focusing on the quantity (number of jobs) and quality of labour, particularly the conditions of work and returns to labour (wages, incomes, profitability), as well as the distribution of labour according to gender and age. Seasonal, part-time and temporary work will also be addressed and specific attention will be paid to household farm members engaged in farming, especially children.



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► About the JobAgri programme

The International Labour Office (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the African Union (AU) and the Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (Cirad) are proposing a joint initiative called “JobAgri”.

The objective of this programme is to support policy making for effective and job-rich investments in agriculture and agri-food value chains through renewed and innovative knowledge generation on the quantity and quality of labour. Both dimensions remain broadly unknown but are central for guiding policy choices and investments for a job-rich recovery and for supporting innovative transformation pathways in Africa.

The programme will directly contribute to the African Union’s Agenda 2063, the Ouagadougou +10 Plan of Action, international and national efforts towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Decent work for equitable livelihoods coalition, the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, as well as the new AU-EU partnership Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa.

► Way forward

The initial vision is to implement the programme in a number of pilot countries, before extending it across the continent. This will allow for comparison between different agro-ecologies, farming systems, demographic and economic contexts and for a representation of the five AU’s regions.

In order to implement the programme as envisaged, the AU, ILO, FAO, and Cirad have launched a resource mobilization campaign.



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