

CONCEPT NOTE

Regional youth consultations on promoting youth engagement in agriculture and food systems in Europe and Central Asia

Overview session: Challenges and opportunities for rural youth

Online consultation in English and Russian

SERIES OF YOUTH CONSULTATIONS

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



When:

10th December 2021

9:30-11:30 Budapest time (CET)

Where: Online – Zoom webinar

Registration link: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

Background

Rural youth¹ in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) face several challenges, including access to knowledge, training, natural resources, in particular land, as well as financial resources. They also have limited access to markets, decent employment opportunities, engagement in policy processes, and much more. Despite a high general level of development, inequalities are on the rise in all parts of the ECA region, manifested also in high levels of youth unemployment, exclusion of marginalized groups, and lack of access to social services often leading to outmigration.²

The United Nations Strategy on Youth represents a real opportunity for all UN agencies, including FAO, to coordinate efforts on youth issues.³ Youth-related issues also have been increasingly integrated into global processes such as the UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028 (UNDF) ⁴ and the Food System Summit 2021, which spotlighted the critical role of youth in ensuring Good Food for All in the Global Youth Summit Dialogue. The UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) calls for development of systems, policies and programmes that engage more youth in agriculture⁵. Similar efforts were made through the formulation of the World Food Forum, which is a youth-led movement and network to transform food systems. It was launched by the FAO Youth Committee in March 2021 and its key objective is to contribute to the transformation of food systems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular SDG 2 “zero hunger.”

In 2020, FAO developed the Rural Youth Action Plan, which addresses the importance of making rural areas more attractive for young women and men.⁶ Acknowledging the challenging situation of rural youth in Europe and Central Asia, the Member Countries in the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC 32) in November 2020 emphasized *„the role of youth as key agents of change in the revitalization of rural areas and in the transformation towards sustainable food systems and suggested promoting the empowerment of youth through their participation in national and international governance and decision-making processes to improve their social and economic well-being, addressing the drivers of economic or distress migration, and maximizing the positive impacts of migration for rural communities and the use of remittances for investments in agriculture and rural development.”*⁷ Among these aspects, interlinkages with gender equality and women’s empowerment, the rural–urban continuum, and innovative practices and technologies, and knowledge-sharing platforms, are particularly relevant.

¹ In 1995, the UN General Assembly defined youth as those aged 15 to 24 but noted that the age range varies among countries and societies. However, for policy purposes, “youth” can be defined differently. For instance, farmers in the European Union younger than 40 are defined as “young farmers”.

² FAO Regional Conference for Europe. 2020. Solutions for Youth, Employment and Developing Rural Areas in relation to the United Nations Decade of Family Farming. <https://www.fao.org/3/nc227e/nc227e.pdf>

³ Committee on Agriculture. Twenty-seventh Session. 2020. Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP). <https://www.fao.org/3/nd385en/ND385EN.pdf>

⁴ FAO & IFAD. 2019. United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028. Global Action Plan. Rome. www.fao.org/3/ca4672en/ca4672en.pdf

⁵ HLPE. 2021. Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/nh021en/nh021en.pdf>

⁶ Committee on Agriculture. Twenty-seventh Session. 2020. Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP). <https://www.fao.org/3/nd385en/ND385EN.pdf>

⁷ FAO. 2020. Report. Thirty-second Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe.

It is important to mention that rural youth are not a homogeneous group; challenges may differ for young family farmers, young women and men, youth with disabilities, youth from low-income families, young refugees, displaced youth, or youth from excluded groups or indigenous peoples. Also, the situation may vary across countries, territories and culture, as well as it can be context specific along the agro-food systems including agriculture, food processing, community and rural development.

Therefore, under the *Regional Initiative on Empowering smallholders, family farms and youth, facilitating rural livelihoods and poverty reduction*, FAO REU organizes a series of youth consultations during December 2021 - April 2022. The first session is titled **Overview session: Challenges and opportunities for rural youth** including men and women.

Objectives of the consultation

The main objective of the consultations is to understand the challenges and the needs of rural youth as well as sharing good practices in the region, and to support building a platform for them to be able to develop and learn from each other. Highlighting the importance of young people in family farms can help future generations to participate in agriculture and sharing with them innovative solutions can increase the willingness of working in agriculture and food sector.

These consultations will also serve as a basis to plan the work of FAO in Europe and Central Asia for enhancing the support provided for rural youth through highlighting the importance of context specific interventions, creating the necessary intergenerational linkages and facilitating transitioning of knowledge.

Target audience

Participants of the consultations will be both youth representatives as well as stakeholders from policy, civil society, academia and private sector level, who are active in the field of food, agriculture and rural development.

Expected results of the consultation(s)

- Enhance collaboration with youth organizations, youth representatives and other main stakeholders in the region,
- Understand the region-specific challenges which rural youth have to face in Europe and Central Asia,
- Share good practices in the region,
- Establishing a platform for rural youth in the region,
- Follow-up on the World Food Forum at regional level, and
- Identify specific entry points for FAO to further support rural youth in the region.

Agenda

10th December 2021

OVERVIEW SESSION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL YOUTH	
9:30 – 9:35	Introduction and housekeeping rules by the moderator, Katalin Ludvig, Rural Development Specialist, Youth Focal Point, FAO REU
9:35 – 9:45	Opening words and the importance of youth in FAO's work in the region , Raimund Jehle, Regional Programme Leader, FAO REU
9:45 – 9:55	Introduction of World Food Forum , Kazuki Kitaoka, Senior Policy Officer, FAO
9:55 – 10:05	Q&A
10:05 – 11:20	<p>Discussion session</p> <p><i>In this session each speaker has a five-minute slot to talk about the indicated topics, which may also include reflections on the following two questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What are the key needs and constraints of rural youth?</i> - <i>How to respond to these needs and support rural youth?</i> <p><u>Topics and speakers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of young farmers and generational sustainability of family farming: Diana Lenzi, President, European Council of Young Farmers, Belgium • Lack of opportunities leading to migration, Zulfiya Bakhtibekova, independent researcher and consultant, Tajikistan • Comments from the audience • Agriculture and food sector in education – rebranding agriculture through education: Natalija Bogdanov, Belgrade University, Serbia • Employment in agriculture and rural areas: Levan Mumladze, young farmer and extension specialist, Georgia • Comments from the audience • Access to land of young farmers: Morten Hartvigsen, Land Tenure Officer, FAO REU • Rural youth in policy making processes: Pier Francesco Pandolfi de Rinaldis, representative of Nyéléni ECA through the European Youth Articulation of La Via Campesina • Comments from the audience
11:20 – 11:30	Wrap-up and closing remarks