

- Establish a database of enterprises and an alumni network: A database helps ATCs, as well as steering institutions, improve their knowledge management for existing or potential partnerships. Tracer studies should be conducted to improve knowledge management for alumni. This strengthens the networks between the private sector and ATVET institutions.

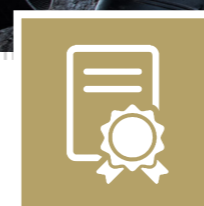
Cooperation at the national level

- **Provide incentives for the private sector:** The short-term investment that companies must make to host interns can pose serious barriers to deepening or even engaging in cooperation. Tax breaks or infrastructure subsidisation in return for hosting interns or engaging in curriculum development will increase the willingness of the private sector to form long-lasting relationships.
- **Incentivise flexible courses hosted by private sector actors:** Providing more flexibility in the curricula should be considered to enable private sector actors to provide short courses. These short courses can in turn be developed into longer, practical, skills-based modules.
- **Strengthen exchange between actors:** Regular dialogue events provide great opportunities to monitor and review the implementation of MoUs, and also to review any sector developments that may have an impact on curricula delivery and refinement.
- **Consolidate the cooperation:** Especially in the initial stages, the contribution of Ministries helps to underline the importance of regular dialogue events and to strengthen the capacity of ATC liaison offices to formalise cooperation processes. This can be achieved through:
 - Stakeholder dialogue facilitation
 - Developing and maintaining communication channels
 - Database management and monitoring
 - Establishment and monitoring of MoUs.
- **Cluster the umbrella associations of value chains:** Associations help to cluster several different actors according to their value chain. A closer linkage between national ATVET bodies, such as technical working groups and umbrella organisations, makes exchanges more efficient and thus provides a good basis for knowledge management and efficient communication.
- **Offer free training in pedagogy to entrepreneurs in cooperation:** Not all entrepreneurs in companies can train and transfer their knowledge and skills to interns. Interns should not be sent to enterprises where there has been no input on improving pedagogical skills. To participate effectively, those in charge of interns should understand how curricula are taught, what their roles are as intern hosts, and how they are able to complement the training process.
- **Set up an ATVET fund for ATCs:** Collaboration with the private sector cannot solve crucial issues such as lack of accommodation and infrastructure for practical instruction at ATCs. Countries need to increase investment in agriculture in general and agricultural training in particular. For this to be effective, it should be coordinated at the continental level.
- **Promote ATVET among girls and women:** Governments can support better integration of women in professional agriculture by setting up grants to enable female trainees to conduct internships, on the condition that they participate in mentorship programmes or become ATVET ambassadors after their graduation.

Having a large population of young people in developing African countries can serve to stimulate economic development with improved human capital capabilities, but only if there is intentional investment in quality and adequate training. As we think about investing in the needs of the youth, we must look at where the greatest opportunities for development exist. Investing in appropriate education and training programmes will give young people the skills they need to transition smoothly into the labour force. This is critical for farming and agribusinesses. The future of agriculture and its sustainability will depend on the quality of training provided to the youth.



Policy brief



Dynamic approaches to the integration of private enterprises into ATVET delivery

Over 65% of Africa's labour force finds employment in the agricultural sector, with the majority representing smallholder farmers with little to no formal or non-formal training. Across the continent, many rural families still depend on agriculture as their sole source of income, while at the same time economies rely heavily on the sector as a key contributor to the gross domestic product (GDP). However, the agricultural sector in many African countries is not yet sufficiently professionalised to realise its potential for poverty alleviation, food security and economic growth. In this context, the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) promotes Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training (ATVET) and ATVET for Women in 12 member states to foster sustainable agricultural skills development and strengthen a professional and productive agricultural sector.



Several years of experience have shown that one crucial, yet often neglected area is **private sector engagement** in ATVET. This paper, based on experiences from Benin and Togo, highlights the possible roles for private companies in ATVET, the major challenges hindering cooperation, and recommendations to enhance and accelerate the private sector contribution.

A mismatch between training and agricultural labour needs

Despite high unemployment rates in many African countries, the high demand for a qualified workforce in the agricultural sector is not sufficiently met. This is due in part to a mismatch between the general education system and the needs of the labour market which requires practical skills and work experience. ATVET aims to equip young people with practical skills critical to professionalise agricultural production in Africa and boost processing for value addition. Special curricula, training equipment and facilities on the ground, and a strong focus on practical instruction at Agricultural Training Centres (ATCs) and in the industry are integral elements of the programme.



The private sector has a role to play

Closer linkages between agricultural enterprises and ATCs are an important step towards resolving the mismatch.

Engaging companies in education and training has great potential for enhancing the skills of trainees and also gears the training towards the needs of the labour market. Below is an overview of types and levels of cooperation currently practised in Benin and Togo.

Existing cooperation between ATCs and private companies



Internships

In the current setup in Benin and Togo, an internship constitutes the first professional experience which serves as preparation for the trainee for a given job. The private sector hosts the trainees to make it possible for them to put the theoretical knowledge gained through their training into practice. It allows trainees to acquire skills related to a given profession or to prepare them for their own entrepreneurial project.



Curricula Development

The contribution of entrepreneurs and professionals in the agricultural and agrifood trade in the development of curricula is a form of cooperation that is increasingly explored. This form of cooperation ensures that training programmes meet the needs of the agricultural market.



Training Delivery

In some instances, private sector representatives are involved in the training delivery at ATCs by running training courses or sharing their entrepreneurial experiences. In the new dynamic of training for entrepreneurship, learning from established entrepreneurs is an important condition for effective preparation of young people starting out on their own.



Mentoring

Mentoring refers to an interpersonal relationship of support, exchanges and learning between individuals. An experienced person, the mentor, offers their acquired experience and expertise to promote the development of another person, the mentee, who needs to acquire skills or knowledge and achieve professional goals.



Management

Management means that private sector representatives are involved in the management of ATCs. It is a very rare form of cooperation. Individuals or companies from the private sector may also be involved in the management of training by providing machinery, infrastructure or financial support.

Advantages of collaboration

1. Partnerships inspire youth to become engaged in agriculture

Existing cooperation with private enterprises addresses two main challenges related to the production of a skilled agricultural labour force.

- **The provision of internship opportunities:** By hosting interns, enterprises expose trainees to real-life industry contexts, including skills needed and machinery used. A major challenge is that ATCs have limited capacities to provide learning that includes solid practical elements. This is partially due to limited access to the machinery needed

- for intensified agriculture, which is very expensive when used for non-commercial purposes. At the same time, there are specific skills that trainees cannot gain or practise in an institutional environment, but only through real-life exposure in the industry.
- **Exposure to role models:** Agricultural entrepreneurs provide an understanding of agriculture as a market-oriented business to which young and skilled people can make a significant contribution and generate revenue. These role models can inspire youth to engage in agriculture as a profitable business and to become entrepreneurs by sharing their stories, challenges and experiences.

2. Collaboration brings benefits to companies

- **Companies gain skilled employees:** The influence of companies and their participation in ATVET enable them to fit the training to their needs. The most relevant forms of cooperation are internship provision, participation in curriculum development and training delivery. All three elements are geared towards producing workers who are fit for the labour market. By taking part in curriculum development, for example, companies can influence the quality of teaching content in their sector, and contribute to the development of the value chain.
- **Collaboration provides incentives for enterprises:** The professionalisation and development of the sector are key incentives which need to be strengthened further.

Challenges to cooperation and collaboration

Despite positive experiences with collaboration and a solid foundation of motivated actors, the current cooperative environment does not live up to its potential. This is mostly due to a lack of resources and organisational challenges which complicate enterprise engagement.

- **Lack of formalisation at the ATC level:** Although there is already a considerable amount of cooperation taking place, most of it is based on informal networks and agreements. The lack of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), as well as a clearly designated contact person in ATCs, such as a liaison officer, makes it difficult for companies to engage on a long-term basis.
- **Lack of resources on both sides:** To host interns, companies need to invest time, material, financial and human resources. These short-term costs can exceed the medium- to long-term benefits gained by cooperation and thus limit the willingness of companies to engage in long-term relationships with ATCs or hinder the initiation of a partnership. Additionally, companies take risks during internships, as there is often no insurance in place to cover inexperienced personnel using complex machinery.

Approaches that can enhance and accelerate private enterprise involvement

The issues outlined above hinder the strengthening of existing partnerships and make it more difficult to engage in new ones. To address these challenges, it is key to provide easy access and a secure framework with which companies can engage. This can be done at the level of ATCs with the support of higher-level leadership or by national actors.

Cooperation at the ATC level

- **Support the formalisation of cooperation processes:** A crucial element of this process is the establishment of liaison offices at ATCs. Their responsibilities should include initiating and strengthening formal relationships with companies through the following instruments:
 - Draw up Memoranda of Understanding: MoUs between ATCs and private sector companies should set realistic expectations about goals and objectives for the collaboration, as well as setting dates for review and evaluation.