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## The issue

More than 70 million young people worldwide are unemployed and 160 million young workers live in poverty. The issue of youth employment is particularly pressing in rural areas, where poverty rates remain high. A lack of productive and decent employment and entrepreneurial opportunities is driving people further into poverty and food insecurity and can result in youth out-migration. Rural youth face significant obstacles in obtaining quality education and training. Many depend on agriculture for their livelihoods and face severe constraints, without access to land, credit or markets. Young women, in particular, have fewer opportunities than young men to obtain paid work. Vulnerability also varies by age group: globally, there are about 37 million young people aged 15 to 17 engaged in hazardous work. As a result, the agricultural sector – and rural areas as a whole – is witnessing increased numbers of young people leaving in search of a better life in cities and abroad. As of 2015, 21 percent of the 243 million migrants worldwide were aged between 15 and 29. While most developing regions recognize the urgent need to invest in youth and rural development, the effort still does not match the need. Most countries lack sufficient capacity to adopt youth employment solutions at scale and interventions remain isolated and mostly uncoordinated.

## The action

The Integrated Country Approach (ICA) to increasing decent job and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth in the agri-food system assists countries in adopting and implementing more youth-inclusive agri-food-system development policies, strategies and programmes. Its ultimate aim is to reduce rural poverty and address the adverse drivers of migration among rural youth. The immediate beneficiaries include agricultural line ministries and other public, private or civil-society institutions involved in strategic planning for rural development. The ultimate beneficiaries include poor, vulnerable and unskilled rural youth; poor, but market-oriented young producers; and young agripreneurs. The programme aims to benefit around 4 000 youth in more than 12 countries (50 percent of them young women) through capacity development and increased access to employment and entrepreneurial support services. In the longer term, the policies, strategies and investments designed together with governments and key stakeholders – including, most importantly, the private sector – will benefit between 2 million and 5 million young people.

## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

# Youth Agri-Food Policy Assistance

Supporting governments to increase decent job opportunities for youth in the agri-food system

## The issue in numbers



More than **70** million youth are unemployed worldwide



**71%** of child labour is in agriculture



**51** million international migrants are aged 15-29

## Programme targets



**4 000** youth gain access to employment and entrepreneurial support services



More than **12** countries adopt policies to enhance rural employment



**5** million vulnerable rural youth and agripreneurs see long-term job and business benefits

## The budget



**USD 24** million



**5** years



**12-14** countries

## Expected results

- A set of agreed priorities in each country for gender-sensitive knowledge generation, policy support and capacity development to promote rural youth employment;
- Stakeholder knowledge gaps filled in relation to the agri-food system to support youth-inclusive programme development and boost the creation of jobs in the sector;
- Increased stakeholder awareness (including government institutions, the private sector and youth, themselves) of youth-inclusive and employment-centred planning, especially for generating more decent job opportunities for young rural women and men;
- Policy, strategy and programme formulation and implementation supported in relation to youth employment in agro-food systems, with a focus on territorial development processes for job creation, entrepreneurial support and youth employment-centred value-chain development;
- Tools, approaches and capacities strengthened to promote youth employment in agri-food systems in a gender-sensitive manner.

## Geographic focus

The programme will target 12 to 14 countries in three regions:

**Africa:** Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and/or Kenya

**Asia:** Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam

**Latin America:** Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and/or Paraguay

## In partnership with

**At local and regional level:** Ministries of agriculture, economy and planning, commerce, finance, youth, labour, migration, education and vocational training, local authorities, youth organizations, producer, worker and employer organizations, community-based and other civil-society organizations, research institutions and the private sector

**At global level:** The International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, UN Women, the World Bank, the Inter Agency Network for Youth Development, the YUNGA network, the UN Network on Migration



### SDG contribution



## Eco-tourism in Guatemala

With the support of ICA, Manuel Antonio Figueroa Pérez, a 20-year-old agripreneur from San Marcos, Guatemala, has established an eco-tourism centre that involves the entire community by commercializing local products, such as medicinal plants and coffee. "Thanks to ICA, I am able to see that there are endless resources that have never been put to use and from which it is now possible to benefit," he says. Manuel is one of 60 youth champions selected by ICA to become agents of rural development in Guatemala. The programme has provided training on entrepreneurial skills and local development to 75 young men and women, supporting them in assessing local markets and forging alliances. The resulting youth-led micro-enterprises have a strong agricultural base and each engages 50 to 100 families from their respective communities.



## Why invest?

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency is already a key partner in this initiative, financing the Integrated Country Approach for Decent Rural Employment in five countries (Guatemala, Malawi, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda) in recent years (2011–2018), to the benefit of more than 3 000 young people. These results can clearly be replicated in other countries, where FAO has proven that job opportunities can be boosted by building strategic partnerships with national and regional governments and engaging key stakeholders, most importantly the private sector. Youth employment is top of the political agenda for many countries and now is the time to act. Job and entrepreneurial opportunities in the agrifood sector hold much potential and the sector is only predicted to grow in tandem with population growth and rising food demand.

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