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# COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

## Twenty-seventh Session

28 September - 2 October 2020

## Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP)

### Executive Summary

The FAO Conference endorsed the call to develop a rural youth action plan that addresses the importance of making rural areas more attractive for young women and men. The Action Plan should be based on existing initiatives and instruments and be implemented in collaboration with the other Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs) and other organizations. This document presents a five-year Action Plan which is aligned to the five thematic areas identified by COAG. The goal of the Action Plan is to contribute to the realization of the SDGs by equally empowering rural young women and men, protecting children and other excluded youth groups. The Action Plan is developed under 5 pillars: Pillar 1: Support youth participation in rural development, within the context of integrated Landscape and Territorial Approaches; Pillar 2: Foster youth employment in an inclusive green economy; Pillar 3: Strengthen rural youth capacities for the use of innovative approaches and technologies in food and agriculture; Pillar 4: Promote rural services for youth and agripreneurs, and Pillar 5: Building FAO institutional capacity to address rural youth areas of work. The action plan is considered a “living” document to ensure it has the flexibility to accommodate new developments such as the emerging challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- Endorse the Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP) contained in this document.
- Request FAO to strengthen its organizational and budgetary arrangements, including the establishment of a “youth desk” to ensure FAO has the capacity to integrate and address youth and youth-sensitive elements in its programmes and initiatives.

*Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:*

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## I. Introduction

1. COAG at its 26th Session (2018) discussed why and how young women and men in rural areas suffer from unemployment and lack of decent jobs, and how this contributes to an ageing farming community, out-migration and the economic, cultural and environmental decline of rural areas. COAG highlighted that supporting youth is essential to revitalizing rural areas and ensuring the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). COAG further identified the territorial approach as an overall framework to revitalize rural areas and create decent job opportunities for youth.<sup>1</sup>

2. To strengthen areas of collaboration and synergy in the RYAP, FAO undertook consultations with the Rome-based Agencies: International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Food Programme (WFP) as well as International Labour Organization (ILO) and several United Nations (UN) agencies: UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCDD), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Population Funds (UNFPA), UN International Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UN Women and the World Tourism Organization (UNTWO) as joint members of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD). Consultations were also made with: FAO divisional and regional children and youth focal points, the Young UN network, the WFP Youth Network, and other global and regional youth networks, such as the Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger, the Major Group of Children and Youth (MGCY), and the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD). The outcomes of these consultations are reflected in this Action Plan.

## II. Rationale for a Rural Youth Action Plan

3. Since UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' (UNDESA) World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY),<sup>2</sup> there has been a growing recognition of the importance of youth participation in developing, implementing and monitoring processes at all levels. The subsequent UN System-Wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP) and the United Nations Strategy on Youth represented a real opportunity for all UN agencies, including FAO, to coordinate efforts on youth issues. An increasing number of organizational youth specific strategies and action plans have also been developed, such as those by IFAD<sup>3</sup> and ILO; and youth-related issues have been increasingly integrated into global processes such as the UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028 (UNDF) <sup>4</sup> and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030<sup>5</sup>. Bodies such as the UN Committee on World Food Security are also increasingly incorporating youth into their work<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, the role of youth in the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda has been highlighted in the World Youth Report<sup>7</sup>.

4. The United Nations defines “youth” as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member Nations. There are currently 1.2 billion youth in the world, with the majority in rural areas in developing countries. In these countries the youth population is expected to increase by approximately 60 percent by 2050. Youth are not a homogeneous group; challenges differ for young women, younger youth, youth with disabilities, youth from poorer families, young refugees, displaced youth, or youth from excluded groups or indigenous peoples. Also, age structure varies across countries, territories and culture, highlighting the importance of context

<sup>1</sup> FAO. COAG/2018/06

<sup>2</sup> UNDESA. World Programme of Action for Youth. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpay2010.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> IFAD. 2018. EB/125: *Minutes of the 125th Session of the Executive Board*, para 34 – 36.

<sup>4</sup> FAO & IFAD. 2019. *United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028. Global Action Plan*. Rome. [www.fao.org/3/ca4672en/ca4672en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca4672en/ca4672en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> UNEP. *Youth to power the decade on restoration* <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/youth-power-decade-restoration>

<sup>6</sup> FAO. CFS 2019/46/7 [www.fao.org/3/na703en/na703en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/na703en/na703en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> UN. 2018. *Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/WorldYouthReport-2030Agenda.pdf>

specific interventions, creating the necessary intergenerational linkages and facilitating transitioning of knowledge and decisional powers.

5. Many of the rural youth living in developing countries are unemployed, lack education opportunities and access to essential services. Often rural job opportunities, especially in the agriculture sector, do not meet young people's needs or aspirations. This contributes to outward migration, rural social deterioration, as well as an increasing aging farming community. These problems are further compounded by the degradation of natural resources, climate change, as well as a lack of resilience to shocks. As future managers of our ecosystems and food systems, countries need to invest in rural youth to ensure sustainable long-term economic development that is resilient to future crises and shocks and contribute to the realization of the SDGs.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all parts of society and livelihoods around the globe. As noted in FAO's policy brief 'Rural youth and the COVID-19 pandemic', disadvantaged segments of populations, such as rural young women and men, will be impacted harder, with exacerbated gender inequalities. At the same time, the pandemic offers opportunities to invest in responses and recoveries that create new sustainable jobs and livelihoods. There is need to ensure that humanitarian responses and social protection measures are youth and gender sensitive, as well as supporting recovery efforts that enable sustainable and resilient rural transitions that address issues such as environmental degradation and climate change. Considering that young women and men are contributing meaningfully and often leading crisis responses within their communities, it is imperative that they are included in the design of these responses. FAO will work with its Members and partners to address these needs in the different measures designed during the pandemic and the recovery phase. The Action Plan also intends to respond to the Call for Action in the *COVID-19 and Youth Statement* prepared by IANYD, by continuing to engage with young people during the pandemic, and recognizing the diverse and multiple impacts on young people in the medium- and long-term.

#### **A. Collaboration with RBAs and other organizations**

7. FAO and other organizations jointly developed the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP) which established UN priority areas of joint work that include employment and entrepreneurship, education and political inclusion and supported the subsequent development of the 'Youth 2030: The UN Youth Strategy'<sup>8</sup>, which acts as an umbrella framework to guide the entire UN as it steps up its work with and for young people across its three pillars: peace and security; human rights, and sustainable development. Organizations also support the development and implementation of respective individual strategies, such as FAO support to IFAD's action plan. FAO is also collaborating with other organizations and regional work streams such as the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA) as well as the International Year of Family Farming and the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor. FAO and ILO further collaborate jointly with other entities in the Decent Jobs for Youth [Global Initiative], while jointly co-leading the thematic area of 'Youth in the Rural Economy'. The RYAP will seek to strengthen collaboration with WFP, in particular in field level programmes and activities that support rural youth during protracted crises to reduce their vulnerability and enhance resilience in a conflict-sensitive and participatory way. Collaboration with other entities are regularly reviewed and updated through MOUs and other agreements, such as the global work plans within the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD). The RYAP will therefore build on existing collaboration and on lessons learned and addressing new priority areas. Further details of collaborative areas of work with other entities are provided within the different RYAP pillars.

#### **B. Goal**

8. The goal of the RYAP is *to contribute to the realization of the SDGs by equally empowering rural young women and men, protecting children and other excluded youth groups, revitalizing rural areas through on-farm and off-farm activities and leaving no one behind*. This will be achieved through improved policy guidance, supporting governments and other stakeholders and targeting of FAO's normative and field programmes on youth-related issues, with a view to strengthen youth

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<sup>8</sup> UN. *Youth2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth* <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-un/>

participation in decision-making processes and access to education, decent employment and rural services.

### **C. FAO programmes targeted**

9. The RYAP will contribute predominately to SDG 1 (end poverty), 2 (end hunger) and 8 (sustainable economic growth and employment) as well as SDG 4 (education), 5 (gender equality), 6 (water), 7 (energy), 13 (climate action), 10 (reduced inequalities), 11 (sustainable communities) and 14 and 15 (life on land and in water). The RYAP is in line with the objectives of FAO's Sustainable Food and Agriculture principles and its activities will be integrated into relevant FAO initiatives and approaches, such as Climate Smart Agriculture, Agroecology, Integrated Landscape Management, Sustainable Food Value Chain Development, the Policy on Gender Equality, as well as FAO's new *Hand-in-Hand* and 100 Territories Initiatives.

10. RYAP will seek to capitalize, to the extent possible, on all FAO programmes and projects, in particular youth-related initiatives such as: the Decent Rural Employment programme; the Integrated Country Approach for boosting decent jobs for youth in the agrifood system; the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools, and the Elimination of Child Labour in Agriculture work. Other related initiatives include: the Farmer Field Schools and Farmer Business Schools; the Digital Agriculture and Innovation Hubs; work on rural finance such as the Improving Capacity Building in Rural Finance (CABFIN), and the work on youth and responsible agricultural investments and sensitizing rural value chains.

11. RYAP will strive for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and other excluded groups and will cover various value chains, including those related to crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries, aquaculture, as well as integrated systems and food, feed and fiber processing. With partners, FAO will also create the interlinkages with other non-farm-food sectors, with a view to boost off-farm income generation activities, such as agro-eco-tourism.

12. In order to operationalize the Rural Youth Action Plan, stronger collaboration will be promoted with external entities (including Government, NGOs and other UN agencies) especially at the regional and country levels. Guidance will be made to support the up-scaling and integration of youth-related issues into FAO core programmes, projects and strategic objectives. These activities will include communication measures with partners and decentralized offices and supporting them to engage and address youth-related issues through corporate channels and mandated focal points.

### **D. Action Plan approach and principle of youth engagement**

13. The RYAP will promote empowerment and youth leadership, as well as facilitate youth engagement in decision-making processes, especially for marginalized and disadvantaged youth, youth in remote areas and those with limited access to the internet and other communication channels. FAO will collaborate with other UN agencies and relevant partners at global, regional and country levels to strengthen and create a coherent design of youth-centric and gender-sensitive processes. The principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)<sup>9</sup> will be further developed so that indigenous youth will be allowed to give or withhold consent to a project that may affect them or their territories.

## **III. FAO Rural Youth Action Plan 2021-2025**

14. The RYAP has five pillars that follow the five priority themes endorsed by COAG.<sup>10</sup> The rationale, relevant FAO programmes and proposed main outcomes and outputs are indicated below.

- Pillar 1: Support youth participation in rural development, within the context of integrated Landscape and Territorial Approaches
  - a) Sustainable rural development needs to take into account different land uses, livelihood needs and socio-economic factors, all of which shape social and ecological outcomes at various scales. Integrated Landscape and Territorial Approaches strive to meet the needs,

<sup>9</sup> FAO. [www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/our-pillars/fpic/en/](http://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/our-pillars/fpic/en/)

<sup>10</sup> FAO.COAG/2018/06

interests and values of all women and men of all generations and ethnic groups who live in a given ‘territory’ while also addressing biophysical and ecological objectives and requirements. It recognizes spatial, socio-political and environmental diversity and supports equitable decision making and governance systems. Such approaches address the economic, social and environmental interlinkages and through participatory approaches identify optimal use of assets and resources in a given space to ensure sustainable transitions that create synergies and reduce tradeoffs. Such an approach is therefore suited for addressing multiple interlinked challenges such as the climate emergency, degraded natural resources and ecosystems and the economic decline in rural areas. Considering such challenges are being further exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic, especially in rural areas, these approaches need to ensure sustainable and resilient transitions that respect the specificities of different territories, making sure to leave no one behind.<sup>11</sup> This will require economic inclusion and targeted social protection measures, to address the immediate emergency but also ensure to “build back better” approach. Youth have demonstrated their increasingly important role in meeting these global challenges.

- b) The RYAP will increase youth awareness of Integrated Landscape and Territorial Approaches, support increased youth participation, instill ownerships in landscapes and create the means for youth to be positive active agents of change. Guidelines will be developed to ensure approaches, tools and methodologies are youth and child sensitive, and public policy support measures will be strengthened for incentivizing youth engagement in the formulation, governance and implementation of landscape and territorial development strategies and programmes. Youth-focused capacity-building tools for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of rural development public policies, including those needed for strengthening family farming will also be developed. Programmes will also be strengthened for the protection of individuals below 18 and adolescents from the worst forms of child labour, including hazardous labour, contributing to the FAO Framework on Ending Child Labour in Agriculture. Guidance will also be created to build government capacity on youth sensitive social protection measures.
- c) *Outcome 1.1: Integrated Landscape and Territorial Approaches created that incorporate the needs and aspirations of young women and men. Indicative outputs:*
  - Youth and child sensitive integrated landscape and territorial strategies developed through participatory processes that include the vision of youth constituencies in its formulation, governance and implementation.
  - Institutional and legal frameworks and strategies developed which foster improved natural resource governance, ensure secured access to land for youth and promote farm transfer and generational turnover.
  - Capacities of governments strengthened to integrate youth sensitive resilience and emergency responses into landscape and territorial approaches.
- d) *Outcome 1.2: Strengthened self-organization of youth within rural communities and interconnected urban areas. Indicative outputs:*
  - Youth participation strengthened in rural decision-making processes fostering their role as innovators and agents of change.
  - Generational sustainability for sustainable natural resource management and food supply networks strengthened.
  - Innovative sustainable solutions promoted for young agripreneurs especially through global, regional and country fora.

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<sup>11</sup> FAO. 2017. *Landscapes for life: Approaches to landscape management for sustainable food and agriculture*. [www.fao.org/3/i8324en/i8324en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/i8324en/i8324en.pdf)

- e) The *main* partners for Pillar 1 implementation include: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), IFAD, ILO, UNDESA, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UNESCO, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UNIDO, Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger and YPARD.
- Pillar 2: Foster youth employment in an inclusive green economy<sup>12</sup>
    - a) Many of the world's ecosystems and natural resources are overexploited and degraded while they need to continue providing food, clean water, energy and other essential economic, social and environmental goods and services to a growing population. This is further aggravated by challenges such as climate change and other emerging shocks such as the COVID-19 epidemic. Major transitions are required for sustainable production systems and consumption patterns in order for countries to achieve their SDGs. This requires major efforts, especially in rural areas, to build resilience, reduce investment risks, develop relevant bioeconomy infrastructures and create market opportunities, for example through the provision of environmental services, carbon trading as well as creating premium products, such as through fair trade, geographic indication and organic products.
    - b) Sustainable innovations in farm and non-farm rural employment and greening agricultural value chains have the potential of creating millions of jobs. However it is essential that such interventions are youth-sensitive and that jobs and market opportunities are equitable, non-discriminatory, viable and attractive to young women and men. This will require partnerships among business, academia, government and local entities, as well as youth organizations, in order to undertake the needed research, skills training, and create bioeconomy clusters within rural communities and in rural-urban interfaces.
    - c) Through the RYAP, policy guidance and technical support will be provided to governments to identify optimal entry points for transforming agricultural sectors, generating new rural value chains and creating youth sensitive sustainable jobs. Special attention will be given to the analysis and development of value chains that address gender inequalities, increase the engagement of young women and most marginalized youth and ensure equal benefit distribution. The work will contribute to programmes such as the Green Jobs for Rural Youth Employment (GJ4RYE), Greening the Economy with Agriculture (GEA), Geographic Indication (GI), circular bioeconomy, as well as Food Safety for Food and Nutrition Security. Similarly, the FAO Mainstreaming Platform for Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors is particularly relevant to youth with regards its Action Area 2 on Development of Green Economy.
    - d) The 2012 study on *Green Jobs for a Revitalized Food and Agriculture Sector* will be updated<sup>13</sup> and will include a review of business and economic sustainability of identified systems and practices, as well as their potential impact on the local and global economy. A digital platform and other resources will also be created to support evidence-informed action on decent youth employment. The work will be undertaken with the UN Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (DJ4Y) thematic area of Youth in the Rural Economy<sup>14</sup> and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)<sup>15</sup> whose members include governments, the private sector and youth organizations.
    - e) *Outcome 2.1*: Promote government policies which ensure youth- and gender-sensitive transitions to the green economy. Indicative outputs:

<sup>12</sup> Based on the principles of RIO+20 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20/futurewewant>

<sup>13</sup> FAO. *Green Jobs for a Revitalized Food and Agriculture Sector*

[www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/sustainability/pdf/FAO\\_green\\_jobs\\_paper\\_March\\_31.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sustainability/pdf/FAO_green_jobs_paper_March_31.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> DJ4Y. [www.decentjobsforyouth.org/knowledge](http://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/knowledge)

<sup>15</sup> UN. <https://www.un-page.org/>

- Sustainable and circular bioeconomy policies and strategies are in place to promote inclusive food systems and sustainable decent jobs that are youth- and gender-sensitive.
  - Policy uptake and adoption of technical guidance achieved through the establishment of distribution and information measures that are effective even during social distancing measures.
  - Guidance generated that empowers young people to contribute to issues related to environmental services.
- f) *Outcome 2.2: Initiatives supported that allow young women and men to equally access sustainable jobs and participate in the bioeconomy. Indicative outputs:*
- Sustainable innovations, including technologies and practices are introduced across value chains sectors including non-food sectors such as agro-tourism and eco-tourism.
  - Youth-sensitive methodologies developed and used to assess the policy implications, business validity, resource efficiency and cultural-sensitivity of sustainable production systems and value chains.
  - National, regional and global partnerships strengthened to support the creation of sustainable and circular bioeconomies that are youth- and gender-sensitive.
- g) The main partners for Pillar 2 implementation include: ILO, IFAD, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as well as PAGE and DJ4Y members.
- Pillar 3: Strengthen rural youth capacities for the use of innovative approaches and technologies in food and agriculture
    - a) Formal education (such as schools, universities, vocational schools and training institutions), non-formal education (such as community groups, farm schools, and structured initiatives) and informal education (such as intergenerational knowledge transfer, peer-peer and community forums) are essential for capacity development, knowledge sharing and changing behaviors required to allow sustainable school to work transitions to occur and ensuring equal involvement of young women and men. Education not only improves employment opportunities but also addresses issues such as informal jobs, as the level of informality decreases when education increases<sup>16</sup>.
    - b) Innovation, including in information and communication technology (ICT), increases the opportunities for the exchange of farm and value-chain information, and supports the cross-fertilization among research, innovation and traditional and indigenous knowledge. ICT also creates opportunities to access inputs and services, identify potential markets and job opportunities, and create linkages between rural and urban areas. In addition, it can also provide options compatible with social distancing measures required under COVID-19. ICT, however, to be effective will need to be tailored to the specific rural contexts taking into consideration the needs of young women and men and function with the available infrastructure, such as broadband and smartphone coverage. Knowledge and the ability to apply modern and labour-saving technologies can also contribute to reducing the hardship of work and trigger the interest of young women and men to participate in rural value chains.
    - c) Through the RYAP collaboration with organizations such as UNESCO will be strengthened to provide guidance on required provisions of primary and secondary education in rural areas and improve the methodology and structure of curricula developed at all age levels. Based on these insights educational programmes, curricula and other products will be developed to support sustainable production transitions and providing the needed entrepreneurial and job skills. In particular, FAO will strengthen

<sup>16</sup> ILO. 2018. *Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture (third edition)*  
[https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_626831/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang--en/index.htm)

support to national extension services, vocational schools and other capacity development programmes such as farmer field schools to ensure they are youth sensitive and meet current and future learning needs. Through partnerships such as the Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA) behavioural change education will be developed to ensure future generations are instilled with farming interests, strive for balanced diets and become champions of social, environmental and sustainable consumption patterns in their families and communities. The RYAP will also support in ensuring that innovations in FAO initiatives such as Climate-Smart Agriculture, Circular Bioeconomy, Agroecology, Integrated Landscape Management, and Sustainable Food Value Chain, feed into education and capacity development initiatives. FAO will also review the work of IFAD and World Bank on non-cognitive skills and socio-emotional skills (abilities such as conscientiousness, perseverance, and teamwork) in order to further equip youth with a flexible set of skills that will allow them to thrive in the fast evolving labour market.

- d) *Outcome 3.1: Youth and gender sensitive education and training programmes developed taking into consideration specific contexts and needs of youth constituencies such as disabled, indigenous, minorities and marginalized groups. Indicative outputs:*
  - Policy guidance allows national policy makers and local entities to develop youth sensitive educational and capacity building programmes related to agricultural value chains.
  - Extension and educational resources developed or adapted to address identified opportunities that connect local traditional and indigenous knowledge with new innovations.
  - Educational resources for school and youth organizations developed that increase knowledge and raise interest in agriculture, instill environmental and social consciousness and ensure the adoption of balanced diets and sustainable lifestyles.
  - New research and lessons learned used to create more effective capacity building strategies, programmes, initiatives, curricular and youth-led knowledge and support mechanisms.
- e) *Outcome 3.2: Young men and women capacities developed through ICTs, agribusiness support programmes, junior farmer field schools, education clubs and related mechanisms:*
  - Agriculture Digital Innovation Hubs strengthened to address key knowledge gaps and improve youth adoption of digital technologies and innovative practices.
  - Youth entrepreneurship skills strengthened through *Sprint programmes* and other related initiatives that connect youth with global agri-tech companies.
  - Improved learning and information achieved through optimized junior farmer field and life schools, distance learning tools and other mechanisms including partnerships (such as 4H Clubs).
  - Guidance on improving informal education mechanisms, including intergenerational knowledge transfer, used to strengthen youth capacity development initiatives.
- f) The main partners for Pillar 3 implementation include: Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), IFAD, ILO, UNICEF, UNIDO, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), YPARD as well as members of YUNGA.
- Pillar 4: Promote rural services for youth and agripreneurs
  - a) The achievement of the SDGs requires a significant increase in investments in sustainable agriculture. In this context, attracting youth to agriculture and empowering them to carry out sustainable investments is crucial since it will have significant positive impacts on food security, economic development, employment creation and the reduction of forced migration. It is essential to strengthen youth access to services, including (micro-) credit and (micro-) financial services, and those for land acquisition.



Other crucial services include advisory services on enterprise development, market information as well as equitable access to innovations such as e-commerce platforms and e-banking. Sustainable interventions also require incorporating youth-specific investment incentives into national investment promotion strategies, as well as working with youth organizations to strengthen their capacities to provide services and engage in policy dialogues. In addition the use of specific rural youth orientated incentive schemes can increase youth attachment, retention and recruitment to rural areas. Rural infrastructure, including internet connectivity and other services, such as social, health and education services will also be essential in creating opportunities in both agricultural sectors and other sectors such as tourism. Transitioning towards a sustainable resilient future will also require youth policies and targeted social protection and safety-net measures that address recurrent or foreseeable shocks, such as climate change, as well as the recent COVID-19 epidemic. Other needed accompanying measures would include opportunities to incentivize family care facilities, family planning and social assistance.

- b) The FAO Umbrella Programme “Supporting Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems” supports FAO Members through strategic planning, capacity development and policy dialogue with youth on investment incentives and services. FAO also collaborates with UNIDO under the joint flagship initiative: “Opportunities for Youth in Africa: Accelerating Jobs Creation in Agriculture and Agribusiness” (OYA) as well as other initiatives such as the “Accelerator for Agriculture and Agroindustry Development and Innovation” (3ADI+), the African Agribusiness and Agro-industries Development Initiative (3ADI), Agrinvest, as well as non-agriculture activities and environmentally-friendly business, such as agrotourism and eco-tourism<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, a Youth-Sensitive Value Chain Analysis Guide (YSVCA guide) is currently being finalized and field tested in selected countries. Key in creating the enabling environment are also the work on the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, as well as the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management.
- c) *Outcome 4.1: Youth entrepreneurship and decent jobs promoted and investment strengthened. Indicative outputs:*
- Policy measures and incentives to enhance youth access to farming assets, financial services and markets are identified, developed, disseminated and implemented.
  - Youth sensitive investments attracted through evidence base assessments of economic opportunities, including analysis of gaps in policies, services and social protection measures.
  - Youth capacity to engage in responsible investment in food and agriculture systems supported through multi-stakeholder think-tanks, agricultural hubs, mentorship programmes and other youth participatory processes.
  - Public policies established that incentivize youth engagement in agriculture and along its value chain, create new economic opportunities for young people and support farm succession and improved generational turnover.
- d) *Outcome 4.2: Youth communities, organizations and networks supported in accessing rural services, including agricultural measures. Indicative outputs:*
- Capacity of national and local institutions strengthened on innovations linking sustainable production to consumers and markets for improved diets and reduced malnutrition.
  - Young women and men have increased access to land, finance and markets, including through the creation of multi-partner incubator platforms (such as IFAD’s Agri-Hubs).

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<sup>17</sup> FAO, IFAD & CTA. 2014. *Youth and agriculture: key challenges and concrete solutions* [www.fao.org/3/a-i3947e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3947e.pdf)

- Youth, including indigenous, involved in participatory approaches of FAO's Voluntary Guidelines that initiate work on youth's access to land and natural resources.
  - Policy guidance ensures that humanitarian and emergency responses, including social protection schemes are youth sensitive and promote long term sustainable rural transitions.
- e) The main partners for Pillar 4 implementation include: IFAD, ILO, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNIDO, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNWTO, WFP and Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger.
- Pillar 5: Building FAO institutional capacity to address rural youth areas of work
    - a) One of the key objectives of the RYAP is to initiate a more systematic and strategic approach in how FAO addresses youth related issues. Although there is considerable improvement from the past, certain technical areas still need to be strengthened to ensure they are youth and children sensitive. Staff, including from regional and country offices, may not necessarily have the capacity to develop programmes that are relevant for their country contexts, or undertake adequate youth participatory processes. In addition, country offices often are not equipped to address youth issues in new UN country processes and ensure that the needs and views of the different rural youth constituencies are represented. Guidance is also required to support the integration of children and youth issues in FAO technical programmes and projects. Identifying suitable mechanisms needs to take into consideration that FAO does not have a dedicated coordination unit (or even officer), nor a dedicated regular programme budget for such work.
    - b) Strengthening partnerships with relevant organizations can help mitigate these internal limitations, and empowering youth to be partners, can provide considerable strength at global, regional, country and most importantly, grassroot levels. Building on each organization's strengths will allow to work at larger scales and strengthen advocacy efforts. RYAP will therefore strengthen collaborative efforts with regards to institutional capacities and participatory youth networks. This will include creation of joint initiatives, improved coordination in regional processes and country implementation, the development of joint knowledge products and training materials, as well as resources such as policy and guidance briefs.
    - c) *Outcome 5.1*: FAO's capacity strengthened to strategically deal with rural youth issues by capitalizing on existing programmes and resources. Indicative outputs:
      - FAO programmes and projects are youth and child sensitive and youth-participatory through the provision of guidance and staff capacity development.
      - Youth related indicators incorporated into sustainability and SDG assessment framework and evidence base used to monitor and strengthen the impact of programmes and initiatives.
      - FAO network of divisional, regional and country youth and child focal points strengthened to exchange and disseminate youth-relevant information and created more integrative programmes.
    - d) *Outcome 5.2*: Partnerships established and youth participation in UN processes supported in view of establishing a specific youth engagement network/mechanism. Indicative outputs:
      - UN inter-organizational collaboration mechanisms strengthened on children and youth issues, in particular at regional and country level and with the RBAs, to collaborate on initiatives, such as the new FAO Framework on Ending Child Labour in Agriculture.

- Youth able to engage in FAO and related UN processes through interlinked networks and participatory engagement mechanisms.
  - Youth and child sensitive strategic planning advocated and funds mobilized in support of youth interdisciplinary responses.
- e) The main partners for Pillar 5 implementation include the following: Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) Secretariats, UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), FAO Youth Focal Points, the Major Group of Children and Youth (MGCY), RBAs Youth Focal Points, Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger.

15. FAO, with Partners, will regularly monitor progress on the implementation of the Action Plan and associated activities. Monitoring will be done based on clear operational roles and responsibilities and following the subsidiarity principal to promote accountability for results – and leveraging the revised FAO corporate results based management systems to be developed and put in place for the new FAO Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan 2022-25.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

16. An Organization-wide Rural Youth Action Plan is needed, in cooperation with RBAs, to promote the following five pillars: (i) Support youth participation in rural development, within the context of an Integrated Landscape and Territorial Approach; (ii) Foster youth employment in inclusive green economies; (iii) Strengthen rural youth capacities for the use of innovative approaches and technologies in food and agriculture; (iv) Promote rural services for youth and agripreneurs; and (v) Build FAO institutional capacity to address rural youth areas of work.

17. Considering its transverse nature, the RYAP has been structured with a series of activities and integrative processes within existing programmes and thus, would not require significant additional resources. Activities would be anchored within the Regular Programme and, where possible, strengthened with extra-budgetary resources. However, the effective implementation of the Rural Youth Action Plan requires a dedicated coordination desk (one P4 level coordinator, one GS support staff, one technical support person) to be considered under the regular programme budget. Should additional funding be secured, the Action Plan will be expanded, in collaboration with partners, to include additional cross cutting normative and operational activities. In this regard, the RYAP should be considered a living document that will evolve to address needs and opportunities, in the face of the very rapidly changing world environment. Due to the timing of developing this document, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have only been initially considered. The Action Plan will remain flexible to accommodate new developments in that respect.

18. The Committee on Agriculture may wish to endorse this proposal.