

CFS Policy Convergence Process on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems

World Health Organization (WHO)

Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems

Q1: We see the following priority issues and policy-relevant areas that should be addressed through this CFS policy convergence process and included in the policy recommendations:

All regions of the world are facing alarming increases in the rates of overweight and obesity among children and youth, which rose from 4 percent in 1974 to over 18 percent in 2018 (WHO, 2020). And the trends are increasing. Also, the SOFI report 2019 reported about this. Overweight and obesity in these age groups, result from an unhealthy diet and inadequate physical activity, and increase the risk for diet related NCDs. Healthy diets need to be provided by more sustainable food systems. Children and young adolescents are important agent of change for achieving sustainable food system that can deliver healthy diets for all, for today and for future generations.

Therefore, one priority of the policy recommendations should focus on capacity building and training for food systems thinking and action. This includes:

- Reforming vocational training curricula and update training programmes for professions in food systems, from farm to fork.
- Development of curriculum and reform in primary and secondary schools on the needs and practices for transforming food systems, including food systems for health.

Such capacity building needs to go hand in hand with measures that provide an enabling environment for youth to practice the increased awareness, knowledge and skills of and engagement with healthier and more sustainable diets. This includes also to address the need for healthy food environments. Young people are consumers, and make food choices that increasingly influence family diets; this is reflected in child- and youth-targeted food advertising, often focused on unhealthy and highly processed foods, with high content of unhealthy fats, sugars and salt.

Therefore, the policy recommendations should also address the need for:

- Food environments including infrastructure and services, that are adequate to enable youth healthy dietary choices.
- An approach to policy instruments and regulations that is youth-oriented.

Q2: On the point how to meaningful engage with youth constituencies in this policy convergence process, I would like to share how WHO is collaborating with representatives of health and non-health youth organizations on key health and development issues affecting young people.

WHO is setting up a Youth Council and plans to collaborate with representatives of health and non-health youth organizations on key health and development issues affecting young people to co-create a comprehensive and inclusive WHO Youth Engagement Strategy. (WHO 16 Nov 2021).

- <https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/call-for-nominations-to-serve-on-the-who-youth-council>

Alongside the launch of the Youth Council in Dec 2020, WHO announced the creation of a Global Youth Mobilization (GYM), an initiative to invest in and replicate youth solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic. In partnership with the UN Foundation and the [Big 6 Youth Organizations](#) — which alone engage more

than 250 million young people — and with support from the [COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund](#), the movement convened a [Global Youth Summit](#) in April 2021 to reflect on the pandemic from a youth lens. Key issues and challenges the Global Youth Mobilization aims to address, include the gaps in education and COVID-19 health effects, but also Economic inequalities and employment, gender inequality and social stigma.

- <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/who-launches-youth-council-to-advise-on-global-health-and-development-issues-affecting-young-people>
- <https://www.who.int/news/item/14-12-2020-world-s-largest-youth-organizations-and-who-launch-global-mobilization-to-respond-to-disruptive-impacts-of-covid-19-on-young-people>

We are ready to share further details on this and could explore ways of engagement in the CFS workstream through the Secretariat, if applicable.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to re-iterate the importance of integrating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in this workstreams, in line with the CFS49 plenary discussion.

Young people are less at risk of severe disease and death from COVID-19 but will be the most affected by the long-term consequences of the pandemic, which will shape the world they live and work in for decades to come. COVID confinement measures have interrupted youth education, made it difficult to find employment, and led to an increase in mental health conditions. In 2020, global youth employment declined by 8.7%. The unemployment figures for young women are even more bleak, and they face additional, unique challenges, including increased vulnerability to domestic violence and child marriage. (WHO 12 August 2021). The latter point also underlines the need of a gender differentiated approach to the workstream theme.