



Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition • FSN Forum in West Africa

TOPIC NOTE

Discussion No. 9 • from 25 April to 15 May 2016

➤ www.fao.org/fsnforum/west-africa/rural_youth

Youth – feeding the future. Addressing the challenges faced by rural youth aged 15 to 17 in preparing for and accessing decent work?

Rural youth are the future of food security and rural poverty reduction. They are also the present as there are more young people today than ever before – 1.8 billion between the ages of 10 and 24 – most of them living in less developed countries and in rural areas. However, youth in rural areas of developing countries face enormous challenges in preparing for and accessing decent work, including in agriculture. These challenges are even greater for youth under the age of 18.

This online consultation invites you to help identify the solutions that can address these challenges. Your contributions will inform the policy and programme recommendations issued by the international expert meeting “Youth – feeding the future: Addressing the challenges faced by rural youth aged 15 to 17 in preparing for and accessing decent work” that will be held by FAO later this year. Selected contributors to the online consultation could also be invited to participate in the expert meeting. (See [concept note](#) and [participation request form](#)).

Why are we concerned, and what opportunities do we see?

Many youth are working poor, and the youth underemployment situation will continue to worsen if left unaddressed, as millions of young people enter the labour market. At the same time, there is the problem of child labour, with 59% of all child labour taking place in agriculture. Many youth in rural areas see few income and employment opportunities ahead of them. Hence, many are leaving agriculture and their communities to migrate, in search of 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 environmentally friendly practices need to be introduced. Youth can be the drivers of agricultural and rural transformations that create more inclusive and sustainable food systems.

Yet, youth need to see agriculture-related activities as viable and attractive livelihoods that are profitable and match their aspirations for a better future.

What are the challenges facing rural youth aged 15-17?

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. Youth under 18 face additional, or different, challenges in accessing decent jobs or becoming successful entrepreneurs. For example, their status as minors can lead to discrimination in hiring and impede access to productive resources and services, such as finance, or their membership in representative organizations. Adequate vocational training is often not available in rural areas and support for the school-to-work transition is weak. Many in this age group work in agriculture and often are exposed and vulnerable to health and safety hazards. When youth aged 15-17 are engaged in hazardous work, this work becomes child labour according to international and national law.

- **Based on your experience, what are the specific challenges rural youth aged 15-17 face (different from those over 18) in making a (current or future) living in agriculture and related activities?¹**

How can these challenges be addressed?

Particular attention needs to be paid to youth under 18 who have reached the minimum age for employment as this stage in life is typically decisive in how youth will transition from school to work and for the likelihood of transiting out of poverty. Many others are already out of school and are trying to provide for themselves and their families. Yet, youth under 18 are often excluded in the design or implementation of policies and programmes supporting youth employment.

We invite you to share your experience on how policies and programmes can address the challenges faced by rural youth, in particular those under 18.

- **How can policies and programmes overcome the challenges faced by rural youth in a cost-effective manner? If they target older youth, how could we apply them to support those under 18? Please share relevant examples and lessons from your experience.**
- **What are the most binding capacity constraints that you or your institution/organization encounter when designing, implementing and evaluating policies and programmes aiming to address the issues affecting rural youth under the age of 18? What are the data gaps regarding the challenges**

¹ In “agriculture and related activities” we are including farming, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, and natural resource management and green jobs, financial and extension services, and transport, processing and marketing within the agrifood system.

affecting rural youth employment and livelihoods that you periodically encounter?

- **How can education and vocational training in rural areas be improved to support rural adolescents and youth to productively engage in agriculture or related activities? What are the skills and support they need? What does the school-to-work transition for rural youth aged 15-17 look like and what works to effectively support rural youth during this transition?**
- **What approaches are most effective in overcoming the additional challenges rural youth under the age of 18 face in accessing decent jobs, including (decent) green jobs (e.g. skills mismatch, health and safety conditions, discrimination, exclusion) or becoming entrepreneurs (e.g. barriers in access to finance, producers organizations and markets)?**

We are particularly interested in policies and programmes that have demonstrated results and achieved scale, and in the role that specific stakeholders can play.

We look forward to a lively and stimulating discussion!

Jacqueline Demeranville
Decent Rural Employment Team
FAO