

Expert Workshop

Youth – feeding the future

Addressing the challenges faced by rural youth aged 15 to 17 in preparing for and accessing decent work

Rome 2016

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Rural youth are the future of food security and rural poverty reduction. However, youth in rural areas of developing countries face enormous challenges. These challenges are even greater for youth under the age of 18. Most see few income and employment opportunities ahead of them. Hence, many are leaving agriculture and their communities to migrate, in search of better opportunities in urban areas or abroad.

Yet, with ageing farm populations worldwide, agriculture needs young people. To make agriculture and livelihoods sustainable and achieve food security, better and more environment-friendly practices need to be introduced. Youth can be the drivers the agricultural and rural transformations that are need for more inclusive and sustainable food systems. Yet, to draw youth into agriculture, conditions to work there must become more productive and congruent with young people's aspirations for a better future. Young women and men would need better access to productive resources, services, organizations and markets. They need to be able to manage and cope with risks and access social protection that can provide greater income security and stimulate investment in their future. Decent rural employment and working conditions will allow young people to realize their full productive and innovative potential, driving further productivity gains and growth, and contributing to rural economic transformation.

There are more young people today than ever before – 1.8 billion between the ages of 10 and 24. The vast majority of them live in less developed countries (89 percent) where the majority lives in rural areas.¹ Throughout the trajectory of a young person's life, there are a variety of factors that can hinder his/her full socio-economic development. For instance, children may lack access to education or be engaged in work that disrupts their mental and/or physical development with lasting impact on their income earning capacities. But, also many of those who were able to attend school do not possess the job-relevant skills needed to acquire adequate jobs or to access the resources needed to start up a farm or other business. Rural young people in agriculture face challenges in accessing 1) knowledge, information and education; 2) land; 3) finance; 4) decent jobs, including green jobs; 5) markets; and 6) participation in policy dialogue and rural organizations.

These challenges apply broadly to all rural youth in developing countries. In addressing these, particular attention needs to be paid to youth under 18 who have reached the minimum age for employment. This age group requires a specific focus for a number of reasons:

¹The State of World Population 2014: The power of 1.8 billion: adolescents, youth and the transformation of the future, UNFPA 2014 (in the 48 least developed countries, the majority of the population is under 18 or 19)

- 1) Adequate vocational training is often not available in rural areas. This poses a particular challenge to young women, who may not be allowed to travel far from home.
- 2) Youth aged 15-17 face additional challenges in accessing productive resources and services, such as finance, or joining representative organizations due to their status as minors. This impedes their ability to become successful entrepreneurs.
- 3) They face discrimination in accessing decent jobs, including in small and medium scale enterprises, due to misunderstanding of labour law or fear of accusations of child labour that could impede access to export markets, despite the fact that youth of this age are of legal age to work.
- 4) Many in this age group of 15 to 17 year olds work in agriculture and often are exposed and vulnerable to health and safety hazards. About 47 million youth aged 15 to 17 are engaged in hazardous work; a full 40 percent of all employed youth in this age group. When youth under 18 are engaged in hazardous work, this work becomes child labour according to international and national law. Youth aged 15-17 who are engaged in hazardous work account for 28 percent of all child labour.²
- 5) They are often excluded, explicitly or de-facto, from policies and programmes supporting youth employment, yet many are no longer in school and are considered adults in their communities that need to provide for themselves and their families.
- 6) Adolescent girls who are out of school and unemployed are more likely to be married, also risking complications from early pregnancies.
- 7) This stage in their life is typically decisive in how youth will transition from school to work and for the likelihood of transiting out of poverty.

If subjected to any one (or more) of the above barriers during this critical period, young people may have difficulties in accessing productive and decent employment and risk becoming a lost generation.

These challenges need to be addressed to ensure that rural youth aged 15-17 benefit from an enabling environment and are equipped with the skills and resources necessary to achieve sustainable livelihoods and to contribute to poverty reduction, food security and the equitable growth of the rural economy. Interventions during the most formative years will build youth's capacity to seize future decent employment opportunities.

Considerable work has been undertaken to understand the challenges and solutions related to rural youth employment more broadly and a number of initiatives have been set in motion. For example, the FAO/IFAD/MIJARC project to assess the challenges rural youth face in engaging in agriculture-related activities that engaged rural youth informants from all over the world, the FAO/IFAD/CTA publication "Youth and agriculture: Key challenges and concrete solutions" and the CFS/FAO/IFAD/WFP publication "Developing the knowledge, skills and talent of youth to further food security and nutrition." The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD), UN System-wide Action Plan on Youth and the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth are some of the initiatives at global level working to address these rural youth employment challenges. Action is also taking place at the regional level, for example the Empowering Novel AgriBusiness-Led Employment for Youth in African Agriculture (ENABLE Youth) Program. FAO is also supporting youth inclusiveness in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Rural Futures Initiative (RFI) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

² World Report on Child Labour 2015: Paving the way to decent work for young people, ILO Geneva, 2015.

(NEPAD). In addition, FAO is also assisting the African Union's youth development efforts by supporting components of the African Youth Charter (AYC) related to the promotion of decent employment. In the Caribbean sub-region, a sub-regional strategy on rural youth employment is being developed. At national level, rural youth employment is being included in investment plans, public-private partnership agreements and in tailored youth employment strategies. Unfortunately, the age group 15-17 often falls through the cracks of both child labour prevention and youth employment programmes.

FAO aims to address this blind spot in partnership with the Government of France and other interested partners. Skills development and promotion of decent rural youth employment and improved labour standards in rural areas are key components of FAO's strategy to reduce rural poverty. FAO supports policy and programming for improved rural youth employment outcomes in many countries in the different regions as well as in regional and global initiatives. The Organization is also a leading member of the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in agriculture, strengthening knowledge, capacity and policy at global and country level. In its Programme of Work and Budget for 2016-2017, FAO intends to step up its work in these areas under Strategic Objective (SO) 3 "Reduce Rural Poverty" while also working in collaboration with SO2 "Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable" and SO4 "Enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems". Building on its considerable technical expertise in agriculture, food security and rural development, FAO will support countries in addressing the concrete challenges faced by rural youth, paying attention in particular also to the needs of youth in the age of 15 to 17 years in agricultural and rural development policies and in programmes for youth development and employment. It will do so in partnership with sister agencies, especially the International Labour Organization (ILO) and engaging with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Strengthening policy for improved rural youth employment outcomes will directly contribute to the new Sustainable Development Goal 8: "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all", and in particular the targets related to full and productive youth employment and the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. It will also support SDG 4 on education, SDG1 on ending poverty and SDG 2 on ending hunger and achieving food security and sustainable agriculture.

In order to address the challenges facing rural youth aged 15-17, and given that this is neither fully developed conceptually nor fully reflected in the implementation of programmes, FAO proposes to organize an expert meeting as described below to bring together the necessary knowledge and experience and jump-start collaboration.

Objective and scope

Participants in the expert meeting will exchange and discuss knowledge, experiences and good practices on addressing the challenges faced by rural youth and promoting decent employment opportunities for them, paying particular attention to the challenges and needs of those aged 15 to 17 years. FAO will pre-engage participants in an online consultation with a broader group of experts and practitioners, for example through the Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition. This will provide a basis on which the expert meeting will build and will include both a broader discussion of policy and programmatic responses to address the broader rural youth employment issue as well as discussion focused specifically on the 15 to 17 age group.

The expected outcome of the workshop consists of recommendations to guide the design of policies and interventions by governments, international organizations, private sector, youth

organizations and other stakeholders aiming to facilitate skills development and generation of decent rural employment opportunities for youth in the context of sustainable rural transformations.

The workshop findings will be brought together in a report to be published by FAO in collaboration with Government partners.

FAO expects the workshop results will help strengthen delivery towards its Strategic Objective 3, Organizational Outcome 2: “The rural poor have greater opportunities to access decent farm and non-farm employment.” In particular, it will build hitherto unexploited synergies between FAO’s policy support and capacity development for decent rural youth employment and for child labour prevention in agriculture.

Toward this end, the workshop will examine the following issues:

- the specific challenges rural youth aged 15-17 face in making a (current or future) living in agriculture³ and related activities⁴, as well as in non-agricultural activities in rural areas;
- identification of improved skills development and employment options for rural youth (boys and girls) aged 15-17 in agriculture and the rural economy;
- what works to effectively support rural youth in the school-to-work transition to engage in profitable agri-business; and
- best practices in programmes and policies to overcome these challenges in a cost-effective manner, with lessons drawn from experiences of various sub-sectors and regions;

The above will contribute to the identification of the most feasible and effective policies and actions to support youth aged 15-17 in preparing for and accessing decent work in agriculture and rural areas. The facilitated workshop will last four days and be organized in both plenary and parallel working groups.

Outcome document

Aside from the mentioned publication, the workshop is intended to generate an outcome document with recommendations for policies and programmes to address the challenges faced by rural youth aged 15-17 in preparing for and accessing decent work.

At the global level, the outcomes would be promoted at various international platforms, including the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). It could further be promoted at events organized at the occasion of World Day Against Child Labour (12 June 2016) and the Global Child Labour Conference to be held in Argentina in 2017. They would also inform The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development and contribute to the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth as a first activity towards achieving results under the thematic foci on youth in the rural economy and the transition to decent work for young workers (15-17) in hazardous occupations.

At FAO, these recommendations would kick off the Organization’s work programme on rural youth aged 15-17, bringing together the work streams on child labour and youth employment in agriculture. It could also be the first in a series of meetings addressing particular challenges for youth in rural areas. Of primary importance, the recommendations would inform policy and programme support at national level to coherently address child labour and youth

³ Including farming, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, and natural resource management

⁴ For example, green jobs, financial and extension services, transport, processing and marketing within the agrifood system

employment in agriculture and unleash the potential of rural youth to contribute to food security and reduce rural poverty. Continued support from Government partners to adapt and operationalize these recommendations at national level would be welcomed.

Participants

The expert meeting will bring together ca. 60 experts – senior technicians and managers from government, FAO, ILO, IFAD, UNICEF, UNESCO and other international organizations, NGOs, research institutions, rural youth organizations and private sector, including producers’ organizations and cooperatives – with expertise and experience on issues of high relevance for promoting decent rural employment for youth aged 15 to 17 (e.g. employment, agriculture, occupational safety and health, and education).

Language

English, French and Spanish
(simultaneous interpretation for plenary sessions and four working groups)

Schedule overview

Three working days total: The afternoon-only session on the first day will allow participants to arrive Tuesday morning. The workshop will conclude in the Friday morning session, allowing for inputs from Thursday to be incorporated into the outcome document (evening drafting session) for final adoption on Friday, and allowing participants to depart that same day.

	Tuesday p.m.	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday a.m.
Morning	Participants arrive	Working groups	Working groups	Revisions / agreement on outcome document
Afternoon	Plenary - opening / presentations	Working groups / plenary	Working groups / plenary	Participants depart
Evening	Aperitivo	Drafting session	Drafting session	

Meeting venue

FAO Headquarters Rome
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
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Contact person - FAO

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