



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

ZERO DRAFT – JANUARY 2022

RATIONALE

1. Young people are one of the keys 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 employment opportunities in **the agri-food sector**. Yet, poor access to land, natural resources, infrastructure, finance, technology, knowledge, and poor remuneration for agricultural and food workers turn youth away from agriculture and from remaining rural areas. As a result, many feel that their best option is to migrate, either to urban areas or **overseas**. Actions are needed to make the **agri-food sector** more attractive to young people and to promote their capacity to generate incomes.

2. The potential returns of investing in young people are boundless in terms of food security, poverty **reduction**, employment generation, as well as peace and political stability.

3. As the average age of farmers worldwide approaches 60, it is essential to develop systems, policies, and programmes that engage more youth in agriculture and agricultural professions. Youth engagement and leadership are linked intrinsically to countless aspects of the achievement of food security and good nutrition for all. Among these aspects, interlinkages with gender equality and **women's** empowerment, the rural-urban continuum and innovative practices and technologies, including new uses of data and knowledge-sharing platforms, are particularly relevant.

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

5. They are envisioned as a focused, action-oriented document that will encourage public policies to foster enabling environments capable of tapping into the energy and skills of youth to improve **food systems**. In working towards this aim, the diversity, intersectionality, and context specificity of youth aspirations and experience across the globe should be recognized.

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

a) Contribute to the realization of youth rights without any discrimination, by implementing existing global policy instruments that are relevant to youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food

systems, by supporting relevant policy processes and programmes, as well as by creating accountability mechanisms; (*#Rights*)

b) Ensure that youth-oriented policies and programmes 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 vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of youth; (*#Intergenerational approach*)

c) Enhance youth's standards of living by ensuring access to adequate education, health, hygiene and nutrition; and reduce vulnerability of youth by ensuring their access to basic infrastructure and services and by implementing social protection and safety net programmes that contribute to meet children's and adolescents' specific food and nutrition needs; (*#Social protection*)

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

e) Strengthen collection of labour market information and statistics to capture the diverse realities and heterogeneity of youth, their employment and working conditions in agriculture and food systems, as well as mobility and working time devoted to different activities; (*#Data collection*)

f) Improve the documentation of different forms of youth engagement in agriculture and food systems, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, to better understand youth needs and behaviours and inform policy development. (*#Data collection*)

2. SECURE DIGNIFIED AND REWARDING LIVELIHOODS

a) Ensure that employment and labour market policies and labour demand interventions target young people, providing opportunities for dignified engagement and decent jobs for youth in agriculture and food systems that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment; (*#Labour market policies*)

b) Implement comprehensive labour market policies to increase youth employability in agriculture and food systems through interventions such as job assistance, employment services, training and skills development, job matching and entrepreneurship coaching and incubators; (*#Labour market policies*)

c) Implement labour demand-side measures for youth to promote more inclusive and sustainable food systems and investments, consistent with the CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI); (*#Labour market policies*)

d) Establish programmes to facilitate the transition from school to work, ensuring equitable access to these programmes across gender, ethnicity and citizenship status; (*#Labour market policies*)

e) Develop labour laws and regulations, and associate adequate budget, to guarantee living wages and enhance working conditions for youth, with particular attention to children of legal working age, in agriculture and food systems through reducing hazardous exposures, supporting occupational safety and

health, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, providing personal protective equipment, safe hours and unemployment insurance; (*#Employment legislation and governance*)

f) Develop social protection programmes that **compensate** youth's unpaid contribution to food systems, and that legitimize care work, especially that performed by young women, through the provision of public childcare, parental leave and other community services; (*#Social protection*)

g) Support labour inspection systems in sectors and occupations where young people are prevalent and develop community-level monitoring of compliance to labour legislation and **labour rights**; (*#Employment legislation and governance*)

h) Promote, in line with existing CFS policy recommendations, agroecological and other innovative practices for sustainable agriculture and food systems to generate decent jobs for youth, by supporting the capacity of youth as well as by providing support and market opportunities for **sustainable products**; (*#Incentives and social finance*)

3. INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RESOURCES

a) Support rural youth equitable access, conservation and protection of land, seeds and **biodiversity**, fisheries and forests by adopting appropriate policies 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 by supporting successions, start-ups and increased access to retirement system; (*#Natural and productive resources*)

c) Support the establishment of cooperatives and other organizations to facilitate youth's access to productive assets and increase their capacity to manage agricultural land and business; (*#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 tailored to the needs of youth engaged in agriculture and food systems; (*#Finance*)

e) Support youth entrepreneurship in agriculture and food systems, in both individual and collective enterprises, by providing flexible financing programmes, including through savings mobilization, crowdfunding, alternative forms of collateral to access and lower the cost of loans in rural areas, 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 and communities for sustainable food systems; (*#Infrastructure*)

g) Support development of incubators and relevant programmes to enable youth entry and engagement in sustainable food supply chains and support youth engagement in price premium and certification systems which could guarantee better returns while contributing to more sustainable agriculture and food systems; (#Markets)

h) Support the development of public procurement programmes in the agri-food sector, such as farm-to-school and public nutrition programmes that engage sustainable and youth-led enterprises, through quotas, sensitization and technical support. (#Markets)

4. ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATIONS AND SKILLS

a) Ensure universal access to free and quality education, improving infrastructure 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 approach to implement and enforce policies on girls' school attendance; (#Education)

b) Support educational curriculum development in primary and secondary schools by including subjects related to sustainable agriculture and food systems to equip young people that wish to pursue agricultural and rural livelihoods; (#Education)

c) Promote training and vocational programmes for professions and creation of jobs in food systems such as nutritionists, food educators, extension and advisory service providers; (#Training)

d) Engage youth in research related to sustainable agriculture and food systems, resource conservation, change mitigation and environmental management, 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 through mentorship and peer-to-peer engagement. (#Information and knowledge exchange)

5. FOSTER SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE INNOVATION

a) Support the key role of youth in promoting social innovation, through social and community enterprises, multi-stakeholder innovation platforms, community finance, institutional innovations to link farmers to markets, taking into account inter-generational and indigenous knowledge related to sustainable food systems; (#Social innovation)

b) Support the provision of rural and urban extension services and digital services tailored to youth needs and priorities while ensuring inclusive access to these services; (#Extension and digital services)

c) Develop digital skills of young workers and of those transitioning from school to work, enhance their capacities in sustainable and innovative approaches and engage them in co-designing digital solutions; (#Digital skills)

d) 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 infrastructure)

