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**Why and how youth should get involved in agriculture**

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**Notes to broadcaster:**

The youth are the future of agriculture, yet most young people do not see a future in farming. Worldwide, young people who are interested in farming face challenges in trying to earn a living, including lack of land, and lack of access to credit and other important resources for agriculture.

While most of the world’s food is produced by older small-scale farmers in developing countries, these aging farmers are less likely to adopt new technologies needed to sustainably produce food for a growing population in the face of climate change, while protecting the environment. According to Mercy Corps AgriFin Accelerate, 90 per cent of farmers aged 18 to 35 in Kenya are highly engaged with information and communication technologies. They are active users of social media, particularly Facebook, Google, and WhatsApp, and are bringing a new dynamism and perspective to agriculture. They are also energetic and quick to learn.

With farming populations aging, there is a need to engage youth in agriculture by making it attractive for them to be involved. This entails giving them access to knowledge, information and education on agribusiness, and access to land, financial services, and markets in ways that fit their interests and skills.

In this fictional drama, Alex is young man who has tried several small businesses without success and is on the verge of getting into a life of crime. He and most of his agemates don’t think young men can succeed in farming. After much convincing from his friend Amara, a young man who is doing well in farming, Alex starts an agribusiness. At first, he is faced with a major challenge. The drama revolves around the question of whether he will overcome the challenges and excel in farming.

This drama contains nine scenes, varying in length from 3 to \_5 minutes.

Duration of the entire drama, with intro and outro: 30-35 minutes.

**CHARACTERS:**

**ALEX:** Young man in his early 20s. He completed high school but did not continue to college. He is unemployed and has tried his hand in business so many times, but nothing has worked. He is frustrated and is contemplating a life of crime.

**AMARA:** A young man in his mid 20s, recently married, has one child. He is a beneficiary of projects that help young people in rural areas earn a living from agribusiness. He started growing amaranth for seed and has been very successful.

**ALEX’S DAD/BABA:** Father to Alex, very strict man in his late 50s. He has spent his earnings trying to educate his children. He values his piece of land very much.

**ALEX’S MUM/MAMA:** Alex’s mother, a woman in her mid 50’s. She loves her son and would do anything to help him prosper.

**BUYER:** Mature man who comes to buy agricultural products from the village.

**SETTING:** VIHIGA COUNTY IN WESTERN KENYA

**SFX:** SIG TUNE UP THEN UNDER

**NARRATOR:** Though agriculture provides employment and generates income and food security, young people rarely get involved in it. Even in a country like Kenya where the economy depends largely on agriculture, the young prefer white collar jobs in urban areas. For agriculture to be attractive to many youth, they need to be involved in activities that support agricultural production, including capacity building, goods and services, logistics, and value addition as service providers and entrepreneurs. Young farmers in Kenya prefer short-season, high-value farm enterprises such as horticulture, poultry, beekeeping, and rabbit rearing.

In today’s drama, we meet Alex, an unemployed young man who is frustrated and desperate to earn a living. Amara, a young man in his village, is making money through agribusiness and convinces him to try. Today’s drama, we see how Alex’s hard work helps him succeed in spite of the challenges he faces.

**SFX:** SIG TUNE UP THEN OUT

**SCENE 1:**

**SETTING:** AMARA’S FARM

**SFX:** SOUND OF DIGGING AND SOMEONE WHISTLING UP THEN OUT

**ALEX:** (SHOUTING BREATHLESSLY FROM AFAR THEN MOVING CLOSER TO MIC) Hello, Amara! How are you doing? I see you are early and already in the farm.

**AMARA:** I am well, Alex, how are you doing? Farm work is best done in the morning. Where are you headed this early?

**ALEX:** Let me stop for a minute (SIGHING). I hear there is a political rally in the primary school. I want to get there and get the closest seat to the member of parliament. Perhaps I may be lucky to get some handouts.

**AMARA:** Alex, Alex … for how long will you live on handouts? You get what? Two or three hundred shillings which buy alcohol and you are back to where you started. How is this improving your life?

**ALEX:** That’s easy for you to say. You have money! Until I get to make money like you, I will go anywhere I can get money.

**AMARA:** I did not always have money, Alex. Just like you I would make a little money and spend it in a day. Until one day …

**ALEX:** (SARCASTICALLY) I know the story. You got capital, bought land, started farming, made money, and now you are better than the rest of the young people in the village.

**AMARA:** Is that what you think?

**ALEX:** No, it’s what we all know. Not everyone is lucky to have rich relatives who can give them capital, you know!

**AMARA:** (LAUGHING) I wish that was the case but no, I do not have rich relatives and no one gave me capital. Alex, I would like to share my story and challenge you to get to where I am. Why don’t you go to the rally and pass by here on your way back and then we can talk?

**ALEX:** Ah, not sure. After I get that money, I may not be able to listen to anything (LAUGHING).

**AMARA:** Think about it. I am home all day. Pass by for a cup of tea and we can talk.

**ALEX:** Let me rush. I will think about passing by.

**SCENE 2**

**NARRATOR:** Four hours later, a frustrated Alex is back to Amara’s home. The political rally did not go as he thought it would. He is tired, hungry, and still broke.

**SFX:** QUICK FOOTSTEPS

**ALEX:** (SHOUTING) Amara! (KNOCK ON THE DOOR) Am back, are you home?

**AMARA:** (DOOR OPENING, WHISPERING) Shhhhh …! Keep it down, my brother. My son is having his afternoon nap.

**ALEX:** (WHISPERING) Am sorry, can I get in? I hope the offer for food is still open?

**AMARA:** It was tea, Alex, not food. Why don’t we sit out there while we talk? My wife will kill me if we wake the boy.

**SFX:** SOUND OF CHAIRS BEING MOVED, FOOTSTEPS

**AMARA:** Have a seat. I am surprised you came back even after getting your handout (LAUGHING).

**ALEX:** What handout? (SIGHING) These politicians just want to use young people.

**AMARA:** I take it there were no handouts?

**ALEX:** Not even food, man! Being a young man in this village is hard! The COVID-19 situation has made things even worse.

**AMARA**: Ok. Let me see if I can find some left over lunch for you.

**SFX**: (FOOTSTEPS UP THEN UNDER) You are lucky, there is some left over rice from last night, that is the best I can do. You can have tea later.

**ALEX:** This is fine.

**AMARA:** This is good food! (SPEAKING WITH HIS MOUTH FULL) So this is how well one eats when one has money?

**ALEX:** Let’s just get to the point, Alex. You do know that I was brought up in a poor family, right?

**AMARA:** (SPEAKING WITH A MOUTHFUL) I thought so … but word in the village ...

**ALEX:** I would like to share my experience so that you can see if you will be successful. I will be available to help in any way I can.

**AMARA:** (SPEAKING WITH A MOUTHFUL) Ok, I really have nothing to lose from listening.

**ALEX:** I was just like you, Amara, frustrated after completing my high school, no college fee, unemployed, and I was not getting younger. I had dreams too—to be successful, have a family … but every business idea I had needed capital which I didn’t have, and my parents had spent all their money supporting me through school.

**AMARA**: That’s where I am … no money, no job. I do not see a future unless I get into crime. So who gave you money?

**ALEX:** No one. Flash back three years ago. A gentleman from the city came to our village to talk to young people about the possibility of supporting us in agribusiness.

**AMARA:** Ok. Am listening, but why young people?

**ALEX:** Young people like you are unemployed and desperate and can therefore easily be lured into a life of crime. On the other hand, they are energetic and quick to learn new ways of doing things. So young people like you and I can earn a living in agribusiness and also support the older farmers. Another thing: young people are able to use technology very well during times like this when we have the COVID-19 pandemic. We can even sell our products online unlike our parents.

**AMARA:** True, but agriculture is boring for young people! I am not sure I would be patient enough to plant maize, labour, and wait for months before I can harvest, then sell it at a loss. You have heard our parents complain that the price for agricultural goods is very low.

**ALEX:** Yes, and that is why young people are involved mostly in high value and less labour-intensive crops that require less time to grow. Also, think about it Amara, our parents are getting old and they are not good with these new technologies. They need us, our country needs us to step up and feed our people, especially now that the climate is changing.

**AMARA:** You have a point; I see how my dad struggles with even sending a text (LAUGHING). Ok. But what kind of farming are you talking about?

**ALEX:** There is the option of poultry, horticulture like growing African leafy vegetables for seed, growing hay or pasture for animals, growing fruits like passion fruit, or being part of the production process by providing transport, or administering artificial insemination to animals as requested by farmers. Since you are good with social media, you can use it to sell your products.

**ALEX:** That’s a great idea, and (PROUDLY) I am good at social media. So, is that why you are growing amaranth?

**AMARA:** Yes.

**ALEX:** Ok. But the main issue is land. I do not own it and I can’t afford to lease.

**AMARA:** Most young people don’t own land or even have access to financial services. That’s why we have to talk to our parents or guardians to allow us to use a part of their land.

**ALEX:** My dad would never! He has struggled to get the little land he has and he values it too much.

**AMARA:** Your dad will be convinced if you are serious. Maybe I can help you persuade him. I had to convince my father that my idea would succeed and that I would help in buying some household items when I did well. Took him some time to accept because I was persistent. Look at me now, I am now leasing land from my profits and I still have money to save, invest, and take care of my family.

**ALEX:** My parents might listen to you but I know they will not give me money for seeds or anything else. Not after all my failed attempts at making money.

**AMARA:** You do not have to worry about that. Once you are convinced that you can get involved in agriculture and you are committed to doing the work, you will get the seeds. After my parents allowed me to use me one-eighth of an acre, the gentleman gave me seeds and I went through a training on how to grow the crops. I put into practice all that I had learnt and guess what?

**ALEX:** What?

**AMARA:** After three months, I already had a ready market for my amaranth seeds. Thanks to technology like Facebook and WhatsApp, I sold them at 1500 shillings per kilo. The money I made, I was able to invest in more seed. I bought some household items and my parents trusted me with another quarter piece of land and I planted amaranth again. From the sales, I was able to start saving so that I could lease land the following year. That is what I did with my profits every three months for the last two years. Now I am able to lease three acres of land, farm, pay my bills, live very comfortably with my family, and have a little more to save and invest. In the next few weeks, I want to start a poultry project. All this from growing amaranth!

**ALEX:** Wow! Profits in three months? I would like to do that. Can I grow amaranth for seed too?

**AMARA:** Yes, you can. Even I cannot exhaust the demand for amaranth seed. The good thing is that the same people who train you can also help you get a market for your products, but first you need the land.

**ALEX:** Yeah, I am still not so sure I will get the land from my parents.

**AMARA:** There is no harm in trying … ask them. If they accept, I will give you the first seed then we take it from there. I am preparing my land for the next crop so we can do it together if you get the land.

**ALEX:** Sounds like a plan. Let me go home early today and try talk to them.

**AMARA:** All the best, Alex!

**ALEX:** Thank you, and thank you for the idea. I am challenged to try it.

**SCENE 3**

**SETTING** AT ALEX’S PARENTS HOME

**SFX:** KNOCK AT THE DOOR, DOOR OPENING

**ALEX:** Hi dad! Hi mum!

**ALEX’S MUM:** Hi son. Someone is excited and home early! Wait … (PAUSE, THEN ACCUSINGLY) you only come home early if you have not had any food or you are in trouble out there.

**ALEX:** Its none of those. I am actually full and I spent my afternoon at Amaras place.

**ALEX’S MUM:** Amara, Joseph’s son? That’s a hardworking boy. I wish … (IN A HARSH TONE) Alex, hope you did not go there to cause trouble!

**ALEX:** Mum! I have not done anything wrong!

**ALEX’S DAD:** I know you. Always causing trouble with your wayward friends. Mama, this boy will kill us before our time!

**ALEX:** I am serious, I have not been causing trouble today. In fact, I am home because I want to share an idea.

**ALEX’S DAD:** (SARCASTICALLY) Another idea hmm ...? Well, as long as it does not require money. All our money went into educating you—and remember that you still have two siblings in school.

**ALEX’S MUM:** Baba come on, let’s listen to the boy. Maybe this time …

**ALEX’S DAD** Mama, you know Alex, none of his ideas have worked. The last one was the motor bike business. That motorbike is lying outside, spoilt and useless and I am still paying for its purchase. I think you are the one spoiling him. Entertaining his useless ideas.

**ALEX:** But dad, this one does not involve money. I just need some land.

**ALEX’s DAD:** Did you say land? My land?! No, no … not that! That is not possible. In fact, I will not hear more of this. I am going to bed. This talk of land is just raising my blood pressure.

**ALEX:** (SIGHING) Mum, really it is a good idea.

**ALEX’S MUM:** Alex, you know your dad has tried helping you. You also know that this land is very close to his heart.

**ALEX:** Mum, this time it will work. I have been talking to Amara. He is where he is because his parents believed in his dream and gave him a small part of their land to start with. Now he is leasing two acres, and in fact he has promised to give me the first seed. I want to be like him.

**ALEX’S MUM:** Ok, son. Tell me about this idea. Perhaps I may be able to convince your dad.

**ALEX:** Ok. So this is the plan …

**NARRATOR:** Alex shared his idea with his mum and his mother was very impressed. She went to try and talk to her husband. She knew that it would be very difficult to convince him to help his son so she also had a plan in case her husband refused.

**SCENE 4**

**SETTING:** ALEX PARENTS’ BEDROOM

**ALEX’S MUM:** (WHISPERING) Hello, Baba … are you already asleep?

**ALEX’S DAD:** You know I can’t sleep this early, mama. Your son’s unending demands brought me to bed but am still awake.

**ALEX’S MUM:** I think this time he might be serious.

**ALEX’S DAD:** You are still following me to the bedroom with Alex ideas? I cannot have peace in my house. Mama, don’t spoil this boy. Let him learn to depend on himself.

**ALEX’S MUM:** How will he start? Please, let’s give him a chance.

**ALEX’S DAD:** And this chance involves my land? Surely you of all people know how hard I have worked for this land. It is the only valuable asset I have, and the only thing I can pass on to my sons—and Alex is not ready for it yet.

**ALEX’S MUM:** He is not asking for his inheritance. He is only asking to use a small piece to grow vegetables. The piece near the fence is ideal. You never use it.

**ALEX’S DAD:** Not my land. No, I will not give my land for useless experiments.

**ALEX’S MUM:** (PLEADING) Please …

**ALEX’S DAD:** (SHOUTING ANGRILY) No! And I am not discussing this matter anymore mama. Goodnight!

**ALEX’S MUM:** (IN DISBELIEF) Ok, baba, don’t get so worked up. Goodnight.

**NARRATOR:** As his parents are arguing in the bedroom, Alex hears their conversation and he is not happy. Angry, he leaves the house in the dead of night.

**SCENE 5**

**SETTING:** ALEX PARENTS’ HOUSE, IN THE LIVING ROOM

**SFX:** MORNING SOUNDS

**ALEX’S MUM:** Its 10 o’clock, where is Alex?

**ALEX’S DAD:** (MUMBLING, TIRED) Take your breakfast. Stop worrying about a grown man.

**ALEX’S MUM:** I will check on him**.** (SOUND OF A CHAIR BEING MOVED) It is unlike him to sleep this long. (FOOTSTEPS UP THEN UNDER, CALLING OUT ON MIC THEN OFF MIC, DOOR KNOCK) Alex! Alex wake up … (DOOR OPENING) He is not in his room. Maybe he already left. This is not like him at all. (SHOUTING) He is not in his room.

**ALEX’S DAD:** I told you to leave him alone. The boy can take care of himself. It’s about time he moved out of this house anyway.

**NARRATOR:** Alex did not come back that evening and his phone was off. The next morning, his mom went to find out if Amara knew of Alex’s whereabouts, but Amara had no idea and neither did any of Alex’s friends. Amara’s mother told her husband and they reported the matter to the local chief. The following day, there was an unexpected guest.

**SCENE 6**

**SETTING:** ALEX PARENTS’ HOUSE, LIVING ROOM

**SFX:** MORNING SOUNDS

**ALEX’S MUM:** (ANGRY) See your stubbornness! Now we have lost our son.

**ALEX’S DAD:** He will come back Mama, he is not lost.

**SFX:** KNOCK ON THE DOOR, MALE VOICE CALLING OUT

**ALEX ‘S UNCLE:** Hello! Anybody home?

**ALEX’S MUM:** Come in, my brother.

**ALEX’S UNCLE:** I can hear you shouting from a mile away. Are you ok?

**ALEX’S MUM:** No, I am not. (CRYING) Alex is lost!

**ALEX’S UNCLE:** I heard, that’s why am here.

**ALEX’S DAD:** The boy is not lost …

**ALEX’S MUM:** It is almost four days, Baba, he is not picking his phone and no one knows where he is. My son is …

**ALEX’S UNCLE:** Calm down, my sister. Alex is ok.

**ALEX’S DAD AND MUM:** He is?!

**ALEX’S UNCLE:** Yes, but if you treat him as you are doing, you might just lose him. He came to my house late at night two nights ago.

**ALEX’S DAD:** You see mama, I told you he is not lost …

**ALEX’S MUM:** Don’t! You are the reason we are in this situation. How is my son, how is my son?

**ALEX’S UNCLE:** Your son is frustrated. You have to know that these young people need to be understood and helped. He just wants to be helped to achieve his dream. He only needs a small piece land to try farming—is that too much to ask?

**ALEX’S DAD:** You know how I have tried to support him, but I draw the line at my land.

**ALEX’S UNCLE:** Well, then. Your son is not ready to come back home and you will be responsible for the choices he has to make to survive.

**ALEX’S MUM:** Please let him come. I will give him. I will help him.

**ALEX’S DAD:** How?

**ALEX’S MUM:** Don’t worry, I just want my son home. I own this land too.

**SCENE 7**

**NARRATOR:** After much convincing from his uncle and his mum, Alex came home. His mother allowed him to farm on the land she was preparing to plant beans.

**SETTING:** AMARA’S HOME

**SFX:** FOOTSTEPS, SOMEONE RUNNING

**ALEX:**  (SHOUTING, OUT OF BREATH) Amara! Am here.

**AMARA:** (AT A DISTANCE) Alex! Where have you been? Come round to the farm, Alex.

**SFX:** FOOTSTEPS RUNNING

**AMARA:** The whole village was worried Alex. Where have you been?

**ALEX:** It’s a long story, Amara, I am glad to be back and I got the land. Am ready to start.

**AMARA:** Great! Your parents must really trust you.

**ALEX:** My mum. My dad, not so much. I am actually getting the land that my mum uses to grow beans. Dad thinks this is just another ridiculous idea.

**AMARA:** This just means that you have to work hard and prove to him that this can work. Are you ready to put in the work?

**ALEX:** I was ready yesterday. In fact, I have already thought about my next six months.

**AMARA:** Slow down, my brother. One day at a time, ok?

**ALEX:** Really, Amara, just talking to you has broadened my mind and I have had time to think about the farming. I will plant the vegetables and with my profit I will fix my motor bike. You told me I can also do transport for other farmers. I will do that as I grow my vegetables. I also plan to expand my business using the available digital tools.

**AMARA:** That sounds like a great plan, Alex. I also want you to succeed and I will personally mentor you through this. I want you to also attend the farming meetings that we have each week. But first, help me prepare my land and then we will go start on yours. Every morning, we will start with mine then go to yours, ok?

**ALEX:** Yes, Amara. And thank you for this opportunity. I appreciate it and I will do my best. I need to get where you are.

**AMARA:** With this attitude, you can be better than me, Alex. Ok then, get that hoe and start on that side. We need to start on your land before the sun is too hot.

**SCENE 8**

**NARRATOR:** Amara worked with Alex every day for several weeks. Alex did well, he listened, learned, and his crop did exceptionally well. It has been three months now and Alex’s crops are ready for harvest. Amara promised to pass by with a potential buyer.

**AMARA:** This is the other young man I was telling you about. He has just started and his crop is doing very well, maybe even *better than mine* as you can see.

**BUYER:** Wow, this is good. Is this a quarter acre of amaranth?

**ALEX:** Yes, it is.

**BUYER:** It looks good! You were right, Amara, when you said I will be impressed. You know what—I will take all of it, Alex. Since you come highly recommended by Amara, I will take it at the same price I buy Amara’s.

**ALEX:** Thank you! Thank you so much.

**BUYER:** You are welcome, son, I am always very happy to promote hard-working young people. If you keep this up, I will always buy from you.

**NARRATOR:** With Amara’s help, Alex was able to successfully grow, harvest, and sell amaranth seeds at 1,500 shillings a kilo. With the money he made, he bought some household items for the family and gave his parents some of the money. He was also able to pay the balance on his motor bike and repair it to provide transport for his products and for other farmers too. After the second harvest of amaranth, Alex realized some livestock farmers do not have fodder for their animals. So he started growing Brachiariagrass for sale, and he also began a very exciting online project to support farmers in his area.

**SCENE 9**

**SETTING:** ALEX’S PARENTS’ HOME

**SFX:** FOOTSTEPS

**ALEX’S DAD:** Hi Alex, I thought you would be at the farm?

**ALEX:** Hi dad, I was up early today, I have finished my work at the farm. I thought I would look at the numbers on my website.

**ALEX’S DAD:** (CONFUSED) Web … web what? I get so confused with young people’s language these days.

**ALEX:** (LAUGING) To keep it simple, it’s an online space I created to provide farmers with information about crop cultivation and livestock resources.

**ALEX’S DAD:** And how is that making money?

**ALEX:** By attracting advertising from the private sector dealing with agriculture. And the county government too. See here ... I have the local milk processing company advertising through my website and look here too … some requests from as far as neighbouring countries to partner with me.

**ALEX’S DAD:** Seems like agriculture is going online now. I am so proud of you, Alex. I did not think that you would be committed to agribusiness but look at you now—not just farming but creating solutions for older farmers like me to get information and sell our products beyond this village.

**ALEX:** Your trust means so much to me.

**ALEX’S DAD:** I know. I was skeptical at first, but now I know you are serious. In fact, your mother and I have been talking. Instead of you leasing land, you can use our land for your farming. I am growing old and I am not able to do much farming, but I will support you in every way I can.

**ALEX:** (EXCITED) Thank you, dad! That will help me so much. The money I would have used to lease land, I am planning to grow more Brachiariagrass. And I also want to expand my online activities to other social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and hopefully sell my products and promote other farmers as I also earn from advertising.

**ALEX’S DAD:** I cannot keep up with this online things (LAUGHING), but I am glad you are excited about agriculture and other young people are also inspired to go into agribusiness.

**NARRATOR:** In spite the challenges that Alex faced at the beginning, he managed to work hard, made profit from his amaranth, and convinced his father to give him access to more land. His plan, just like Amara, is to be able to lease more land to grow even more crops and diversify to other high-value crops. He is now part of the farmer VSLA group in his village and he is able to save, invest, and borrow money to expand his business. His success in agribusiness has convinced him and other young people in his village that they can earn a living from farming in the rural areas. He has learnt that agriculture is not only for the old farmers. Young people can also get involved and succeed in agriculture.

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Interviews:

Mr. Daniel Okumu, interview conducted on June 22, 2021.

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