

15,000 youth to benefit from agri-business fund

Target. The project is looking to benefit six districts from Uganda.

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ABIDJAN. The youth in Uganda are set to receive \$19m (Shs68.4b) for agri-business development in the East African Youth Inclusion Programme (EAYIP).

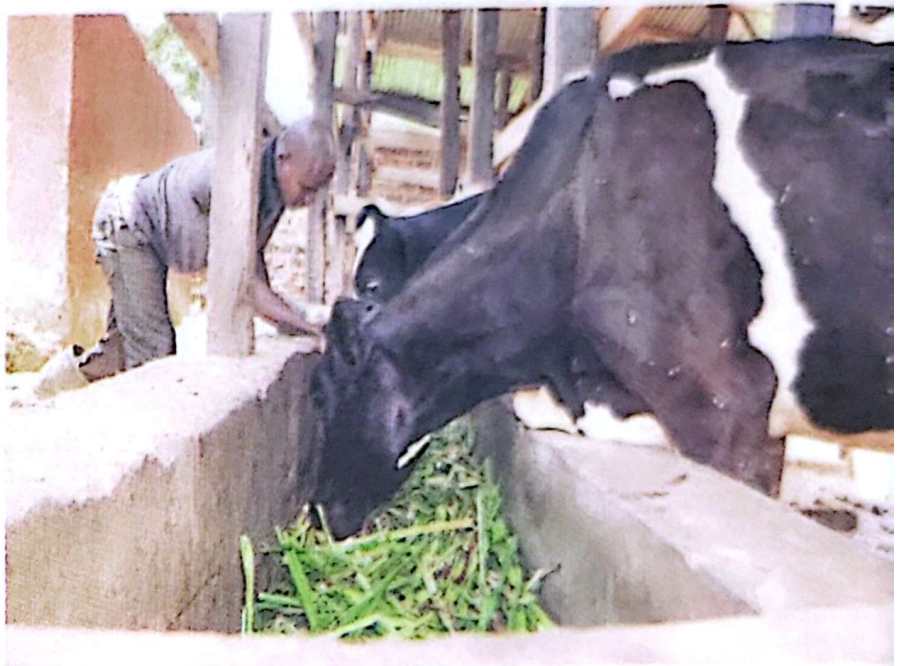
The programme, founded in 2016 by Heifer International, a non-government organisation in Uganda, in partnership with Master Card Foundation, seeks to empower and equip 25,000 economically disadvantaged youth aged between 18 and 24 years (15,000 in Uganda and 10,000 in Tanzania) with funds and training that will see more young people take up agri-business.

The project which started in 2016 and is projected to end in 2021, targets six districts; Amuria, Bugiri, Kiboga, Luwero, Ngora and Wakiso to create employment and development opportunities in the dairy sector and other agricultural value chains.

Addressing the media, Heifer International country director William Matovu, said the youth in Uganda below 25 years do not consider agriculture as a potential career path.

This, he said, compelled the organisation to secure Shs3.6b (\$1m) and Shs64.8b (\$18m) from Mastercard Foundation to benefit the youth that need to grow their agri-business start-ups.

"..Africa is home to the world's youngest population, with over 600 million people under the age of 25 and yet these young people do not consider agriculture as a potential career path," he said. While this is cause for concern, Heifer interna-



A youth tends to cattle at Katende Harambe Rural-Urban Training Centre in Namugongo. PHOTO BY ERONIE KAMUKAMA

tional has identified it as an opportunity to engage youth in a sector with high potential and possibilities.

The project also aims at equipping the youth with necessary skills to establish or seek employment in agri-business hubs, enable hub replication in new value chains and facilitate access to finance for young entrepreneurs to start and expand businesses.

Fund allocation

The funds will be allocated basing on recommendations of the different hubs at district level, building on the success of the East Africa Dairy Development Project, EADD hub approach.

Negotiations with different financial institutions like dfcu, Post and Centenary

banks are under way to determine the capability to provide youths with funds in the different districts at a subsidized interest rate of 10 per cent.

"The banks we are looking at are dfcu, Centenary and Post bank to choose one that has many branches in all the districts and can offer the rate of at least 10 per cent for all amounts for the different sized enterprises," said Mr Richard Ekirika, the programme director EAYIP.

EAYIP is working with support from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to ensure that the project caters for both sexes equally.

On the other hand, ministry of Agriculture will aid in training given their expertise in the dairy sector and other agricultural value chains.