CONSULTATION ON YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS
IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA
26 APRIL 2023
Rural youth in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) offer valuable opportunities for rural development, yet face several challenges, including access to knowledge, training, natural resources (in particular to land) as well as financial resources. Youth also have limited access to markets, decent employment opportunities and engagement in policy making processes. Despite a high general level of development in the region, inequalities are on the rise in all parts of the ECA region, manifested also in high levels of youth unemployment, exclusion of marginalized groups, and lack of access to social services, often leading to outmigration.

The United Nations Strategy on Youth represents a real opportunity for all UN agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to coordinate efforts on youth issues. Youth-related issues have also been increasingly integrated into global processes such as the UN Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028 (UNDFF) and the Food System Summit 2021, which spotlighted the critical role of youth in ensuring Good Food for All in the Global Youth Summit Dialogue. The UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) calls for development of agrifood systems, including policies and programmes that engage more youth in mainstream policy debates. Similar efforts are being made through the World Food Forum, a youth-led movement and network to transform food systems. The Forum was launched by the FAO Youth Committee in March 2021 and its key objective is to contribute to the transformation of food systems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular SDG 2 “Zero Hunger.”

SERIES OF REGIONAL YOUTH CONSULTATIONS ON PROMOTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

CONSULTATION ON YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS

When: 26 April 2023 09:30–11:20 (CET)
Where: Online – Zoom webinar
Registration link: https://fao.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3stu-kv8QNqTooQrb2M-kQ#/registration

Background

Rural youth in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) offer valuable opportunities for rural development, yet face several challenges, including access to knowledge, training, natural resources (in particular to land) as well as financial resources. Youth also have limited access to markets, decent employment opportunities and engagement in policy making processes. Despite a high general level of development in the region, inequalities are on the rise in all parts of the ECA region, manifested also in high levels of youth unemployment, exclusion of marginalized groups, and lack of access to social services, often leading to outmigration.
In 2020, FAO developed the Rural Youth Action Plan, which addresses the importance of making rural areas more attractive for young women and men. Acknowledging the challenging situation of rural youth in Europe and Central Asia, Member Countries at the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC 33) of May 2022 called upon FAO to continue its support to effectively implement the food systems transformation agenda, including a focus on youth which play a fundamental role as key agents of change in the revitalization of rural areas and in the transformation towards sustainable food systems. Among these aspects, interlinkages with gender equality and women’s empowerment, the rural–urban continuum, and innovative practices and technologies, and knowledge-sharing platforms, are particularly relevant.

Important is to mention that rural youth are not a homogeneous group; challenges may differ for young family farmers, young women and men, youth with disabilities, youth from low-income families, young refugees, displaced youth, or youth from excluded groups or indigenous peoples. Youth issues are context-specific, depending on territories and culture, as well as stages along the supply chain including production, processing and trade.

Under the Regional Initiative on Empowering smallholders, family farms and youth, facilitating rural livelihoods and poverty reduction, FAO REU organizes a series of youth consultations during December 2021 – April 2023. The first session provided an overview session of challenges and opportunities for rural youth, including men and women, which was held in December 2021. As the continuation the second consultation was held with the objective to provide a platform for young farmers, entrepreneurs, tech companies and academia to share their success stories, experiences, approaches, and key challenges related to the application of digital technologies in agriculture which was held in the framework of the World Food Forum Flagship event in October 2022. This third one is focusing on youth in agricultural value chains emphasizing good practices, examples from the region.
TARGET AUDIENCE
Youth organizations, young entrepreneurs, government representatives, policy makers, value chain experts, analysts, etc.

OBJECTIVES
The Consultation seeks to raise awareness of ongoing efforts to promote youth in value chains, including the sharing of successful experiences and existing challenges. Ultimately, the event seeks to make a contribution to building regional networks and coalitions of experts and agents of change.

EXPECTED RESULTS
Raise awareness of the emerging knowledge, expertise and opportunities for youth engagement in sustainable food value chain development in the region. The gathered feedback during the consultation will serve as a basis for FAO REU to plan further support under the Regional Initiative on Empowering smallholders, family farms and youth, facilitating rural livelihoods and poverty reduction around the challenges and opportunities of rural youth. Moreover, the regional consultation also will contribute to the Regional Youth Action Compendium, in listing the key priority areas of youth in Europe and Central Asia.
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<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
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<tr>
<td>9:30-9:35</td>
<td><strong>Introduction and housekeeping rules by the moderator</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ms Fanni Zsilinszky, Agri-food Policy Junior Technical Officer, FAO REU</td>
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<td>9:35-9:40</td>
<td><strong>Welcome and key outcomes of the first two consultations and objectives of the webinar</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mr Nabil Gangi, FAO REU Deputy Regional Representative</td>
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<td>9:40-09:55</td>
<td><strong>Youth-sensitive value chain analysis and development</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ms Sonja Barwitzki, Value Chains and Green Employment consultant, ESP, FAO HQ</td>
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<td>09:55-10:00</td>
<td>Q&amp;A</td>
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| 10:00-10:35| **How young people take part in the agricultural value chains?**<br>Real-life field experiences  
• **Chicken from Farm to Table** – Kazakhstan – Ms Akmaral Bolatovna, Project advisor  
• **Csoroszlya Farm** – Organic farm, flour and short food supply chains – Hungary – Mr Ágoston Nobilis  
• **Agricultural drone service provider** – Mr Nikoloz Meskhi – Georgia (tbc) |
| 10:35-10:45| Q&A                                                                |
| 10:45-11:10| **Cambridge-style debate**<br>Moderator: Mr Pedro Marcelo Arias, Economist FAO REU  
Participants:  
• **Mr Rakhmatilla Ubaev** – Agri-food value chain development analyst at the International Strategic Center for Agri-Food Development, Uzbekistan  
• **Mr Nikoloz Meskhi** – Agricultural drone service provider in Georgia  
• **Ms Akmaral Bolatovna** – Chicken from Farm to Table project team’s adviser, Head of the Economics Department at Kazakh Agrotechnical Research University, Kazakhstan |
| 11:10-11:15| Q&A                                                                |
| 11:15-11:20| **Take home messages and closing by**<br>Pedro Marcelo Arias, Economist FAO REU |