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Graduating Students' Inclination to Exploiting Agripreneurial Opportunities in Rural Areas of Lagos State

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Abstract
Agripreneurship offers graduating students a possible route to self-employment while supporting agricultural production and rural development. Students need adequate knowledge of available opportunities and suitable support before they can consider agripreneurship as a practical career option. This study assessed graduating students' awareness of rural agripreneurial opportunities and examined the factors that could facilitate their interest in such opportunities in Lagos State. A descriptive survey design was adopted. Respondents were final-year students selected from Universities in Lagos, Multistage sampling procedure was used to select 301 students, of which 287 completed the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 95.4%. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequencies, percentages and weighted mean scores. The findings showed that the respondents had a moderate level of agripreneurial awareness, with a grand mean of 1.17 on a scale of 0 to 2. They were most aware of sources of information about agribusiness opportunities (1.32) and the existence of agripreneurial opportunities in rural Lagos (1.28). Awareness of the particular rural communities where agricultural enterprises could thrive was lowest (1.02). Hands-on practical training and internships ranked as the leading factor that could stimulate interest (1.50), followed by mentorship and business advisory support (1.45) and exposure to modern agricultural technology (1.42). The study concluded that graduating students have general knowledge of rural agripreneurship, but their awareness is not sufficiently specific to support informed career decisions. Tertiary institutions and government agencies should provide practical training, location-specific information, mentorship and direct exposure to viable agribusinesses.

Keywords: *Aagripreneurship, Graduating Students, Awareness, Agricultural Opportunities, Rural Areas.*

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1. Introduction

The transition from university to work can be difficult for young people, particularly where formal employment cannot accommodate everyone seeking it. The International Labour Organization (2024) identifies access to decent work as an important concern for young people. Agrifood systems offer employment possibilities beyond farm production, including processing, distribution, marketing and services, but young people need access to resources and support to take advantage of them (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2025).

Agripreneurship involves applying business skills to activities within the agricultural value chain. An agripreneur may produce crops or livestock, process food, supply farm inputs, provide transport or connect producers to buyers. These activities require decisions about investment, markets, risk and value creation. For graduates, they may provide opportunities to use skills acquired in agriculture, business, engineering and other fields. Yet knowing that agriculture offers business opportunities does not mean that a student will choose it as a career. Research on Nigerian tertiary students has shown that agripreneurial intention is shaped by students' experiences and their assessment of whether an agricultural enterprise is a realistic option (Adeyanju et al., 2021).

Rural communities in Lagos State provide a setting in which to examine that assessment. Agricultural activities continue in areas such as Epe, Badagry, Ikorodu and Ibeju-Lekki, while the state's large urban market creates demand for food and related services. The Lagos Agripreneurship Programme is one example of a state initiative intended to support young people entering agricultural enterprises (Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture & Food Systems, 2023). Even so, a nearby market and the existence of a training programme do not remove the costs or risks of establishing a business in a rural community.

How graduating students feel about rural agripreneurship is therefore important. If they regard it as rewarding and suitable for someone with a degree, they may consider it alongside other career options. Research on agro-entrepreneurial intention among university students has associated favourable attitudes with stronger interest in agribusiness (Che Nawi et al., 2022). At the same time, young people's views of agriculture are shaped by their wider experiences and by what they believe participation would involve (Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020). A student may value agribusiness in principle yet remain reluctant to pursue it in a rural area.

Practical constraints can account for some of that reluctance. New agricultural enterprises may require land, equipment, inputs, transport and enough working capital to survive before sales begin. Graduates without savings or collateral may find these requirements difficult to meet. Rural roads, electricity and water supply can also affect production and the movement of goods. In a study of youths in Ebonyi State, Umeh et al. (2020) examined the socio-economic conditions associated with the choice of agripreneurship. Such conditions matter because a student can hold a positive attitude towards an enterprise while doubting whether they can establish and sustain it.

The distinction between attitude and feasibility is central to this paper. Studies of youth agripreneurship in Nigeria have addressed entrepreneurial intentions and participation (Adeyanju et al., 2021; Umeh et al., 2020), while work in other settings has examined the role of attitudes and social expectations (Che Nawi et al., 2022; Ephrem et al., 2021). These studies provide useful explanations, but their findings cannot simply be assumed to describe final-year degree students

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considering rural ventures in Lagos State. Such students face a particular choice between opportunities in the state's urban economy and enterprises based in its rural communities.

The gap addressed here is therefore specific: how favourably do graduating degree students view rural agripreneurship, and which obstacles do they themselves consider most relevant to entering it after graduation? Examining both questions in the same group helps distinguish a lack of interest from a lack of workable conditions. The study assesses students' attitudes and ranks their perceived barriers.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

1. What is the level of agripreneurial awareness among graduating students regarding opportunities in the rural areas of Lagos State?
2. What factors can facilitate graduating students' interest in rural agripreneurial opportunities?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine graduating students' inclination to exploit agripreneurial opportunities in rural areas of Lagos State.

The specific objectives were to:

1. assess the level of agripreneurial awareness among graduating students with respect to rural agripreneurial opportunities; and
2. examine factors that can facilitate interest in agripreneurial opportunities among graduating students.

2. Literature Review

Agripreneurship as a Graduate Career Option

Agripreneurship extends across agricultural production and the businesses that support it. For a graduate, the relevant opportunity may be in food processing, input distribution or marketing rather than farming alone. This wider view matters when assessing career choice: students may reject what they understand as conventional farming without having considered other agricultural enterprises. Adeyanju et al. (2021) studied agripreneurial intentions among Nigerian tertiary students, while the FAO (2025) places youth employment within the wider agrifood system. Together, these sources support examining agripreneurship as a range of possible livelihoods rather than a single occupation.

The decision to enter an enterprise also depends on more than recognising an opportunity. Graduates must judge whether they can acquire the necessary skills and resources. Evidence from African agripreneurship empowerment programmes indicates the value of developing young people's practical skills (Adeyanju et al., 2023). Although training cannot remove every obstacle, it can make the requirements of enterprise creation clearer and help students evaluate their own preparedness.

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Attitudes Towards Rural Agripreneurship

Attitude refers to a person's favourable or unfavourable assessment of a particular action. In this study, it concerns whether students regard rural agripreneurship as worthwhile, financially rewarding and preferable to some other post-graduation options. It should not be confused with actual participation. A student can approve of agripreneurship without intending to start a business immediately.

Che Nawi et al. (2022) examined agro-entrepreneurial intention among university students using the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Their work points to the relevance of attitudes and perceived ability when students consider agribusiness. Magagula and Tsvakirai (2020) likewise show why young people's perceptions of agriculture deserve attention when examining participation. These studies suggest that favourable attitudes are important, but they do not establish that a positive view will overcome difficulties with finance, land or infrastructure.

Social expectations add another dimension. Ephrem et al. (2021) investigated perceived social norms and agribusiness intention among young people in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Family and community opinions may shape how attractive or acceptable agricultural work appears. Their effect, however, may differ across locations. Social stigma should therefore be assessed alongside practical obstacles rather than assumed to be the principal reason graduates avoid agripreneurship.

Perceived Barriers to Entry

A perceived barrier is a difficulty that a prospective entrant believes could prevent or hinder action. In rural agripreneurship, some difficulties relate to the individual, such as limited technical knowledge or access to capital. Others arise from the operating environment, including roads, electricity, market connections and land tenure arrangements. Production itself presents uncertainties associated with weather, pests, diseases and prices.

These barriers may be connected. Weak roads can increase transport costs and reduce the prices farmers receive. Unreliable electricity can make cold storage or processing more expensive. Limited capital then leaves a new entrant less able to respond to either problem. Research on youths' agripreneurship choices in Nigeria shows the relevance of socio-economic conditions to participation (Umeh et al., 2020). More broadly, the FAO (2025) draws attention to the need for conditions that allow young people to benefit from agrifood employment opportunities.

Education may address some barriers but not all of them. Otache et al. (2024) found that entrepreneurship education relates to self-efficacy, alertness and opportunity recognition among students. Practical education may improve confidence and competence. It cannot, on its own, provide a reliable road, affordable finance or secure access to land. This distinction is important when deciding whether the response to low participation should focus on training, investment in rural services or both.

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Implication for the Present Study

The literature identifies attitudes, social expectations, skills and external resources as relevant to entrepreneurial decisions. Much of it, however, examines broad entrepreneurial intention, students outside Lagos State or young people already considering or practising agribusiness. The present study concentrates on final-year degree students evaluating rural opportunities in Lagos. It examines whether their reported attitudes are favourable and establishes which barriers they rate most highly. Because the research is descriptive, it can identify priorities for further investigation and support, but it cannot measure the causal effect of any barrier on actual enterprise entry.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour. The theory proposes that intention to perform an action is shaped by three factors: attitude towards the action, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. Attitude concerns whether a person evaluates the action favourably. Subjective norm concerns perceived expectations from important others. Perceived behavioural control concerns how easy or difficult the person believes performing the action would be. Intention is a proposed precursor to behaviour, although circumstances can still prevent an intended action from taking place.

The framework fits the study's two objectives. The attitude items examine whether graduating students see rural agripreneurship as worthwhile and rewarding. The items on family expectations and social stigma touch on possible social pressures. Reported difficulties involving finance, training, land, infrastructure, markets and production risk help explain why students may feel less able to establish an enterprise. These elements offer a way to interpret why a favourable view of agripreneurship might coexist with reluctance to enter it.

Studies applying the theory to entrepreneurial intention support its relevance to students' career decisions. Che Nawi et al. (2022) applied it to agro-entrepreneurship, while Maheshwari et al. (2023) identify it as a widely used approach in research on student entrepreneurial intentions. The framework is nevertheless used with care here. The questionnaire did not include complete, separately validated measures of subjective norm, perceived behavioural control or intention, and it did not record later business formation. The study is informed by the theory; it does not claim to test the full model or to predict which respondents will become agripreneurs.

A further distinction is necessary. A student's rating of poor infrastructure is a *perception of a barrier*, not a direct measurement of road, power or internet conditions. Similarly, reporting limited access to finance does not establish whether a particular loan application would succeed. The theory helps explain how such perceptions may enter a career decision, while the survey shows how respondents rated them at the time data were collected.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was suitable because it allowed information to be collected from graduating students about their awareness and the factors that could encourage their interest in rural agripreneurship without manipulating the study environment. The study covered three government-owned tertiary institutions representing the three senatorial districts of Lagos State. These were the University of Lagos in Lagos Central, Lagos State University in Lagos West and Lagos State University of Education, Epe Campus, in

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Lagos East. Final-year students in agriculture-related, agribusiness, entrepreneurship and other relevant programmes formed the study population.

A multistage sampling procedure was used. Lagos State was first divided into its three senatorial districts. One government-owned tertiary institution was then purposively selected from each district. Relevant departments were selected because their students had received some form of agricultural or entrepreneurship education. The sample was proportionally allocated among the institutions, after which eligible students were selected through simple random sampling.

A total of 301 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 287 were properly completed and used for analysis, representing a response rate of 95.3%. The respondents comprised 133 students from the University of Lagos, 95 from Lagos State University and 59 from Lagos State University of Education.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire administered electronically through Google Forms. It contained sections on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, awareness of rural agripreneurial opportunities and factors that could facilitate interest in agripreneurship. Awareness was measured on a three-point scale of Highly Aware, Moderately Aware and Not Aware, coded 2, 1 and 0 respectively. Facilitating factors were measured as Major Factor, Minor Factor and Not a Factor, also coded 2, 1 and 0 respectively.

The questionnaire was assessed for face and content validity by specialists in agricultural extension, entrepreneurship education and research methodology. A pilot study was conducted among 30 graduating students who were not included in the main survey. The instrument met the minimum reliability coefficient of 0.73 adopted for the study.

Data obtained through Google Forms were checked, coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Frequencies and percentages were used to present the respondents' characteristics. Weighted mean scores were used to assess awareness and the factors that could facilitate interest. A mean score of 1.00 served as the decision point. Items with mean scores of 1.00 or above were treated as reflecting at least moderate awareness or a relevant facilitating factor.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

3.1 *Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

The respondents were mainly young adults who were approaching the transition from tertiary education to employment. More than half, representing 55.7%, were between 20 and 24 years old, while 25.8% were aged between 25 and 29 years. Male students accounted for 55.1% of the sample, while females accounted for 44.9%. The relatively close gender distribution shows that agripreneurial interventions should be designed for both male and female graduates.

Agriculture and agricultural sciences accounted for the largest field of study at 46.0%. Business administration and management students represented 15.0%, while education students made up 13.9%. The participation of students from different disciplines supports the broader view that agripreneurship involves production, processing, finance, marketing, education and technology.

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The respondents also came from different residential backgrounds. About 27.9% originated from rural areas, 36.9% from semi-urban areas and 35.2% from urban areas. This spread is useful because students' familiarity with rural communities may influence how they understand rural enterprises.

Family involvement in agriculture was common. Agriculture was the primary family livelihood for 22.0% of the respondents and a secondary or part-time activity for 42.9%. This means that 64.9% had some family connection to agriculture. However, 35.9% had never participated in or received direct information from an agripreneurship support programme. This gap suggests that government and institutional initiatives have not reached a substantial proportion of students close to graduation.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 287)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20 years	29	10.1
	20–24 years	160	55.7
	25–29 years	74	25.8
	30–34 years	17	5.9
	35 years and above	7	2.5
Gender	Male	158	55.1
	Female	129	44.9
Field of study	Agriculture/Agricultural sciences	132	46.0
	Education	40	13.9
	Engineering/Technology	29	10.1
	Social sciences	31	10.8
	Business administration/Management	43	15.0
	Others	12	4.2
Place of origin	Rural	80	27.9
	Semi-urban	106	36.9
	Urban	101	35.2
Family involvement in agriculture	Primary livelihood	63	22.0
	Secondary/Part-time activity	123	42.9
	None	101	35.2
Prior exposure to agriculture	Farming household	123	42.9
	Studied agriculture-related courses	149	51.9
	Agricultural training/Internship	80	27.9
	Personal farming venture	49	17.1
	No prior exposure	57	19.9
	Participated		
Contact with an agripreneurship programme	Participated	52	18.1
	Heard about it but did not participate	132	46.0
	No contact	103	35.9

Source: Field survey, 2026.

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3.2 *Level of Agripreneurial Awareness Among Graduating Students*

The first objective assessed graduating students' awareness of agripreneurial opportunities in rural Lagos. The overall weighted mean was 1.17 on a scale ranging from 0 to 2. This indicates moderate awareness. The result shows that students have some knowledge of agripreneurship, but that knowledge is not equally strong across all areas.

The highest-rated item was awareness of sources of information on agribusiness opportunities, with a mean score of 1.32. In total, 47.0% were highly aware of such sources, while 38.0% were moderately aware. Students may have obtained information through their institutions, social media, government publicity, agricultural organisations and personal contacts. This is encouraging because access to information can provide a starting point for opportunity recognition.

Awareness of agripreneurial opportunities available in rural Lagos ranked second, with a mean score of 1.28. About 43.9% were highly aware, while 40.1% were moderately aware. Awareness of specific ventures such as crop production, aquaculture, poultry and agro-processing ranked third, with a mean score of 1.22. These findings show that many respondents understood both the general idea of rural agripreneurship and some of the enterprises through which it can be practised.

Awareness became weaker when the questions required more specific knowledge. Market demand for agricultural products from rural Lagos recorded a mean score of 1.10. Awareness of available information sources specifically dealing with opportunities in rural Lagos had a mean of 1.05. The lowest-ranked item was knowledge of the rural communities where agricultural businesses could thrive, with a mean score of 1.02. More than one-quarter of respondents, representing 27.2%, were unaware of these locations.

This pattern suggests that students' awareness is broad but not sufficiently practical. Many know where to find general information and can identify common agribusiness ventures, but fewer understand the geographical and market conditions needed to make an informed decision. Adeyanju et al. (2021) similarly found that general knowledge of agriculture does not always amount to a clear understanding of value-chain opportunities. Information becomes more useful when it explains what opportunities exist, where they are located, how the markets operate and what resources are required.

The moderate awareness found in this study may also be connected to the limited reach of agripreneurship programmes. Although 46.0% had heard about such programmes, only 18.1% had participated in one. Direct involvement could provide students with more detailed knowledge than publicity alone. Magagula and Tsvakirai (2020) maintained that targeted information and practical support are necessary if awareness is to lead to participation in agripreneurship.

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Table 2: Level of Agripreneurial Awareness Among Graduating Students (N = 287)

a	Statement	Highly Aware f (%)	Moderately Aware f (%)	Not Aware f (%)	Mean	Rank
1	Agripreneurial opportunities available in rural areas of Lagos State	126 (43.9)	115 (40.1)	46 (16.0)	1.28	2nd
2	Specific ventures such as crop farming, aquaculture, agro-processing and poultry	115 (40.1)	121 (42.2)	51 (17.8)	1.22	3rd
3	Market demand for agricultural products from rural Lagos	92 (32.1)	132 (46.0)	63 (22.0)	1.10	4th
4	Rural communities in Lagos where agricultural businesses can thrive	83 (28.9)	126 (43.9)	78 (27.2)	1.02	6th
5	Sources of information on agribusiness opportunities, including media and schools	135 (47.0)	109 (38.0)	43 (15.0)	1.32	1st
6	Available information sources specifically covering opportunities in rural Lagos	86 (30.0)	129 (44.9)	72 (25.1)	1.05	5th
	Grand mean				**1.17**	

Source: Field survey, 2026.

3.3 Factors that can Facilitate Interest in Agripreneurial Opportunities

The second objective examined the factors that could encourage graduating students to develop an interest in agripreneurial opportunities. All the listed factors had mean scores above the decision point of 1.00, while the grand mean was 1.41. This means that the respondents considered every factor relevant to the development of agripreneurial interest.

Hands-on practical training and internships ranked first, with a mean score of 1.50. Almost 60% of the respondents regarded this as a major factor, while another 30.0% regarded it as a minor factor. Only 10.1% did not consider it a factor. This strong response shows that students want opportunities to learn by doing. Classroom instruction may explain how an agribusiness works, but practical training exposes students to actual production processes, business risks, market requirements and daily management decisions.

The result agrees with Otache et al. (2024), who found that entrepreneurship education has a stronger effect when it improves students' confidence and ability to recognise opportunities. Farm attachments, agribusiness internships and student-managed enterprises can provide experiences through which students test their interests and develop practical competence.

Access to mentorship and business advisory support ranked second, with a mean score of 1.45. More than half of the respondents, representing 56.1%, regarded mentorship as a major factor. New agripreneurs often need guidance in preparing business plans, identifying markets, estimating costs and responding to production challenges. Mentors with direct agribusiness experience can provide advice that may not be available in textbooks.

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Exposure to modern agricultural technology and innovation ranked third, with a mean score of 1.42. This finding suggests that students are more likely to become interested when agriculture is presented as a modern, knowledge-based activity. Technologies for production, processing, irrigation, marketing and record keeping can make agripreneurship more attractive to educated young people. They may also reduce the physical demands and uncertainty commonly associated with traditional farming.

Seeing successful young agripreneurs ranked fourth, with a mean score of 1.40. Role models can make business ownership appear more realistic, particularly when students can identify with their age, educational background and starting conditions. Alkaabi and Senghore (2024) found that entrepreneurial role models contribute to the development of students' entrepreneurial competence and mindset.

Greater awareness campaigns ranked fifth, with a mean score of 1.35. Although awareness is important, the respondents placed practical training, mentorship, technology and role models above general publicity. This suggests that information campaigns will have greater value when they are linked to real enterprises and opportunities for direct participation.

Agribusiness networks and cooperatives ranked sixth, with a mean score of 1.32. Despite being the lowest-ranked item, 86.1% of respondents still regarded them as either a major or minor factor. Networks and cooperatives may help young agripreneurs obtain inputs, share information, reach markets and address problems collectively.

Overall, the findings show that students' interest is more likely to grow through experience and sustained support than through classroom instruction alone. A useful programme should combine practical training, credible mentorship, modern technology, role models and access to business networks.

Table 3: Factors That Can Facilitate Interest in Agripreneurial Opportunities (N = 287)

S/N	Statement	Major Factor f (%)	Minor Factor f (%)	Not a Factor f (%)	Mean	Rank
1	Access to mentorship and business advisory support	161 (56.1)	95 (33.1)	31 (10.8)	1.45	2nd
2	Hands-on practical training and internships	172 (59.9)	86 (30.0)	29 (10.1)	1.50	1st
3	Seeing successful young agripreneurs as role models	149 (51.9)	103 (35.9)	35 (12.2)	1.40	4th
4	Greater awareness campaigns about agribusiness opportunities	138 (48.1)	112 (39.0)	37 (12.9)	1.35	5th
5	Exposure to modern agricultural technology and innovation	155 (54.0)	98 (34.1)	34 (11.8)	1.42	3rd
6	Availability of agribusiness networks and cooperatives	132 (46.0)	115 (40.1)	40 (13.9)	1.32	6th
	Grand mean				**1.41**	

Source: Field survey, 2026.

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5. Conclusion

The study assessed graduating students' awareness of rural agripreneurial opportunities and identified the factors that could encourage their interest in those opportunities. The results show that the students had a moderate level of agripreneurial awareness. They generally knew that agribusiness opportunities existed in rural Lagos and were familiar with common enterprises such as crop farming, poultry, aquaculture and agro-processing. They also knew some of the channels through which agribusiness information could be obtained.

However, their knowledge was less developed in areas needed for practical decision-making. Many students lacked sufficient awareness of the particular rural communities suitable for agricultural enterprises, available location-specific information and the market demand for products from rural Lagos. Their awareness can therefore be described as general rather than operational. It may help them understand the idea of agripreneurship, but it may not yet be detailed enough to guide the selection and establishment of an enterprise.

The findings also show that practical and supportive interventions are more likely to strengthen students' interest than information campaigns alone. Hands-on training and internships were the most highly rated facilitators, followed by mentorship, business advisory support and exposure to modern agricultural technology. Students want to see how agribusinesses operate, receive guidance from experienced practitioners and understand how technology can improve agricultural work.

The study therefore concludes that graduating students have a reasonable foundation of agripreneurial awareness, but more focused exposure is required to turn that awareness into informed interest. Tertiary institutions, government agencies and private agribusiness organisations need to connect students with identifiable rural enterprises, working agripreneurs, practical training and reliable market information. Such support would enable students to assess rural agripreneurship as a deliberate career choice rather than merely an alternative to unemployment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Tertiary institutions should strengthen the practical content of agriculture and entrepreneurship programmes through farm attachments, agribusiness internships, processing demonstrations and student-managed enterprises.
2. Universities and government agricultural agencies should provide students with location-specific information about agripreneurial opportunities in Epe, Badagry, Ikorodu, Ibeju-Lekki and other rural parts of Lagos State.
3. The Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture and Food Systems should expand awareness of the Lagos Agripreneurship Programme within tertiary institutions. Publicity should clearly state the available value chains, eligibility requirements, training locations and forms of post-training support.
4. Structured mentorship programmes should pair graduating students with successful young agripreneurs, processors, marketers and agricultural technology providers.

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5. Students should be exposed to modern agricultural technologies through innovation exhibitions, demonstration farms, field visits and partnerships with agricultural technology companies.
6. Institutions should establish agribusiness incubation centres where students can receive guidance on enterprise planning, market research, financial management and business registration.
7. Agribusiness networks and cooperatives should create student membership or graduate entry schemes that provide access to information, markets and professional contacts.
8. Agricultural awareness campaigns should move beyond general messages about farming. They should present clear evidence of viable enterprises, market demand, required investment and possible returns.

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