



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

*This paper includes the written input of the Netherlands on the Zero Draft on Policy Recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems after the second Open-Ended-Working-Group meeting.*

The rising average age of farmers, the attraction of cities, and the lack of satisfying employment for young people in rural agriculture are a threat to global food production. Youth has to be front and center of our future food systems. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is committed to put youth at the heart of its policies for international cooperation and aims for social, economic and political inclusion for young people.

Therefore, the [Youth at Heart Principles](#) are central to Netherlands international and multilateral dialogue for investing in the prospects of young people and working in partnership with young people. The Youth at Heart Principles have been developed by approximately 1200 young people from East- and Horn of Africa, Middle East and North Africa and the Sahel Regions. They focus on the one hand on education and employment opportunities for young people as a means to ensure concrete socio-economic perspectives (social and economic inclusion). On the other hand, this strategy emphasizes the importance for young people to voice out and be heard in decision making (political inclusion). The three principles are:

1. Build a more relevant, sustainable and effective **enabling environment** for education and work systems for young people, that recognize their rights;
2. **Involve** young people at all levels in decision making processes that will affect their lives;
3. **Partner** with young people to build a better, more resilient world for all generations.

### CFS Policy Recommendations

The Netherlands welcomes the CFS Policy Recommendations on Youth as an action-oriented document that will encourage public policies to foster enabling environments capable of tapping into the energy, knowledge and skills of youth to improve food systems. Furthermore, we welcome the positive approach to Youth Engagement and Employment and the acknowledgement of interlinkages with gender equality and women's empowerment, the rural-urban continuum, as well as education, health and other relevant areas.

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*Listen to young people  
themselves through  
youth participation*

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The Kingdom of the Netherlands underscores the importance to:

1. address the specific challenges and opportunities of young people as part of the CFS Policy Recommendations, but also to
2. meaningfully involve youth in decision making and in the process of arriving at the CFS Policy Recommendations, and to
3. work together with young people as leaders and partners in materializing the ambitions stipulated in the zero draft, because the Netherlands is convinced that a comprehensive approach in which dialogue and inclusion is a natural part, will lead to policies and interventions that are better geared to addressing the specific challenges, needs and opportunities of young people.

The process of arriving at the CFS Policy Recommendations, with full inclusion of youth leaders from across the planet, will be as much relevant as the content of it, as it will give a great deal of legitimacy and gravity to the actions and commitments it proposes. After arriving at strong Policy Recommendations it will be up to the UN

organizations and Member States, as well as civil society and the private sector, to put words to action and live up to the recommendations. The Netherlands stands ready to take its responsibility.

### General suggestions

- **Climate change** is intrinsically linked to the promotion of youth engagement in agriculture and food systems and the topic has to be added to this zero draft. With the food production being negatively affected by climate change in many regions of the world, the prospect of succeeding a struggling farmer is not very attractive for young people. Young people will not be attracted by just ‘pimping’ the sector as it is. Sustainability, equity and diversity are much more important. There are different ways to make policies future-proof. In recent years, good progress has been made with the creation of youth forums, dedicated youth conferences and youth advisory groups. This was a necessary phase, and definitely tilted the balance towards more meaningful involvement of young people. It proved there is added value in having youth at the table. At the same time it is noncommittal. We propose to introduce a mandatory **generation-check**: every decision should be measured by the yardstick of long-term sustainability.
- It is important to add the word ‘**sustainable**’ before the word agriculture throughout the whole document, in order to support young people to be engaged in agriculture that contributes to healthy ecosystems and support the sustainable management of land, water and natural resources, while ensuring food security. Many forms of conventional agriculture are not future-proof, and therefore not attractive for next generations.
- The challenges for youth to **access finance** should be addressed better. In many contexts, young entrepreneurs face additional challenges, ranging from formal business registration, to collateral to high interest rates – even more in the agriculture sector. Thereby, ensuring in-country value addition is an important prerequisite for job creation and could be added to the text.

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*Meaningful youth participation  
benefits sustainable outcomes*

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### Text specific suggestions

- In the Rationale the text could be more explicit in terms of acknowledging that young people are often excluded from decisions that affect them and hence the basic necessity of **strengthening youth participation**. The fact that (youth) participation is a human right<sup>1</sup> and embodied in SDG 16.7<sup>2</sup> would also be in place in the Rationale and not only in the paragraphs on enabling environment.
- An important additional notion for the Rationale may also be to show that the CFS Policy Recommendations serve to enhance ‘**intergenerational cooperation and justice**’: making sure that policies are not only valued for their effects here and now, but also for their impact on future generations. Especially when it comes to agriculture and food systems (in relation to biodiversity losses, climate change etcetera), this is an important factor.
- It might be helpful to stress in the Rationale that **all countries are in this together and challenges are universal**. Countries are facing both similar as well as unique challenges and have opportunity to learn from one another.
- In part 1 it is important to acknowledge that the **lived reality of (rural) youth is totally different from the reality of decision-makers**, especially in context of gerontocracy.
- In part 1 it may also be helpful to acknowledge that **aspirations of young people** may sometimes conflict with traditional systems and expectations of older generations. This part can further improve when it comes to the notion of creating inclusive platforms and shared safe spaces (both digital and physical) for young people to inform policies and programs that impact their lives.
- In part 1 it is also needed to address structural and legal barriers, and negative perceptions of young people that prevent the **participation of young people** in decision making processes, can be more clearly articulated.

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<sup>1</sup> The opinions of children and youth deserve ‘due weight in accordance with age and maturity’ (Art. 12 CRC). See also GENERAL COMMENT No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard.

<sup>2</sup> “Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.” (SDG 16.7); “Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions.” (SDG Indicator 16.7.1)

- In part 3 we suggest to add: *“without increasing biodiversity loss or harm to the environment”* to the last sentence of paragraph 3.c.
- In part 3 we suggest to add: i) *“Promote and support initiatives for true pricing of agrifood products, taking into account effects on climate, environment and biodiversity, to ensure a fair income for future farmers and more appealing remuneration”* to chapter 3, since investments should rather go into true pricing than into the next technical innovation.