



REGIONAL WEBINAR

TOPIC: LEVERAGING ON DIGITAL INNOVATION TO IMPROVE RESILIENCE OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES IN TIMES OF CRISIS.

BACKGROUND

According to Oxford Business Group focus report, Agriculture in Africa 2021, Africa is home to 60% of the world's arable land. Africa has the potential to meet not only its own needs, but also the needs of the rest of the world. Agriculture remains one of the most important economic sectors for the continent, employing the majority of the population and accounting for 14% of GDP in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the era of the African Continental Free Trade Area, innovation and modernization of agricultural processes, will generate significant growth opportunities across the entire agricultural ecosystem. UNCTAD Technology and Innovation report 2021, 'Catching technological waves Innovation with equity', asserts that frontier technologies can bring enormous benefits to the lives of poor people. Prospects are immense in agriculture, health, education, energy and other areas of development. There are numerous examples on successfully mobilizing frontier technologies. However, many of these technology deployment remains at pilot level.

Innovation is linked to digitalization, Internet of things and sustainability. These three megatrends are guiding many industries for some years now. Technologies and sensitivity to green transition matters are more growing in interest for the agriculture sector than you might have thought. Integrated digital technologies that help with production, monitoring and planning are ushering in the future of agriculture. Through these technological advancements, farmers are able to improve their yields while conserving resources, more quickly identify areas of their fields that require attention, collect and categorize data, and more.

The cooperative business model is people focused and provides timely solutions to societies and communities. According to the International Cooperative Alliance; cooperatives are **people-centred enterprises** jointly owned and democratically controlled by and for their

members to realise their **common socio-economic needs** and aspirations. As enterprises based on values and principles, they put fairness and equality first allowing people to create sustainable enterprises that **generate long-term jobs and prosperity**.

However, with the resilience agricultural cooperatives are the most hit during the times of crisis. For instance, during the lockdowns in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, food supply, market access and access to productive resources were affected. In addition, the challenge of maintaining high-value agricultural commodity value chains requires stakeholders to address potential labour shortages as well as the logistical challenges, given that these products have high levels of perishability.

On April 2021, following a meeting of G20 agriculture ministers, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Bank and the UN World Food Programme issued a joint statement on the impact of Covid-19 on food security and nutrition: “Agriculture and its food-related logistic services should be considered as essential. Increased efforts are needed to ensure that food value chains function well and promote the production and availability of diversified, safe and nutritious food for all.”

In view of the above background, strategies for expediting innovation in the sector are more needed than before. To hasten and enhance access to markets, improving access to financing mechanisms, optimizing productivity, increasing produce affordability, improving distribution channel and access to inputs, a more innovative strategies are needed to catalyze this.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of this webinar is to bring government officials, cooperative leaders and other stakeholders in the forum to deliberate on some of the strategies agricultural cooperatives can use to expedite digital innovation, especially during times of crisis.

The webinar will bring in both global and regional perspectives and practical cases that have been tested and successfully implemented to foster agricultural growth and development in a more innovative way.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To identify strategies for expediting digital innovation in agricultural cooperatives.
- To share knowledge and practical cases that enable agricultural cooperatives and other stakeholders in Africa to engage effectively in digital innovation
- To encourage agricultural cooperatives in Africa to leverage on digitalization innovation to develop resilience during crisis period
- To recommend to agricultural cooperatives and other stakeholders to jointly design policies that promote the use of digital innovation in Agriculture

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Strategies to expedite digital innovation in agriculture are identified
- Knowledge and practical cases that enable agricultural cooperatives and other stakeholders in Africa to engage effectively in digital innovation are shared
- Agricultural cooperatives in Africa are encouraged to leverage on digital innovation to develop resilience during crisis period
- Recommendations are given to agricultural cooperatives and other stakeholders to jointly design policies that promote the use of digital innovation in Agriculture.

WEBINAR PROGRAMME

| Date & Time | Sessions | Facilitator/Speaker |
|-------------------|--|---|
| | Participants arrival & Zoom orientation | Host - ICA Staff (Asira) |
| 14:00 – 16:30 EAT | Introductions | ICA-Africa Program Manager Dr. Rose Karimi |
| | Opening Remarks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ ICA-Africa Regional Director √ ICA DG √ ICA-Africa President √ ICA President |
| | Session One: Background paper presentation by FAO Mrs. Hani May | |
| | Session Two (Panel discussion): Building the resilience of agricultural cooperatives through digitalization innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Finance by International Trade Organization | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Markets by EAGC Mrs Janet Ngombalu • Digital technologies by ACFMSC • Youth innovation in Agriculture by FARM BETTER Mrs Sylvia Ng'eno |
| | <p>Session Three: Best practices of agricultural cooperatives in digitalization and innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Case studies by IFAD Ms Sara Mbago-Bhunu • International Case studies by ICAO Mr Hong Gwangsey |
| | <p>Session four: Policy recommendations and collaborations by CCW Mr Todor Ivanov</p> |
| | <p>Summary Conclusions and Recommendations by Dr Rose Karimi</p> |