

Broadcast network launches pay as you watch service.
Kwese TV has unveiled a satellite television service that will introduce Ugandans to a new world of premium sports and entertainment. Kwese TV Uganda general manager Herbert Mucunguzi said last week that people will be able to use a pay as you view service, an offer designed for viewers' lifestyle and budget. [Eronie Kamukama]



Good point. Transformations of rural economies has lifted rural people out of poverty.

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Rural areas key to economic growth, development - report

KAMPALA. A young person, who stays in the village, will have a chance of living a better life compared to the one migrating to an urban centre in search of job opportunities and the glamour of town life, a new report has revealed.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations report, rural areas, which have for long been seen as poverty traps, are actually the key to economic growth in developing countries such as Uganda.

Therefore, the FAO report titled: "State of Food and Agriculture, 2017" argues that rural people who relocate to cities will likely join the ranks of the urban poor, instead of finding a pathway out of poverty.

And others will need to look for employment elsewhere, leading to seasonal or permanent migration.

No need to migrate

According to the new FAO report released recently, millions of young people in developing countries (such as Uganda) who are poised to enter the labour force in the coming decades need not flee rural areas to escape poverty.

The report says: "Rural areas actually have vast potential for economic growth pegged to food production and related sectors. And with the majority of the world's poor and hungry living in these areas, achieving the 2030 development agenda will hinge on unlocking that often-neglected potential."

But doing so, the report warns that it will require overcoming a combination of low productivity in subsistence agriculture, limited scope for industrialisation in many places, and rapid population growth and urbanisation — all of which pose challenges to developing nations' among them Uganda, capacity to feed and employ their citizens.

The report also noted that there is evidence to show that transformations of rural economies have been credited with helping hundreds of millions of rural people lift them-



Agriculture. Farming, as a main activity in rural areas, if supported with policies and investments, will provide the rural youth with employment. FILE PHOTO

selves up out of poverty since the 1990s.

Between 2015 and 2030, the ranks of people aged 15-24 years are expected to rise by about 100 million, to 1.3 billion.

Worth noting is that almost all that increase will take place in sub-Saharan Africa, with the lion's share of the increase being in rural zones.

This is already evident in Uganda, according to Uganda Bureau of Statistics data.

But in many developing countries, notably in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, growth in the industrial and service sectors has lagged, and they will not be able to absorb the

"Policy-makers are urged to recognise the catalytic role of small cities and towns in mediating the rural-urban nexus and providing smallholder farmers with greater opportunities to market their produce and share in the benefits of economic growth."

JOSÉ GRAZIANO DA SILVA, FAO DIRECTOR GENERAL

massive numbers of new job seekers set to enter the workforce. Nor will

agriculture, in its current form.

This is why targeting policy support and investment to rural areas to build vibrant food systems and supporting agro-industries that are well connected to urban zones - will create employment and allow more people to stay, and thrive, in the countryside represents a strategic intervention, the report published last week says.

It also noted that transformed rural economies will not necessarily be a panacea that solves all the pressures that drive people to relocate, but they will generate much-needed jobs and contribute to making out-migration more of a choice, rather than a necessity.

URBAN FOOD DEMAND

Opportunities. The State of Food and Agriculture makes the case that needed transformations in rural economies can be sparked by leveraging growing demand for food in urban areas to diversify food systems and generate new economic opportunities in off-farm, agriculture-related activities.

This includes enterprises that process or refine, package or transport, and store, market or sell food, as well as businesses that supply production inputs such as seeds, tools and equipment, and fertilizers or provide irrigation, tilling or other services.

But while urbanisation provides a "golden opportunity" for agriculture, it also presents challenges for millions of small-scale family farmers.

Markets that are more profitable can lead to the concentration of food production in large commercial farms, to value chains dominated by large processors and retailers, and to the exclusion of smallholders.

According to the study, the possible way out will involve putting in place a range of policies designed to ensure that small-scale producers are able to participate fully in meeting urban food demands.

This is in addition to putting up the necessary infrastructure to connect rural areas and urban markets and including not just mega-cities into well-connected rural-urban economies but knitting in smaller, more spread-out urban areas as well.