



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

32ND SESSION OF THE FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

**Official Launch of the FAO-AUC Investment Guidelines
for Youth in Agrifood Systems in Africa**

Statement

By

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*Your Excellency Commissioner Sacko,
Honourable Ministers,
Young entrepreneurs and representatives of youth organizations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I am pleased to launch this important initiative, together with the African Union Commission.
2. Including this launch on the agenda of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa reflects the importance that both FAO and the AUC place on of investing in and with young people to build sustainable agrifood systems in Africa.
3. Young people play a vital role in the agriculture sector in Africa, and in the transformation towards more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient and more sustainable agrifood systems.
4. Africa is a continent of young people – as a region, it has the highest percentage of youth in the world.
5. This is an enormous resource for future prosperity, but Africa’s youth also face many challenges.
6. They are twice as likely as adults to be unemployed, and those who do work, are employed in low-quality jobs in the informal sector.
7. Almost two-thirds of young workers live in poverty in Africa, and youth make up a very large portion of the extremely poor.

8. On top of this, young women, especially in rural areas, face gender-biased obstacles that limit their access to opportunities.
9. There is an urgent need to address these gaps, particularly in the rural sector.
10. We must work with youth, governments, development partners and other stakeholders to support the livelihoods, well-being and empowerment of youth by creating viable opportunities for their socio-economic growth.
11. Agrifood systems hold vast ‘untapped’ opportunities for decent employment along value chains in the provision of inputs and services to farmers – including digital technology services, aggregation, transportation, processing, packaging and marketing.
12. FAO works at all levels globally to promote decent rural youth employment, as well as youth inclusion, empowerment and participation in economic development and rural transformation.
13. Regionally, FAO is collaborating with African governments and other stakeholders to strengthen national strategies, policies and programmes for rural youth employment.
14. We have made some progress, but continued efforts are needed, with even greater emphasis on working together as partners for successful outcomes and results at scale.
15. The *Investment Guidelines* that we are launching today are a direct response to the call to scale up investments in and with Africa’s youth.
16. FAO and the AUC have developed these *Investment Guidelines* within the framework of a joint two-year regional Technical Cooperation Project,
17. Implemented in direct support of the AU’s *Five-Year Priority Programme on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development*.
18. These *Investment Guidelines*, developed through multi-stakeholder consultations and in-depth country case studies, provide practical guidance and advice on how to better target and design specific, youth-focused and youth-sensitive investments in the agrifood sector.
19. They also acknowledge youth as critical change agents for rural development.
20. It is all about investing in the human capital of the future vibrant generation of African farmers and entrepreneurs!

*Dear Young People,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

21. Thank you to all who have contributed to the development of these *Investment Guidelines*, and for ensuring they will be useful and practical for all stakeholders.
22. I wish to thank the African Union Commission for working closely with the FAO team in developing the Guidelines, and in particular Commissioner Sacko for her leadership.
23. Investing in and engaging young women and men as stakeholders, advisers and innovators, is a critical step towards the transformation of the agrifood systems that we all strive for,

24. For better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life for all - especially the young people on the African Continent – leaving no one behind!
25. With these remarks, I declare the *FAO-AUC Investment Guidelines for Youth in Agrifood Systems in Africa* officially launched.
26. Thank you.