

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

Written inputs submitted by the Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger

The Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger would like to share their views on the following questions. It has to be said, that statements made from the Youth Alliance do not formally represent the individual convening organizations, but instead reflect a consensus of the views of the members of the Youth Alliance:

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

Firstly, we would like to highlight that the policy convergence process must prioritize the broadest sense of youth engagement and employment across food systems from rural to urban, and from local to global, and everything in between.

It is important that the policy recommendations take into consideration the varying contexts in which youth exist. That youth play a role across the food systems and that the enabling environment needed should not focus on one part, such as production alone, but different aspects of food systems: Policy, Education, Research, Extension, Resources, Finance, Markets, Technology, Trade.

It would be important to underline that we should ensure youth access to the resources highlighted in the HLPE report, as well as adopting a rural development approach with a holistic lens focusing on agriculture while also including social services, schools, infrastructures, or access to the internet, among others.

We believe that to promote youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems, educational systems need to include and highlight the role and value of agriculture so as to raise the awareness of youth as young as childhood. Agricultural skills and capacity also need to be developed outside the four walls of schools, such as through vocational programs, mentoring programs, and peer-to-peer programs. In this sense, we would like to highlight the necessity to empower young entrepreneurs and game-changers on the ground, not just with money but with mentorship, capacity building programs, non-financial opportunities or speaking slots at policy processes in local, national and international levels.

Also, to acknowledge the key opportunity that young people offer as great agents of change in influencing consumption of healthy and balanced diets, more environmentally-friendly production and so on.

We underscore the need for the process to take into consideration the four pillars of Agency, Rights, Equity and Recognition as guiding principles throughout this policy

convergence process. We believe this can be done by deliberately involving youth in every step of the process, as well as encouraging member states to work closely with youth including women, indigenous youth, young farmers, and other possible marginalized youth groups as these policy documents are developed. This also means that youth constituencies who may not commonly be involved in CFS processes be brought into the fold to raise the pluriactive roles of youth as the HLPE highlights. An effective inclusion of youth during this process can be also raised as one of the core strengths/areas of the final policy document. This will place this policy convergence process as an actual example of how to include youth perspectives into policy making.

It is important for the diversity of youth's interests to be taken into consideration, whilst highlighting that recommendations must be youth-centric and context-specific and not innovation- or technology-centric. This is in line with the points of the HLPE report that highlights the pluriactive roles and the mobility of youth which is shown in the diversity of their interests.

It is our hope that the recommendations are developed with pragmatism and practicality in mind, so that we achieve the highest possible adoption of policy recommendations at the country level with which youth, at the end of the day, will benefit directly.

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

We would like to suggest that the CFS secretariat with the support of the RBAs and other allies reach more youth organizations, specially in the developing countries, that may be normally out of the CFS stage and of the "regular" policy circles to be present in this process. Flexible schedules and approaches during the process will facilitate this.

Allow PSM youth, CSM youth and other youth constituencies to be present in every discussion as well as facilitate and ask for their participation.

In addition to this, we would like to make a call to member states for reaching and working closely with national youth organizations to find common approaches. In addition, it would be very appropriate to invite these youngsters to these meetings as part of their delegations.

Interpretation services for meetings and written inputs will also facilitate that youth on the ground take an active role during the process.

Give higher publicity to the procedures that CSM and PSM have to include more youth organizations in the process.

To arrange more regional informal meetings/forums between the CFS stakeholders with regional youth constituencies.

To arrange a youth workstream composed by youth organizations for this specific policy process, even those who are not part of the PSM and CSM to add their voices to this process. It has to be considered that many young people fall in between the spectrum of the defined mechanisms simply because they do not identify as either civil society or private sector, while some youth move dynamically between the two sectors.

As it was said before, it would be very important to strengthen the link between what happens at the CFS in Rome and the national governments. RBAs with their liaison offices could help, also to involve the stakeholders' organizations like youth organisations in this case.

We think it is fundamental to see a process that is not only “For Youth” but “by youth”.