During its 46th Plenary Session (14 – 18 October 2019), the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) requested its High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) to produce a report entitled “Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems”, to be presented in 2021 (the request is provided below) 1.

The report, which will provide recommendations to the CFS workstream “Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems”, will:

- Review the opportunities for, and constraining factors to youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems, including youth access to:
  1. Knowledge, information and education;
  2. Productive land, natural resources and inputs;
  3. Productive tools, extension, advisory and financial services;
  4. Training, education and mentorship programmes;
  5. Innovation and new technologies;
  6. Markets;
  7. Policy-making processes;
- Examine aspects related to employment, salaries, and working conditions;
- Review rules, regulations and policy approaches, including territorial approaches, aimed at addressing the complexity of structural economic, cultural, social and spatial transformations currently taking place globally;
- Explore the potential of food systems and enhanced rural-urban linkages to provide more and better jobs for women and youth.

To implement this CFS request, the HLPE is launching an open e-consultation to seek views and comments on the following scope and building blocks of the report, outlined below. To participate in the e-consultation, please visit the dedicated HLPE e-consultation website: http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/cfs-hlpe/discussions/youth_engagement_employment

---

Engagement of youth (both women and men) is key in making the transition towards sustainable and healthy agriculture and food systems. It is estimated that more than 2 billion children will be born worldwide between 2015 and 2030 (UN, 2015). The majority of these children will be in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where agriculture and food systems constitute the largest employer, and where the needs in terms of availability, access and quality of food and nutrition are greatest. There is a large untapped reservoir of employment opportunities in the agri-food sector which is increasingly pinched by significant labour constraints in many areas of the world. Yet, due to limited access to land, natural resources, infrastructure, finance, technology, markets, knowledge, and poor working conditions the sector cannot be considered attractive and sustainable for youth. There is a high incidence of informality, casual labour, underemployment, child labour, forced labour, working poverty, and among the lowest rates of access to social protection and unionisation in the agricultural sector. Young women, once married, are mostly engaged in farming, often for subsistence, while young men exit the sector in search of other income opportunities and greater autonomy. Discriminatory traditional and cultural norms leave women disadvantaged as regards access to productive resources, limiting their ability to innovate on their farms. It is then important to better understand aspirations of the youth, differentiated by gender, class, ethnicity and other forms of difference, to enable sustainable food systems.

As the global average age of farmers approaches 60 years, it is essential to develop systems, policies, and programmes that encourage the engagement of youth in agriculture and food systems and related professions, including research and innovation. These should provide spaces and mechanisms for participation, and opportunities for innovation. Traditional subsistence agriculture is not attractive to the youth and it is essential to transform agriculture and food systems in a way that is intellectually challenging and economically rewarding. Retaining youth in agriculture also requires improving living standards and quality of services in rural areas and mid-sized towns.

Engagement and leadership of young women and men in agriculture and food systems is essential as youth need to be recognized as agents of change and not (only) as receivers of assistance and support. Youth participation in decision making related to agriculture and food systems requires changes to the enabling environment, through the institution of specific mechanisms to allow the voices of youth to be heard; and recognition of the social, economic, cultural and political status of youth, to allow them to fully participate. The legislative and institutional environment influences the respect of young people’s rights, working conditions, job creation and youth engagement. Coherence between sectoral and employment policies and legislation needs to be promoted to ensure that there are no conflicting objectives in different policies, and that policies reinforce one another.

The objectives of this report are to better understand the gender differentiated reasons for the limited engagement of youth in agriculture and food systems, to identify new opportunities for youth to improve their efficiency and sustainability, and to provide recommendations to facilitate their active engagement and employment. These recommendations will be in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular with SDG2, SDG1, SDG8, SDG5, SDG9, and SDG10, and with other global and regional level agreements.

During this e-consultation, the HLPE Steering Committee welcomes your feedback. In particular, you are invited to:

- Share your comments on the objectives and content of this report as outlined above;

---

• Share good practices and successful experiences to improve youth engagement in the governance of agriculture and food systems; to address obstacles hindering youth ability to engage as entrepreneurs, and to generate decent work opportunities for youth in agriculture and food systems, at different scales (from local to global) and by different stakeholders (public, private or civil society), including with respect to legislation and the enabling environment;
• Share the most recent references that should be considered in this report;
• Provide feedback on the following questions, identifying any gender issues, to guide the development of the report:

1. Why is there a need to promote youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems? What are the key issues and opportunities?
2. How do the evolution and transitions of agriculture, food systems and nutrition affect youth engagement and employment? How can employment in agriculture and food systems become more attractive for youth, especially considering the rural-urban continuum? What would be needed to improve standards of living and services in rural areas and mid-sized towns, to retain youth and young families?
3. What governance transformations are necessary to enable and encourage youth participation in agriculture and food systems, and what actions are required to equip youth with the necessary skills and confidence in fully engaging in these decision-making processes?
4. What are the most promising pathways to transform current agriculture and food systems in developing countries to make them more attractive to the youth?
5. What are the best strategies for fully engaging youth, in particular young women, in opportunities to acquire adequate skills and learning opportunities to further develop their knowledge and enable them to be leaders in innovative agriculture and the transformation of food systems?
6. What are the most appropriate policies to remove obstacles to empower youth to initiate and/or upscale activities in agriculture and related services, in the food supply chain, in agroecology, and in the food environment, as well as in nutrition and innovation, in accordance to their skills, aspirations, assets and contexts?
7. What are the most appropriate policies and initiatives to facilitate the education-to-labour market transition and youth recruitment and retention in agriculture and food systems’ related activities? What nodes and activities in supply chains have the highest potential for generating decent jobs for youth? What new types of training are needed to foster more agroecological approaches to farming?
8. What is the extent of wage discrepancies against youth, particularly young women, in agriculture and food systems, and what are some successful experiences in removing such wage differentials?
9. What data is necessary to support policy development to enhance youth engagement and employment, and to create awareness of the specific needs, vulnerabilities and opportunities of disadvantaged youth?