

A new report on the living conditions, characteristics and role of farming households in Rwanda shows that while agriculture remains the country's economic backbone, young people are underrepresented in the sector.

The 2024 Agriculture and Household Survey (AHS) found that about 3.6 million Rwandans over age 30 work in agriculture. In comparison, only 30.7 percent of those between ages 16 and 30 are involved in farming.

The 2022 Population and Housing Census reported that although agriculture employs about 65 percent of Rwanda's population, farmers between 16 and 30 account for only 14 percent of that workforce.

Among working-age Rwandans, just 17 percent of young people with professional skills are employed in agriculture, forestry or fisheries. The sector, however, contributes more than 25 percent to Rwanda's gross domestic product.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) has said attracting youth to farming is increasingly critical as most current farmers are smallholders and nearing retirement age.

The government has begun to tap into graduates from the Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture (RICA), which trains students in environmentally sustainable farming practices. Many graduates are young professionals expected to bring innovation and renewed energy to the industry.

During the Africa Food Security Summit in Senegal in September, President Paul Kagame urged African youth to become the driving force behind modern agriculture by embracing innovation and technology to boost productivity.

Kagame said empowering youth is key to transforming Africa's agriculture. He called on governments to adopt policies that remove barriers for young farmers and support them with financial and technical resources to implement their projects.

Across Africa, more than 400 million people are between ages 15 and 35, according to regional data. While about 60 percent of the continent's land is arable, climate change continues to make farming difficult.

Governments are also encouraging commercial banks to design financial solutions that address the continent's economic challenges, with agriculture among the priority sectors.

The AHS 2024 report shows that Rwanda has more than 2.2 million farming households, representing 65.3 percent of all households nationwide. Of these, 88.4 percent rely primarily on farming as their main source of income. The remaining households earn their living from other activities but engage in farming or livestock as a secondary source of revenue.

The report found that 74.3 percent of farming households are headed by men and 25.7 percent by women. The average household size is 4.4 people, with an estimated 9.6 million Rwandans living in farming households — 48.3 percent men and 51.7 percent women.