

November 2021

**Written input from the United States for the preparation of the Zero Draft of the Policy  
Recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food  
Systems**

The United States thanks Ambassador Pio Wennubst, Rapporteur for the workstream, for the opportunity to provide written input ahead of the development of the Zero Draft of the Policy Recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems (Youth in Ag.).

**Priority Issues/Policy Relevant Areas**

In framing the development of the Zero Draft, the United States would like to highlight the importance of keeping this policy guidance focused on its intended scope: recommendations for promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems. As mentioned by other members during the first Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) meeting and in an effort to complete the workstream on time and in a consensus-based manner, we emphasize the importance of drawing upon agreed language from the *Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition* (VGFSyN) and *Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches* (AOIA) on topics such as human rights, trade, and approaches to agricultural production to avoid unnecessary, unproductive debates on topics that have already been discussed at length in the past year at CFS.

Further, in an effort to develop a document that encourages consensus and improves the efficiency of the policy convergence process, we support the call of some members during the OEWG meeting to avoid including a section on definitions and would welcome further discussion on similar considerations regarding a preamble. We note that the inclusion of a section on definitions would be unusual for a CFS policy recommendation and recognize that the removal of the AOIA's definition Annex was necessary in order to gain consensus and finalize that document.

The Youth in Ag. policy recommendations must be applicable to a wide array of contexts and circumstances and adaptable to those seeking to utilize them: policy makers and implementors. Therefore, it is important that the Zero Draft be balanced in the approaches it promotes, avoiding overly prescriptive solutions that were espoused by the HLPE Report's narrow vision for a food systems transformation, and equally considering the three pillars of sustainability: Economic, Social, and Environmental. The HLPE Report failed 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.

The Zero Draft should also avoid overly broad statements that, if taken out of context, could be used to promote policies that would negatively impact food security. This includes disparaging the role of trade in food security whether through the promotion of food sovereignty or by implying that food security needs should be addressed entirely via local supply chains. We also note that "Youth" represent a diverse group of stakeholders in food and agricultural systems and the Zero Draft should not presume to know the specific interests of Youth as a group and should avoid generalizations of their interests.

It is crucial that the policy recommendations be tied to barriers to meaningful, continued employment that Youth are facing on the ground today. These include a lack of access to finance, land, education, and technology, amongst other necessary resources. On youth engagement, employment and nutrition needs and roles, the United States endorses the cultivation of meaningful partnerships with youth to strengthen policies that improve the enabling environment for more and better jobs for youth within inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems that also meet young people's nutrition needs and nurture youths' roles in advancing nutrition and healthy diets.

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It is similarly important for the Zero Draft to be inclusive of all sectors and settings – rural and urban. With regard to private sector engagement (noticeably absent in the HLPE Report), 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.

### **Engaging Youth Constituencies in the Policy Convergence Process**

The United States strongly believes in the importance of meaningfully engaging Youth constituencies in the policy convergence process. In order to develop relevant, useful policy recommendations that can be readily deployed by policy makers and implementors, Youth input must be solicited and incorporated.

We encourage the OEWG and the CFS Bureau to consider separate consultations for Youth on the Zero Draft, much like the Regional Consultations for the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition (GEWE), and for the VGFSyN. Consideration should also be given to existing models for successfully engaging Youth in multilateral policy processes. We are open to exploring these opportunities with the OEWG and CFS Bureau.

Finally, as mentioned previously, we reiterate that the policy convergence process should not view Youth as a singular group, that Youth interests vary substantially by context and setting, and that no single CFS member can fully represent Youth in a way that would be reflective of the target audience for this workstream.