

VET Toolbox II in Ghana

Policy Brief

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of Ghana's economy, contributing around 20% to its Gross Domestic Product per year. The agricultural sector in Ghana employs an estimated 40-50% of the country's labour force and remains a vital and significant source of livelihood for many Ghanaians. Despite its importance, the agricultural sector faces several challenges, including being small holder driven with low productivity and underutilising modern technology. There exists a significant skills gap in the workforce, especially amongst youth.

These persistent challenges make TVET offers, which are designed to bridge the skills gap in the agricultural sector, critical in addressing the lack of relevant skills at the right level, by equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge required to boost productivity along the value chain.

VET Toolbox was designed to enhance the delivery of demand-driven skills to cater for investment needs in 11 selected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The main objective of the project was to support human capital development to enhance investment in supply chains in these selected countries, through the implementation of targeted skills development and by strengthening VET delivery systems for employment opportunities, especially for youth. VET Toolbox aimed to improve the effectiveness of VET systems by making them more opportunity-driven to drive inclusive economic growth, social development and the creation of decent jobs, across three key areas:

Enhanced Public-Private Dialogue

Creating connection channels between government TVET actors, vocational training institutions, the Agricultural Sector Skills Body, cooperative farms and local authorities.

Aligning training offers with labour market needs through public-private collaboration.

Targeted Skills Development

Implementing focused, short-term training courses for youth, covering essential technical skills needed at commercial farms in Agronomy, Farm Enterprise Management and Tractor Mechanisation.

VET Reform

Using project insights and lessons to improve Ghana's vocational education and training.

Developing policy recommendations and facilitating national dialogue to maintain programme relevance.

Implementation process

In Ghana, the Agricultural Skills Enhancement Programme aimed to support skills development in the agriculture sector across the Northern, North-East, and Savannah regions of the country. The project built upon government investment programmes and laid the foundation for future investments in Ghana's dynamic agricultural and agro-processing sectors. The VET Toolbox project closely collaborated with the Savannah Zone Agricultural Productivity Improvement Project (SAPIP) to address the growing need for a skilled labour force, with a specific focus on training youth for employment at commercial farms.

Through innovative partnerships with public and private organisations, the programme has contributed to creating local jobs in the agriculture and agro-processing sectors through the development and delivery of three curricula in collaboration with training providers (Damongo Agric College, Tibzaa Farms, Gratis Foundation, Dabpoka Technical Institute, Tamale Technical University and Nalerigu) and private commercial farms. The project pioneered comprehensive Workplace Experience Learning (WEL) placements in the sector through the close collaboration of employers and training providers, aiming to enhance practical, employable skills for inclusive graduate employment.

Roles and responsibilities

Ghana TVET Service

Has the mandate for managing, overseeing and implementing approved policies and programmes relating to pre-tertiary and vocational education and training in Ghana.

CTVET

Facilitates the development of TVET policy, approving occupational standards, unit specifications and assessment tools, as well as overseeing assessment and issue of certificates via the National TVET Qualifications Framework.

Agricultural Sector Skills Body (ASSB)

Facilitates the integration of skills development into agriculture sector development policies to ensure that the supply of skills is tailored not only to meet the skills demand of the agriculture sector, but also to engineer the necessary growth in productivity and market orientation to produce sustained and decent employment.

Ghana Employers' Association

Advocates and lobbies for the design and implementation of policies that create a conducive environment for business to thrive.

Chamber of Agribusiness

Serves as the voice of the agribusiness industry, supporting smallholder, producer-led cooperatives and agribusinesses with technical, market and regulatory services.



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Policy recommendations

These recommendations were formulated through experiences gained throughout project implementation, as well as from a lessons learnt and policy recommendations workshop held in November 2024, involving all of the project's key stakeholders (government ministries, training providers, private sector and trainees). This workshop provided them with an opportunity to feedback on the process and reflect upon what had been learnt through implementation of the VET Toolbox project. These suggestions and feedback were then consolidated into the policy recommendations below.

Public-Private Dialogue

What we recommend

Invest in a multi-level, sustainable public-private dialogue forum to enhance dialogue between actors. Public-private dialogue is critical for the implementation of VET provision within local communities. Although sector skills bodies do exist as nationally recognised dialogue mechanisms, both demand and supply side stakeholders should be involved in setting up local dialogue mechanisms to drive the reforms needed to implement holistic VET education. The enhanced dialogue mechanism should include representatives from government agencies, TVET institutions, industry players and civil society, to formalise and streamline sector-specific VET responses to investments for responsive TVET delivery. This local dialogue forum, facilitated by the Agricultural Sector Skills Body, would generate local labour market information to help training providers understand employers' needs and allow local stakeholders to be directly involved in the design, implementation and management of future TVET projects, fully devolving stakeholder engagement to the communities in which a project is implemented.

Action

This policy recommendation is actionable by CTVET, ASSB, Ghana Employers' Association, Chamber of Agribusiness, Ghana TVET Service.

Why this recommendation

Demand-driven TVET requires input and leadership from the private sector to bridge the gap between TVET delivery and the expectation of the labour market. The experience of VET Toolbox has shown that a functioning, local-level dialogue mechanism is essential to implement a demand-driven VET system, whereby the participating commercial farms have shown willingness to co-invest in public-private dialogue to design effective mechanisms for effective VET delivery.

Through comprehensive investment in stakeholder engagement involving training providers and the private sector, private employers would contribute to all training development and delivery activities, including curriculum development and workplace experience learning. A local-level mechanism would contribute directly to the Agricultural Sector Skills Body at national level for better informed policy discussions and this committee would become a permanent structure to support implementation of future projects, thereby building local capacity for partnership and sustainability.



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Curriculum Development

What we recommend

Direct industry players with experience in the specific field of work should be included in occupational standards' generation and validation of curriculum development, to have a strong voice in agreeing the occupational needs and thereby the standards to complement the work of curriculum development experts. Improving the breadth of key actors involved helps to align curricula to specific industry needs, particularly when that involvement extends to labour market intelligence and skills needs analyses. Including past trainees in occupational standards' generation and validation is also recommended to give a voice and agency to immediate past trainees with knowledge of the training process and to improve the relevance and quality of courses based on lived experience.

Action

This policy recommendation is actionable by CTVET and ASSB.

Why this recommendation

Occupational standards' generation in Ghana is currently carried out by industry experts who sometimes do not have direct experience in the field of work of the curriculum being developed. Through the VET Toolbox project, commercial farmers and a past female trainee were involved in the generation of occupational standards for the first time, directly utilising their experience and expertise and increasing the quality of the learning material to be more relevant to industry needs, as well as gender sensitive. The ASSB has acknowledged this recommendation and has committed to directly involving direct industry players in future curriculum development processes.

Training Delivery

What we recommend

The academic calendar for farming and agriculture programmes should be aligned with due consideration made to the farming season, particularly in the unimodal rainfall system of northern Ghana. Whilst certain courses can be undertaken during the off-season period, the main production courses should be well-planned to coincide with rainfall to afford learners of practical training opportunities to experience a complete farming cycle.

Action

This policy recommendation is actionable by Ghana TVET Service.

Why this recommendation

Ghana has a fixed school term system irrespective of the course being delivered. For an agriculture programme, especially in a rain-fed condition and unimodal rainfall regime, it is important that the academic calendar is reconsidered for practical farm training and specifically for work experience learning placements, to optimise the learning that can be undertaken during the short harvest season. This will allow learners to benefit extensively at the farm and to learn about the full cycle of farming activities within a season, experiencing all phases of production as they take place.



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Work Experience Learning

What we recommend

Funding for work placements should be directly provided for within training delivery. This could incorporate tax breaks, subsidies and public recognition for employers engaging in public-private dialogue, whilst promoting cost-sharing models to finance infrastructure, training, and public-private dialogue activities. Whilst workplace experience is part of the competency-based training model that is implemented in Ghana, students rarely undertake practical work placements, due mainly to a lack of sustainable funding to support it. Private employers would be willing to support learner activity if training courses are designed to provide workplace experience learning, with the needs of private employers included in the training offer. For training providers, private employers, and students alike, this is a win-win situation.

Action

This policy recommendation is actionable by CTVET.

Why this recommendation

VET Toolbox benefitted from EU and BMZ funding whereby WEL placements for students were supported through a financial provision to employers for the upkeep of learners, as well as transport for learners being provided to and from their placement. Without a sustainable funding mechanism for the future, it will be difficult for vocational training institutions and commercial farms to continue implementing the WEL component of the training.



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