



CFS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROMOTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

DRAFT FOR NEGOTIATIONS

RATIONALE

1. Young people are key to achieving sustainable development, in particular in developing countries, where the vast majority of them reside, often in rural areas. There is a large untapped reservoir of wage and self-employment opportunities in agriculture¹ and food systems, which are a significant source of employment for youth. Yet, limited access to and control over land, natural resources, infrastructure, markets, insurance, finance, technology, knowledge and skills, as well as limited participation in decision-making processes, poor remuneration, income uncertainty, exposure to risks and low social recognition for agricultural and food workers turn many youth away from agriculture and rural areas. As a result, many feel that their best option is to migrate, either to urban areas or abroad. Actions are needed to make agriculture and food systems more attractive to young people and increase their capacity to generate decent employment opportunities and livelihoods, especially in the post COVID-19 recovery context.

2. The potential returns of investing in young people and ensuring their participation in decision-making processes, are considerable in terms of food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, employment generation, sustainability of agriculture and food systems, management of natural resources, preservation of knowledge systems, as well as peace and socio-political stability. Further, multiple interlinkages exist with gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, child labour elimination in agriculture, harnessing rural-urban linkages and fostering inclusive innovative practices and technologies, including new uses of data, digital tools and knowledge-sharing platforms.

3. The entry of young people in agriculture and food systems is a key driver to fostering the competitiveness and vitality of these sectors. To guarantee generational renewal, it is essential to develop systems, policies, and programmes that engage more youth in agriculture and food systems and associated professions, and that enable them to enjoy their rights, by addressing the structural inequalities and discriminatory practices that negatively affect them, while improving overall service provision and well-being in rural areas.

4. The following recommendations are addressed to Governments (relevant ministries, national, regional and local authorities and institutions, as appropriate) to implement in consultation with intergovernmental and international organizations, youth and producer organizations, workers' unions, the private sector (including micro, small and medium as well as larger-sized-entities), research organizations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities and civil society.

¹ Agriculture includes crops, forestry, fisheries, livestock and aquaculture. UNGA Resolution A/RES/74/242. Paragraph 20.

5. These policy recommendations are envisioned as an ambitious, focused and action-oriented tool that will encourage public policies to foster enabling environments capable of tapping into the energy and skills of youth to make agriculture and food systems sustainable and promote food security and nutrition. In working towards this aim, the diversity, intersectionality, and context specificity of youth aspirations, needs and experience across the globe should first be recognized.

1. PROVIDE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

a) Contribute to the realization of human rights of youth without any discrimination, by implementing existing global policy instruments that are relevant to youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems, as applicable, by supporting relevant policy processes and programmes, as well as by creating accountability mechanisms for youth as right holders to hold duty bearers accountable; (*#Rights*)

b) Ensure that youth-oriented policies and programmes engage youth in their design and take heterogeneity of youth and intergenerational relationships and hierarchies into account, providing additional support to improve equity and distribution of resources across generation, gender, class, culture, ethnicity and citizenship status, with specific attention to groups of youth in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations; (*#Diversity and representation*)

c) Enhance youth's standards of living by ensuring their access to quality education, health, hygiene and healthy diets; and reduce present and future vulnerability of youth by ensuring their access to basic infrastructure and services and by implementing context-specific social protection systems that contribute to meeting children's and adolescents' specific needs, including food and nutrition, with specific attention towards girls and young women; (*#Social protection*)

d) Provide income support measures and employment opportunities for young people, especially young women, who have lost their jobs as a result of shocks, conflicts or crises, as a means to ensure stability, reintegration, socio-economic growth and sustainable peace; (*#Social protection*)

e) Support and encourage equal, non-discriminatory and meaningful youth participation and leadership in organizations, including through civil society and private sector organizations, in governance mechanisms and decision-making fora at all levels, such as CFS, parliaments, unions and other national and local policy-making spaces, as appropriate, and promote youth-led organizations and initiatives; (*#Participation and governance*)

f) Strengthen collection of sex- and age-disaggregated labour market information and statistics to capture the diverse realities and heterogeneity of youth, their employment status and working conditions in agriculture and food systems, access to social protection, migration and mobility patterns, working time devoted to different activities and their overall living conditions; (*#Data collection*)

g) Improve the documentation of different forms of youth engagement in agriculture and food systems, combining quantitative and qualitative methods and youth-led participatory research, with due regard to data privacy and safety, to better understand youth needs, experiences, aspirations and behaviours and inform policy development. (*#Data collection*)

2. SECURE DIGNIFIED, ATTRACTIVE AND REWARDING LIVELIHOODS

- a) Develop social protection, employment and labour market policies and labour demand interventions, as well as investments and private sector development strategies that target young people, with emphasis on youth in situations of vulnerability, providing opportunities for dignified engagement and decent jobs for youth in agriculture and food systems. Such jobs should preferably contribute to adapt agriculture and food systems to mitigate their impact on climate change, conserving or restoring biodiversity, soils and the environment; (*#Targeting youth*)
- b) Implement comprehensive labour market policies to increase the employability of youth of legal working age in agriculture and food systems through interventions such as job assistance, employment services, culturally-appropriate training, skills development and apprenticeship, job matching, mentorship programming, entrepreneurship coaching and incubators, and payment for ecosystem services; (*#Labour market policies*)
- c) Implement labour demand-side measures for youth to promote more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food systems through investments that are consistent with the CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI); (*#Labour market policies*)
- d) Establish programmes to facilitate school to work transition, ensuring equitable access to these programmes across gender, ethnicity, levels of education and citizenship status and ensuring that they support the diversity of youth aspirations; (*#Labour market policies*)
- e) Develop and adopt labour laws, policies and regulations, and assign adequate budgets to enable decent living wages and incomes and ensure decent working conditions for youth in agriculture and food systems, with particular attention to children of legal working age, migrants and marginalized groups, ensuring occupational safety and health, reducing exposures to hazards, providing personal protective equipment, adequate working hours, non-discrimination, adequate access to social security and education; (*#Employment legislation and governance*)
- f) Recognize and compensate, as appropriate, unpaid work performed by youth in agriculture and food systems, including care work by young women, by developing social protection programmes that promote access to public childcare, essential health care, maternity care, parental leave and community services; (*#Social protection*)
- g) Ensure labour inspection systems in sectors and occupations related to agriculture and food systems, where young people are prevalent, and develop community-level monitoring of compliance to labour legislation and labour rights, reinforcing the need to prevent and eliminate child labour; (*#Employment legislation and governance*)
- h) Establish monitoring mechanisms to foster the progressive transition to formalization of informal enterprises in agriculture and food systems, including youth-led ones, for business owners and employees to get formal social and labour coverage, as well as access to financial and other support; (*#Formalization*)
- i) Promote, in line with relevant CFS policy recommendations, agroecological and other innovative practices for inclusive, resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems to generate decent job opportunities for youth and, in doing so, supporting the financial, management and technical capacity of

youth as well as providing support and market opportunities for foods that contribute to healthy diets from sustainable food systems; (*#Incentives and social finance*)

3. INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RESOURCES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND MARKETS

a) Recognize and protect youth tenure rights and support youth equitable access, sustainable use, conservation and protection of land, seeds and biodiversity, fisheries and forests by adopting appropriate policies, legal measures and programmes at the national level, consistent with the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (CFS-VGGT) and other relevant frameworks; (*#Natural resources*)

b) Develop legal measures, policies and regulations to facilitate inter-generational transfer of natural and productive resources and enterprises, including specific measures targeting young women, by supporting inheritance, start-ups and increased access to retirement and pension system; (*#Natural and productive resources*)

c) Support the establishment and functioning of cooperatives and other organizations to facilitate youth's access to productive assets, markets and services and increase their capacity to sustainably manage agricultural land, water resources and business. Additionally, encourage existing cooperatives and other organizations to establish youth sections; (*#Productive resources*)

d) Promote youth financial literacy and, in collaboration with financial service providers, the development and availability of affordable and inclusive financial services and products, including for the transfer and investments of remittances, tailored to the needs of youth engaged in agriculture and food systems, taking into account specific challenges faced by some groups (such as young women, youth living in rural areas and migrants); (*#Finance*)

e) Support youth entrepreneurship in agriculture and food systems, in both individual and collective enterprises, with specific attention to targeting young women farmers and entrepreneurs, by providing flexible financing programmes, including through savings mobilization, removing policies that prevent crowdfunding, alternative forms of collateral or collateral-free loans, low interest loans, contract farming and other value chain finance arrangements, warehouse receipts, digital and mobile financial services, insurance, remittances investment products, improved supply of financial services, provision of seed capital grants, partnerships with financial institutions and risk sharing instruments; (*#Finance*)

f) Improve public infrastructure to increase access to markets for youth producers, entrepreneurs and traders and empower youth to contribute to better link urban and rural territories, Indigenous Peoples and local communities for sustainable agriculture and food systems; (*#Infrastructure*)

g) Create enabling conditions for the engagement and leadership of youth in setting up short-distance supply chain initiatives, such as community supported agriculture, urban and peri-urban agriculture, food baskets and local markets, that reduce the distance between consumers and producers, by implementing guidance provided by the CFS Policy Recommendations on Connecting Smallholders to Markets; (*#Markets*)

h) Support development of effective business models for youth, incubators and relevant programmes to enable youth entry and engagement in food supply chains and support youth engagement in voluntary price premium and certification systems which may support better returns while contributing to more sustainable agriculture and food systems; (*#Markets*)

i) Support the development of public procurement programmes in agriculture and food systems, such as farm-to-school, school feeding and public nutrition programmes that engage sustainable and youth-led enterprises. (*#Markets*)

4. ENHANCE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATIONS AND SKILLS

a) Ensure universal access to free and quality education, improving infrastructure and introducing child grants and school meals programmes to facilitate access to school, ensuring school continuity during emergencies through access to long-distance learning and ensuring a safe and inclusive return to school without discrimination of any kind, and adopting multi-sectoral approaches to implement and enforce policies on girls' school attendance; (*#Education*)

b) Support multidisciplinary educational curriculum development in primary and secondary schools by including subjects related to sustainable agriculture and food systems, healthy diets, food security and nutrition, food literacy, as well as to leadership skills to prepare young people who wish to pursue agricultural and rural livelihoods, with related technical skills and practical learning components; (*#Education*)

c) Promote the development and uptake of training and vocational programmes that develop youth's skills for jobs in agriculture and food systems such as nutritionists, food educators, cooks in schools, farm managers, agri-food technicians, and extension and advisory service providers; (*#Training*)

d) Engage youth in research related to sustainable agriculture and food systems, sustainable use and conservation of natural resources, biodiversity and the environment, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and strengthen opportunities for youth to participate in community-based research partnerships; (*#Research*)

e) Promote inter-generational and intra-generational exchange of information, knowledge and practices, including Indigenous and traditional knowledge, through mentorship and peer-to-peer engagement; (*#Information and knowledge exchange*)

f) Develop intellectual property legislative frameworks recognizing and protecting Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge systems to guarantee effective intergenerational transfer of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, addressing the risk of misappropriation or misuse by third parties. (*#Indigenous knowledge*)

5. FOSTER SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE INNOVATION

a) Empower youth to promote inclusive innovation, through social and community enterprises, multi-stakeholder innovation platforms, community finance, and institutional innovations to link farmers to markets, acknowledging and utilizing inter-generational and Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge related to sustainable food systems; (*#Social innovation*)

- b) Support the provision of demand-driven rural and urban extension services and digital services tailored to youth needs and priorities while ensuring inclusive access to these services, including to close the gender digital divide; (*#Extension and digital services*)
- c) Develop digital skills of young farmers and food workers and of those transitioning from school to work, enhance their capacities to safely and effectively operate in digital environments and engage them in co-designing sustainable and innovative digital solutions and in digital knowledge transfer to elders;
- d) (*#Digital skills*) Invest in digital infrastructure and promote digitalization to ensure connectivity in peri-urban, rural and remote areas as a mean of strengthening and diversifying food systems as well as creating job opportunities for youth; (*#Digital ecosystems*)
- e) Support capacity building of youth through transfer of technology, especially to developing countries, and technical scientific international cooperation, including through mechanisms such as South-South and Triangular Cooperation. (*#knowledge transfer*)