

L'ENTREPRENEURIAT  
NUMÉRIQUE DURABLE AU  
BÉNIN : OPPORTUNITÉS, DÉFIS  
ET STRATÉGIES



UNE ÉTUDE DU ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT  
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# L'ENTREPRENEURIAT NUMÉRIQUE DURABLE AU BÉNIN : OPPORTUNITÉS, DÉFIS ET STRATÉGIES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Digitalisation offers great potential for sustainable development in West Africa. For example, it could be used to connect agriculture and develop agribusiness, to expand and strengthen education systems, to create logistical efficiency, to secure financial transactions and support the adoption of e-government, to promote a sharing economy, and even to prevent fraud and corruption. However, this requires more local digital entrepreneurs and startups. This study explains where Benin stands in digital entrepreneurship and offers ways to make its agricultural sector more sustainable.

### 1. Digital entrepreneurship challenges

Digital entrepreneurs and their startups face multiple challenges that range from the traits of entrepreneurs themselves to the weaknesses inherent to startups and to the macro context in which they operate. The main challenges include the lack of adequate funding for startups and the low level of subsidies for agricultural digitalization, making importing digital agricultural equipment in Benin and the region expensive. Also, challenges revolve around the need for more training for aspiring digital entrepreneurs and the need for a change in mindset towards agriculture among youths. Meanwhile, potential users of digital services suffer from digital illiteracy in addition to the need for more coordination and harmonisation among digital initiatives in the francophone subregion. Moreover, there are challenges of national digital budget funding to address the infrastructure deficit in rural areas and ease access to affordable electricity, reliable internet, and digital equipment.

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### 2. Digital entrepreneurship strategies

There are strategies digital entrepreneurs and startups mobilise to navigate the ecosystems in the francophone West Africa region. Individual and organisational strategies revolve around cooperation, informality, competitiveness, networking, and being up to date. Collaboration and joint venture strategies involve the use of partnerships among digital players. An informal digital existence strategy is when startups choose to stay unregistered during their early stages. Low cost strategies are related to minimising the cost of operation by using cheap digital inputs, while a learning and networking strategy with private and public actors is used to create opportunities to win contracts and learn from other reputed digital players. Finally, a digital monitoring strategy is mobilised to stay current and ahead of other digital competitors in the ecosystem.

### 3. Implications for sustainable digital entrepreneurship development

Benin is developing a first mover advantage in the digital sector, in connected agriculture, and in digital training. This is an advantage that could be sustained over the long run in the context of francophone Africa if Benin continues to galvanise this advantage by refining its position around its comparative advantages of digital infrastructure, expertise, and leadership. Digital platforms

operating in Benin and in the subregion are already improving the agricultural value chain, particularly through better information regarding demand and supply, as well as through better coordination between suppliers of digital services and their users in various markets. For this improvement to continue, the digital and agricultural players need to collaborate better and maximise synergies, particularly by involving local manufacturers of digital equipment, which are increasingly emerging in the region of francophone Africa. Another implication is that Benin could export its expertise to other French-speaking countries of West and Central Africa.

#### 4. Policy recommendations for better sustainable digital entrepreneurship

Opportunities in digital entrepreneurship in Benin and francophone West and Central Africa are underexploited because they have not been fully understood by the entrepreneurs, or startups lack the capacity to take full advantage of them. Some opportunities require significant resources and investments, something that many young startups and potential entrepreneurs currently lack. Therefore, policymakers have meaningful opportunities to act. To develop digital entrepreneurship and make agriculture more connected and sustainable, this study offers some recommendations to improve the digital entrepreneurial ecosystem in national and regional economies. Firstly, there should be more regional cooperation among countries in francophone West and Central Africa to clarify the institutional and regulatory framework for digital activities while pursuing Africa's digital integration. Secondly, better policies are needed to increase digital literacy among potential users while training more digital entrepreneurs and enabling more digital players to network and share expertise in the ecosystems. Thirdly, policies that develop the national digital infrastructure and facilitate access to funding and support for digital startups should be strengthened. Fourthly, it is necessary to design policies that incentivize digital joint ventures and collaboration between public and private sectors and among local and international digital players.

## MENTIONS LÉGALES

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