

Statement of the United States of America on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems

The United States recognizes the critical roles that youth play in food and agricultural systems around the globe and the importance of developing and promoting policies that attract and create more and better jobs for millions of youth in these sectors, particularly ensuring equal opportunity and equitable outcomes for female youth.

This is why the United States supports the inclusion of this workstream in the CFS MYPoW and why we are looking forward to the upcoming policy convergence process on this workstream.

Unfortunately, the HLPE Report falls short of our expectations. Instead of “a focused, action-oriented report” envisioned in the MYPoW, much of the HLPE Report is narrowly focused on a fundamental transformation of food systems towards “economies of well-being and food sovereignty.”

By focusing on a narrow vision of transformation, the HLPE Report fails to consider the majority of agricultural approaches that are sustainable, are proven to bolster food security, and may be more appropriate in any given context.

Notably, the role of the private sector in advancing youth employment in agriculture and food systems is largely missing from this report and should feature more prominently in the policy convergence process. In so doing, emphasis should be placed on the achievement of shared value propositions with the private sector that unlock the potential of more inclusive markets to achieve sustainable food systems transformation. The role that youth themselves play in creating a more vibrant and inclusive private sector through their own innovation and entrepreneurship must also be recognized.

This continues a disappointing trend from the HLPE, which is under increased scrutiny following the UN Food Systems Summit. We strongly underline the need to focus on the multiple sustainable approaches available for advancing food security and nutrition. We look forward to working with the newest members of the HLPE Steering Committee to reverse this trend and ensure we don't miss out on critical opportunities in supporting youth in agriculture and on other food security and nutrition related topics.

While the youth policy convergence process can build upon the recommendations of the HLPE Report, we oppose transferring the narrow vision espoused in the HLPE Report on how food systems can be transformed into the policy convergence process.

We share a common goal of promoting the engagement and employment of youth in inclusive and sustainable agriculture and food systems, and we must work together to develop a policy product that recognizes differences in culture, gender norms, economy, and environment and will be useful to implementers and policy makers across the globe for years to come.

We are also concerned about the relatively few days, just six, that have been allotted for formal negotiations. As CFS leadership and Members will remember, negotiations on the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN) and Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches (AOIA) far exceeded the planned schedule.

We encourage the CFS Secretariat to allot a realistic number of days to the Youth policy convergence process.

We welcome the nomination of Pio Wennubst from Switzerland as Rapporteur and look forward to continuing to engage with the HLPE, CFS, and all members on this workstream.