



2. PREPARE YOUTH FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Though youth might be linked to viable economic opportunities, they may not always be prepared to succeed. Volume 1, Section 4.1 of this guide discusses the importance of aligning youth assets with the demands of the agri-food system. This section suggests how to prepare youth to maximize the opportunities within the agri-food system over the long term, as well as in other aspects of their life.

2.1 Develop Transferable Skills

When youth possess the right skills, competencies, and attitudes, they are able to succeed as market actors in agri-food systems. However, not all youth possess the necessary skills and competencies to perform in agriculture markets; as youth cohorts differ in education level, age, etc., their skill levels also vary. Feed the Future activities are likely to achieve greater results with youth when accompanied by strategies that help youth build foundational skills and positive attitudes.



TIP: While it is critical to identify the set of industry-specific skills required by value chain entry points, it is equally important that skill-building efforts enable young people to navigate within and between value chains as new opportunities arise. These foundational skills also help young people develop the resilience needed to overcome barriers and respond to economic or other shocks as they arise. Figure 3 illustrates the range of skills that enable youth success—most of which are consistent with value chain requirements.



Figure 3. Skills Pyramid: Range of Skills Necessary for Youth Success in the Agri-Food System

INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATIONAL SPECIFIC SKILLS



WORK READINESS SKILLS



Financial Literacy



Enterprising and Employability Skills

Goal setting, value chain dynamics, market research and marketing, cost/benefit analysis, revenue models



Soft Skills

Social skills, positive self-concept, self-control, communication skills, and higher-order thinking

BASIC SKILLS



Functional literacy and numeracy



When assessing skills requirements, a very basic approach examines the technical or educational requirements for performing different job functions. Table 4 illustrates such a “skills mapping” exercise, identifying value chain functions and the corresponding levels of education and experience needed to complete them.

Table 4. Technical Skills Requirements in the Fruit and Vegetables Global Value Chain*

Position	Job Description	Education Requirements	Training/ Experience
Production for Export			
Harvest Worker	Responsible for bin placement for pickers and removal of bins ready to be stacked in trucks. Must be able to operate machinery safely, and without damaging the harvested product.	No education required	Experience/training
Tractor/Truck Operator	Manually plant, cultivate, and harvest fresh fruits and vegetables. Duties may include tilling soil and applying fertilizers; transplanting, weeding, thinning, or pruning crops; cleaning, packaging and loading harvested products.	License/certification	Technical training
Pesticide Handler	Prepare and apply pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, or insecticides. Pesticides handlers must be thoroughly knowledgeable of the chemicals as well as proper application and disposal procedures.	Technical education	Experience/technical training/certification
Irrigation Technician	Install, maintain, alter, repair, and service irrigation system.	Technical education	Experience
Quality Control	Work in the field and are responsible for the quality of the harvested crop. Random samples are taken from each bin and checked for quality, size, color, and maturity.	Technical education	Experience
Packing and Cold Storage			
Packing Worker	Fills trays, wraps fruit, and packs boxes. Looks for defects in the fresh fruit and vegetables and makes sure the packed fresh fruit and vegetables are well presented.	No education required	Training
Labelers	Labels packed fresh fruit and vegetables for shipment. Using computer-controlled equipment ensures traceability of produce.	Literacy and numeracy skills	Training
Transport Driver	Transport fresh fruit and vegetables between fields and packhouses and shippers. Delivers product safely and in good condition. Manage logistical delivery and dispatch paperwork. May need heavy truck license.	Literacy and numeracy skills	Technical training/experience
Managers (Line/Shift)	Ensures quality of the fresh fruit and vegetables complies with industry standards. Shift managers are responsible for workflow. They solve workflow problems by people management, and liaise with the line manager.	Technical education	Management skills/experience

*Adapted from: Fernandez-Stark, K. et al. (2001). The Fruit and Vegetables Global Value Chain. Economic Upgrading and Workforce Development. Center on Globalization, Governance & Competitiveness, Duke University, p. 18.



A growing body of research is finding, however, that soft skills (such as positive self-concept, communications, social skills, self-control, and critical thinking) are equally, if not more, important predictors to long-term economic success.¹⁸ Other important work readiness skills, such as entrepreneurial skills and financial literacy, enable youth to navigate the changing economy over time. As an example, Table 5 illustrates how the range of technical competencies, soft skills, and work readiness skills are relevant in the context of the Kenyan livestock sector.

Table 5. Required Competencies in the Kenyan Livestock and By-Products Value Chains*

Cross-Sector Skills Profile: Livestock and By-Products		
Soft Skills	Enterprising and Employability Skills	Industry Specific Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following Instructions • Giving Clear Explanations • Communication • Negotiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Relationship Management • Logistics • Entrepreneurial Skills • Costing • Marketing and Sales • Buyer Network Management • Financial Record-Keeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Control • Packaging • Inventory Management • Health and Safety

*Adapted from: EcoVentures International. (2010). Youth Labor Market Assessment, North Eastern Province, Kenya: A study of market opportunities and workforce needs for youth. Chart adapted to highlight the different types of skills developed.

Even though a skill might be developed in an agriculture or workforce setting, evidence shows that youth apply many of these skills (e.g., problem solving, planning ahead, and negotiations) in other aspects of their life, including conflict mitigation, health, and nutrition.¹⁹ As such, developing soft skills mutually reinforces cross-sectoral programming. (Volume 1, Section 3.3 of this guide discusses ways to identify opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration.)

