African Young Entrepreneurs

Brief on Eight Young Innovators and Entrepreneurs from Malawi in the Top 139 of the 756 Applicants

Introduction

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM, see www.ruforum.org) is a Network of 66 Universities in 26 African countries. RUFORUM was created by African Vice Chancellors with the vision for a vibrant agricultural sector linked to African universities that can produce high performing graduates and high-quality research, responsive to the demands of Africa’s farmers for innovations, and able to generate sustainable livelihoods and national economic development.

RUFORUM recognizes the need for greater youth participation in enterprise development and business incubation and through its member universities and partners has supported training and skills development in this respect. It has also supported start-ups through innovative financing mechanism of the revolving fund implemented in some member universities. RUFORUM believes in youth entrepreneurship as the game changer in ensuring greater youth participation and integration into the economic growth at national and regional levels and for youth employment.

During the Fifth Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 17th - 21st October, 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa that focused on ‘Linking Agricultural Universities with Private Sector, Governments and other Stakeholders in support of Agricultural Development in Africa’, RUFORUM launched the African Young Entrepreneurs Competition Series, 2016.

This competition invited applications from young African innovators, entrepreneurs and incubatees (<40 years) with innovative business ideas, enterprises, and innovations.

The purpose was to provide the Young Entrepreneurs and Innovators a platform to be heard, exposed, and supported to increase their social capital, networking horizon and opportunity to showcase their ideas and innovations to potential venture capital financiers that would attend the conference.

While the focus of the competition was on innovations in agribusiness, other innovations, incubations, business
enterprises and business concepts along ICTs, health, engineering, natural resources, meteorology, urbanization, green economy, and transport and communication, among others were eligible. Over a period of 2 months, a total of 756 applications from 38 African countries were received.

The selection process involved the following stages:

I. All 756 applications were screened for compliance to the set guidelines and application rules.

II. A total of 663 applications were compliant. Each of these applications were evaluated by three independent reviewers (Round one).

III. A shortlist of 139 (20.9%) applicants were selected for Round two evaluation. Each of these applications was once again evaluated by 3 independent evaluators.

IV. A shortlist of 20 (13.6%) applicants were evaluated by a panel of six reviewers to select the final list (Round 3).

Owing to the competitiveness of the enterprises and innovations in Round 3, the panel made a decision to select 15 Young African Entrepreneurs instead of 10 that were originally planned.

The selected young entrepreneurs had the opportunity to present their innovations at the main plenary session at the Biennial Conference before an audience of 850 participants that included: HE Dr. Nkosazana Zuma (Chairperson African Union Commission) and Development partners.

In this brief, a summary description of Eight (8) Young Entrepreneurs and Innovators from Malawi that emerged among the Top 139 from the 756 submissions to the competition is profiled. A profile of the overall 15 winners from the 756 submissions is available at the following link https://blog.ruforum.org/
Sharick Enterprises

Led by Dennis Chinkhata, Sharif Ngwira and Cedrick Kasinja

Sharick Enterprises is an initiative of innovative youths; Dennis Chinkhata, Sharif Ngwira and Cedrick Kasinja from Malawi to operationalise commercial mushroom production as an alternative, readily available and affordable protein source as well as an alternative livelihood option to rural and peri-urban households in Malawi.

Sharick Enterprises seeks to scale up the production of two of the main mushroom species; oyster and button mushrooms that are currently on high demand and production advantage in Malawi. Sharick Enterprises seeks to become a market leader in the supply of edible and medicinal mushrooms. Sharick Enterprises will be taking advantage of commercializing university generated research through a partnership with Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) that will provide a constant supply of mushroom seed needed in the commercial operations.

The company shall adhere to International Standards Organization (ISO) rules and regulations to ensure quality of the mushrooms produced and processed. A concrete mushroom value-chain will be established including the processing of mushroom into capsulated mushroom powder for the medicinal properties of mushroom. In order to make this proposed enterprise a reality, Sharick Enterprises requires an estimated US$50,000 for takeoff.
Maternitech

Led by Walter Moyo, Thandie Magasa and Daniel Mvalo

Maternitech is a startup project developed by three Malawians: Walter Moyo, Thandie Magasa and Daniel Mvalo as a platform for provision of information related to contraceptives and family planning. This application was initially developed with a focus on Malawian women however it can be customised for other African countries.

The application performs four functions:

i) provide information on contraceptives, including how they work, side effects, considerations and other tips;

ii) provide information on pregnancy (when to start antenatal services and also healthy pregnancy tips);

iii) predict possible delivery dates of pregnant women using gestational estimates; and iv) educate women who have premature babies on the care of such babies (Kangaroo Mother Care).

Maternitech’s vision and mission is to provide a standard digital package for maternal health information-provision to women of the reproductive age group in Malawi and other sub-Saharan countries. This is hoped will help save lives of women in the reproductive age group as well lives of newborns. This unique innovation will facilitate the achievement of maternal healthcare targets as well as the broader Sustainable Development Goals. Maternitech requires an estimated US$25,000 to operationalise this innovation.
Agri-Future Microfinance Limited

Edith Gondwe, Inno Khuwi and Dennis Chinkhata

Three young passionate Malawian youths: Edith Gondwe, Inno Khuwi and Dennis Chinkhata are putting their expertise together to start Agri-Future Microfinance Limited. Agri-Future Microfinance Limited is an innovative financing mechanism for actors in the fish value chain along the Lake Malawi shores.

The enterprise will offer unique microloan services to fish value chain actors to further propel the local SMEs operating in Malawi. This business venture is designed, to take advantage of the overall challenge of high post-harvest losses as well as high cost of credit that currently affects the fish sector in Malawi.

Agri-Future will offer opportunities to SMEs to grow their business as it will allow them to increase their operating capacity. The long run perspective of Agri-Future Microfinance is to significantly contribute to poverty reduction of its target customers by provision of services such as community investment (consumer-owned businesses, social businesses, and social investment), entrepreneurial of entrepreneurship (small-business development, hands-on learning, technical know-how culminating in self-employment, and life skills development) and dynamic social network (sharing resources, local and global interdependence, and mobilization of social networks).

Agri-Future requires an estimated US$30,000 to commence operations in rural Malawi.
Chonona Aquaculture Limited

Led by Tione Kaonga and Abudala Napuru

Chonona Aquaculture Limited is a medium scale commercial fish farm based in Chikwawa operated by Tione Kaonga and Abudala Napuru. Chonona is derived from a Chichewa word meaning something “delicious” because the business produces tilapia locally known as Chambo, which is revered by most Malawians. It was founded and registered in 2015 as a direct response to the ever increasing demand for fish in the country.

Chonona Aquaculture Limited produces table size fish, tilapia and catfish fingerlings which then raised on the farm in earthen ponds. The Company will also offer internship opportunities to college and university students willing to acquire practical skills in fish farming, extension and market linkages.

Chonona Aquaculture Limited is a rural based inclusive business with integrated aquaculture farming practices. It is the only business raising catfish on a commercial basis in Malawi. It is also involved in the production of single sex tilapia using imported hormone. Being rural based and SMEs, the business adopts low cost production methods.

Chonona exemplifies an innovative enterprise in aquaculture in Malawi with innovative technologies and processes such as sex reversal, marketing of live fish, production of low cost fish seed and feed at the farm from locally available raw materials. Through its selective breeding process, the business is able to produce high quality fish seed for production. Chonona Aquaculture Limited requires an estimated US$125,000 to take this enterprise to scale.
Impact Agribusiness Incubator

Led by Madalitso Chidumu, Priscilla Longwe and Mphatso Mbewe

Impact Agribusiness Incubator is an initiative by three young Malawians; Madalitso Chidumu, Priscilla Longwe and Mphatso Mbewe. The Impact Agribusiness Incubation center is the first and only registered agribusiness Incubation center under Malawi Company’s Act. Impact Agribusiness seeks to reduce poverty and hunger in Malawi and to create employment opportunities for the youth and women.

Impact Agribusiness focuses on Roots and Tubers value chains which has a high business potential and opportunity to increase income of stallholder farmers and create employment opportunities along the value chain. Impact’s current focus crop is cassava with attention geared towards commercialisation of cassava production using ICT and value addition. Several smallholder farmers in Malawi produce cassava but face low prices, high postharvest losses, drudgery which reduce the quality and net returns from cassava production.

Impact Agribusiness Incubator is helping farmers to Triple their incomes through an innovative business model of contracting farming and full product development along the cassava chain including the utilisation of cassava laves, chipping of broken root tubers and potential to starch production among others. Impact is in a partnership with Airtel Malawi allowing farmers to access agricultural information through the Short Messaging Services (SMS). Impact Agribusiness Incubation Centre seeks an estimated US$25,000 to take this enterprise and institutional focus to scale.
Lowosi Electronics and Energy Services

Led by Samuel Admore, Happy Kadewere, Grace Makwakwa, Enock Palapandu, and Joyce Mphalabungu

A team of young Malawians; Samuel Admore, Happy Kadewere, Grace Makwakwa, Enock Palapandu, and Joyce Mphalabungu with a passion to propel quality fish delivery, reduce postharvest losses and ensure international competitiveness of Malawian fish have allied together to establish the Lowosi Electronics and Energy Services Company.

Lowosi seeks to champion the use of Fish Vacuum packaging enterprise as a new innovative approach to the fishing industry in Malawi. Lowosi Electronics and Energy Services as a youth lead company is currently marketing cooling systems and maintaining food storage facilities in Lilongwe Malawi.

Lowosi seeks to become a leading company in fish packaging in Malawi satisfying national and international market with quality fish. Lowosi requires an estimated US$20,000 to further take this innovation and enterprise to scale especially reaching to the fishers at the Lake shores of Malawi.
Green Heat Malawi

Sungani C. Mkandawire and Alinane Brown Kilembe

Green Heat Malawi is a green economy business based in Mzuzu, Malawi operated by Sungani C. Mkandawire and Alinane Brown Kilembe. It is focused on the production and sale of sawdust/paper briquettes to households and institutions engaged in day-to-day cooking activities. Green Heat Malawi seeks to reduce household and institutional dependence on traditional fuels like firewood and charcoal by providing an environmentally-conscious alternative through the utilization of sawdust/paper briquettes and the implementation of efficient biomass cooking stoves. Green Heat Malawi is creating a world where former waste products are reused to generate sustainable energy.

In partnership with Flame Tree Initiative and Mzuzu University faculty, Green Heat Malawi’s key activities are creating sawdust and paper briquettes and fuel efficient stoves that provide the unique value proposition of generating inexpensive, highly efficient cooking power with a low carbon footprint. Green Heat customers consist primarily of residential households, small-scale restaurants, and institutions with large cooking facilities such as boarding and government primary schools, university cafeterias, prisons, refugee camps, and hospitals.

By transforming sawdust and paper into a valuable fuel, briquettes unlock the true potential of waste products. They can ease the pressure on natural forests for fuel cultivation, as well as relieve the waste building up in landfills across the country. Unlike the traditional fuels, briquettes can be made from a variety of waste materials, pressed into different shapes, and produced using dozens of methods. Diversity in briquette design enables integration with many end-use technologies, from improved cook stoves to industry boilers. Green Heat Malawi, seeks an investment capital of US$30,000 to translate this innovation into scale.
Innovation Food & Agribusiness Development Consult

Led by Dumisanie Mambiya, Sam Kapota and Rachael Mambiya

Innovation Food & Agribusiness Development Consult (IFADC) championed by Dumisanie Mambiya, Sam Kapota and Rachael Mambiya a team of dynamic Malawian youth recognises the need for more businesses that help to create more business opportunities within Malawi and Africa as a whole to reduce the polarizing unemployment levels affecting youth in the continent.

Therefore, Innovation Food & Agribusiness Development Consult (IFADC) seeks to recreate a Malawi with zero unemployment and an Africa of progressive productivity through food and agribusiness enterprise development. The IFADC seeks to mobilize hundreds of agricultural graduates passionate youth to engage in production of pigeon peas that is on high demand in Indian markets.

IFADC models agricultural innovations to the youth through its model farms and challenges the youth to replicate and improve in practice in other areas of Malawi. IFADC is not just a business, it is a business creator. IFADC seeks to expose and develop the entrepreneur inherent in the many agricultural university students or graduate and/or school leavers and help them practically get out of their comfort zone to put their ideas to use.

IFADC’s current farm/production systems are not merely for the market, but to demonstrate to the unemployed youth the immense opportunities in agriculture. IFADC requires additional US$20,000 to take this innovation to scale and reach out to more youth in Malawi.
Training the Next Generation of Scientists for Africa

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