

# KIC YOUNG AGRIPRENEUR

KOSMOS  
INNOVATION  
CENTER

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE, ONE ENTREPRENEUR AT A TIME

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Quarterly Newsletter



**INVESTING IN THE FUTURE,  
ONE ENTREPRENEUR AT A TIME**

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# Key Highlights

In the first quarter of 2024, the Kosmos Innovation Center (KIC) has been at the forefront of driving innovation and agripreneurship for young people in Ghana. Starting with the team's workplan and review session in January, the KIC team is committed to delivering on its purpose of powering innovation, transforming communities, and impacting lives.



The AgriTech Challenge Pro kicked off with a Military Bootcamp, providing participants with intensive training and mentorship to prepare them for the challenges ahead on the entrepreneurship journey. This unique approach emphasizes resilience and discipline.



KIC took a significant step towards promoting agricultural education by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Blue Skies Foundation to assume governance of the School Farm Competition.



The quarter also saw young people on the AgriTech Challenge Pro's participate in their first pitch, presenting their innovative solutions to agricultural challenges to the Ideation Team. First pitch and regional pitches for AgriBiz was also organised under the MSR activity.

To engage with the media and raise awareness about its initiatives, KIC organized a Media Round Table, facilitating discussions and insights into the organization's impact on youth agripreneurship in Ghana through its program pathways.



In line with its commitment to fostering collaboration and empower more young people across the country, KIC expanded its network by signing MOUs with six new universities and colleges.

Additionally, the Community Based Women's Bootcamp was featured prominently, highlighting KIC's commitment to promoting gender equality and empowering women in entrepreneurship.



Overall, the first quarter of 2024 showcased KIC's dedication to fostering innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship, laying the foundation for continued growth and impact.

# KIC commences AgriTech Challenge Pro with Team Building and Bonding Bootcamp



In January, (KIC) organised a Team Building and Bonding Bootcamp for the 2023 cohort of the AgriTech Challenge Pro. The AgriTech Challenge Pro is a program organised in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, reflecting a joint commitment of KIC and the Mastercard Foundation to enhancing work-readiness and employability skills among young individuals, steering them toward dignified and fulfilling career paths in entrepreneurship.

The team building training kicks off the robust 5-month long accelerator training program. Leveraging innovation and technology as catalysts, the AgriTech Challenge Pro aims to drive transformative change in the industry by nurturing the next generation of agripreneurs, transforming and creating social impact, while becoming economically empowered. Each participating team receives funding support for their product and business development.

This year's participants include the top 22 teams from the 2023 KIC AgriTech Challenge Classic and 20 dynamic existing startups. The ten participating universities include University of Ghana (UG), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University of Cape Coast (UCC), Bolgatanga Technical University (BTU), Takoradi Technical University (TTU), Ho Technical University (HTU), Koforidua Technical University (KTU), University of Development Studies (UDS), SD Dombo University of Business & Integrated Development Studies (UBIDS), and University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR).

The AgriTech teams were immersed in activities that strengthened not only interpersonal connections but also introduced crucial concepts of resilience and discipline as fundamental team skills. Recognizing the pivotal role these attributes play in the journey of start-ups, the bootcamp focused on fostering collaboration and creativity among the upcoming entrepreneurs.

Benjamin Gyan-Kesse, the Executive Director for KIC, set the tone for this year's AgriTech Challenge Pro training with an inspiring address. He emphasized the significance of KIC's program approach, underscoring its role in instilling an entrepreneurial mindset among young individuals. Mr. Gyan-Kesse highlighted the importance of empowering participants to not only envision but also actualize their aspirations, fostering a culture of business growth and sustainability.

# KIC signs MOU with Blue Skies Foundation to take over the governance of the School Farm Competition



KIC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Blue Skies Foundation (BSF) to transfer the governance and implementation of the School Farm Competition to KIC. The ceremony took place at KIC Innovation Hub in Accra on 6th February, 2024 in the presence of Mr. Benjamin Gyan-Kesse, Executive Director for KIC, Mrs. Jane Lutterodt, General Manager, Blues Skies Company Ltd., Mr. Alistair Djimatey, Head of Blue Skies Foundation and Corporate Affairs Manager for Blue Skies Ltd, as well as other representatives of Blue Skies Company Ltd .

The MOU outlines the agreement for the transition of the governance and management of the Blue Skies School Farm Competition to KIC. The School Farm Competition introduces students in junior and senior high schools to agriculture innovation by focusing on horticulture. The students learn from concepts such as nursing seedlings, transplanting, cultivation beds and the right application use of approved chemicals and fertilizer, as well as the use of PPEs. Through the practical experience, the program seeks to create a change in mindset about seeing agriculture as a form of punishment to seeing it as an economic viable activity. In 2022, KIC partnered with Blue Skies Foundation with funding support from the Mastercard Foundation to help achieve the objectives of the School Farm Competition.



The KIC-BSF partnership helped reach a total of 198 junior high and senior high schools in 2022 with over 5,500 students being exposed to opportunities in the agricultural value chain and changing their mindset to agriculture entrepreneurship. As of December 2023, more than 18,000 students had been trained under the program, under the partnership arrangements. Speaking about the new governance structure, Benjamin Gyan-Kesse said: “With the governance and management of the school farm competition program moving to KIC, we are confident that we will be able to continue with the growth trajectory of the program, as we look forward to encouraging more schools to participate in the competition.”

On his part, Alistair Djimatey, Head of Blue Skies Foundation and Corporate Affairs Manager for Blue Skies Company Ltd., affirmed that Blue Skies will maintain an advisory role in the competition's governance, assisting and advising on its development and growth.

Through the program, participating schools have supported their students to see the benefits of farming. It has also enabled schools to support their canteen. Some of the yields have also been sold externally and the proceeds used to support development in the schools.

# KIC organises AgriTech Challenge Pro

## First pitch



KIC and Mastercard Foundation have organised a First Pitch for the 2023 cohort of the AgriTech Challenge Pro ahead of the Final Pitch event to take place in May 2024. The First Pitch took place at Kosmos Innovation Center in Accra, where the AgriTech Challenge Pro participants received feedback from Ideation Team members, a team of business experts across the agribusiness and agri-MSMEs sectors. AgriTech Challenge Pro was introduced by KIC to provide young people with entrepreneurial skills within the agricultural sector. Through the 5-month program, young people receive capacity building and training on business development, business diagnostics, design thinking, marketing, legal documentation, business team formation, among others.

Through KIC's partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, the AgriTech Challenge Pro expects to train young people across the partner universities in the next two years, collaborating with regional academic partners such as universities and technical schools.

Since 2022, the participants to the KIC AgriTech Challenge Pro join from the KIC AgriTech Challenge Classic, where KIC supports young people with a business idea, to develop these into agri-startups. At the Pro stage of the competition, these businesses already exist as registered legal entities. Other participants also join the program from already existing start-ups.

Speaking about the impact of the KIC AgriTech Challenge Pro, Benjamin Gyan-Kesse, Executive Director, highlighted the important role of the training and capacity building in providing the young people with practical training on agribusiness management.

"Every year, young people from the participating universities and colleges develop business solutions tailor made to address some of the critical challenges facing the agricultural sector. Particularly, this year, many of the businesses are focusing on sustainability, green businesses, and circular economies, cutting across different agro-related industries," he said.

### **Enabling a climate action through agritechology and innovation**

This year 40 teams are pitching from ten universities across the country, with a strong focus on climate related interventions and technology focusing on bio-degradable innovations from waste agricultural produce, carbon reduction innovations, Agric manufacturing implements among others. From climate smart agricultural practices to eco-friendly packaging, the ideas from these young people are contributing to environmental responsibility and reducing the impact of agricultural activities on the environment.

# KIC organises Media Round Table

On 15th March, 2024, KIC organised a Media Round Table with selected media from across different media houses. The media interacted with the Executive Director and Management Team of KIC.

The media roundtable created a platform for KIC and KIC Businesses to interact with the media, highlighting and showing the impact of KIC and its partners in creating social transformation for young people. There was an introduction of KIC and its program portfolio. There was also a Q & A Session where KIC had the opportunity to expatiate further on some of its programs.

Speaking at the engagement, Benjamin Gyan-Kesse, the Executive Director for KIC said: “At KIC, our multi-stakeholder partnerships approach to deliver consistent programs complement formal education already received. We have also introduced programming for young people within the informal sector, because we believe in leaving no one behind when it comes to job creation for young people within the agricultural sector.

“I am very happy about this media interaction, not only because I am passionate about agriculture, agribusiness and agritech, but also because I believe that young people can bring their skills and know-how in technology to transform the sector to bring about increased productivity and food security and take climate action through innovation,” he added.

The media engagement is part of KIC’s media relations strategy to promote collaboration with the media.



## Young Agripreneur Forum



Young Agripreneur Forum is a student-led interactive forum, initiated by KIC where tertiary students can share and exchange ideas, interests and engage in activities pertaining to agriculture.

Young Agripreneur Forum -University of Cape-Coast chapter embarked on a volunteering program dubbed" A Day on the Job" where they took a day to work at Farm Fresh Foods Limited, a commercial poultry farm located at Jukwa, in the Central Region. It was an amazing experience as they witnessed the hard work of our farmers and the exciting opportunities that the agricultural sector presents to the youth.

Young Agripreneur Forum- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology chapter, organised a handing over of its executives. A new group of executives have taken over. They have also launched a “ Youth in Work” project to encourage young people to take up agripreneurship. YAF across different campuses also launched similar activities within the quarter.

# KIC signs MOU with six new universities and colleges



KIC has signed an MOU with six additional educational institutions, to promote and build the capacity of young people in entrepreneurship and agribusiness, within the agricultural and agri-adjacent sectors. This initiative forms part of the scaling up of KIC's programs under its multi-year partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, to create dignified and fulfilling employment opportunities for young people.

The partnership agreement was signed with Pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrars and Principals of the following universities and agricultural colleges respectively, namely C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences; Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development; Damongo Agricultural College; Kwadaso Agricultural College; Ejura Agric College and Mechanization Centre and Ohawu Agricultural College. This brings the total number of tertiary institutions and colleges on the program to 16.

Under the partnership, students and young people within the communities where these educational institutions are located will receive training and capacity building on entrepreneurship. Some of the programs that will be run within the 2-year agreement include the AgriTech Challenge Classic, AgriTech Challenge Pro, Young Farmers Business Academy and Young Agripreneur Forum. Through the AgriTech Challenge Classic and Pro programs, students receive mentorship, training, and networking opportunities to start and grow their business. Students who go through unto the business incubation stage receive funding support from KIC together with its partners to enable them scale -up their businesses and become investor ready.

Speaking at the MOU signing ceremony, Benjamin Gyan-Kesse, Executive Director for KIC emphasized KIC's commitment to youth development, working in collaboration with its partners to provide practical business training for young agripreneurs along the entire agricultural value chain. "We are committed to empowering young men and women to drive innovation in agriculture towards the attainment of SDG Goals".

# KIC holds orientation for six new universities and colleges



Kosmos Innovation Center (KIC) recently welcomed six new universities and colleges, marking a significant milestone in its mission to foster innovation and youth entrepreneurship across Ghana. This brings the total number of tertiary institutions and colleges on the program to sixteen covering all regions of Ghana. The orientation session, held at the KIC office Accra, brought together representatives from the newly onboarded universities namely C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences; Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development; Damongo Agricultural College; Kwadaso Agricultural College; Ejura Agric College and Mechanization Center and Ohawu Agricultural College, eager to explore the opportunities and resources offered by KIC to drive innovation-driven entrepreneurship among students and young people.

During the orientation, participants were introduced to KIC's flagship programs, including the AgriTech Challenge Classic, the AgriTech Challenge Pro, Business Incubation, Business Booster and AgriBiz Programs. These programs provide young people with training, coaching, mentorship, investor-readiness and access to funding support to develop and scale their innovative ideas. The participants in the orientation program were also introduced to the School Farm Competition, Young Agripreneur Forum and Women's Bootcamp which helps to create mindset change about agriculture and helps young people to see career and employment opportunities within the agricultural sector. Mrs. Terence Tienaaah, Programs Manager at KIC, emphasized the importance of the collaboration in driving innovation and economic growth and opportunities for young people. "By partnering with universities, we are helping to provide entrepreneurial pathways for young people within the agricultural sector," she said.

The orientation also featured insights from participants currently on the KIC AgriTech programs who shared their entrepreneurial journey and the impact of KIC's support on their ventures. Their success stories served as inspiration for the new cohort of university partners, demonstrating the transformative power of innovation and entrepreneurship in driving social and economic progress. As the newest additions to the KIC family, the participating universities expressed their enthusiasm for the opportunity to engage with KIC's ecosystem and contribute to Ghana's innovation landscape. Through collaboration and knowledge-sharing, they are poised to unleash the full potential of their students and drive positive change in their communities.



# KIC organises Women's Bootcamp in selected communities in Upper West Region



As part of its gender strategy to encourage more women farmers to take up agripreneurship outside the farming season, and women in general to consider agripreneurship, KIC organised a capacity building training for at the community level women groups from Jirapa, Lambussie, Wa East and Sissala East Districts in the Upper West Region in February. This forms part of the series of capacity building sessions organised throughout the year.

Facilitators trained the women on topics such as climate change adaptation and livelihood enhancement programs linked to agribusiness, as well as other topics such as record management, good agricultural practices, and the safe application of chemicals. Women are also encouraged to form Savings and Loans Association to support livelihood activities.



# Spotlight Feature: Meet KIC's Gender Champion



In Quarter one, we celebrated International Women's Day, with the theme "Inspire Inclusion". As the world endeavors to ensure gender equality, some women act as frontiers in introducing and implementing gender friendly initiatives. Mercy Tuffour is one of such women, who has initiated and led projects tailored at empowering women and the youth.

Mercy has indicated garnering work experience in gender, safeguarding, agri-business value chain, monitoring and evaluation as well as project management.

She has led many gender initiatives in various organisations, targeted at investing in the young and women.

Currently, Mercy Tuffour is the Gender and Safeguarding Specialist for Kosmos Innovation Center (KIC). She leads the KIC's Women's Bootcamp Project, which seeks to encourage more women undertake agribusiness as a means of economic empowerment for young people, as well as promoting the improvement of the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in selected locations.

Prior to her current position, she served in different capacities in reputable organisations. Mercy, at different stages in her career utilized her expertise and platforms to create awareness on plights of the marginalized in society and empower women in diverse ways. Over the years, Mercy's work has taken her to the frontlines of some of the most pressing gender issues of the time.

As a Gender and Safeguarding Specialist, Mercy conducts trainings and also advocates for human development issues relating to youth, women and girls. Mercy focuses on addressing gender based violence, economic empowerment, as well as reproductive health for young people. She focuses on facilitation, gender mainstreaming; safeguarding, monitoring, and evaluation; capacity development for youth and women's empowerment; and managing stakeholder relationships".

Mercy holds a Master of Business Administration in Corporate Governance from the University of Professional Studies and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Philosophy from the University of Ghana.

Her efforts in the gender field has demonstrated her quest to promote justice, as projects she spearheads have generated key conversations towards gender equality.

Mercy's initiatives have left an enduring mark in some communities she served.

Credit: Interview with Journalist from GNA

# AgriBiz Build Up organises first pitch and regional level pitches under MSR activity



The MSR Activity under the AgriBiz Build Up Program has organized its first district level pitch. The pitch involved a total of 475 young people aspiring to be agripreneurs across all 16 Zones of Influence (Zoi) of the MSR Program in the Northern, North-East, Upper East and Upper West Regions of Ghana. The 475 young people were classified into 136 teams, with business ideas ranging from agricultural production, processing, storage, digitization, marketing, and construction of agricultural implements/equipment etc. An ideation team comprising of Head of the district Business Advisory Centers, district MOFA, and KIC established AgriTech Businesses was constituted to assess the business viability and provide technical input into the business ideas of the 136 teams at the event.

As a member of a consortium, KIC since 2023 has been implementing the Feed the Future Ghana Market Systems and Resilience Activity within sixteen Zones of Influence in Northern Ghana with the aim of increasing institutional capacity of market actors. The MSR Program has through capacity building and investor preparedness coaching and mentorship, equipped the capacity of 27 Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSMEs) and 36 teams of young and dynamic individuals including women with brilliant and economically viable business solutions.

The district level pitches were followed by region specific pitches comprising Northern, Upper West and Upper East Regions. Selected teams from the regional pitch will participate in a Final Pitch and Investor Day Celebration.

Through the MSR project, KIC aims to strengthen collaboration between actors, improve the rural entrepreneurship ecosystem to enable greater market participation, particularly for women and youth, while expanding the availability of agribusiness services and link targeted policy initiatives to improve local economic governance.





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