

## YPARD Fellowship Programs: Supporting the Youth Today for a Better Tomorrow

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There is a disconnect between the skill sets acquired in a university setting and those required by employers in the agricultural sector. We bridge the existing gap. [Young Professionals for Agricultural Development \(YPARD\)](#) is a network of 30'000 young professionals spread across the globe who either work or are active in agriculture. As a youth network with over fifteen years of experience, and as young professionals ourselves, we are privileged to have insight into the needs of young people. These needs can be summarized in two parts: the need for involvement in policy and capacity development to secure green jobs.

At YPARD, it is important we respond to the demands of our membership and over the past fifteen years, there have been many workshops, mentoring programs, knowledge products and placements to support the career development of YPARDIans. More recently, YPARD developed fellowships based on the interest of our membership to further enhance capacity building, one of YPARD's strategic fields. At the moment, the fellowship pathways are: [extension & advisory services](#), [agriscience research](#) and [policy & advocacy](#).

Interested to learn how YPARD's fellowship pathways have materialized thus far?

### In Africa: Strengthening Youth Research Competencies for Agriculture R&D



*Nawsheen Hosenally*

Agriculture continues to be the largest employing sector in Africa. However, youth are not well positioned to contribute to the sustainable development of food systems. Due to hierarchies of power, along with the lack of training, networking and opportunities for civic engagement, agriculture is perceived as an occupation offering no escape from the poverty trap. This is at the core of the passive involvement of youth in agriculture.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative Africa strategically positions its youth to effectively shape the agricultural sector. With this in mind, [Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa \(FARA\)](#) joined forces with YPARD and [Africa Leadership Academy \(ALA\)](#) to provide training, networking and pathways to decent employment opportunities. In 2021, four young African

scientists, part of the YPARD network, benefitted from this program. Looking towards the future, YPARD along with partners are enthusiastic to expand on this pathway.

### **In Europe: Mentoring & Training of Young Advisors to Close the Skills Gap**

Extension and advisory agents face similar challenges to young farmers in entering and staying in the sector due to many factors including access to opportunities, credibility, and support. To tackle the problem and its root causes, YPARD has partnered up with [EUFRAS \(European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services\)](#) thanks to our strategic partnership with [Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services \(GFRAS\)](#). The resulting [YEUFRAS-YPARD Young Advisors Mentorship and Training Program](#) aims to retain and advance young advisors through practical training. They will hone their soft skills by connecting with relevant networks in the European food system.



*EUFRAS*

This pilot program, which will launch in September 2022, already piqued the interest of young professionals across different continents. Due to this, our goal is to scale up the fellowship to further reach YPARDians.

The partnerships of organizations, such as FARA, ALA, EUFRAS and GFRAS, are important to YPARD. We cherish their support of youth interested in agriculture. Moreover, our partnership with [Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation \(SDC\)](#) allows YPARD to thrive in a space where many youth organizations are not able to survive due to lack of financial support. Lastly, YPARD looks forward to developing more fellowship programs in the future, and we are always open to collaborating with organizations, which support young professionals to ensure the food producers of today and tomorrow.