

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

PSM comments on Zero Draft

General comments on rationale of the zero draft

The PSM welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the CFS '*Policy recommendations on promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems – zero draft*' which contributes to bringing forward the objective of sustainable food systems. The PSM believes that the policy recommendations capture relevant policy questions and actions to enhance food security and nutrition in the context of the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainability.

The PSM and its members, ranging from small farmers, cooperatives, SME's, and corporations continue to value the role of CFS and its multi-stakeholder engagement process as the forum to engage as a stakeholder, providing experience, evidence and solutions. Collaboration, partnerships, and dialogue at international, regional, and national level remains key for the development and use of sustainable agricultural practices and systems to address FSN goals. It remains important to recognize the role of partnership and multi-stakeholder engagement moving forward, the role of CFS in facilitating this and ensuring that CFS policy recommendations do not deviate from CFS's mandate.

1. The Zero Draft rightly (paragraph 1) notes that 'young people are one of the keys to achieving sustainable development' and 'that there is a large untapped reservoir of employment opportunities in the agri-food sector'. The PSM would suggest that along with employment opportunities it also be noted that there are many entrepreneurial and innovative farming opportunities also available. Paragraph 1. Should also include the need to 'reframe agriculture as a business choice that is intellectually, socially and financially rewarding, as well as one in which young people can make an incredible impact on issues such as climate change, hunger, displacement, poverty elimination and economic development in rural communities.'

2. Similarly, paragraph 2 refers to 'the potential returns of investing in young people' in the context of 'food security, poverty reduction, employment generation, as well as peace and stability'. In addition to these points, it is the PSM's suggestion that 'investment in youth also leads to greater overall economic development in rural areas and fosters an environment that

encourages entrepreneurship and technological development in food systems.' This should be added to the sentence in paragraph 2.

3. Within the Rationale of the Zero Draft the PSM has noted that no mention is made of climate change or climate change mitigation and that given the youth of today will disproportionately be dealing with the consequences of climate change in the future we recommend that this be noted and added to the rationale.

Specific comments on recommendations

1. Provide an enabling environment for youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems

a) The PSM would like to see greater emphasis in this paragraph on the rights of women and young girls as specified under the VGGT.

b) While paragraph b) refers to the process of succession it does not explicitly state that more work needs to be done on the process of succession planning, with emphasis on including youth, young girls, and women in this process.

c) Paragraph d) calls to enhance living standards of youth through a variety of mechanisms including, 'by ensuring access to basic infrastructure and services.' The PSM feels that given the challenge youth will face in meeting climate change targets and adaptation the reference to 'basic infrastructure' should be expanded to refer to more 'technologically complex infrastructure, including innovative renewable energy technologies' that will be needed to meet the FSN challenges of the future, especially in rural and farming areas.'

d) The reference to promoting 'youth-led organizations and initiatives' should be expanded on to state that this is of particular importance in farming and rural communities that are on the forefront of FSN and climate change challenges.

2. Secure dignified and rewarding livelihoods

a) The PSM suggests that this section be edited to include a reference to employment and professional mobility within the agriculture workforce. '...providing opportunities for dignified engagement and decent jobs, with occupational and professional mobility opportunities, for youth in agriculture and food systems that recognizes the aspirations youth have to not just eliminate poverty within their communities but to create prosperity.'

d) Paragraph d) calls for programs to facilitate the transition from school to work. Such programs to attract youth into agriculture should be starting earlier than the point between transiting from school to work. Primary schools should be teaching topics from growing to marketing crops. In many poorer countries farm work is still used as a punishment by schools and this is the paradigm of thinking that needs to change if we are to recruit more talented youth into agricultural and farming professions.

Note: The PSM feels that the only effective way to attract youth to agriculture is by ensuring dignified and rewarding livelihoods through fair and decent economic remuneration. Such remuneration is only possible if farms and agricultural enterprises are profitable yet there is

no mention in the zero draft of enhancing the profitability of farms (small or large) or agricultural enterprises to facilitate this. The PSM strongly feels that the link between farm and agricultural enterprise profits and increased remuneration, and subsequent recruitment of youth into farming and food systems, be explicitly stated in this section.

3. Increase equitable access to resources

a) Paragraph a) calls for the strengthening of 'equitable access, conservation and protection of land, seeds, fisheries and forests by adopting appropriate policies and programs.' The PSM would like to see this expanded upon to include practical actions that achieve these outcomes such as; better land use through precision farming; erosion management; crop cover and rotations; fishery output controls; greater precision use of inputs; and improved water management. It should also be noted that innovative financing mechanisms are required to ensure that technology adoption should not be cost prohibitive to entry into farming for youth who lack capital or collateral.

b) The PSM would like to see this paragraph changed slightly from 'Develop legal measures, policies and regulations to facilitate inter-generational transfer of natural resources and enterprises by supporting successions....' To 'Develop legal measures, policies and regulations to facilitate inter-generational transfer of natural resources and enterprises by supporting successions through the establishment of specific help centres that can assist SME's unfamiliar with these processes to plan for them, start-ups and increased access to retirement systems that will encourage and facilitate succession and the intergenerational transfer of land and agricultural assets.' The specifics around retirement and succession need to be linked, not act as separate actions in the process of intergeneration asset transfer.

c) Paragraph c) outlines the requirement for 'the establishment of cooperatives or other organizations to facilitate youths access to productive assets and increase their capacity to manage agricultural land and businesses'. The PSM would like to see this expanded upon to include the role those cooperatives and organizations can have in facilitating access to technology and agricultural equipment, this is of particular importance to youth who may not have the financial capability to own technology or agricultural equipment in their own right, however, can gain access to those required resources through being part of a cooperative or farmers organization. It is important that technology adoption does not become a barrier to entry for young people.

d) The PSM suggests that paragraph d) also include a specific reference to putting in place regulatory measures that stop youth and women being the victims of predatory lending or financial practices. Financial literacy must also be addressed from the side of financial institutions who do not always understand the economic dynamics of small to medium farms. Cooperatives or farmer organisations need to take a greater role in assisting agricultural SME's to develop business plans that financial institutions regard as high risk. Specific reference should be made here to the difficulties that women and young girls face in many countries due to an inability to own land and therefore lack the required means and collateral to access finance and supply chains.

f) The PSM suggests that this paragraph be changed to, 'Improve public infrastructure in a way that further compresses supply and value chains in order to increase access to

markets and agricultural inputs for youth producers, entrepreneurs and traders and empower youth to contribute to better link urban and rural territories and communities for sustainable food systems. This needs to be done in a way that creates even power dynamics across the supply chain so vulnerable youth or women entrants are not disadvantaged.

g) The PSM recognises the importance of incubators and mentoring programs and advocates that additional resources to be provided them, however the PSM wishes this to be expanded upon to ensure that provisions are in place to mitigate predatory behaviour between mentor programs, certification systems and young farmers. Mentor programs and certification systems must be able to quantifiably demonstrate higher returns for young farmers that are accessing their services. The reference to incubator and mentoring programs should also reference the 'need to connect young agricultural leaders from diverse countries and regions to experiential learning programs, scholarships, professional development opportunities and broader networks to further knowledge sharing between countries and sectors.'

Note: It has been suggested amongst PSM members that mechanisms should be developed between cooperatives, financial institutions and government to provide streamlined SME assistance services that can provide a full range of financial, business advice and farming advice to young farmers and young agricultural entrepreneurs across the entire supply and value chain.

Government and development banks should also be engaging with local financial institutions and cooperatives to provide credit support for young farmers in ways that de-risk lending and borrowing costs for banks engaging with young emerging farmers and agricultural SME's who lack capital and collateral. This would result in better risk management and mitigation for financial institutions and young farmers.

The PSM would also like to suggest that through the creation of the above mechanisms an international resilience fund be developed for young farmers and young women farmers operating in countries that face increased challenges relating to climate change or that lack national initiatives to ensure decent livelihoods for young agricultural workers.

Additionally, the zero draft makes no reference to the reduction in productive agricultural resources that youth will disproportionately face due to urbanization and the loss of productive agricultural land to real estate or other development not related to food production or food systems. The PSM strongly feels that this should be addressed in the final policy document.

4. Enhance knowledge, education and skills

b) The PSM suggests that this paragraph be expanded to specifically reference educational subjects to be developed within the curriculum that have specific relevance to FSN. Such as financial literacy (not just mathematical literacy); agronomics; supply chain management; communications and marketing; food processing and value addition; develop and further enhance knowledge of the link between food systems production and nutrition; the use of digital technology used in agriculture; ecosystem conservation; and innovative retail.

c) The PSM suggests that curriculum developed in the context of paragraph 4.b) allows greater guidance for primary and secondary schools to have a direct pathway that can guide

youth toward relevant training and vocational programs. Presently there is too greater gap between school curriculum, vocational training, and employment.

d) The PSM suggest that renewable energy adoption also be included amongst the research topics listed here.

e) The PSM suggests changing this sentence to, 'Promote inter-generational and intra-generation exchange of information, knowledge and practices through mentorship and peer-to-peer engagement through recruiting existing farmers, agricultural professionals and agri-entrepreneurs to engage with youth all the way from primary to vocational education.' Currently a too greater gap exists between educational providers and how such education can be applied practically to farming and agri-business.

5. Foster sustainable and inclusive innovation

a) The PSM would like to suggest adding the following this paragraph, 'Support the key role of youth in promoting entrepreneurship and social innovation, through social and community enterprises, multi-stakeholder innovation platforms, community finance, institutional and technological innovations to link farmers to markets, taking into account inter-generational and indigenous knowledge related to sustainable food systems.'

b) Paragraph b) calls for extension and digital services tailored to youth needs and priorities while ensuring inclusive access to these services. The PSM would like to see the topic of inclusive access to be expanded upon with practical ideas such as leasing relevant access to digital technology through cooperatives, private sector companies or civil society organisations.

c) Developing the digital skills of young workers should be a targeted priority prior to the transition from school to work. Undoubtedly youth will need increased training and skills beyond school, however this paragraph should be framed in the context of 'further developing' the skills of youth discussed in 4.a-e)

d) The PSM suggest this sentence be changed to include, '...creating job, farming and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth.'

Note: Fostering sustainable and inclusive innovation will also require increased investments in agricultural R&D. The PSM wishes to see a specific reference to the need for governments to partner with the private sector, academia and civil society to increase R&D funding targeted for young people in agriculture.