

PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS CONCERNING CFS THEMATIC WORKSTREAMS

PROPOSAL E

Youth in Agriculture and Food Systems

a) Proponents

This is a joint proposal by:

Member States:

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b) Outputs associated with the proposed thematic workstream

The proposed thematic workstream will contribute both to output 1.1 (inclusive discussions) and output 2.1 (global policy guidance).

To date, the importance of the theme of youth has been brought up during both CFS44 and CFS45 Plenary sessions (including the CFS45 MYPoW discussion), in the rural and urbanization stream, and several of the respective CFS side events and during the November 2018 Innovation Symposium, as reflected in Plenary Reports, side event reports, and relevant Chair's Summaries. It is clear that there is a desire to further this discussion.

We propose the development of a set of Principles on Youth in Agriculture commissioned for 2020, with young people to be engaged in the drafting of the principles via multiple avenues. The proposed Principles will frame a potential policy document to be discussed at CFS Plenary in 2021, with two innovative, interactive Intersessional Events taking place in 2022. The proposed thematic workstream would culminate in 2022 with a Plenary discussion of concrete outcomes of the Principles, including commitments to Multistakeholder Partnerships on Youth in Agriculture. All of these activities point directly to the endorsement of global policy guidance, with the drafting process, CFS Plenary discussions, and Intersessional Events intended to be inclusive, multistakeholder discussions.

c) Rationale for including the proposed thematic workstream, based on the prioritization criteria and building on CFS main comparative advantages, as described in Annex B of the CFS Evaluation Implementation Report

Young people are one of the keys to achieving sustainable development, in particular in developing countries, as the majority of the world's young people lives in developing countries and rural areas. The agricultural sector has valuable and untapped potential to address the youth unemployment challenge; actions need to be taken to make the sector more attractive to young people as one that is remunerative.

As the average age of farmers worldwide approaches 60, it is essential to develop systems, policies, and programmes that engage more youth in agriculture and agricultural professions. Youth engagement is linked intrinsically to countless aspects of the achievement of food security and good nutrition for all, but we would highlight in particular the interlinkages with gender equality, the rural-urban continuum, and innovative technologies, including new uses of data and knowledge-sharing platforms. Governments will play an essential role in creating enabling environments for youth engagement in agriculture, so the proposed thematic workstream will encourage and facilitate government action to invest in youth as a strategic approach to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Youth must have a voice in CFS and in other UN fora, including the United Nations headquarters, where events focused on youth, such as Agriculture and Food Day in 2017, have seen great success and received very positive feedback.

By 2030, it is projected that 14% of the 8.5 billion people on earth will be between the ages of 15-24. Most of these young people will be concentrated in Asia and Africa. According to the World Bank, fully employing all African youth will require the creation of 350 million new jobs across the African continent by 2035 to address current high rates of unemployment in many of African countries (exceeding 50% in some countries in Central / Southern Africa). Currently, on average, about 70% of the African population is involved in agriculture in some way; however, young people are trending toward a preference for off-farm and non-agricultural employment. Youth resistance to engaging in agriculture is particularly remarkable given that the value of Africa's food markets is predicted to grow from its 2010 value of US \$313 million to over US \$1 trillion by 2030.

Despite vast advances in agricultural technology elsewhere in the world, in Africa, the World Bank has recently confirmed the long-held understanding that irrigation and tractor use is negligible; input intensification is happening for maize in particular; few households use credit to purchase modern inputs; the pattern of market failures is widespread and damaging to farmers' incomes; farmers primarily finance modern input purchases with cash from nonfarm activities and crop sales; and that population pressure and market access have resulted in poorer soil health, a result of less fallow time for fields and inadequate access to restorative fertilizers¹. All of these phenomena disproportionately affect youth, whose interest in new technologies, use of modern inputs, access to reliable markets, and environmental sustainability is too often unfulfilled in the agricultural systems to which they have been exposed.

¹ Christiaensen, Luc; Demery, Lionel. 2018. Agriculture in Africa: Telling Myths from Facts. Directions in Development—Agriculture and Rural Development;. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28543> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO

Contrary to widespread perceptions, the mean age of adults engaged principally in farming is not rising – in fact, it is falling slightly in some countries and remains stable in most others. However, given that the average age of the general population continues to fall, the age of farmers remains worryingly high relative to other professions. On the African continent, about 60% of the agricultural labor force is currently between 15–35 years of age, and the share is growing. However, rural youths are looking for better and more rewarding livelihoods than traditional farming, and are migrating to urban areas even when the jobs there are inadequate².

Using nationally representative data from nine countries, demographic and employment trends in Africa's workforce based on full-time labour equivalents (FTE) can be documented. The FTE approach takes account of individuals' multiple jobs throughout the year and is therefore likely to give more accurate estimates of the pace of structural transformation. Since 2000, Africa has experienced a sharp decline in the share of its labour force in farming. Because of the seasonal nature of farming, the share of the labour force remaining in farming is substantially lower using the FTE approach than when examined in terms of individuals' primary sources of employment or total numbers of jobs.

Using the FTE approach, the share of the labour force in farming ranges across the nine countries from 35 per cent in Ghana to 54 per cent in Rwanda. Employment in off-farm segments of agri-food systems is expanding rapidly in percentage terms, but in terms of absolute numbers, non-farm activities are by far the major source of employment outside of farming.

The proposed thematic workstream will contribute to the all three of CFS' MYPoW Strategic Objectives. The workstream will most significantly capitalize on CFS' convening power, as one obstacle facing young people in agriculture is the fact that the constant demands of work in agricultural professions too often keeps youth from participating in policy discussions and gatherings. CFS' position as the world's preeminent inclusive body to discuss FSN makes it a compelling event for young people to prioritize year over year, as shown by youth attendance and involvement on CFS 45 and 46. The workstream will also build on the field level programme experience of the RBAs, ranging from the specific investment programmes for youth (IFAD); the training and capacity development perspectives (FAO) and fast, focused interventions to support youth in fragile states (WFP).

The workstream will also derive value from CFS' expertise in producing voluntary global policy guidance: as the unique challenges facing youth are different in each country and region, the emphasis on allowing member states to appropriately adapt the information in the Principles document for implementation is a great asset to equipping young people to contribute to the end of hunger and malnutrition. Finally, the Youth in Ag workstream is relevant to Strategic Objective 3 in that youth have proven interest in and commitment to the use of data, knowledge transfer, and sharing of best practices, especially using new technologies; in this way, the workstream serves to both fulfill and strengthen this strategic objective.

There have been broad expressions of support from many CFS actors, including Member States, in support of this workstream. The country sponsors of this proposal are The Netherlands and Indonesia. Indonesia, together with IFAD, will be jointly implementing the Youth Entrepreneurship

² Yeboah, F. K., & Jayne, T. S. (2016). Africa's evolving employment structure (International Development Working Paper 148). East Lansing, USA: Michigan State University

and Employment Support Program (YESS) for the period 2019-2024, which aims to engage Indonesian youth to contribute to rural transformation through employment and entrepreneurship.

d) Expected results and how they will contribute to the achievements of the CFS MYPoW Strategic Objectives and FSN-relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda

The overarching objective of the proposed workstream is to create a set of Principles on engaging, recruiting, and retaining Youth in Agriculture and Food Systems as a key means of achieving SDG2, and an array of other SDGs, with a secondary focus on SDGs 5, 8, and 9. The Principles are envisioned as a focused, outcome-oriented document; we hope for an efficient, actionable document.

The Principles would be presented for endorsement to the CFS Plenary in October 2022. Specifically, the workstream would start after the nutrition workstream is complete; this youth stream is proposed to run from 2020-2022. The Principles should serve as an actionable, adaptable reference document for governments, their partners, and members of the private sector and civil society on the policies, innovations, and initiatives that will be most successful in drawing more young people to agriculture and related professions. The Principles will also address the fact that youth engagement is a topic that should be implemented in a cross-cutting fashion and in partnership with existing and future programmes and policies, rather than considered as an independent issue.

In addition to the projected Principles, it is also hoped that two CFS Intersessional Events would be held to bring together youth and representatives of youth organizations from around the world, together with other CFS stakeholders, to discuss challenges and opportunities for youth in agriculture ahead of 2030. Young people would ideally have a leading role in the planning and execution of these important events, which would be held in 2021-2022 and would create a space for collaborative feedback and consensus-building on the policy procedures. Such events will serve to both further engage young people in agriculture by creating buy-in to the drafting procedures, and will also legitimize the content and structure of the Principles by virtue of the proactively inclusive process.

e) Potential activities that could be considered after the adoption of the CFS policy product to promote its use and application

Follow-up from the Intersessional Events in 2021 / 2022 should include impact evaluation for all attendees as a way of deriving lessons learned about the value of such events to young people in agriculture. The outcomes of the event should be shared widely, both within CFS and also through partners, and should include publication of reflections on the event on social media platforms. FAO Regional Conferences could develop region/country specific events aimed at member state policy makers and regional donor financiers.

The Principles, both during the drafting / consultation phase(s) and final stage, should be widely disseminated via webinars, workshops, trainings, classes, and special events to encourage young people to take up the recommendations individually and, more importantly, for governments to make public commitments. Following adoption of the CFS policy product at Plenary in 2022, other potential activities could include regional dissemination events and further events to encourage and celebrate Multistakeholder Partnerships on Youth in Ag for food security and nutrition.

f) Budget estimate, human resources and timeline

Timeline:

2020: Principles document commissioned for 2020 (the drafting committee may want to consider an 18-month timeline in order to be maximally inclusive of many stakeholders).

2021: Release of the v0 draft of the Principles document and launch of an e-consultation.

2021 Plenary: Plenary discussion on framing for a potential policy document on Youth in Ag.

2021 / 2022: Two Intersessional Events, with a half day devoted to youth-led sessions and a half day devoted to negotiations of the policy document.

2022 Plenary: Plenary discussion of projects and initiatives associated with the Principles; and a session or special event devoted to commitments to Multistakeholder Partnerships to engage, recruit, and retain youth in agriculture in accordance with the content of the Principles and the policy document.

Costs: a) negotiation of the potential policy document; b) travel of panelists and interpretation for the intersessional events; c) translation of background documents for the Intersessional events; d) e-consultation(s); e) regional consultations; f) regional (conference) dissemination events; g) translation & interpretation of the negotiation processes; h) planning and execution for the Intersessional and Plenary events.

g) Indications on whether the preparation of a HLPE report is foreseen and its potential contribution to the proposed CFS thematic workstream

An HLPE Report is not requested.