

Question 1: Which priority issues and policy-relevant areas should be addressed through this CFS policy convergence process and included in the policy recommendations?

- **FAO fully supports the CFS call** for the development of systems, policies and programmes that engage more youth in agriculture and agricultural professions. Further, FAO fully agrees with the overall priority emerged from the HLPE report around the need for policies and initiatives to protect and strengthen youth engagement and employment in agri-food systems.
- **FAO supports the HLPE conceptual framework organized around the four pillars of rights, equity, agency and recognition** of youth intersectionality, heterogeneity and diversity across all dimensions of agri-food systems. In particular, a human rights based approach can support the establishment of mechanisms for participation and accountability, and lay the foundations for fairer, empowered, and more resilient societies.
- **In terms of macro policy areas, FAO supports the structuring proposed by the HLPE report** across the following areas: i. providing an enabling environment for youth as agents of change; ii. securing dignified and rewarding livelihoods; iii. increasing equity and rights to resources; iv. enhancing knowledge, education and skills; and v. fostering sustainable innovation. **The list of related policy recommendations provided in the HLPE report is already very comprehensive and well structured. A few additional suggestions are provided below.**
- FAO appreciates that the HLPE report mentions the need for specific attention for **younger youth between 15 and 17 years of age** (p. 40). Specific policy recommendations should be included in this regard, namely:
 - Under the area on *Providing an enabling environment for youth as agents of change*, section on *Participation and Governance*, **recommendations should emphasize the need to support the engagement of younger youth with specific measures**. Rural youth aged 14/15 to 17 are often excluded from trade unions, producers' and workers' organizations, cooperatives and other forms of associations. It would be important also to promote inter-sectoral cooperation to include them in social dialogue schemes.
 - Under the same area, section on *Policy instruments and regulations*, it would be important to emphasize **the need for knowledge and data generation about the 14/15-17 age group** and their needs.
 - Under the same area, section on *Infrastructure and social protection*, point k. mentions the need to *Ensure youth have access to basic infrastructure and services, including education*. It is suggested to mention more explicitly **the priority issue of access to free and quality education for youth aged 14/15-17, especially girls**. Related policy areas include: i) alignment in national legislation between the age for compulsory school and the legal working age; ii) introduction or further emphasis on agricultural topics in school curricula in order to better equip this age group if they wish to pursue agricultural/rural livelihoods; iii) incorporate practical learning and soft skill development in education; iv) combine education, food security policies and social protection through school feeding programmes and support to small-scale farmers to send and keep their children in school (already addressed in point (l) of the same section); v) improve infrastructure to facilitate access to school and support families to access school supplies; vi) ensure school

- continuity during emergencies through access to long-distance learning; vii) ensure a safe and inclusive return to school without discrimination of any kind; viii) adopt multi-sectoral approach to implement and enforce policies on girls' school attendance; ix) create awareness on the negative impacts of gender stereotypes on both girls and boys; and x) address the problem of early marriage and adolescent pregnancies.
- Under the area on *Securing dignified and rewarding livelihoods*, section on *Employment legislation and governance*, a recommendation could be made on **the mitigation of work-related hazards for children of legal working age (14/15-17) to turn situations of child labour into decent youth employment**. A related policy-relevant area is about ensuring OSH for children of legal working age (related to existing bullet (d) in this section) by: i) improving working conditions and arrangements, including by separating working children from particular work hazards; ii) raising awareness about and integrate national hazardous work lists into agricultural and rural development policies; and iii) developing capacity of agricultural stakeholders on sustainable agricultural practices, including risks related to working children's exposure to pesticides.
 - Also, in the section on *Labour market policies*, bullet (c), specific mention could be made on the **need to partner with the private sector (creating incentives) to provide apprenticeship and internship opportunities for the 14/15-17 age group**.
 - Under the area on *Increasing equity and rights to resources*, section on *Access to finance*, FAO suggests mentioning **the need to address the financial needs of different age segments**. In many countries, the minimum age to open a bank account is 18, while youth under 18 who have already started working would greatly benefit from access to financial services and financial literacy. Also, micro insurance schemes should be promoted and made available also for the 14/15-17 age group.
- Under the area on *Providing an enabling environment for youth as agents of change*, section on *Participation and Governance*, recommendations should emphasize the need for **enhancing youth participation and leadership in Parliaments and policy mechanisms, and overall youth-responsive policymaking**. The 7th Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians (April 2021) stressed youth under-representation in parliaments, where only 2.6 % of the world's MPs are under 30. Initiatives exist worldwide such as the [Frente Parlamentario Juvenil #EcuadorSinHambre](#) launched in 2018, which is an initiative of the Asamblea Juvenil de Ecuador with the objective to engage youth in legislative work. In the Philippines, the [FAO Legislative Advisory Group-Philippines \(FLAG-PH\)](#), composed of legislators and FAO, has been serving as a platform for the exchange of ideas and as a node between parliamentarians and ordinary farmers and fisherfolk. A dedicated FLAG-youth was established recently, actively engaging young parliamentarians and leading to congressional deliberations on essential pieces of legislation targeting youth such as the House Bill Establishing the Young Farmers Challenge Program; as well as capacity building initiatives for strengthening youth policy advocacy in the Bangsamoro region.
 - **As for access to land, FAO wishes further emphasizing the focus on young women** in the corresponding section on *Access to natural and productive resources*, considering the additional challenges they face. Overall, FAO finds very relevant the HLPE report areas on youth access to land and points to the need to: i) create space for youth and women to dialogue, organize and lobby for land rights; ii) develop youth's capacities to manage agricultural land and agricultural business on the land; and iii) introduce incentives (e.g. access to retirement system) to older

generation for the transmission of the management and ownership of the land, the business and other assets to the younger generation.

- Under the area on *Securing dignified and rewarding livelihoods*, section on *Employment legislation and governance*, point (f) seems to have a too narrow focus on labour inspection, which could be expanded (o an additional recommendation added) to reflect on the need to promote **progressive formalization, including by introducing related incentives and sensitization**.
- FAO appreciates the emphasis of the HLPE recommendations on youth engagement in agro-ecology transitions, and other actions to preserve the natural resource base. **Promoting inter and intra-generational exchange of sustainable agricultural practices and decent jobs for youth that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment** will not only positively impact on the overall sustainability of food systems development but also address long term youth unemployment. This will demand policy and technical support, as well as supporting the capacity and skills needs of youth.
- **As for employment creation**, FAO suggests strengthening the focus on the demand-side measures aimed at creating more decent jobs for youth in agri-food systems. Focus should be on promoting more inclusive and sustainable agri-food value chains and investments, and supporting agri-MSMEs. Linkages could be made with CFS RAI principles and FAO's work on Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains.
- Under the area of *Fostering sustainable innovation* it is recommended to emphasize the importance of supporting **digital engagement and networking of youth in agri-food systems** to reduce information asymmetries and enable peer-to-peer learning, knowledge sharing and collaborations, as well as increased access to service providers (e.g. business mentors, technical experts, financial institutions). This could be reflected in the policy recommendations under the same thematic area, e.g. recommendation 5b which currently focuses on rural/urban advisory and extension services could be widened in scope by including also other digital services tailored to youth needs (finance, e-learning, business development, online marketplaces).
- Based on the experience of FAO's Decent Rural Employment Team (DRET) in the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP), and the principles of digital development, it is important to develop youth digital skills to uptake new, inclusive and adaptable technologies and innovations, but it is equally important to **engage youth in co-designing digital solutions** that respond to their needs and are appropriate to their context. This point could be reflected in recommendation 5c on developing digital skills and innovation capacity of the youth.
- FAO places great emphasis on the key role played by **rural youth networks, organizations, associations and youth in agribusiness organizations as partners** and intermediaries to both represent and engage the most underserved and vulnerable groups of youth in rural areas. A recommendation focusing on strengthening these youth organizations to ensure no one is left behind could be considered.

Question 2: Do you have any suggestions for CFS meaningfully engaging youth constituencies in the policy convergence process?

- For the meaningful engagement of youth organizations, beyond their engagement in existing mechanisms, such as in the CSM and PSM, **stronger outreach should be ensured** by the CFS Secretariat, RBAs focal points, CSM and PSM to youth representative organizations engaged in agri-food system development. Unless active and regular information sharing is ensured, youth organizations might not become aware of the opportunities for providing written contributions or for participating in the OEWG.
- For this specific request on written inputs to these two initial questions, FAO technical points have shared the request to relevant global youth networks (YPARD, UNMGCY, CSAYN, Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger, Nourishing Africa, Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement (JVE), as well as some regional/country networks (RAPEA Senegal/West Africa, YOFCHAN/Uganda, UNYFA/Uganda, RYAF/Rwanda, YEAN/Rwanda). Further, the information has also been shared with members of the FAO youth crosscutting team and youth regional focal points, who have further shared the information with global and regional networks of farmers' organizations supporting the implementation of the UN Decade on Family Farming (UNDF). The link to the CFS youth webpage has also been shared, to give them the opportunity to eventually register to the OEWG mailing list. **Furthermore, in view of favoring the engagement of youth groups that might not be familiar with CFS, additional opportunities could be established at country and regional levels to facilitate youth discussions on the policy recommendations.**
- **Finally, CFS members could engage eventual young parliamentarians groups in their respective countries to provide inputs into the policy convergence process.**