A study conducted by one Heifer International, a global organization working to improve farmers' income and families' nutrition projects reveals a wide range of agritech innovations that could propel African farmers to profitability.

While a proportion of 23% of youth engaged in agriculture are using any form of agricultural technology, the report says there is still a lack of financing and training.

Dubbed "The Future of Africa's Agriculture: An Assessment of the Role of Youth and Technology," the new findings released on International Youth Day, includes responses from almost 30,000 young Africans and follow-ups with hundreds of farmers and farm organizations.

In addition, it points to the need for new investments to stimulate access to innovations that could encourage African youth now turning away from agriculture to reconsider opportunities in the sector—especially given the need to generate jobs and repair food systems battered by the pandemic.

Commenting on the new report, Adesuwa Ifedi, senior vice president for Africa Programs at Heifer International stressed that Africa's agricultural sector must provide the investments in agritech innovations that will encourage youth to embrace agriculture-related endeavors.

This is because, according to him, Africa as a continent with a thriving young population, the youth is key to revitalizing the existing food system.

The new report surveyed 29,900 youths, 299 smallholder farmers and 110 agriculture technology startups, innovation hubs and technology organizations in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal,Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

It identifies challenges faced by smallholder farming communities and potential areas for innovation and growth.

While it was demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected African farmers, new findings indicate that some 40% of agriculture organizations featured in the survey report that they were forced to close at least temporarily due to the pandemic.

Estimates show that 38% experienced a reduction in average purchase amount per customer and 36% still do not have the financial capital to grow back their

businesses.

“Youth engagement in agriculture will be essential to recovering from the economic impacts of the pandemic, both to rejuvenate the continent’s agri-food system and develop economic opportunities for young Africans,” Ifedi said.

But despite the challenges they face, the report also provides a window into the many ways young African entrepreneurs across the continent are developing creative, useful agritech tools and services for smallholder farmers.

It highlights many young innovators who are boosting farm productivity and profits in Africa.

These include artificial intelligence, remote sensing, geographic information software (GIS), virtual reality, drone technology, application programming interface (API) technology and a variety of precision tools for measuring rainfall, controlling pests and analyzing soil nutrients.