



## Switzerland - written input to Zero Draft of the policy Recommendations on promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems

Link Zero Draft: [CFS Policy Recs Youth Zero Draft.pdf \(fao.org\)](#)

Deadline: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022

### General comments:

1. **Conciseness, concreteness, applicability**: The policy recommendations are drafted in a concise and concrete manner. They are useful and applicable for policy makers while still addressing the needs of implementers.
2. **Thematic hashtags**: The use of thematic hashtags is innovative and helpful and facilitates readability. Besides, the thematic labels promote youth mainstreaming across different sectors.
3. **Evidence-based**: The policy recommendations are content-wise informed by scientific evidence, namely the [HLPE Report](#), which is appreciated. However, this source reference should explicitly be mentioned.
4. **References to inter-generational exchange**: References to inter-generational aspects are included in the policy recommendations. The inter-generational exchange of knowledge, to which paragraph 4e) and 5a) refer, as well as the promotion of legal measures, policies and regulations to facilitate inter-generational exchange of natural and productive resources and enterprises – to which paragraph 3b) refers – are important and constructive to foster education, skills and innovation among youth.
5. **Holistic approach to food systems**: the document emphasises agriculture at the expense of the other features of food systems. For example, in paragraph 1a), the agri-food sector is linked exclusively to rural areas, what does not reflect the reality of agriculture, let alone of food systems. Agricultural activities in urban and peri-urban areas are becoming more important, while non-agricultural professions, which are related to food systems, are increasingly found across the rural-urban continuum. We would propose that the holistic approach to food systems and the rural-urban continuum, laid out in the Rationale be more consequently reflected across the body of recommendations
6. **Transparency of value chains and de-risking methods**: The highly relevant aspects of transparency of value chains and shared responsibility along the value chain as well as de-risking methods need to be addressed in the document. More transparency and product traceability from the producer level up to retailers and consumers increases awareness and promotes accountability of larger off-takers or retailers. This contributes to the bargaining power of



producers in favour of a fair sharing of margins across the value chain. To this purpose, we suggest the promotion of digitalisation, technology and other relevant solutions like the build-up of regional marketing. Regional markets, in fact, foster transparency and provide a greater added-value as well as opportunities for small farmers. Furthermore, de-risking methods in agriculture and value chain investments need to be addressed in the document. De-risk promising youth initiatives, both for prospective investors and young entrepreneurs are essential to increase income stability and predictability and to make the ventures of young agri-entrepreneurs more attractive to investors. We suggest adding this proposition in Chapter 2b).

7. **Attractiveness**: giving young people access to resources, employment, and education is of utmost importance but not sufficient. As alluded to under the first paragraph of the Rationale with the mention of making the agri-food sector more attractive to young people, working in agriculture and across food systems can become desirable only if the social status of farmers and those in supply chains is raised. Specific recommendations should be included that address the issue of low social recognition and for the difficult working conditions that may keep young people away from pursuing careers in agriculture and food systems. Additionally, we propose that the element of youth participation in decision-making processes could be emphasised more strongly. These should be promoted, so that youth can actively participate in decision-making processes (see concrete text proposals in Rationale 1<sup>st</sup>, Para 1 e, 1 f,
8. **Gender-sensitive approach**: while these policy recommendations must support all young people, we must also recognize that young women, substantially more than young men, are disadvantaged when it comes to access to resources or growing a business compared to their male counterparts and women of older age. Young women are key actors in agriculture and food systems, not just in the traditional sense of being caretakers, as mentioned in paragraph 2f), but also as farmers and entrepreneurs<sup>1</sup>. Switzerland would welcome a more explicit language that underlines the importance to promote and support young women's entrepreneurship and access to resources. We strongly believe gender-sensitive approach is key to end hunger and achieve food security. (see concrete text proposals in 3a), b) and e) and 5b).
9. **Access to markets**: Even though the Rationale accurately addresses the topic of "access to the market", the several sections fail to deliver sufficiently concrete recommendations on how this could be achieved. Accordingly, this aspect could be included and reinforced in Rationale 1, and respectively in paragraphs 2h, 3f, and 5a. Promotion of market access should specifically focus on trade relations that contribute to the sustainable development of the agriculture and food sector.

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<sup>1</sup> According to FAO in Low Income Countries women make up 48% of agricultural employment and across Africa for example, the World Bank found the majority of entrepreneurs are women (2019)



10. **Promotion of rural financial agricultural sector:** The urban banking sector in agri-food systems is growing strongly worldwide, but the rural sector needs further support. Banking in rural areas and forms of micro-financing are important to ensure access to credits across the rural-urban continuum and the food system sectors. This is not only essential to foster youth's entrepreneurship but also to increase rural area's vitality and thus their attractiveness – see 3d.
11. **Impacts of COVID-19** The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the fragility of the global food system, and with it, the need to transform it towards more sustainability and resilience. The impacts of the pandemic are however not only to relegate in the past and near future, the youth will live with its effects (i.a. economic, social psychological, ecological) for decades. For the document to be timely and applicable for the challenges to come, we suggest including policy recommendations that allow youth not only to face them but also to seize this opportunity and reimagine food systems in terms of their own agency.
12. **Climate change:** Climate change represents a major threat to agriculture and food systems worldwide in the present and in the future. Youth must be prepared adequately for the challenges to come, so that they can meet their needs through and despite climate change (see 1 c and 5 d). Youth movements have taken leading roles in bringing the threats of climate change to public attention and urging governments and institutions to take action. The document should recognise their agency and concerns, and articulate how these might contribute to food systems that are not only resilient to climate change but that do not contribute to it (see rationale 2nd).

**Specific comments on paragraphs [with highlighted text proposals in brackets]:**

Rationale	
Text as per Zero Draft	Explanation on and new Text proposals (marked in yellow)
<p>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, [markets], [insurance], finance, technology, knowledge, [as well as income uncertainty and exposure to various risk (e.g. weather, pests, price)], [low social recognition], 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 [leave the agri-food sector,] migrate, either to urban areas or</p>	<p>Young people are fundamental to achieving sustainable development everywhere, not only in developing countries or rural areas.</p> <p>The binary rural/urban and agriculture/no-agriculture is increasingly notional. Agriculture is increasingly practiced in (peri-) urban areas, and through remote working one can live in rural areas and work in the cities. This paragraph links and uses the rural areas and agri-food sector interchangeably.</p> <p>Aspects to be considered for enumeration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to markets</li> </ul>



<p>overseas. Actions are needed to make the agri-food sector more attractive to young people and to promote their capacity to <b>generate incomes [a steady livelihood]</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurances</li> <li>• Income uncertainty</li> <li>• Low social recognition</li> <li>• Incomes is a purely economic notion. Livelihood comprises all meanings to sustain life, whereby it might include sociocultural, human, more-than-human capital.</li> </ul>
<p>2. The potential returns of investing in young people <b>[and including them in decision-making processes]</b> are boundless in terms of food security, poverty reduction, employment generation, <b>[sustainable food systems]</b>, as well as peace and political stability.</p>	<p>Add reference to sustainable food systems.</p>
<p>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 <b>[healthy diets for sustainable food systems for all]</b> <del>good nutrition for all</del>. [...] 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.</p>	<p>Amend “good nutrition of all” - insert [healthy diets for sustainable food systems for all]</p>
<p>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.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p><b>1) PROVIDE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS</b></p>	
<p><b>Text as per Zero Draft</b></p>	<p><b>Explanation on and new Text proposals (marked in yellow)</b></p>
<p>a) Contribute to the realization of <b>[youth human]</b> rights without any discrimination, by implementing existing global policy instruments that are relevant to youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food</p>	<p>A more immediate reference to human rights would frame the urgency to ensure that youth are not discriminated be made.</p>



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 [race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, education] and citizenship status, with specific attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of youth; (#Intergenerational [and intersectional] approach)	It is good that the heterogeneity of youth is recognised. Intersectionality is explicitly mentioned in rationale 5, yet some aspects of it are then marginalized in 1b and 2d. It might be useful to articulate its various aspects, such as race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, education.
c) Enhance youth's standards of living by ensuring access to adequate education, health, hygiene and nutrition; and reduce [the future] vulnerability of youth by ensuring their access to basic [climate resilient] 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)	Climate change is a fundamental challenge to future generations' standards of living. This should be recognised by adding appropriate references.
[c bis) Facilitate and promote engagement from parents, civil society and the private sector to expand vocational training and practical skills-building opportunities which induct young people into food-system-related career paths and harness the innovational force of young people; (#Education)]	Consider an additional paragraph, which makes explicit society's role and obligation in the capacitation of young people.
d) Support and encourage [democratic] 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)	Make explicit reference to democratic structures.
e) Strengthen [youth-led] 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)	We would like to see more research done by youth itself not only about youth.
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)	



<b>2) SECURE DIGNIFIED AND REWARDING LIVELIHOODS</b>	
<b>Text as per Zero Draft</b>	<b>Explanation on and new Text proposals (marked in yellow)</b>
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)	Consider replacing “youth” with “young women and me” to emphasise the need to consider both genders.
b) Implement comprehensive labour market policies to increase youth [of legal working age] 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)	We suggest including a phrasing that prevents child labour practices.
[b bis] Ensure that educational curricula which relate to agriculture and food processing impart a holistic understanding of food systems and the importance of sustainable resource management (#Education);]	Add wording that makes educational curricula more holistic in that they should impart a fuller understanding of food systems and how resources can be managed sustainably.
[b ter: Ensure risk mitigation schemes such as insurance programmes targeted specifically at farmers and small producer organizations, to increase income stability and predictability and make the business ventures of young agri-entrepreneurs more attractive to investors (#Social protection).]	Aspect of de-risking / insurance programmes need to be included, see comment 6 above.
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 (e.g. vocational training programmes), ensuring equitable access to these programmes across gender, ethnicity [race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, education] and citizenship status; (#Labour market policies)	Explicitly make reference to the importance of career-relevant skill acquisition through vocational training programmes. See also comment to 1b) above.
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)	

e bis) Encourage peer-support networks between young people entering labour markets across food systems; (#Labour market policies)	Recognise the potential of networks for young people to successfully enter the labour market with a perspective of building dignified livelihoods.
f) Develop social protection programmes that compensate youth's unpaid contribution to food systems, <b>and that legitimize care work, especially that performed by young women</b> , through the provision of public childcare, parental leave and other community services; (#Social protection)	It is not clear why especially the care-work of young women should be legitimised. This language tends to highlight and re-produce, indeed strengthen, gender norms that see women as the primary care-givers – which is not the case in all cultures. We suggest deleting " young women" in this context and adding a separate paragraph (see 3e bis) that highlights the role of young women as care-workers, entrepreneurs, farmers, agricultural extensionists etc.
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 <b>[and trade]</b> ; (#Incentives and social finance)	Highlight the importance of trade.
<b>3. INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RESOURCES</b>	
<b>Text as per Zero Draft</b>	<b>Explanation on and new Text proposals (marked in yellow)</b>
a) Support <b>rural</b> youth equitable <b>[and gender-sensitive]</b> 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)	In line with comment 8 above, and the continuum between urban and rural spaces, we propose dropping "rural" and adding "gender-sensitive".
b) Develop legal measures, policies and regulations to facilitate inter-generational <b>[and gender-neutral] [gender-equal]</b> transfer of natural and productive resources and enterprises by supporting successions, start-ups and increased access to retirement system; (#Natural and productive resources)	In reference to comment 8 above, add "gender-equal" to the element of inheritance.
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)	
<b>[c bis) Enable young people to participate adequately in decision-making processes (#Governance);]</b>	Assert a role of young people in decision-making processes.



<p>d) Promote youth financial literacy and, in collaboration with financial service providers, the development and availability of affordable, <b>gender-sensitive, low-threshold</b> and inclusive financial services and products tailored to the needs of youth engaged in agriculture and food systems; <i>(#Finance)</i></p> <p><b>d) bis: Promote the rural financial sector (banks, non-banking financial institutions, fintechs, insurance companies) to serve rural clients with focus on youth</b> <i>(#Finance)</i></p>	<p>Gender-sensitive and low-threshold are important qualities of the financial services that young, particularly female, entrepreneurs need.</p>
<p>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; <i>(#Finance)</i></p>	<p>The urban banking sector in agri-food systems is growing strongly worldwide, but banking in rural areas merits more pro-active support.</p>
<p><b>e) bis: Support and promote young women's entrepreneurship, develop programmes targeting young women farmers and entrepreneurs providing support in starting and growing their business in agriculture and food systems.</b></p>	<p>see explanation under 2f)</p>
<p>f) Improve public infrastructure to increase access to <b>sustainable</b> 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; <i>(#Infrastructure)</i></p>	<p>Define the sort of market to be promoted.</p>
<p>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; <i>(#Markets)</i></p>	
<p>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. <i>(#Markets)</i></p>	





<b>4. ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATIONS AND SKILLS</b>	
<b>Text as per Zero Draft</b>	<b>Explanation on and new Text proposals (marked in yellow)</b>
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; ( <i>#Education</i> )	
<b>[a) bis: Promote education programmes compatible with working schedules, provide access to education for working youth.]</b>	
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; ( <i>#Education</i> )	
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; ( <i>#Training</i> )	
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; ( <i>#Research</i> )	
e) Promote inter-generational and intra-generational exchange of information, , <b>systems of</b> knowledge and practices, <b>[including indigenous knowledge,]</b> through mentorship and peer-to-peer engagement. ( <i>#Information and knowledge exchange</i> )	Promote inter-generational and intra-generational exchange of information, <b>systems of</b> knowledge and practices, <b>including indigenous knowledge,</b> through mentorship and peer-to-peer engagement
<b>5. FOSTER SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE INNOVATION</b>	
<b>Text as per Zero Draft</b>	<b>Explanation on and new Text proposals (marked in yellow)</b>
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; ( <i>#Social innovation</i> )	Without being specific, we would propose that concrete recommendations to increase access to markets be provided.



<p>b) Support the provision of rural and urban <b>gender-sensitive, demand-driven, and pluralistic</b> extension services and digital services tailored to youth needs and priorities while ensuring inclusive access to these services; (<i>#Extension and digital services</i>)</p>	<p>The terms are mentioned and demanded in <a href="https://www.fao.org/publications/collection/en/agricultural-extension-in-transition-worldwide">Agricultural extension in transition worldwide (fao.org)</a></p>
<p>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; (<i>#Digital skills</i>)</p>	
<p>d) Invest in <b>climate resilient</b> digital infrastructure and promote digitalization <b>while addressing sustainability issues of the electronics industry, the risks of power (re-)distribution, data ownership, accessibility, sharing, and control</b> 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. (<i>#Digital infrastructure</i>)</p>	<p>Many risks/issues connected to digitalization of agriculture<sup>2</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data security, ownership, accessibility, sharing and control</li><li>• Power (re-)distribution</li><li>• Expected substantive (hard and soft) impacts on the environment, on human and animal life and wellbeing (e.g. source of metal for technology?)</li></ul>

<sup>2</sup> van der Burg, S., Bogaardt, M.-J., Wolfert, S., 2019. Ethics of smart farming: Current questions and directions for responsible innovation towards the future. NJAS - Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences, 100289. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.njas.2019.01.001>