



SCALING UP INVESTMENTS IN AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS FOR YOUTH IN AFRICA WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW



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Africa as a region, has the highest percentage of youth in the world, estimated at 420 million between the ages of 15 and 35 (AfDB, 2018), with the share of rural youth projected to rise to 37 percent by 2050 (IFAD, 2019). More than ten million new jobs must be created yearly by 2035 to absorb new labour market entrants, an immense youth employment challenge. Rapid urbanization, changing consumption patterns and digitalization are transforming agrifood systems (Figure 1), offering vast employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for young women and men in agricultural value chains and across food systems.

Young people are already transforming agrifood systems in Africa but often under poor working conditions. Vulnerabilities and constraints prevent them from making a full contribution to sustainable agrifood systems. Young women and those living in rural and fragile situations face

additional challenges, sometimes leading to radicalization, negative coping mechanisms or pressured migration. With enabling policies and support, young people can overcome constraints and grasp opportunities in agrifood systems, but this requires targeted youth-focused investment.

This brief presents a snapshot of the *Investment guidelines for youth in agrifood systems in Africa*, developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the African Union Commission (AUC). It provides practical guidance and “how to” steps to develop youth-focused and youth-sensitive investment programmes that engage youth as partners. The guidelines are for those involved in designing and implementing investment programmes for sustainable agrifood systems: governments, financial and technical partners, the private sector, civil society, and young women and men themselves.

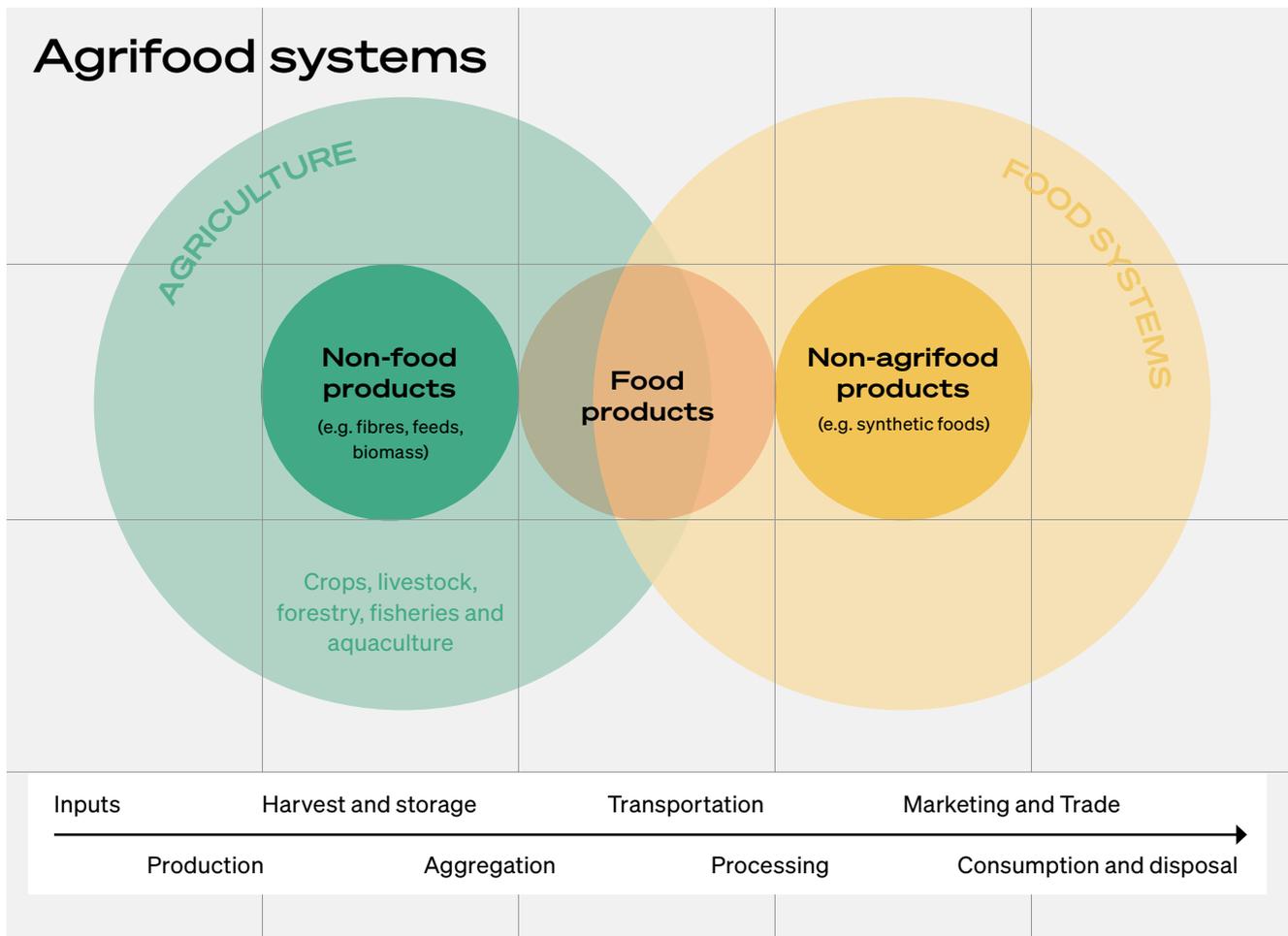


Figure 1

Diagram of agrifood systems

Source: Authors, adapted from FAO’s definition of agrifood systems, World Food Forum

Why is investing in youth critical for sustainable agrifood systems?

The AUC reports that 70 percent of jobs in Africa are in agriculture (AUC, 2021). Sixty percent of rural youth aged 15-35 work in low paid, precarious and unsafe jobs (FAO and UNIDO, 2021; ILO, 2020). More than one in five young Africans are not in employment nor in education or training, with higher rates for young women (ILO, 2020).

Agrifood systems are under pressure from climate change, chronic and emerging conflicts, COVID-19 (Bulman *et al.*, 2021), undermining their ability to provide healthy and affordable food for all. It is crucial to invest differently and engage youth in transforming food systems, through expanding automation, digital technologies and the green economy. Young people bring in new ideas, solutions, products and services, new models of entrepreneurship, partnerships and networks. Failing to invest in youth could lead to economic and social costs and threaten agrifood systems' sustainability.

Innovation in agrifood systems

In the face of COVID-19, young agripreneurs have adapted. Some adjusted business models, moving to online marketing, adding value to primary products. Others developed green businesses, producing organic fertilizers using renewable materials, while others went into food delivery. These innovations can inform further investments in agrifood business and jobs for youth (FAO, 2020).

BOX 1

Agriculture needs to be more attractive and economically viable for young people. This requires investing in education and skills, promoting access to information and technical assistance, land, finance, markets and jobs, while supporting the aspirations of youth from various backgrounds and bringing them on board as beneficiaries, partners and advisers.

The political commitment is there. The Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, endorsed at the 2014 AUC summit, includes youth targets to be met by 2025:

- job opportunities for at least 30 percent of youth in agriculture;
- preferential entry and participation of women and youth in agribusiness.

Youth employment is also central to many policies, strategies and frameworks on the continent (see Box 2).

Investing in youth in agrifood systems contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): SDG 8 “full and productive employment and decent work for all”, with positive impacts on SDG 4 (Quality education for all), SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 10 (Reducing inequalities).

Examples of policies and frameworks calling for increased investment in youth in agrifood systems in Africa

- Agenda 2063 (2015);
- African Union Five-Year Priority Programme (FYPP) that contributes to the achievement of specific targets of Agenda 2063 (2015);
- Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods (2014);
- African Youth Charter (2006);
- African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (APAYE) 2019-2024 (2019);
- One Million by 2021 Initiative (2019);
- African Agribusiness Youth Strategy-AAYS (2021).

Investment guidelines for youth in agrifood systems in Africa

A practical guide

Supporting agricultural interventions for youth requires a major increase in investment. The guidelines consider youth’s constraints, needs and aspirations to design investments, taking on board employment and empowerment in a holistic manner and in various contexts. It is not only about more jobs, but better jobs and viable youth-led businesses. FAO and the AUC developed the guidelines drawing from research, case study analysis of successful programmes and multistakeholder consultations.

The guidelines provide practical guidance to design, implement, monitor and evaluate investment programmes, showing how to assess thematic action areas and opportunities, fully engaging youth. This is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather a guide for undertaking phases of investment programming, adapting best practices to the local context.

They open with core principles (Box 3), aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the AUC Agenda 2063 and other global flagship frameworks. The guidelines are then structured around four chapters (Figure 2).

Investment guideline principles

- A** engage and empower youth throughout the programme;
- B** recognize youth diversity and inclusiveness;
- C** use an integrated, sustainable approach;
- D** make the process forward looking and innovative;
- E** maintain cross-sectoral and multistakeholder collaboration.

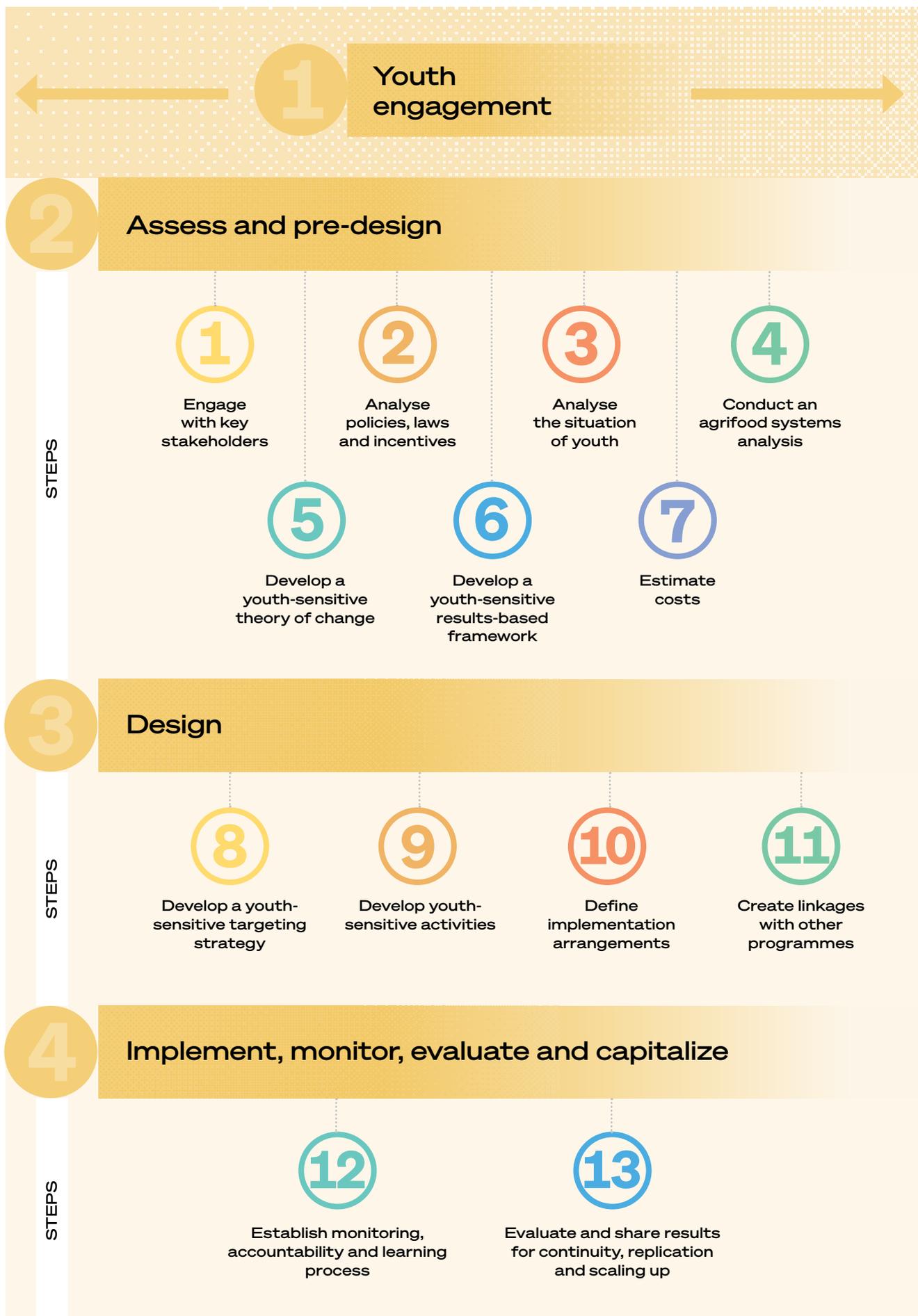


Figure 2
Steps for youth-responsive investment programmes

Source: Authors' own elaboration

ENGAGE YOUTH IN THE INVESTMENT PROGRAMME CYCLE

Inclusion of youth in the programme cycle is essential, not only as beneficiaries but as advisers, partners in decision-making and to initiate proposals.

This can be strengthened by:

- reaching out to young people through different channels and media to understand and build on their ideas and retain their priorities whenever possible when designing interventions;
- involving youth organizations from the beginning;
- building their capacity to formulate their views and share their ideas;
- building staff capacity in agencies and programmes on youth-adult collaboration;
- inserting criteria in service procurement to encourage youth applications;
- placing youth representatives on governance bodies.

The participation of youth from different backgrounds, gender, age, ethnicity and socio-economic situation, is essential. This is especially true for young women and youth aged 15-17 as they have particular difficulty accessing skills development opportunities.



2

ASSESS AND PRE-DESIGN WITH A YOUTH LENS

Context analysis helps clarify the opportunities and challenges for youth around investment options. This should involve stakeholders: government, development partners, youth

themselves, producer organizations and the private sector. The first phase of the programme has seven steps which can be taken consecutively, in parallel or in different order.

STEPS		The guidelines provide practical advice, tools and examples to assist in the following actions.	
1	Engage with key stakeholders	4	Conduct an agrifood systems analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the main stakeholders in youth employment and agrifood systems, clarifying roles, responsibilities and level of influence and assessing coordination mechanisms. Collect information on interventions and identify potential synergies. 		Integrate a youth lens into value chains and market analysis to identify sectors that will attract youth and the support they may need to become entrepreneurs. This will identify priority investments with particular attention to service providers and the comparative advantages of areas/territories targeted by the programme.
2	Analyse policies, laws and incentives	5	Develop a youth-sensitive theory of change (ToC)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse policies and legal frameworks on youth employment and entrepreneurship, and investments in agriculture. Assess how agricultural investments support youth and the restrictions that adversely affect youth or could block interventions. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise a theory of change and a results-based framework for youth programmes or integrate a youth lens into these aspects of investment programmes. The extent depends on whether a programme is youth-focused or youth-sensitive. Fine-tune iteratively the theory of change through webinars, multistakeholder platforms during the design phase.
3	Analyse the situation of youth	6	
	<p>Understand the context, livelihoods, challenges and aspirations of different youth groups whom the programme targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the degree of access of different youth groups to assets and resources and participation in agrifood systems. Identify successful young agripreneurs and youth-led organizations. Assess risks and vulnerabilities faced by migrants, those in fragile or post-conflict areas, those aged 15-17. 	7	Estimate costs
			Preliminary costs can be based on the RBF, and verified at the next design stage: inputs, equipment, training, business incubators and coaching, grants and loans.

7 Examples of assessment tools and approaches

One example is a multistakeholder rapid capacity assessment tool to engage youth to assess and benefit from responsible investment in agriculture and food systems (FAO, 2018a), applied in Tunisia, Senegal, Guinea, Mali and Mauritania.

Youth-sensitive market analysis in the United Republic of Tanzania, conducted under the United Nations Joint Programme on Youth Employment, shaped a youth employment project using International Labour Organization (ILO) guidelines (ILO, 2015).

Research on rural youth migration in Tunisia sought to understand migration and mobility, the types of rural youth outmigration and their impact on rural livelihoods (Zucotti et al., 2018).

The GIZ Agripreneur 2.0 programme in Tunisia conducted a study to identify viable business opportunities for youth along agricultural value chains. The involvement of the private sector was critical to identify market opportunities (Knobloch and Pirzer, 2019).

3

DESIGN WITH A YOUTH LENS

To fine-tune the investment design, adjust and validate aspects of targeting, RBF, interventions and costing, deeper consultations with youth and relevant stakeholders are essential. This chapter includes four steps, each with their own key actions.

STEPS			
8	Develop youth-sensitive targeting strategy	10	Define implementation arrangements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select the priority areas and youth groups for the programme, and the appropriate targeting mechanisms. Criteria may include poverty, unemployment, growth potential, agrifood business and employment opportunities, government priorities, ongoing programmes and partnership potential. Key considerations include: segmentation (disaggregating youth by age, e.g. under 18 and above and by gender); transparency in defining criteria; and consultations with young people. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a youth lens in implementation: when establishing governance bodies and choosing service providers; enhance youth-adult collaboration. Establish clear communication procedures, inputs, complaint mechanisms and continuous feedback to ensure accountability and transparency.
9	Develop youth-sensitive activities	11	Create linkages with other programmes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide integrated holistic packages rather than stand-alone support, to align with the varying needs, challenges and expectations of different groups. Integrate youth-sensitive considerations in action areas: access to information, skills, land and water, inputs, equipment and services, markets, financial services and policy dialogue. Increase youth access to digital solutions to reduce the digital divide. 		Stakeholders and agencies investing in agrifood systems for youth must collaborate, especially when targeting the same areas or youth groups. Enhance coordination, through linking employment and agribusiness with rural development, social protection and other measures supporting rural transformation.

7 Examples of youth-sensitive programmes with an integrated, multisectoral approach

The Agricultural Value Chains Support Project (PAFA) in Senegal took an innovative approach to engage youth, encouraging local sports and cultural associations to submit project proposals. Youth groups benefited from equipment, training in best agricultural practices and improved inputs, as well as access to value chain round tables. Some were trained as family farm advisers (IFAD, 2018).

The Modèle d'Insertion des Jeunes dans l'Agrobusiness (MIJA) platforms in Senegal is a network of rural hubs as well as training in production and marketing. It promotes group cooperation and mentors youth on the economic viability of their business (FAO, 2018b).

The Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme (YEAP) in Nigeria, targeted two groups: young medium-scale agripreneurs and young farmers interested in market-oriented agriculture and small-scale processing. The programme provided young people with agricultural, business and life skills, helping them to set up agriculture enterprises and improve access to land, credit and agriculture inputs (FAO, 2016).

The Building Resilience in the Sahel Region through Job creation for Youth Project (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) aims to bolster youth resilience and social cohesion while improving livelihoods to increase sustainable employment. For example, the *Mon projet, Mon avenir* initiative finances youth projects in fishing, agriculture, livestock, public works and services, environment and new technologies (FAO, 2021a).

4

IMPLEMENT, MONITOR, EVALUATE AND CAPITALIZE

The guidelines propose youth-sensitive monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), noting that MEL is a continuous learning process that begins alongside project preparation. Impact evaluation can shape future interventions and scale-ups.

STEPS	
12	13
Establish monitoring, accountability and learning processes	Evaluate and share results for continuity, replication and scaling up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect baseline data on youth prior to programme implementation, against which changes can be monitored and evaluated. • Develop a youth-sensitive MEL plan to assess what the programme aims to achieve: for example access to resources and assets, entrepreneurship and decent jobs, social capital and agency. Indicators should be disaggregated by gender and age groups (for example: 14-18, 19-25, > 25). • If a programme is not youth-focused (youth is only one target group), it should still disaggregate indicators by age group to understand its impact on youth. • Create channels for feedback and learning as well as complaints and build staff capacity in youth-sensitive MEL. • MEL systems must embrace inclusiveness, benefit sustainability, socio-economic and gender impacts among different youth groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate how programmes affect youth. • Capitalize on lessons and share successful practices and proven models through different platforms, using South-South technical cooperation and youth fora.

7 Examples of youth-sensitive indicators

On entrepreneurship: the number of young people trained in income-generating or business management who applied those skills; increased income for young people who started or expanded their business after training; satisfaction level of young people who reported increased income.

On decent job creation: percentage of young people reporting satisfactory income and working conditions; number of youth 15-17 years who accessed training, coaching and employment with better working conditions due to skill development (FAO, 2015).

On social capital and agency: the number of new or stronger youth groups; number or proportion of youth in leadership positions who participated in the programme's monitoring and learning phases.



The way forward: operationalizing investment guidelines

In collaboration with their partners, governments have a central role in prioritising youth-focused investments to meet their commitments while fostering youth involvement in that process (FAO, 2021b). The AU 4th Specialized Technical Committee for Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment endorsed the guidelines in December 2021, echoing that of the July 2021 FAO/AUC Validation Workshop. Both events recommend the uptake of the guidelines at country level.

Make the guidelines widely accessible

The AUC, governments, financial and development partners, the private sector and youth can all support dissemination. The guidelines could appear through different fora and in different formats (webinars, multistakeholder platforms, infographics, videos and podcasts) with translations in various languages.

Build national and local stakeholder capacity

Multistakeholder dialogue and workshops that also include young people will be crucial to identify how to apply the guidelines. These fora can also serve as practical entry points to apply them during the design, implementation support or review of investment programmes, thus ensuring youth needs and aspirations are met.

Apply the guidelines to investment programmes

They can be a starting point for governments to engage youth in investment programme stages, generating further partnerships and programmes. Governments play a central role incentivizing this, while also encouraging collaboration across ministries and with development and financial partners.

Key messages of the guidelines

Investing in agrifood systems with a youth lens has positive impacts on youth employment and entrepreneurship and is critical to building sustainable agrifood systems.

Youth must have an active role as agents for change at all stages of the investment programme cycle. This requires an enabling investment environment.

Operationalizing the guidelines will accelerate investments for and by youth in agrifood systems. It is needed urgently and at scale.

Acknowledgements

The brief was prepared by Maria Lee and Pamela Pozarny, with support from Melisa Aytekin and is based on the publication *Investment guidelines for youth in agrifood systems in Africa* (FAO and AUC, 2022). The authors wish to acknowledge all the contributing authors of the guidelines which were developed by AUC and FAO with support from the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), “Partnership to Support AU’s Strategies on Social Protection, School Feeding and Rural Youth Employment” (TCP/RAF/3703) and the FAO Investment Centre’s Knowledge for Investment programme (K4I).

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank	OYA	Opportunities for Youth in Africa (Project)
AUC	African Union Commission	PAFA	Agricultural Value Chains Support Project
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	RBF	results-based framework
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	STC	Specialised Technical Committee
ILO	International Labour Organization	ToC	theory of change
MEL	monitoring, evaluation and learning	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
MIJA	Modèle d'Insertion des Jeunes dans l'Agrobusiness	UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	YEAP	Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme



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Required citation:

Lee, M., Pozarny, P. and Aytekin, M. 2022. *Scaling up investments in agrifood systems for youth in Africa – What policymakers need to know*. Investment brief. Rome, FAO and African Union. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9137en>



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