



WORLD
FOOD
FORUM

GLOBAL
YOUTH
ACTION

FOOD ACTION ACCELERATES CLIMATE ACTION



2023 World Food Forum

RESULTS REPORT



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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACS	Africa Climate Summit
ACW	Africa Climate Week
AUC	African Union Commission
AYA	African Youth Agripreneurs
AYCA	Africa Youth Climate Assembly
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CAAS	Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences
CAB	Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
COP	Conference of the Parties
CYMG	Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP
CJWZ	Joint FAO/WHO Centre for Zoonotic Diseases and Antimicrobial Resistance
EAFF	East African Farmer Federation
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO LOB	FAO Liaison Office in Brussel
FAO LOG	FAO Liaison Office in Geneva
FAO LOJ	FAO Liaison Office in Japan
FAO LON	FAO Liaison Office in New York
FAO PLO in ROK	FAO Partnership and Liaison Office in the Republic of Korea
FAO RAF	FAO Regional Office for Africa
FAO RAP	FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
FAO REU	FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
FAO RLC	FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
FAO RNE	FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa
GACSA	Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture
GCEW	Global Commission on the Economics of Water
GIAHS	Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IAAS	International Association of Students in Agriculture and Related Sciences
ICA	Integrated Country Approach
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDGC	Industry Disruptors Game Changers
IF	Investment Forum (WFF)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMWI	International Water Management Institute

Abbreviations and acronyms

JWFD	Junior World Food Day
MFJN	Metro Food Justice Network
MGCY	Major Group for Children and Youth (United Nations General Assembly)
NENA	Near East and North Africa
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSGEY	Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth
OYA	Opportunities for Youth in Africa
PPR	Peste des Petits Ruminants
RBA	Rome-Based Agency
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SENA	Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Advisory Group (UNFSS)
SGM	Social Gastronomy Movement
SIA	Startup Innovation Awards (WFF)
SIF	Science and Innovation Forum
SNEB	Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
TRC	Transformative Research Challenge (WFF)
UN CC:Learn	United Nations Climate Change Learning Partnership
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFSS+2	United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment
UNGIYF	United Nations Global Indigenous Youth Forum
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
USD	United States Dollar
WFD	World Food Day
WFF	World Food Forum
WFO	World Farmers' Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WUR	Wageningen University and Research
XTC	Extreme Tech Challenge
YFL	Youth Food Lab (WFF)
YPARD	Young Professionals for Agricultural Development
YPB	Youth Policy Board (WFF)
YSG	Young Scientists Group (WFF)
YUNGA	Youth and United Nations Global Alliance



“We showed the world the importance of the active engagement of the youth in all global processes, for a truly inclusive decision-making process...

The importance of partnership, collaboration and solidarity... And we heard from everyone, across all events, from all partners, on the importance of leveraging the power of science and innovation, and investments. This is the only way we can accelerate bold and actionable solutions to catalyze the transformation of global agrifood systems.”

—QU Dongyu, FAO Director-General



01

Introduction

From 16 to 20 October 2023, the WFF flagship event took place at FAO Headquarters in Rome.

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01 - Introduction

The 2023 cycle of the World Food Forum (WFF) demonstrated an incredible acceleration toward a better food future for all. In its third year, the Forum brought together many tens of thousands of participants both in-person and online, and shared ideas and solutions that [reached billions](#) around the globe. This is an unprecedented movement that is stepping up in the face of unprecedented climatic and agrifood systems challenges.

Currently, agrifood systems account for one-third of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, 90 percent of global deforestation and 70 percent of water use globally. They are the single greatest cause of terrestrial biodiversity loss, putting pressure on food value chains. We also lose or waste enough food to feed 1.3 billion hungry people every year.

These figures can be disheartening. However, they also show us the latent power and immense potential for global betterment in our agrifood systems. As QU Dongyu, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), said in his opening remarks at the 2023 WFF flagship event, *“By creating efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems we can mitigate and adapt to climate change. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, we need to adapt our solution to country context, which is why we need all your voices, ideas and experiences to be shared.”*

In this spirit, the WFF is leveraging inter-generational and cross-sectoral collaboration, innovation and investment in order to transform the planet’s agrifood systems and help achieve the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the core of all we do is a strong commitment to inclusivity with youth, Indigenous Peoples, women and people in vulnerable situations leading the way.

In 2023 the WFF brought together youth organizations, governments, the private sector, academia, Indigenous communities, investors and so many others. Throughout the year, we further defined and developed regional youth priorities and policy recommendations, and launched ten new National Youth Chapters for greater local impact. We learned from and empowered one another, recognized and funded research and innovative startups, and invested in initiatives that can create lasting change. We explored how science and innovation can accelerate climate action and sought to leverage new production methods and technologies. We also connected through music, film and gastronomy, catalyzing culture for change.

In 2023 we saw the WFF solidify as a truly global movement to create a more sustainable, resilient, inclusive and hunger-free future. Its impact continues to grow.





The WFF is empowering youth voices by bringing their perspectives to the forefront.

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The WFF Journey

Launched in 2021, the WFF is an independent, youth-led global network of partners facilitated by FAO. It aims to spark a global movement that empowers young people everywhere to actively shape agrifood systems to help achieve the SDGs and a better food future for all.

The WFF serves as the premier global forum to harness the passion and power of youth to identify solutions and incite positive action for agrifood systems. It aligns with the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), acts as a major youth platform in global food governance, and serves as a global think tank that fosters youth-led solutions in innovation, science and technology.



CULTURE



YOUTH ACTION



INNOVATION LAB



EDUCATION

Date / Time (CEST)	16 Oct / DAY 01	17 Oct / DAY 02	18 Oct / DAY 03
09:00			
11:00	<p>GO01: World Food Day</p> <p>10:00-13:00 Plenary Hall</p>	<p>YOUTH</p> <p>INVESTMENT</p> <p>INDIGENOUS YOUTH</p>	<p>YOUTH</p> <p>INVESTMENT</p> <p>INDIGENOUS YOUTH</p>
13:00			<p>Read more on page 6</p>
15:00	<p>GO02: World Food Forum grand opening</p> <p>14:00-17:00 Plenary Hall</p>		
17:00	<p>GO03: Exhibition opening</p> <p>17:00-18:00 Atrium</p>		
19:00	<p>YM00: Concert and Global Youth Forum opening</p> <p>18:00-20:30 Sheikh Zayed Centre</p>	<p>Read more on page 2,3 and 9</p> <p>Read more on page 6</p> <p>Read more on page 4-5</p>	<p>Read more on page 2,3 and 9</p> <p>Read more on page 4-5</p> <p>Read more on page 7</p>
			<p>SCIENCE AND INNOVATION</p>

Date / Time (CEST)	19 Oct / DAY 04	20 Oct / DAY 05
09:00	<div>YOUTH</div> <div>Read more on page 2,3 and 9</div>	<div>YOUTH</div> <div>Read more on page 2,3 and 9</div>
11:00	<div>SCIENCE AND INNOVATION</div> <div>Read more on page 7</div>	<div>SCIENCE AND INNOVATION</div> <div>Read more on page 7</div>
13:00	<div>INDIGENOUS YOUTH</div> <div>Read more on page 4-5</div>	<div>INDIGENOUS YUOTH</div> <div>Read more on page 4-5</div>
15:00	GO05: Junior World Food Day 14:00-16:00 Plenary Hall	GO05: Junior World Food Day 14:00-16:00 Plenary Hall
17:00	<div>YOUTH</div> <div>Read more on page 2,3 and 9</div>	<div>INDIGENOUS YOUTH</div> <div>Read more on page 4-5</div>
19:00	<div>SCIENCE AND INNOVATION</div> <div>Read more on page 7</div>	<div>INDIGENOUS YOUTH</div> <div>Read more on page 4-5</div>



The agrifood systems that encompass the journey of food from farm to table touch every aspect of our lives.

©FAO/Sheam Kaheel

03

2023 Theme: “Agrifood systems transformation accelerates climate action.”

In 2023, the WFF focused its efforts on the theme, [*“Agrifood systems transformation accelerates climate action”*](#). The agrifood systems that encompass the journey of food from farm to table and beyond touch every aspect of our lives and reach every corner of the planet. Yet instead of harnessing their immense potential for positive impact, we are letting agrifood systems wreak havoc on our climate and environment.

But it does not have to be this way. In fact, transforming agrifood systems can – and must – be a central part of the global climate solution. It can significantly accelerate climate action and the achievement of the SDGs. By creating efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems we can mitigate and adapt to climate change, increase biodiversity and restore ecosystems, while also ensuring food security and better nutrition through agrifood systems that enable and sustain healthy diets, and a more equitable future for all.

Climate change is a global challenge that requires comprehensive action across all sectors, including our agrifood systems. And to drive real, sustainable change, we must respond to local needs and challenges, while supporting and implementing sustainable solutions that we can amplify and scale up.

It is with this idea of adapting solutions to local contexts that in 2023 we worked to turn ideas into impact by focusing our efforts on local action. The WFF is also committed to local action that emphasizes innovation, partnerships, science-backed evidence and above all inclusiveness.

To achieve our ambitious goals and ignite action around agrifood systems transformation, the WFF activities, in line with the 2023 theme and the common goal of a better food future for all, were carried out along five thematic tracks: Youth Action and Policy, Innovation Lab, Education, Culture and Local Action.



Thematic Youth Assembly Session on Agrifood Systems in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process.

© FAO/Aurora Napoli

04

Youth Action and Policy Highlights

The WFF Youth Action and Policy track connects and empowers young people around the globe with different backgrounds to discuss their local priorities and challenges, as well as identify innovative and actionable solutions for a better food future. From the local to the global level, from projects to advocacy, from entrepreneurship to culture, this track aims to create a true movement of change in the policy dialogues surrounding food and agriculture.

United Nations Water Conference 2023

In March 2023, the WFF participated in the [United Nations Water Conference in New York](#). Activities included co-organizing two events with a range of partners and meeting with partner youth groups and organizations including the former Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY), the FAO Liaison Office in New York (FAO LON), the United Nations Youth Delegate for Slovenia, Indigenous Youths and the Youth Observer to the United Nations along with climate advocates from the United States of America.

The first of two WFF co-organized events was a special open dialogue titled [“The Economics of Water”](#) with UN-Habitat, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), MetaMeta, WaterworX, the International Association of Students in Agriculture and Related Sciences (IAAS), C40 Cities, Dutch Water Authorities, the Global Commission on the Economics of Water (GCEW) and others. It highlighted the need for urgent actions to address the ongoing global water crisis, and presented the initial and key findings of GCEW.

The second side event, [“A Generational Challenge in Agriculture,”](#) highlighted the complexity of global water challenges with a holistic water-food-energy-ecosystem perspective to help enable a transition towards global sustainable water management. This event also served to launch the WFF Transformative Research Challenge (TRC) Special Prize on the role of water in agrifood systems transformation, sponsored by the International Water Management Institute (IMWI), and included closing remarks by FAO's Chief Economist.

172nd session of the FAO Council

On 27 April, the WFF officially launched its 2023 cycle and the second [WFF Youth Policy Board \(YPB\) cohort](#) through a [side event at the 172nd session of the FAO Council](#), in support of the the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum. The event served to announce the Forum's planned activities, its 2023 theme, and announce the YPB objectives to develop key agrifood systems related policy priorities across different regions and themes as well as to guide the work of the Youth Action and Policy Track and the WFF Youth Assembly. The 2023 YPB cohort is comprised of 16 different young people representing six regions, including Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East and North Africa and North America.

At the FAO Council, the WFF also launched its *Regional Youth Action Policy Compendium 2022*, which considered regional specificities, to better ensure inclusivity in policy asks and guide future activities of the WFF. The policy recommendations in the Compendium were drafted by the previous YPB cohort (formerly called the Focal Point Group).

ECOSOC Youth Forum 2023

From 24 to 27 April 2023, the WFF YPB actively participated in the [ECOSOC Youth Forum 2023](#) in New York. The Board engaged in various events, discussions and meetings, highlighting the role of agrifood systems in achieving the SDGs, promoting youth engagement in the sector and fostering collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders.



Youth leaders gather with FAO LON during the ECOSOC Youth Forum.

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Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA) Annual Forum

From 4 to 5 May 2023, the WFF youth attended the [GACSA Annual Forum in Rome](#), hosting an interactive session that promoted youth voices and presented evidence on why youth inclusion is the future of effective and sustainable agrifood systems transformation. The event was chaired by the WFF Global Coordinator and moderated by several WFF youth leaders. It demonstrated how global youth are willing to embrace leadership roles and promote sustainable agriculture practices that benefit the environment, society and economy. Inspirational youth leaders also gave presentations on projects that aim to mainstream youth involvement including Jessica Muzamhondo from Zimbabwe Climate Smart Agriculture; Divine Ntiokam, founder and manager of Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network; and Emanuela Vignola and Roberta Ianna, representatives of the Italian Environment and Energy Security Ministry, who presented the Youth4Climate initiative.

Launch of the 2023–2025 Young Scientists Group cohort and first report

In May 2023 at the Science, Technology and Innovation Forum (STI Forum), the WFF [announced the members of its second Young Scientists Group \(YSG\) cohort](#), which is comprised of 16 young scientists from all over the world. YSG members serve for two years and play a critical role in providing the WFF with science-based direction, opinions and the technical knowledge necessary for the implementation of its initiatives. It is also responsible for creating a biannual WFF Young Scientists Report on specific policy issues that concern youth related to the transformation of agrifood systems.

In tandem with the announcement of the new YSG cohort at the STI Forum, the WFF also launched its first-ever YSG report composed by the previous first YSG cohort: ["Opportunities and Barriers for Advancing Agrifood Systems: Empowering Young People for a Sustainable Future."](#) The report extensively analyses key challenges youth face in engaging efficiently and effectively in improving local, regional and global agrifood systems; it identifies and explores key enablers of youth to become leaders and changemakers for a better food future; and it gives 18 science-based and action-oriented recommendations for agrifood systems transformation that are of particular concern to youth, and which can be adapted to local contexts.

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

From 10 to 19 July 2023, representatives of the WFF attended the 2023 HLPF to advocate for meaningful youth engagement and participation to achieve the SDGs and agrifood systems

transformation. The WFF team organized a side event titled ["Empowering Youth for a Better Food Future – Driving Youth-led Agrifood Systems Transformation in a Post-COVID world,"](#) which emphasized the urgency of fostering youth leadership and providing them with the necessary tools and opportunities to make a tangible impact.



During the HLPF, the WFF team also actively participated in the launch of *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023* report, working in coordination with FAO LON to invite additional youth participants and organize a youth intervention during the launch. The WFF team also met with core partners including the Major Group of Children and Youth (MGCY), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Youth Delegates to the United Nations and the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY).

United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS +2)

From 24 to 26 July 2023, the WFF supported youth activities during the UNFSS+2, including the activities in the youth booth, communications support and the co-organization of the side event *"Youth Leading Transformation: Accelerating Inclusive Food Systems in Collaboration with UNFSS"*. The side event highlighted barriers for youth to co-create solutions with Member States for agrifood systems transformation, best practices and recommendations on the way forward including discussions on an envisioned youth coalition.

The WFF team also supported youth representatives of the Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Advisory Group (SENA) to undertake an analysis of agrifood systems national pathways to provide insights on the setting of various national priorities on youth engagement and employment to catalyze broader transformation of national and global agrifood systems. WFF representatives also gave interventions from the floor during a special event titled *"Leveraging urbanization for food systems transformation"*, participated in meetings with the Permanent Representative of Netherlands to the United Nations and other youth and non-youth led entities, and spoke during the official closing of the UNFSS+2.

Freerice Challenge and “Youth Towards Zero Food Waste” campaign

On 1 September 2023, the WFF, together with the World Food Programme (WFP) and with the technical support of FAO, launched a new set of food waste questions in the educational trivia game [Freerice quiz](#), enabling users to expand their knowledge on the critical issue of food waste and its impacts on our environment, all while earning grains of rice for those in need. The launch also marked the first day of the [“50 Days to Fight Food Waste”](#) challenge, in partnership with FreeRice. Through [this challenge](#), the WFF and Freerice managed to engage 127 824 participants who raised 100 408 610 rice grains, more than four times the original goal of 25 million rice grains.

The related ongoing WFF campaign [“Youth Towards Zero Food Waste”](#) also successfully conducted [three workshops](#) with over 800 active participants on *“Addressing the Global Food Waste Problem: An Interactive Workshop”* in English, Spanish and French.

Africa Youth Climate Assembly (AYCA), Africa Climate Summit (ACS) and Africa Climate Week (ACW) 2023

In September 2023, a YPB Co-chair represented the WFF and participated in the AYCA, ACS and ACW. The Co-chair met with a range of partners and participated in various food, agriculture

and land-use related side events, amplifying the work of the WFF and YPB. He also co-launched the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa’s position statement on agrifood systems transformation and climate adaptation in Africa, that was co-drafted by agrifood systems actors in the region a couple of months before the ACS.

Representing the WFF, the YPB Co-chair also spoke in three side events focusing on agroecology, regenerative agriculture and youth engagement: *“Strengthening Africa’s Food Systems: Innovation, Policies, and Inclusion to Build Climate Resilience”*; *“Agroecology as a Pathway for Climate Adaptation and Mitigation”*; and *“Integrating Gender-Responsive Strategies and Faith-based Principles into Conflict Transformation for Climate Resilience in Africa.”*

SDG Action Weekend

On 16 and 17 September 2023, ahead of the SDG Summit and New York Climate Week, members of the YPB participated in the [SDG Action Weekend in New York](#), taking part in bilateral meetings and idea exchanges, and advocating for youth empowerment and collaborative efforts to foster sustainable and resilient agrifood systems transformation. The WFF also co-organized a side event titled *“One World, Shared Goals: Collaborative Actions for SDG Implementation”*, which highlighted the pivotal role of partnerships in translating ideas into action and propelling us towards achieving the SDGs.



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The Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

From 23 to 27 October 2023, the WFF took part in the fifty-first plenary session of the CFS, organizing two side events. The first, [*“From Global to Local: Translating Policy Recommendations on Youth Engagement and Employment into Tangible Action at the Local Level”*](#), highlighted the need for synergies, evidence-based recommendations, a systems approach and accountability mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of policy recommendations at the ground level. The second side event, titled *“Investing in Youth to Reduce Inequalities – Implementing CFS Guidelines on Engaging Youth in Agriculture and Food Systems”*, highlighted WFF’s activities and outcomes in 2023, and emphasized the importance of investing in youth innovations and education, scaling up youth-led innovation and groundbreaking research, projects, bolstering startups through funding and technical support, and reducing inequalities by bringing global opportunities and initiatives to the local level through WFF National Chapters.

Policy and action related activities

Throughout 2023, the WFF actively engaged in different policy and action spaces. Selected highlights include:

- Co-hosting the side event *“Investing in Youth and Women for Food Systems Transformation: Inclusion and Targeted Finance”* and facilitating a meeting between the official children and youth constituency, YOUNGO, to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Executive Secretary at the Bonn Climate Change Conference in June 2023;
- Intervening in the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference, where a YPB member spoke in the high-level panel discussion *“How our Agrifood Systems Shape One Health: what are the priorities for attention in developing national pathways for change?”* and the WFF Head of Youth Action and Policy shared the perspective of youths in a roundtable on water infrastructure;
- Participating in a plenary session titled *“Youth Change-Makers and Nutrition Education: Connecting, Nourishing and Inspiring a Better Food Future”* during the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) 2023 Conference, where WFF Global Coordinator gave a keynote presentation and a YPB member shared passion and experience in youth-led social impact in agrifood systems;
- Sharing the work of the WFF in a two-day digital technical session led by the World Farmers’ Organisation (WFO) as part of third edition of the WFO Gymnasium High-Level Capacity Building Program;
- Exploring agrifood systems transformation through the lens of cross-sector collaboration for food justice and equity during the 2023 Twin Cities Learning Journey, organized by the Social Gastronomy Movement (SGM) in collaboration with the Metro Food Justice Network (MFJN) and Appetite for Change.



Annisa Fajriani, Youth Food Lab Award winner, capturing the essence of innovation at the WFF Innovation Lab.

© FAO/Antoniella Violante

05

Youth Innovation Lab Highlights

The WFF Innovation Lab consists of hands-on competitions for students and young professionals – including research challenges, startup challenges, incubation and acceleration initiatives, bootcamps and networking events – as well as Masterclasses with inspirational and educational content from renowned experts and emerging young leaders on how to nurture innovation for a better food future.

Youth Food Lab (YFL)

On 18 January 2023, the [YFL](#) was launched at the International Conference for Youth in Agriculture in Wageningen, the Netherlands. Created in partnership with Wageningen University and Research (WUR) and IAAS, the YFL provides a platform for teams of young innovators, researchers and entrepreneurs to transform their idea-stage solutions into a real business model. Through capacity development in three stages – system mapping, business development (including finance), and communications and storytelling – the YFL supports young innovators to access the right tools and networks to move from idea to impact and scale the solutions they are developing.

The first YFL cohort consisted of ten global teams who started the nine month incubator programme in February 2023. The teams were given customized mentorship support by FAO, the WFF and WUR and took over 20 live masterclasses and workshops with 15 trainers from different organizations and institutions, such as FAO, FAO Toastmasters, Food Bank of Bolivia, Google, Harvard, Lexicon, Mama4Planet, Narratize, the World Food Prize Foundation and many others. The teams also participated in several high-level events including FAO Council, the STI Forum and the High-Level Political Forum in New York. They also took part in two live sessions with feedback from the FAO Chief Economist and FAO Chief Scientist.

Transformative Research Challenge (TRC)

The WFF TRC aims to inspire research and innovation in sustainable development to end hunger and transform our agrifood systems. Teams of young and “young-at-heart” researchers were invited to submit a two-page concept note proposing an innovative research idea to help end hunger and transform our agrifood systems. Shortlisted participants received expert mentorship to help translate their concepts into sound research papers and presented them in October 2023 at the WFF flagship event.

In 2023, the TRC was [launched at the STI Forum](#) and proceeded to receive around 500 applications. Twenty teams were then awarded with visibility, publications at FAO, and over USD 200 000 in prizes including internships, travel to Rome for the flagship event and grant money to carry out their research. Five special TRC prizes were also launched with partners in 2023: the Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) Special Prize (co-hosted with FAO PPR GEP Secretariat), the Global One Health prize (co-hosted with WUR and the FAO One Health Team), the Role of Water in Agrifood Systems Transformation prize (co-hosted with International Water Management Institute in the Middle East and North Africa Region, and the IAAS Food and Agriculture Youth Institute), the Food Loss and Waste prize, and the Food Action Accelerates Climate Action prize.

Startup Innovation Awards (SIA)

The WFF SIA, powered by Extreme Tech Challenge (XTC) is a global startup competition established to support and showcase young

innovators and entrepreneurs who are harnessing the power of technology to drive the sustainable transformation of agrifood systems in support of ending global hunger and achieving the SDGs. In 2023, the third iteration of the awards were [launched at the STI Forum](#), and went on to receive nearly 400 submissions from 69 countries. The entrants were shortlisted into 34 startup semi-finalists from 20 countries, with 55% coming from the Global South.

After four days of live semi-finals pitches (5–8 September 2023), eight startup finalists were then selected to pitch live at the 2023 SIA Finals during WFF flagship event. Half of the finalists came from Global South countries. Finalists received public relations and communications support, pitch and investment capacity development, a travel allowance to come to Rome as well as a small cash prize for the overall winner.



Uplink: Private Sector Engagement

The WFF partnered with the World Economic Forum and other private and public sector partners on the youth innovation platform Uplink, supporting two challenges designed to promote innovation in agrifood systems. The **Smarter Climate Farmers challenge** was a competition that called for solutions using climate-smart agriculture approaches to improve food production, promote better living standards, respond to climate change and lead to the efficient care of the planet's resources within food ecosystems. It received 244 submissions and had 12 winners. The **Food Ecosystems in Arid Climates challenge** was a global call for food entrepreneurs who are generating innovative solutions to achieve food security amidst intensified droughts and desertification and are delivering on the availability, access and management of food on land and sea. It had 169 submissions and 10 winners. Both competitions supported entrants with funding, mentorship and expertise to source, identify and scale-up their startups and support positive systemic change for people and planet.

United Nations Innovation Network

In 2023, the WFF collaborated with the United Nations Innovation Network by providing a case study to its United Nations Innovation Toolkit, a capacity building resource that includes 21 tools, step-by-step directions, worksheets, case studies, references as well as a self-assessment which provides a diagnosis on every user's innovation strengths and areas for improvement. United Nations Innovation Network also held an idea-a-thon for youth to find solutions for real-life United Nations challenges from the field during WFF flagship event, featuring challenges from United Nations Global Pulse Lab in Uganda and the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO RLC).



The Global School Assembly brings together bright young minds from across the globe to engage them in the thematic areas of the WFF.

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06

Youth Education Highlights

The WFF Education track aims to provide access to knowledge and actionable solutions for healthy diets and a healthy planet, while inspiring children and youth everywhere to create a better food future for all. Far too many children and teenagers lack access to food education and an understanding of how agrifood systems work. Yet knowledge is a key driver for the sustainable systemic changes our global agrifood systems need, now more than ever.

Teachers' Labs

It is well understood that human behaviours are largely driving environmental destruction and climate change, and understanding how to leverage human behaviour as a driver of climate action is increasingly important. In this sense, teachers and educators stand on the frontlines of climate action and environmental protection, as schools and youth groups are the first place where we begin to understand the world around us.

To build educators capacities in behavioural science, The Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA) in coordination with the WFF and One United Nations Climate Change Learning Partnership (UN CC:Learn) held two teachers' labs in January and February 2023. Over 200 participants from across the globe joined the sessions to gather insights and understanding of human behaviour and how these insights could improve the impact of environmental education programmes globally. YUNGA also launched a discussion board on Behavioural Change in Education on FAO's Climate Change Knowledge Hub.

Youth Climate Dialogues

In April and June 2023, the WFF held two youth climate dialogues in collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to provide a space for young people to voice their perspectives and experiences on climate change, based on what happens in their communities. The dialogues offered a platform for a North-South exchange, explored how young people in different parts of the world are affected by climate change and related topics, and were held in a peer-to-peer format that created a space for interaction on an equal footing. Thirty-eight applications were received with a total of 25 young people accepting to participate. Countries represented included: Cameroon, Chile, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Republic of Korea, Nepal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Togo, Uganda and Zimbabwe. A group was also created to encourage follow-up discussions and continue engagement. Each participant pledged to continue their climate action.

Global Education Fair

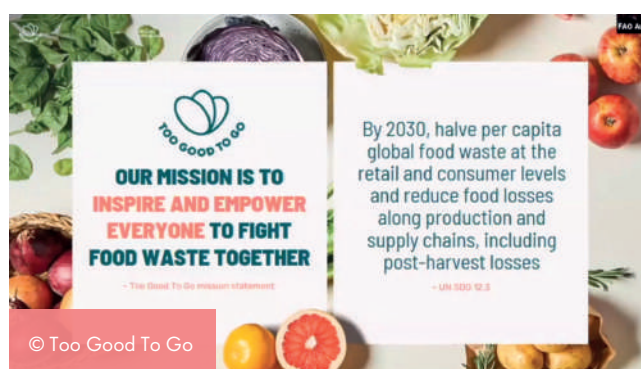
In 2023, the second instalment of the WFF Global Education Fair brought together student-led projects from across the globe, highlighting the importance of the theme *"Agrifood systems transformation accelerates climate action."* Twenty-seven applications were received, including 12 video submissions from youth organizations and young people across the world in eight different countries. Five finalists were then short-listed and had the opportunity to present their projects during the Global Education Fair side event during the WFF flagship event in October. The 12 project videos of the participants will be hosted on the WFF website to provide visibility and opportunities for further support.

Educational Steering Committee

In September 2023, the WFF launched the Educational Steering Committee composed of seven members from all continents between the ages of 18 and 30. The Steering Committee members will act as advisors and ambassadors, and will be regional representatives of the WFF Education track.

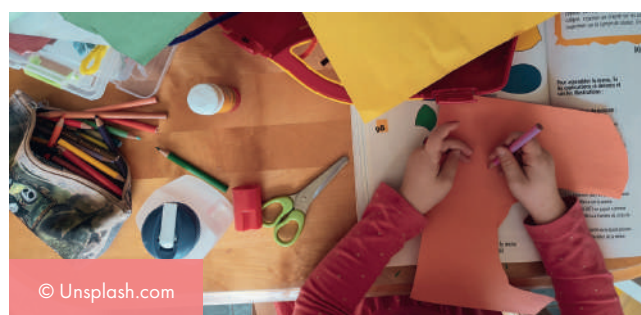
Masterclasses for Upskilling

[Upskilling Masterclasses](#) were held throughout 2023 to build capacities for climate action and agrifood systems transformation. Sessions reached hundreds of participants, each, and included: Right to Food with Consumer International, Food Waste with Too Good to Go and International Year of Millet with Slurrp Farm.



Youth Skills Hub

Launched during the TRC Finals on 17 October 2023, the [Youth Skills Hub](#) is an online platform that brings together thousands of free online courses across 10 knowledge hubs, 11 e-learning platforms and 35 websites providing internship/volunteer and career opportunities within the United Nations system and its partners. Designed to provide youth with the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to get into the workforce and actively shape agrifood systems to optimize human and planetary health, the Hub is structured around complementary pillars: an online library, career opportunities and Masterclasses. The Hub was presented at an exhibition during WFF flagship week with two partners, Scientific Animations Without Borders and Spectacle, who showed how video creation can support the sharing and dissemination of knowledge and skills to transform agrifood systems.





Dancers at WFF embody the fusion of culture and empowerment, unifying youth through art for a better food future.

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07

Youth Culture Highlights

Gastronomy, art, music and film all act as universal languages to communicate across borders and cultures. The WFF leverages these cultural threads that sew the fabric of a connected world, transcending all boundaries to help connect young people and empower them to transform agrifood systems. Bringing culinary traditions, the inspiring power of film, and the bonding aspects of music and art, the WFF aims to highlight our mission statement and bridge the gap between policy, youth advocacy and actionable youth-led solutions towards a better food future for all.

Film festival

In 2023, the WFF launched the third iteration of the [WFF Film Festival](#), which invites young filmmakers to tell the world stories that will inspire behavioural change and play an essential role in transforming our agrifood systems. The young authors of the winning films received a cash prize and their films were also featured during the WFF flagship event, allowing the artists to promote their work, gain visibility and network with global participants. In 2023, the Festival introduced the new prize category: **Best Focus on Agrifood Systems**.



Art exhibition

On 28 September 2023, the FAO youth art exhibition, *"Smultronställe: Fungi Exhibition by Egeon"*, opened to the public at the Rome Botanical Gardens. At the heart of the exhibition was a unique combination of both the artistic and technical aspects of fungi. The Exhibition was organized by the WFF in collaboration with Generation Restoration (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and FAO) and GACSA.



Podcast

In collaboration with Kitchen Connection, in 2023 the WFF continued the production and dissemination of its [podcast](#) series, which was first launched in 2022. The podcast features interviews with young trailblazers serving up change in their industries and communities across the agrifood chain. Seven new episodes launched in 2023.



The WFF Anthem

Musical artist [Mpiwa](#) wrote the 2023 WFF Anthem, *"Together,"* to raise awareness of the WFF and celebrate the flagship event. As a young Zimbabwean singer, songwriter and instrumentalist, who plays mbira (Zimbabwean thumb piano), guitar, marimba and djembe, Mpiwa's genres include Afro fusion, gospel and world music. She is also the first African WFF anthem artist as well as the first female WFF anthem artist.





In 2023, the WFF saw significant expansion in its National Chapters, showcasing a worldwide increase in youth engagement.

© FAO/PLO in ROK

Local Youth Action Highlights

The WFF Local Action track aims to increase the WFF's impact on the ground. By mobilizing youth-led local action through national youth platforms and collaborating closely with the FAO decentralized offices, the WFF is empowering and catalyzing local youth leadership in changing the present and future of our agrifood systems for a better food future.

NATIONAL CHAPTERS

In 2023, the WFF witnessed remarkable growth in its National Chapters, reflecting a global surge of youth interest in reshaping local agrifood systems. The expansion included ten new chapters launched: Bangladesh, Malawi, Nepal, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Uganda, the United States of America and Zimbabwe. Together with pioneering chapters in the Netherlands and the United Republic of Tanzania, the WFF now boasts 12 national chapters across four FAO regions and is in discussions with 30 additional countries interested in establishing their own youth chapters.

To support the development of these National Chapters, the WFF introduced the [National Chapters Blueprint](#), offering best practices from existing chapters and a structured approach to ensure alignment with core objectives. Throughout the year, these dynamic national chapters actively engaged youth at the local level, focusing on WFF tracks and initiatives. Pioneering chapters led the way, organizing events such as policy dialogues and consultations to address critical youth issues.

Additionally, the WFF hosted **National Chapter Workshops**, where leaders from chapters networked, shared experiences and honed their capabilities in issue identification, campaign planning and action-taking, ensuring the continued empowerment of youth in reshaping agrifood systems at the national level.

National Chapter activities throughout the year included:

WFF National Chapter in Bangladesh

With the fragmentation of youth-led organizations in the agrifood sector in Bangladesh, 25 youth-led organizations in the country combined efforts under the umbrella of the WFF to set up a National Chapter. The WFF chapter was launched at the WFF flagship event, where the chapter leaders delivered a national youth statement bringing together the voices of the youth-led organizations after a series of policy consultations on youth policy asks for agrifood systems transformation in the country and globally.

WFF National Chapter in Nepal

With guidance and support of FAO Nepal, the National Chapter was launched during the WFF flagship event at FAO headquarters and in a parallel side event organized by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP). The launch was the culmination of a collaboration on a series of events and activities held throughout the year. On International Youth Day, FAO Nepal and the WFF Chapter marked the celebrations with a virtual event on *"Greening the Future: Youth Perspectives and Actions,"* focused on equipping youth with green skills and igniting a community of sustainability advocates capable of contributing to Nepal's agrifood sector transformation. Moreover, in line with the International Year of Millets, the National Chapter also joined FAO Nepal's campaign to create awareness of this timeless nutritious grain, including through engaging students in classrooms and field education sessions.



WFF National Chapter in the Netherlands

To support national efforts feeding into the creation of national food systems pathways in the Netherlands, the WFF Chapter in the country held youth policy consultations that culminated in a national conference on Youth World Food Day. At the conference, passionate youth leaders led by the Dutch National Youth Council, the United Nations Youth Representatives on Biodiversity and Food, the Dutch Young Climate Movement, IAAS and i4Nature synthesized the youth inputs from the consultations to create the Dutch Youth Food Manifesto. The Manifesto has since been shared with different policy decision makers in the country and informed the national youth statement made by the youth representatives at the WFF flagship event. The engagements supported movement building and the strengthening of the National Chapter's policy and advocacy efforts.

WFF National Chapter in the Republic of Korea

The WFF National Chapter in the Republic of Korea was officially launched during the WFF flagship event at FAO headquarters and simultaneously in a parallel hybrid event in the country. With the support and guidance of the FAO Partnership and Liaison Office in the Republic of Korea (FAO PLO in ROK), the Chapter implemented a few events and activities, including the *"Guardians of Food Security"* regional forum event that was meant to mobilize and celebrate local youth initiatives to enhance food security. Notably, the Chapter also held its kick-off meeting in an organized field visit to an urban agriculture centre and park that was meant to showcase urban agriculture solutions to the students who make up most of the Chapter members.

WFF National Chapter in Spain

With a focus on engaging and empowering students taking courses related to agrifood systems, the Spanish Chapter brought together students from various universities including the Polytechnic University of Madrid, Spain, to hold a Model United Nations, deliberating on sustainable agrifood systems. The event was organized to build the students' expertise in agrifood policy, diplomacy and food governance. Moreover, the Chapter joined hands with various institutions to celebrate World Food Day at the University's Technical School of Agronomic, Food and Biosystems Engineering, focusing on the importance of water as a basic resource for agriculture and food. The Spanish Chapter also received recognition by the Official Association of Agricultural Technical Engineers of the Center, for its yearlong efforts to engage and empower youth in the agrifood sector. The event was held on 2 June 2023, commemorating the 75th anniversary of its foundation.

WFF National Chapter in the United Republic of Tanzania

The WFF Chapter in the United Republic of Tanzania in collaboration with FAO Tanzania organized an interactive dialogue between youth leaders and parliamentarians at the sidelines of the African Food System Forum. To build meaningful youth participation in agrifood policy and advocacy, the candid and interactive dialogue provided 15 youth leaders an opportunity to directly engage with policy decision makers and voice their policy priorities for transformative change. Moreover, the youth leaders representing diverse regions and expertise also learned from the parliamentarians on how they can effectively engage in policymaking processes for meaningful impact. This policy dialogue was organized to strengthen the partnership between policymakers and youth, support in building awareness of food systems national pathways and lay a foundation for WFF United Republic of Tanzania's advocacy work.

WFF National Chapter in Uganda

The WFF National Chapter in Uganda is dedicated to supporting youth engagement in policy and advocacy as well as empowering young agrifood entrepreneurs through providing a structure of support for their entrepreneurial activities. To follow the global and regional youth policy compendiums that have been developed by the WFF, the National Chapter in Uganda began efforts to consult youth in gathering inputs to support the creation of a national youth policy compendium. To this end, the WFF Chapter held a first virtual youth webinar titled *"Youth Policy Solutions for Agrifood Systems Transformation in Uganda"*. The webinar serves as a precursor to a series of youth related events to support the development of the compendium and trainings that will be focused on imparting business and management skills to young entrepreneurs.

REGIONAL UPDATES

Africa

With a median age of 19, Africa has the youngest population in the world. This demographic dynamism presents a compelling case for governments, international organizations and the private sector to prioritize the creation of meaningful youth engagement and employment opportunities in the continent's agrifood sector. A number of youth-focused initiatives are ongoing in the region, notably the Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA) programme, developed jointly between FAO and UNIDO, and implemented in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), the Integrated Country Approach (ICA) for boosting decent jobs for youth in agrifood systems, the Green Jobs for Rural Youth programme, and the African Youth Agripreneurs (AYA) platform, an initiative supported by FAO and the East African Farmer Federation (EAF). The platform for young African agripreneurs has brought together and engages over 3 000 young people across Africa.

In the region, the WFF is hosted by FAO's Regional Office for Africa (FAO RAF), where it has closely collaborated on a range of initiatives, at both the regional and country levels, including:

- Advocating for sustainable jobs for youth in the African agrifood sector at the Africa Food Systems Forum 2023, in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania. The collaboration will also extend to the YouthConnekt Africa Summit to be held in Nairobi, Kenya. The engagements at the forum will showcase and drum up support for WFF National Chapters in the region.
- At a side event during the WFF 2023 flagship event on promoting youth-centred green investments in Africa, FAO RAF unveiled the investment guidelines for youth in agrifood systems in

Africa. The guidelines provide practical guidance, tools and examples to design, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate youth-focused and youth-sensitive investment programmes.

- The Region has been working on supporting the development of WFF National Chapters in different countries. The region boasts five newly launched chapters and interest from 12 other countries to set up a country youth platform to advance local youth action.

Asia and the Pacific

The Asia and the Pacific region is home to 700 million young people between the age of 15 and 24 who are an untapped reservoir of potential to accelerate agrifood system transformation and rural development. To amplify and promote the experiences and initiatives of young people in the region, the WFF is present in the region with the overall support and contribution of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP) and FAO country offices in Bhutan, China, Japan, Nepal and the Republic of Korea.



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Throughout the year, the WFF has collaborated with these offices to support localization efforts through the initiation of WFF National Chapters and the implementation of regional actions including:

- In July 2023, FAO RAP convened country offices in a knowledge webinar that brainstormed on opportunities for the decentralized offices to bolster youth-led action in the country programmes in line with the WFF localization process. This engagement preceded the remarkable growth of WFF National Chapters in the region that include Chapters in Nepal and the Republic of Korea, launched at the WFF flagship event. A number of other countries in the region including Bangladesh, Bhutan and China are in process of establishing National Chapters.

At the WFF flagship event, the Asia and the Pacific region held four hybrid-format regional forum events that:

- explored the importance of protecting and passing on to future generations Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) (organized by the FAO Liaison Office in Japan (FAO LOJ) and students from the Takachiho and Gokase Region);
- reaffirmed the pivotal role of youth and youth networks in orchestrating the tangible transformation of local and national agrifood systems (organized by FAO RAP);
- ignited the creativity and dynamism of young people in low-carbon agriculture through a hackathon on cutting-edge technologies and business models that support low-carbon agricultural development (organized by the FAO Office in China, the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) and Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD));
- recognized outstanding local youth initiatives from the Republic of Korea that are helping to mobilize youth action for enhancing food security (organized by FAO PLO in ROK).

Throughout the WFF flagship week, two notable exhibitions were showcased at the FAO Headquarters, facilitated through close collaboration with national governments, local youth and youth networks:

- The Exhibition of Unique Mountain Products from Bhutan *“Best of Bhutan in One Basket”* was organized by the FAO Office in Bhutan in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Bhutanese youth.
- *“Crops, Culture, and Youth: A Path to Sustainable Development”* was organized by the FAO Office in Nepal, including a hybrid event to foster youth engagement in championing Neglected and Underutilized Crops to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Moreover, the region was represented by 49 national youth representatives nominated by their governments to engage at the Forum. During the WFF Asia and the Pacific Youth Assembly, FAO RAP delivered a keynote presentation, aimed at inspiring and mobilizing regional youth towards accelerating action.

FAO RAP has also hosted youth from the region in Bangkok for a Model United Nations conference to explore solutions for food loss and waste reduction, and supported a youth consultation organized in collaboration with the WFF YPB members in the region on promoting the production, accessibility and consumption of safe, healthy and sustainable food in the region.

The journey progressed beyond the flagship event. The WFF and FAO RAP jointly hosted a side event titled *“Youth-Driven Resilience: Climate-Resilient Food Systems in Asia-Pacific”* during Asia-Pacific Climate Week, held in Malaysia from 13–17 November 2023.

Europe and Central Asia

In Europe and Central Asia, agrifood contexts vary widely. The diverse landscapes in these countries hold particular significance in making rural areas appealing to younger people, fostering engagement from both women and men, and creating an enabling environment for youth involvement in policy and decision-making processes.



The WFF supports regional youth action in collaboration with the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (FAO REU), the Liaison Office in Brussels (FAO LOB), the Liaison Office in Geneva (FAO LOG) as well as with other country offices. Expanding on our engagement in 2022, the pursuits in 2023 included:

- A series of youth consultations for Europe and Central Asia were launched by FAO REU in partnership with the WFF YPB: the consultations included promoting youth engagement in agriculture and food systems, as well as reducing food loss and waste in the region.
- A photo contest that aimed to leverage the power of visual storytelling in advocating for sustainable agrifood systems and climate action was commissioned by FAO LOG in line with the WFF theme of the year. To culminate the contest, the winning photographs were displayed in a photo exhibition as part of a WFF regional forum event, at the Palais de Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.
- A regional forum event addressing youth empowerment for transformed agrifood systems was organized by FAO LOB during the WFF flagship event. The event brought together inspiring European youth leaders committed to improving agrifood systems and the environment in their own communities.

- A *“Jeu de Piste”* was organized to engage students at the University of Geneva in interactive activities that raised awareness on the local and global challenges of food waste, hunger, food insecurity and climate change.

- A WFF Regional Youth Assembly for Europe and Central Asia was conducted in Rome during the WFF flagship week. The Georgian and Uzbek delegations provided national statements highlighting the activities, good practices and needs for further development focusing on youth in their own countries. The outcomes will serve as a basis for further policy recommendations.

- The Regional Rural Youth Forum was held in Budapest from 29–30 November 2023. The Forum brought together participants from FAO REU, country offices, governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and international organizations. The hybrid format facilitated engaging discussions on the challenges and pathways for rural youth in the European and Central Asia Region.

Additionally, throughout the year, the regional, liaison, and country offices actively participated in aiding the formation of National Chapters in various countries within the region. They also worked to advocate for the inclusion of youth representatives and observers by collaborating with different governments and WFF partners.

Latin America and the Caribbean

In Latin America and the Caribbean, nearly 70 percent of employed youth work in informal jobs, many of which are in the agricultural sector. Investing in young people in this region can lead to significant outcomes, including poverty reduction, job creation, food security and inclusive rural development.

The WFF's efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean are coordinated by FAO's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO RLC). Their focus is on supporting rural youth at both regional and country levels. Key activities in 2023 included:

- WFF YPB members actively participated in the World Rural Forum in Brasilia, Brazil, from 25 to 27 April. This forum showcased the innovative solutions developed by rural youth for challenges related to rural development, family farming, access to land and resources, sustainable food production and the climate crisis.
- WFF YPB members and regional youth engaged in the Forum of Boys, Girls, Adolescents and Youth of Latin America and the Caribbean 2030.

- A regional rural youth event in Colombia was held in November and co-created with the involvement of FAO RLC, the WFF YPB and YPARD LAC, building on the success of past editions like the 2021 Rural Youth Festival and the 2022 meeting of Rural Youth.

- A youth consultation was held leading up to the WFF flagship event, focusing on accelerating investments in agrifood systems through innovative approaches within an agroecological framework. This consultation laid the foundation for discussions at the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Youth Assembly during the flagship event.

- A regional forum event was held at the WFF flagship event, where FAO RLC brought together young people, representatives from youth-led organizations, governments, academia and the private sector to discuss and promote the role of youth in spaces of dialogue and advocacy for the transformation of agrifood systems and the achievement of the SDGs.

Throughout the year, the office also garnered support and identified suitable youth leaders to establish National Chapters in the region.



- In partnership with Industry Disruptors Game Changers (IDGC) and Berytech, the 2023 *Agrination Startup Cup competition* celebrated the innovation and entrepreneurship of young people in the NENA region. It provided customized incubation, mentoring, product testing, market research and connections to new market opportunities, partnerships and funding.

- During the WFF flagship event the region recognized the winners of the Agrination business competition and raised awareness about how youth-led startups can contribute to agrifood systems transformation.

- On International Youth Day, FAO RNE and the WFF organized an event focused on bridging the rural-urban divide and developing inclusive value chains to offer equal opportunities and ensure inclusive economic growth. The event was co-created with and moderated by the WFF YPB members from the region.

- In 2023, the collaboration with the regional office extended to support the appointment of youth representatives and observers. A total of 35 youth from the region participated as National Youth Representatives at the WFF flagship event.

Near East and North Africa

Unemployment in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region is at alarming levels, with a 26 percent youth unemployment rate and a 40 percent rate among young women. To combat this issue and promote the transition to sustainable agrifood systems, it is crucial to invest in and support youth entrepreneurship and employment in the agrifood sector.

In 2023, the WFF closely collaborated with the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (FAO RNE) to promote youth engagement and leadership in achieving food security and good nutrition in the region. This collaboration included several initiatives:



The WFF is dedicated to amplifying youth voices, as exemplified in this engaging youth panel featuring President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins.

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The 2023 WFF Flagship Event

From 16 to 20 October 2023, the [WFF flagship event](#) took place at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, as well as on our interactive virtual platform, bringing together more than 6 000 in-person attendees and over 65 000 online visits. In its third iteration, the five-day event served as a dynamic global platform that united individuals from various backgrounds, transcending boundaries and generations, with the aim of reshaping the future of our agrifood systems. The central theme of the event revolved around the 2023 WFF theme: ["Agrifood systems transformation accelerates climate action"](#).

Held concurrently with **World Food Day (WFD)** and the **Biennial United Nations Global Indigenous Youth Forum (UNGIYF)**, the flagship event was structured into three interconnected fora: the **WFF Global Youth Forum**, the **FAO Science and Innovation Forum**, and the **FAO Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum**. The event harnessed the potential of intergenerational collaboration and creativity spanning policy, science, innovation, education, culture and investment. The ultimate objective was to establish new pathways for action, impact and acceleration on local, regional and global levels, working towards a sustainable, resilient, inclusive and hunger-free food future for all.

2k Run

On 15 October 2023 in Rome, Italy, the WFF organized its first-ever two kilometer run to promote awareness about the crucial link between healthy living and our food choices. The event opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony and speech by FAO Director-General and hundreds of participants laced up their running shoes to be part of this impactful WFF initiative that aimed to educate participants about the importance of nourishing our bodies through healthy diets and healthy lifestyles.

Opening Ceremony

On 16 October 2023, the WFF flagship event commenced with a vibrant opening ceremony at FAO Headquarters in Rome. Tying in the theme **"Agrifood systems transformation accelerates climate action"**, the event brought together a diverse array of heads of state, youth representatives and participants. FAO Director-General gave the welcome address, which emphasized the urgency of reshaping agrifood systems to mitigate climate change. King Letsie III of Lesotho highlighted the need to transform national agrifood systems, while Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, called for sustainable agricultural practices. Leaders like Prince Hassan bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (speaking on behalf of King Abdulla II); Abdul Latif Rashid, President of Iraq; Kassim Majaliwa, Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania; and Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, stressed the importance of global cooperation to address food security and agrifood systems challenges. European Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen highlighted the role of young people in building a fairer and more sustainable future. In addition, the opening ceremony featured performances by young artists from Liberia, Malaysia, Peru and Zimbabwe. The ceremony also included youth chats with YPB Members, young farmers, young innovators and female leaders of the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus.

Following the ceremony, the FAO Director-General inaugurated the WFF exhibition, showcasing creative and informative displays. The exhibition covered a wide range of topics, including the use of nuclear techniques and biotechnologies in food and agriculture, a Carbon and Water Footprint Tool, the Hand-in-Hand projects' reach and impact, biodiversity seeds and crops, Indigenous Peoples' food and knowledge and more. The exhibition area also hosted events and the launch of innovative initiatives designed to transform our agrifood systems.

Closing Ceremony

On 20 October 2023, the third annual WFF flagship event successfully concluded with enhanced commitments to transform agrifood systems. In his closing remarks, FAO Director-General stressed the importance of youth engagement, global collaboration, and the power of science and innovation.

Indian youth climate activist Licypriya Kangujam, who serves as the Special Envoy for the President of Timor-Leste, called for diverting funds from wars to address hunger, education and climate change. President Michael D. Higgins of Ireland praised her message, emphasizing the importance of authenticity in tackling climate change, food security and inequality. He advocated for a new approach to sustainable development, involving innovation and inclusivity, and empowering young people in policymaking. President Higgins also engaged in an open dialogue with youth leaders where he provided advice on the way forward to achieve agrifood systems transformation.

Marcio Macedo, Minister of State in Brazil, reaffirmed the country's commitment to fighting global hunger, broadening youth and women's participation in food production and advocating for a fairer international trade system for agricultural commodities. H. Moeldoko, Chief of Staff and Special Advisor for Food Security in Indonesia, emphasized the need for youth engagement in agriculture and outlined concrete steps taken to promote young leaders in public policy and innovation in agriculture.

A panel discussion also featured Laura Suazo, Secretary of Agriculture and Livestock of Honduras; Yeshey Penjor, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock of Bhutan; and Abdullahi Aliyu Sabi, Minister of State, Agriculture and Food Security of Nigeria. They highlighted the significance of youth, science and innovation, and investment, and commended FAO's efforts to transform agrifood systems and support developing countries in this endeavour.



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WFF GLOBAL YOUTH FORUM HIGHLIGHTS

WFF Youth Action Activities at the Flagship Event

The WFF Youth Action and Policy Track organized two engaging mainstage events during the WFF flagship event:

17 October - From Policy to Action: Youth Shaping Global Agrifood Systems: This event discussed youth-led policy development and offered a space for a thought-provoking conversation on how to advance institutional and political support for youth engagement in policy. It also highlighted youth experiences, challenges and lessons in agrifood systems transformation. The event saw the participation of FAO Deputy Director-General, Beth Bechdol, who shed light on the importance of youth engagement as a catalyst to addressing the challenges faced by our agrifood systems and driving sustainable and inclusive transformation; Director of the FAO Food Systems and Food Safety Division, Corinna Hawkes, who discussed how youth-led sound policymaking and concrete action can catalyze agrifood systems transformation; and Cynthia Yue, the 10th United States of America Youth Observer to the United Nations, who launched the *WFF Youth Policy and Deliberation Challenge*, which provides a space to incubate ideas and bring youth perspectives on agrifood systems to the global policymaking sphere.

18 October - Bridging Generations: Empowering Young Scientists for Agrifood Innovation: This event saw the participation of various young and senior scientists including FAO Chief Scientist, Ismahane Elouafi; Director of the FAO Agrifood Economics Division, David Laborde; USDA Chief Scientist Chavonda Jacobs-Young; WFF YSG Members, Sofia Cavalleri, Ebba Engström and Haiteng Li; Rabi Mohtar from Texas A&M University; and Silvia Miranda from the University of Sao Paulo. The event highlighted the essence of intergenerational solidarity as a catalyst for scaling science, technology and innovation. It also provided practical ways and means to strengthen intergenerational linkages, achieve gender equity and unlock financing within science.



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Regional Youth Assemblies

Six regional assemblies with more than 400 attendees were held during the flagship week for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and North America. The regional youth assembly sessions were informed by the regional consultations and surveys carried out by the WFF YPB in August and September 2023. Each Regional assembly session was designed to discuss a specific objective and policy priority informed by the [WFF 2022 Regional Policy Compendium](#).

Regional Assembly – Africa: participants gathered for a discussion on resilient and nature-positive agrifood systems in alignment with the African YPB's 2023 objective. The focus was on defining these systems, understanding barriers faced by young people and exploring solutions such as education, land access and incentives.

Regional Assembly - Asia and the Pacific: the session aimed at identifying pathways to combat hunger and malnutrition. The discussion emphasized better production management, featuring expert speakers, including representatives from FAO RAP.

Regional Assembly - Europe and Central Asia: this session centred around addressing food waste in Europe and Central Asia through policy implementation. Participants engaged in discussions that focused on government and individual roles, solutions and ways to involve youth in the fight against food waste. The importance of government involvement and initiatives like waste redistribution and education were highlighted.

Regional Assembly - Latin America and the Caribbean: the session delved into the importance and promotion of agroecology. Key points emphasized include agroecology's value for youth and the transmission of local knowledge across generations. A new training programme called the FAO Campus was introduced during the session.

Regional Assembly - Middle East and North Africa: the session explored green education, focusing on awareness of the green economy in universities and engagement in green activities. Challenges included the promotion and funding of educational programmes and the need for more agricultural funding support.

Regional Assembly - North America: the discussions delved into the need for inclusive, healthy and sustainable feeding programmes at educational institutions. Challenges included limited awareness of food-climate connections and unequal access to nutritious food. Solutions focused on education, investment in access to healthy food and involving youth in policy programmes.

Thematic Youth Assemblies

A total of five thematic Youth Assemblies, focusing on six different themes with over 300 attendees were organized by the WFF YBP and held during the Global Youth Assembly.

Youth action in implementation of national pathways: Follow-up of the Food Systems Summit Stock Taking Moment: this session saw vibrant discussions among youth leaders, youth assembly participants, and the Coordinator of the UNFSS Coordination Hub, Stefanos Fotiou. They discussed strengthening youth co-leadership in food systems transformation after the UNFSS+2 and explored potential next steps, fostering partnerships between national youth organizations and convenors.

Review of SDG 2 progress: Lead up to the High-Level Political Forum 2024: featuring former Irish United Nations youth delegate David Giles and former YOUNGO Food and Agriculture contact point Lana Weidgenant, this session assessed progress related to SDG 2. It highlighted youth-led examples and recommendations for research, technology, innovation, financial incentives, resilience-building and recognition of Indigenous food systems, to be used as advocacy tools for the High-Level Political Forum in 2024.

Agrifood systems in the context of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity process: organized in collaboration with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) and the UNCCD Youth Caucus, this session featured discussions on agrobiodiversity, enabling environments for protecting biodiversity, forest and water management, and the need for collaboration between UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP and United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) COP.

Agrifood Systems in the context of the UNFCCC Change process: Lead up to COP 28: this session, organized in collaboration with YOUNGO and the Middle East and North Africa Youth Network, discussed youth-led solutions and partnerships in the context of the UNFCCC. Key speakers highlighted the importance of youth engagement and action, metrics for measuring adaptation, and policy topics such as agroecology and agrifood systems.

Agrifood systems in the context of the United Nations Environment Programme process: Lead up to the 6th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly: organized in collaboration with the Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG) of UNEP, this session focused on youth engagement in environmental work. It highlighted the role of youth in addressing the triple planetary crisis and emphasized the importance of local knowledge, youth perspectives, and international frameworks in achieving resource allocation and improving key sectors like biodiversity and renewable energy. An interactive discussion covered climate change impacts, obstacles to promoting environmental causes and strategies for encouraging community action.

Young farmers roundtable

Around 70 farmer representatives from all regions, both online and in person, engaged in a session highlighting the pressing need to involve new and young farmers in agriculture due to the aging of the farming population. They emphasized the challenges in achieving generational turnover, such as the strenuous nature of the work, limited access to land and credit, and the absence of retirement plans for older farmers. Young farmers were recognized as crucial contributors to fostering innovative and sustainable farming systems. The roundtable aimed to gather insights from young farmers worldwide regarding their challenges, approaches, innovations and motivations. Its overall objective was to facilitate intergenerational exchanges, share advice and experiences and gather ideas to shape policies supporting young farmers. The conclusions stressed the importance of promoting farming as a viable livelihood, ensuring access to land and credit for young farmers, encouraging generational renewal through mentorship programmes, and providing education and skills to future farmers.

Indigenous Youth roundtable

With over 70 participants, the Indigenous youth roundtable convened to evaluate policy priorities across different regions and facilitate discussions on raising the voices of young Indigenous Peoples. The primary goal was to collaborate with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in order to establish local action plans and set joint policy priorities. Each regional representative presented their specific priorities. These priorities represent critical steps in advocating for the rights and well-being of Indigenous communities across the world, and the roundtable discussions aimed to drive meaningful action and change.

In Africa participants emphasized the need to strengthen the organization of the Indigenous African youth network and foster greater interaction with Indigenous agrifood systems. They aimed to establish priorities based on outcomes that could be advocated at the political level. Interaction with the African Union was also highlighted to support the defence of Indigenous agrifood systems. Governments were called upon to formulate policies promoting sustainable cultivation practices and encourage the protection of agricultural knowledge. Furthermore, there was an emphasis on creating educational programs to raise awareness and a plan to defend Indigenous food systems through research and community efforts.

Priorities in Latin America and the Caribbean included the continuation of efforts to protect and promote local and ancestral knowledge. They aimed to develop access to capacity-building and education while actively contributing to the expansion of forums that would enhance visibility and opportunities for Indigenous communities.

The discussion about North America underlined the importance of knowledge sharing, not only in terms of receiving more training but also in making Indigenous knowledge more accessible and understandable for non-Indigenous communities. The need to provide best practices and guidance to older generations was also highlighted.

WFF YOUTH INNOVATION LAB ACTIVITIES AT THE FLAGSHIP EVENT

Youth Food Lab

With the support of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the University Fund Wageningen Ambassadors, the ten teams of the YFL (from Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda) were able to showcase their projects at the WFF. After presenting their pitches, the audience voted for their favourite. At the conclusion of the event, the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations in Rome bestowed prize money to these teams to further their community-oriented work.

The Youth Food Awards were presented to [Mama4Planet](#), [Food Bank of Bolivia](#), [PURA](#) and [Bees and Trees](#), while the Youth Seed Awards went to [Wetlands for Nepal](#) and [Hydropan](#). Mama4Planet also secured the People's Choice Award. The event also featured addresses from FAO Deputy Director-General, FAO Chief Scientist and a keynote speech by [Too Good To Go's](#) co-founder Jamie Crummie.

Notably, at the event it was announced that the first-ever physical YFL will be launched, set to be located within WUR. The event then concluded with a networking session, during which the teams connected with potential supporters. They were subsequently invited to pitch their projects to investors and donors alongside the SIA finalists, creating an opportunity for direct engagement with agri-investors, donors and global agrifood system stakeholders.



Transformative Research Challenge Finals

During the TRC finals, ten teams presented their final projects, with seven teams participating in person and three teams joining remotely. The event welcomed 21 TRC team members from around the world representing the five Special Prizes. Ten teams were granted a USD 10 000 grant prize each as part of the TRC special prize focused on Global One Health, sponsored by WUR in collaboration with the FAO Joint Centre for Zoonoses and Antimicrobial Resistance (CJWZ). Additionally, six winners of the PPR Special Prize were announced, with each team receiving a USD 10 000 grant to support their respective projects.

The Food Loss and Waste Special Prize had two winners, each receiving a USD 10 000 funding grant. There was also a Food Action Accelerate Climate Action special prize winner, who was presented with a USD 5 000 research grant provided by IFAD. Furthermore, a recipient of the Water Prize was announced and awarded a paid internship opportunity with the International Water Management Institute in Jordan.

The third place overall TRC winners were Ornella Possi and Francine Berlange, with their project: "Molecular characterization of Sheep and Goat plague virus in Cameroon". The second place winners were George Kidega and Maureen, with their project: "Assessing the impact of organic fertilizer blends". The first place overall TRC winners were Menglu Wang, Peng Pan, and Saud uz Zafar, with their project: "Evapotranspiration Water Reuse Integrated Technology", and they were awarded a research grant of USD 10 000.

Additionally, the first special prize for 2024, co-hosted with Meatless Mondays, was announced.

Startup Innovation Awards Finals

The SIA finals powered by XTC featured five distinguished judges, including Beth Bechdol, FAO Deputy Director-General (Chair of the Jury); Corinna Hawkes, Director of the FAO Food Systems and Food Safety Division; Marcelo Cabrol, Chief of Scalability, Knowledge and Impact at Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Lab; Nicolas Autret, Partner – Walden Catalyst Fund; and Victoria Slivkoff, Executive Managing Director, Extreme Tech Challenge.

Four startups were selected as the winners of each category:

- Better Production: [Zebra Cropbank](#) (Nigeria)
- Better Nutrition: [Sustainable Planet](#) (United Kingdom)
- Better Environment: [Organicin Scientific](#) (USA)
- Better Life: [Stellapps Technologies](#) (India)

The top honour of Startup Innovator of the Year was awarded to Zebra Cropbank for their pioneering tech-enabled, post-harvest crops warehouse platform, enabling farmers to have control over pricing and the ability to instantly convert their crops into cash or

use them as collateral for credit. All of the finalists were invited to pitch their startups the next day to investors and relevant agrifood systems stakeholders.

Unleashing Youth Power in the Private Sector

During the WFF flagship week, the Innovation Lab hosted a Private Sector session where young experts from diverse private sector fields explored innovative approaches to transform global agrifood systems. This session highlighted the role of youth in the private sector to accelerate climate action and achieve the SDGs. It featured two thematic panels, one with emerging startup companies, and the other with United Nations entities and multinational corporations. The interactive fishbowl format allowed youth participants to engage directly with speakers from key multinational corporations.

Keynote speeches were delivered by Darci Vetter from PepsiCo and Lisanne van Oosterhoud, a WFF Youth Champion. The first panel featured Cristina Domecq from CrowdFarming, Yvonne Löwenstein from Share, Zhiqian Zhang from Tidetron Bioworks, and Marie Ammann from the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Food. The second panel included Bruna Elias from the United Nations Global Compact, Julia Mahon from Nestlé, and Rita Lousa from Tetra Pak. Three young audience members asked critical questions during the second panel, and FAO Deputy Director-General delivered opening remarks and closing reflections, emphasizing the importance of continued engagement with the private sector in agrifood systems transformation.

WFF Youth Education Activities at the Flagship Event

YUNGA School Assembly

YUNGA hosted a plenary session attended by more than 600 children from various schools worldwide both in person and online (530 in person, 70 online). The event included a high-level session with FAO core leadership, music and artistic performances, presentations and a quiz game. Children learned about sustainability, nutrition, and the WFF and FAO's work. The session is used as a model for other School Assemblies worldwide.

YUNGA Discovery Jump Stations

Children from the School Assembly were brought by chaperones to Discovery Stations across FAO aimed at engaging young people in the work of FAO and demonstrating the diversity of expertise held within the Organization. YUNGA discovery stations were organized by seven internal FAO divisions and one external partner (Farmcraft) involving around 40 members in total. Each station focused on its own area of expertise and delivered educational and fun activities for more than 350 children. This pilot sought to find ways to communicate the complex work of FAO to children. Virtual jump stations are planned for the future.



YUNGA Youth Reporters Club

Throughout the flagship week YUNGA invited ten children to attend various sessions and conduct interviews with a wide array of personalities. From the private sector to delegations, from external to internal staff, the dedicated Youth Reporters gave a voice to a diverse range of participants, seeking to offer their audience an insight into the happenings and discussions of the flagship event.



WFF Youth Culture Activities at the Flagship Event

During the 2023 WFF flagship event the WFF brought youth culture as a catalyst to every corner of FAO Headquarters in Rome to transform agrifood systems. Youth culture highlights included:

- the launch of the WFF 2023 Anthem by young singer and songwriter Mpiwa;
- performances by six young musicians from Brazil, Indonesia, Liberia, United States and Zimbabwe, three of which from Indigenous backgrounds, and Peruvian Patty Cruz Folk dancing group;
- the selection of the winners of the 2023 youth Film festival:
 - Best Fiction Movie: [68.415](#)
 - Best Documentary: [Hortus](#)
 - Best Focus on Agrifood Systems: [Bauxite](#)
 - Best Cinematography: [La Cosecha](#)
 - Best Technical Focus: [El Canto del Quezta](#)
- the launch of the Food is Medicine series [podcasts](#);
- over 60 youth exhibitions showcased at the FAO Atrium's WFF Booths and Culture Corner;
- the first FAO Bioeconomy Fashion Event, [Wearable Food Waste – A Transformative & Innovative Approach](#), created by the WFF, FAO and Bites of Transfoodmaton;
- six food waste awareness events;
- to complement a side event organized by the Government of Uzbekistan stressing the importance of agrifood education, a traditional lunch including music and dancing was showcased, spotlighting the country's rich cultural heritage;
- a Peruvian dinner with Ministers of Agriculture, highlighting the country's traditions; and
- coffee talks and tastings hosted by youth working in the specialty coffee industry from [Peacocks Coffee](#) and [Nudo – Artisan Coffee](#).

WFF Local Youth Action Activities at the Flagship Event

At the WFF flagship event, the WFF formally launched approved National Chapters in Nepal and the Republic of Korea, and provided provisional National Chapter status to chapters in Bangladesh, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Uganda, the United States of America and Zimbabwe.

After a year-long process, the WFF also hosted 198 National

youth representatives and observers from 30 countries that were nominated by their governments or nations to participate at the WFF flagship event. Following consultations at the national, partner and sector level, the youth representatives presented statements in line with the 2023 WFF theme.

Regional Youth Forum Events

To culminate the collaboration with FAO's decentralized offices throughout the year, FAO country, liaison and regional offices held 12 Regional Forum events, at the sidelines of the WFF flagship event. The Regional Forum events played a crucial role in promoting a locally led, youth-focused and integrated approach to building sustainable and equitable agrifood systems. They also brought best practices and experiences from the regional and local level to feed into the global deliberations at the WFF flagship event.



Highlight Story:

On the occasion of WFD and the WFF flagship event, FAO LOG promoted and carried out a wide range of activities this year. Both events were celebrated with different partners and stakeholders, increasing the engagement and visibility of FAO's work in Geneva and Switzerland. The implemented activities from this year's celebrations included:

- WFD & WFF media breakfast;
- Jeu de Piste: Youth Challenge Games at the University of Geneva;
- WFD dialogue: Improving Water Management through Agroecology;
- WFF photo contest and exhibition at the Palais des Nations;
- WFD food heroes exhibition at the Palais des Nations;
- WFF side event: Panel Discussion on Climate action in Emergency and Humanitarian Livelihood Assistance;
- United Nations news interview: Deputy Director-General Maria Helena Semedo;
- WFD message from Guy Parmelin, Federal Councilor and head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research;
- City branding of WFD;
- Illumination of Jet d'eau;
- United Nations Geneva cafeteria partnership with Eldora.



The FAO Liaison Office in Geneva joined hands with the United Nations Organizations in Geneva to open the WFF photo exhibition at the Palais des Nations.

© FAO/LOG

Youth Partner–Led Side Events

To complement the mainstage events, the WFF welcomed partners and interested parties to propose virtual or hybrid in-person side events. These events aimed to highlight partners' visions, innovations and programmes related to the 2023 WFF theme. In total, [84 side events](#) were organized. These gatherings aimed to facilitate in-depth discussions on agrifood systems transformation, creating an interactive and inclusive space for young individuals to participate, advocate for their ideas and ignite action.

Highlight Story:

The side event "Nurturing the Seeds of Agri-food Education for Food Systems transformation" was organized and sponsored by the Government of Uzbekistan to highlight the significance of agrifood education in addressing food security challenges. Featuring a youth delegation from Tashkent State Agrarian University, the event provided insights into Uzbekistan's agricultural progress and initiatives for youth empowerment. The country's rich cultural heritage was showcased through a lunch of traditional gastronomy as well as music and dancing.



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Global Indigenous Youth Forum activities

On 17 October, the second UNGIYF commenced with an inaugural ceremony at FAO Headquarters. The event was co-organized by FAO, the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus and the World Reindeer Herder's Association, and brought together over 180 Indigenous Youth in Rome and more than 350 online. The Forum saw representations from the seven global socio-cultural regions, 51 countries and 98 Indigenous Peoples' groups.

Throughout the flagship week, the Forum held special events and joint sessions with the WFF Global Youth Forum, the Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum, the Science and Innovation Forum and the CFS. Activities underscored the importance of recognizing and protecting Indigenous Peoples' rights, merging modern technologies with traditional knowledge, and addressing conflicts, climate change and biodiversity loss.

The opening ceremony of the Global Indigenous Youth Forum featured the participation of FAO Director-General, who emphasized the significance of learning from Indigenous Peoples, highlighting their valuable knowledge that blends tradition and innovation, their sustainable agrifood practices rooted in Indigenous lifeways, and their role as custodians of biodiversity for ensuring food security and healthy diets in the face of climate crisis and food insecurity. Other speakers included the President of IFAD and the Deputy Executive Director of WFP, among others.

The Forum's focus this year centred on making policy recommendations derived from the Youth campaign, *"My Food Vision is..."*, and two previous declarations on Youth formulated at FAO. Indigenous Youth engaged with FAO management, member countries, United Nations agencies, universities, and other partners, with discussions spanning topics like ultra-processed foods, school meals programmes, commercialization, and environmental concerns affecting Indigenous Peoples' foods, lands and waters. The Forum also included music, food, roundtable discussions, and an art exhibition showcasing Indigenous food and knowledge systems.



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FAO SCIENCE AND INNOVATION FORUM (SIF) HIGHLIGHTS

From 16 to 20 October 2023, the second edition of the FAO SIF was organized under the umbrella of the WFF and featured three days of intensive discussions on technology's role in addressing the climate crisis within agrifood systems. Held in a hybrid format at FAO Headquarters in Rome, the Forum attracted numerous global stakeholders, featuring around 150 high-level speakers from academia, business, government, non-governmental organizations and Indigenous communities. Participants were presented with the *FAO Science and Innovation Strategy*, facilitating a common framework for the agency's global efforts.

Objectives

The SIF aimed to enhance the accessibility of the most appropriate climate technologies, innovative practices and local knowledge in agrifood systems for climate change adaptation, resilience and mitigation. This facilitated a focused and strategic debate on how science, technology and innovation influence vulnerability, impact and the capacities essential for transforming agrifood systems and advancing climate action. The event also provided a platform for sharing experiences and lessons learned in implementing practical solutions to accelerate climate action, supporting members in their efforts to achieve the SDGs and the *FAO Four Betters*, leaving no one behind.

Outcomes

The SIF yielded significant outcomes, including a consensus that climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation are unattainable without science and innovation. Lessons and best practices from diverse regions were shared, covering a wide spectrum of innovations from technology advancements to social innovations, along

with emerging technologies and innovations in food production. The importance of innovation and technology in accelerating climate actions in various sectors, such as integrated soil and water management, loss and damage assessment in agrifood systems, energy-smart agrifood systems, innovative financing, resilience to multi-hazard, bioeconomy and transformative partnerships, was better understood. Furthermore, the SIF highlighted the significance of the *FAO Science and Innovation Strategy* and the *FAO Strategy on Climate Change*, emphasizing the synergy between the two strategies. Collaborative dialogues among stakeholders were fostered, strengthening science-policy interfaces, enabling research in Small Island Developing States and Low- and Middle-Income Countries and promoting inclusivity and equity that engage youth, women, Indigenous Peoples and small-scale producers. Four partnership agreements were also signed with CAB International, the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, Italy's University of Naples Federico II and the Universidade de Sao Paulo in Brazil.

Takeaways

The SIF underscored the unprecedented challenges facing agrifood systems due to the adverse impacts of climate change, emphasizing the pivotal role of science, technology and innovation in driving their transformation. Cross-sector collaborations and strong partnerships emerged as key factors in this transformation, alongside the need for embracing diversity, inclusivity and multi-stakeholder participation. Engaging youth, women, small-scale producers and Indigenous Peoples is essential in shaping the future of agrifood systems. The critical role of robust science as a foundation for scalable solutions in various contexts was highlighted, as was the need for technology and innovation tailored to local conditions. Promising technologies and innovations, as well as emerging technologies, were acknowledged for their pivotal role in building climate-resilient agrifood systems.



SIF in numbers

Registrants:

8 967
people

(7 153 virtual and
1 814 in person)

In-person attendees:

4 000
people

Online attendees:

9 769
views

(3 162 views on Zoom events,
6 607 livestreaming views from
fao.org, UNWebTV and YouTube)

Plenary sessions:

3

Technical sessions:

15

Topics included:

Soil and water management, multi-hazard resilience, loss and damage assessment of agrifood systems, animal source food alternatives, artificial intelligence and digital tools, bioeconomy, energy-smart agrifood systems for climate action, science-policy interfaces, innovative finance, small-scale producers and Indigenous Peoples, implementation of FAO Strategy on Climate Change and FAO Science and Innovation Strategy

Partnership agreements signed:

4

Regional events: **6**

2 for the Asia and Pacific region on Digital innovations, and youth and community-led climate actions; 1 for Africa on Youth, women and science-led innovations; 1 for Europe and Central Asia on the Integration of science, research and innovation in policymaking; 1 for Latin America and the Caribbean on Innovative Rural Entrepreneurship; 1 for the Near East and North Africa on Digital Agriculture

Interactive exhibition talks and demos of innovative approaches, and unique exhibitions about cutting-edge innovations:

54

#SIF2023 hashtag shares on X:

Over **30 000**
between
1 June and 24 October
2023

Coverage in global online news reports: **11**

Including coverage in the National Tribune (Australia), Mirage News (Australia), Latin America News Agency, India Education Diary (India), Antara News Agency (Indonesia) and Pacific Scoop (New Zealand), among others

Video news release broadcasts: **12**

Including broadcasts on YLE TV1 (Finland), RAI 3 (Italy), Sky TG24 (Italy), Cielo (Italy), Khabar 24 (Kazakhstan), Arirang News (Republic of Korea), NRK 1 & NRK 2 (Norway), TVP Info (Poland), TVS1 (Slovenia) and TVE La 1 (Spain)



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FAO HAND-IN-HAND INVESTMENT FORUM (IF) HIGHLIGHTS

From 16 and 20 October 2023, the FAO Hand-in-Hand IF was organized under the umbrella of the WFF and provided a platform for national authorities to present investment opportunities to investors, multilateral development banks, the private sector and donors, with a focus on investment potential on national agriculture and food value chain investment opportunities. During the four-day event, Ministers and representatives from the participating countries presented their country's prioritized investment plans and detailed opportunities in those areas where the Hand-in-Hand Initiative supports governments to reduce poverty and hunger. Roundtables were also organized and led by high-ranking officers of international financial institutions, global agrifood firms, global foundations and representatives of traditional donors.

The IF featured insightful presentations of investment plans and opportunities from 31 countries across Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, two regional initiatives, the Central American Dry Corridor and the Regional Initiative for the Sahel, took centre stage. These initiatives hold the potential to generate over USD 6 billion in investments, with approximately 110 projects benefiting 149 individuals.

These projects span a wide range, from small-scale irrigation networks and water storage facilities to digital soil mapping and measures aimed at boosting regional trade, reflecting the forum's commitment to driving sustainable and impactful investment in the agrifood sector.

Attendance

The Forum witnessed a robust presence of Multilateral Development Banks, with notable figures such as the Vice President of IADB and CABEL, the Vice President of the Multilateral Guarantee Agency, and the Global Director for Agriculture and Food of the IBRD, all part of the World Bank Group. The Forum also welcomed high-ranking representatives from key institutions like the International Finance Corporation, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, and the Development Bank of Latin America. The private sector also played a pivotal role in the success of the Investment Plans, with active participation from the Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), alongside representatives from the World Economic Forum and the Private Sector Mechanism, along with numerous affiliated companies. Ministerial delegations from participating countries, together with a substantial representation of global firms in the agrifood industry, further enriched the discussions.

Hand-in-Hand IF in numbers

Presenting countries: Over 31	Regional Initiatives: 2	Number of Investments presented: 110	Number of presented investment beneficiaries: >149 million	Worth of investment opportunities presented: > USD 15 billion	Plenary sessions: 3
In-person participants: 930	Roundtables: 4	High-level attendees: 1 Vice President, 28 Ministers, 4 Vice Ministers of Agriculture and Finance	Interviews with Ministers: 14 from Angola, Bhutan, Colombia, Corredor Seco, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe	Bilateral meetings 421	

WORLD FOOD DAY AND JUNIOR WORLD FOOD DAY HIGHLIGHTS

"The sustainable management of water for agriculture and food production is essential to end hunger, achieve the SDGs and preserve water for future generations." – United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

World Food Day Ceremony

On 16 October, a global ceremony commemorating WFD at FAO Headquarters in Rome highlighted the central theme of this year's WFD, **"Water is Life, Water is Food - Leave No One Behind."** The event underscored the need to use water more efficiently and adopt holistic approaches to water management to address these pressing challenges.



In his opening remarks, FAO Director-General stressed the profound interdependence of water and food security. He pointed out that factors such as rapid population growth, urbanization, industrialization, economic development and the climate crisis have collectively strained global water resources, leading to more frequent floods and droughts that are directly impacting agrifood systems and jeopardizing the livelihoods of millions of farmers. In his video message, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres underlined water's role as a necessity for nutritious and healthy food.

Italy's President Sergio Mattarella emphasized that water scarcity lies at the core of poverty and conflict and, therefore, requires resolute and innovative management to promote peace and well-being. Other prominent figures, including Ireland's President Michael D. Higgins and Pope Francis, and leaders from around the world, also underscored the critical role of water in ensuring nutritious and healthy food, achieving SDGs and preserving this invaluable resource for future generations. The event fostered discussions on the urgent need for innovative solutions and collaboration to bring hope and resilience to vulnerable commu-

nities in the face of escalating global challenges. Furthermore, the ceremony featured the presentation of the second-ever FAO Achievement Award, recognizing achievements, dedication, and innovation in agriculture and food security. This year's recipients included the Sara Bangla Krishak Society and Farmer Lifeline Technologies, with an additional acknowledgment for the FAO country office in Nepal for its work on trans-boundary animal diseases.

Junior World Food Day

On 19 October, during the WFF flagship week, FAO hosted a vibrant gathering at its Headquarters in Rome for Junior World Food Day 2023, where a diverse assembly of Food Heroes, influencers, and innovators came together to inspire and mobilize young individuals under the banner of the 2023 World Food Day theme: **"Water is Food, Water is Life - Leave No One Behind."** FAO Director-General set the stage, emphasizing the power of collective action to create a world where everyone has enough food and safe water. He highlighted the centrality of water as the foundation of life and food and encouraged young people to channel their positive energy into forging a water- and food-secure future. International chefs then offered personal insights into the critical importance of water, underscoring the value of not wasting this precious resource, especially when many individuals around the world struggle to access basic necessities.

Throughout the event, Food Heroes such as Bela Gil, Rodrigo Pacheco and Diarmuid Gavin shared their stories and perspectives, stressing the interplay between what we eat, how it's produced and its impact on water resources. The event included engaging activities like a water action game, where participants experienced the consequences of sustainable and unsustainable actions. A new multilingual youth music video, **"Water is life, water is food"**, showcased the collective efforts of students from around the world to promote water-conscious actions. The event also featured children's activity books exploring global challenges and a poster contest calling on youth to design posters depicting their water actions for food.





Principals of Rome-based
United Nations Agencies.

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WFF Collaboration between United Nations Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs)

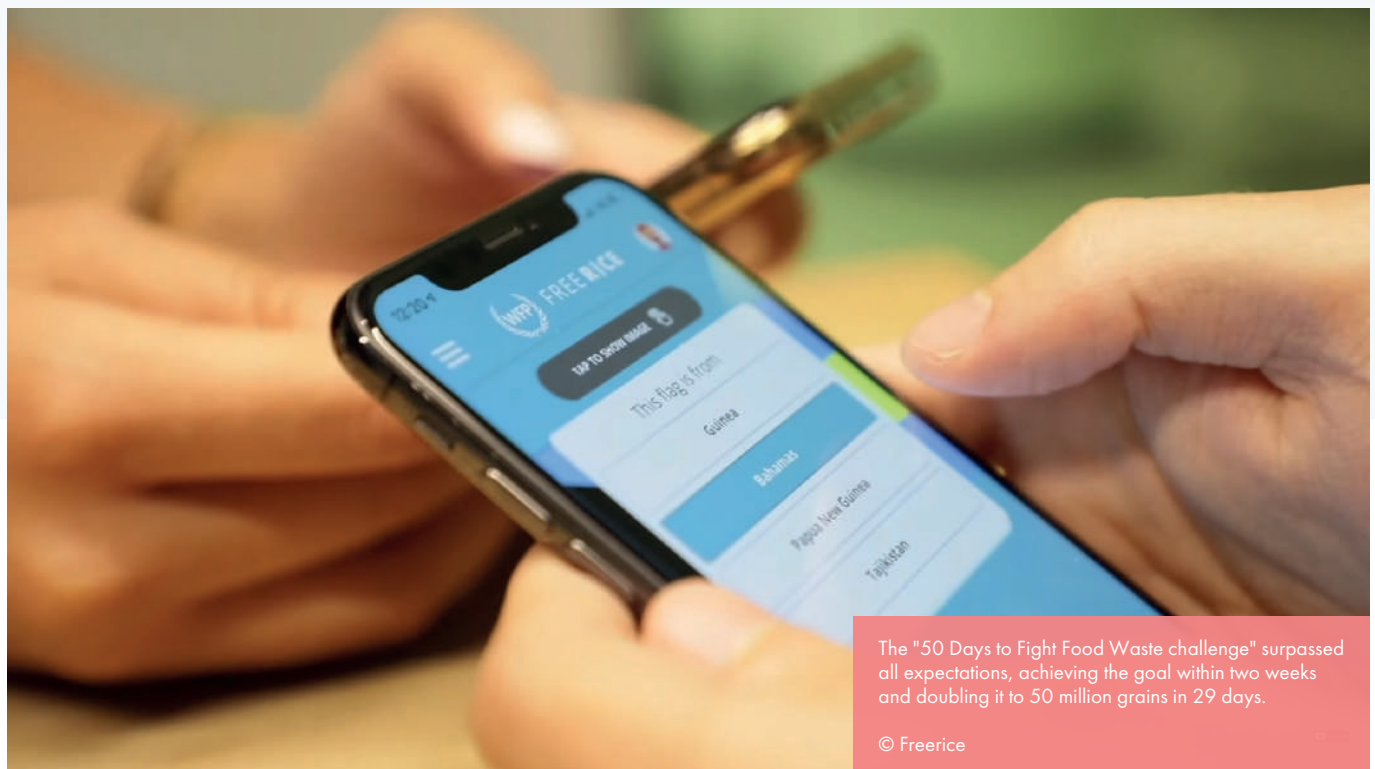
The achievements of the WFF have been significantly bolstered through collaboration with partners, notably the RBAs: FAO, IFAD and WFP. Though each agency has distinct characteristics and mandates, the RBAs worked closely and continuously in various ways, encompassing joint advocacy, policy and technical endeavours, and collaborative projects, reflecting the shared expertise and unwavering commitment of these specialized agencies.

The WFF originated in FAO's youth committee, and FAO has taken on the role of facilitator of this youth-led Forum. Throughout the year WFF collabo-

rated with all three agencies, and both IFAD and WFP Delegations were in attendance at the WFF flagship event. The flagship also featured a speech by Executive Director of WFP, Cindy H. McCain, at the closing ceremony, and the President of IFAD participated in the Global Indigenous Youth Forum and Investment Forum openings. IFAD also provided an expert judge, Jo Puri, Associate Vice President of IFAD's Strategy and Knowledge Department for the TRC finals during the WFF flagship event, as well as sponsored the USD 5 000 TRC Food Action Accelerates Climate Action prize.

Freerice Campaign with WFP

Freerice partnered with the WFP to launch the *"50 Days to Fight Food Waste challenge"*, an online quiz game to raise awareness about food waste and combat global hunger. The initiative achieved remarkable success by reaching a total of 100 408 610 rice grains. Initially targeting 25 million grains, the challenge exceeded expectations by reaching this goal in just two weeks and doubling it to 50 million grains in 29 days, coinciding with the International Day of Awareness for Food Loss and Waste. The final goal of 100 million grains was reached immediately following the WFP flagship event, with participants' enthusiasm contributing to this achievement, providing meals to those in need. The effort continues through the *Youth Towards Zero Food Waste campaign*, aiming to empower the younger generation to learn, take action and scale up their efforts against food waste.



WFF Results Overview 2023

Impact (Social Gastronomy Movement #UniversalPlate campaign)

- **2 699 608** meals shared in **7** days
- **18 510** kgs of meals saved

Impact (Freerice campaign)

- **100 408 610** rice grains raised in **53** days
- **127 824** participants

Events, sessions and reach

- **400+ events**
exhibitions and sessions during the flagship week
- Hundreds of volunteers and partners
- **1 500**
people reached with Youth Consultations
- **2 400+**
press clippings in 2023 (as of 30 October 2023)
- **1 700+**
press clippings during the WFF flagship week
- **2.5**
million increase in FAO.org visits

Flagship event attendance

- More than **20 000** registrations from around the world
- More than **6 000** in-person at FAO and **65 000** online visits
- Attendees from **186** countries
- **198** national youth representatives/
observers from **30** countries

Competitions

- **500** entrants in the TRC
- **10** teams in the YFL
- **400** entrants in the SIA powered by XTC
- **500** films submitted from
75 different countries to the WFF Film Festival

Social Media

- **30 000+** social media followers
(more than double 2022)
- **26 000+** newsletter subscribers
(more than double 2022)
- **11%** average follower engagement
rate on social media
- **2.7** billion social media accounts
reached during WFF flagship week



With a vision centered on empowering youth, innovation, inclusivity and collaboration, the WFF aims to boost youth leadership in transforming agrifood systems.

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Looking Forward: Scaling-Up Youth Empowerment in Agrifood Systems Transformation

In 2023, the WFF embarked on a transformative journey to accelerate climate action through agrifood systems transformation, focusing on turning ideas into impact through local action. With a vision that intertwines youth empowerment, innovation, inclusivity, science-backed evidence and collaboration, the WFF is gearing up for a series of ambitious endeavours to scale-up youth leadership for agrifood systems transformation in the year to come.

28th United Nations Climate Change Conference Engagement

One of the WFF's milestones in 2023 is its active participation at the COP28, taking place in Dubai. The WFF has been selected as the official youth co-host of the Food Systems Pavilion, endorsing the Policy Working Group and Communications Working Group. With youth representatives advocating for food and agriculture topics, the WFF will play an integral role in advancing agrifood systems transformation in relation to climate change. Side events, support for the FAO delegation, and engaging WFF youth bodies like the YPB and YSG are among the key planned activities.

Collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

The WFF¹ is set to become a part of the Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCO, focusing on the significance of culture and cultural heritage in achieving the SDGs. This collaboration aims to further grow the impact of youth culture within the WFF and its mission.

United Nations Youth Delegates Programme in Rome

The WFF is supporting the proposed pilot project, *"United Nations Youth Delegates Programme in Rome"*, which seeks to involve youth delegates at meetings of the United Nations in Rome. This initiative is led by current and former United Nations Youth Delegates and aims to enhance youth participation in global food governance and provide a platform for national-level agrifood system-related youth priorities.

Roadmap for Youth Co-Leadership

Collaborating with the FAO, the UNFSS Coordination Hub and youth constituencies and organizations, the WFF is developing a concrete roadmap for countries to engage with youth in the transformation of our agrifood systems.

YPB 2024 Global Youth Action Plan

Derived from the WFF Youth Action Regional Compendium 2022, the WFF YPB has been working on selecting regional policy priorities and conducting surveys and consultations. The results will be consolidated into a comprehensive report known as the *"2024 Global Youth Action Plan"*. This plan will outline actionable steps to achieve policy outcomes by addressing gaps, opportunities and challenges.

Youth Food Lab - WFF Incubator

The WFF is expanding its Youth Food Lab initiative to include not only a global incubation program but also its first physical Youth Food Lab located within WUR. This unique initiative places

emphasis on inclusivity and seeks to incorporate young people's ideas and solutions from around the globe, in particular the Global South.

Expansion of National Chapters and Local Impact Initiatives

The WFF plans to expand its national chapters and reinforce local impact initiatives, such as the Freerice Food Waste Campaign, to amplify its efforts on a regional scale.

WFF Youth Policy and Deliberation Challenge

The 2024 WFF Youth Policy and Deliberation Challenge will provide a platform for young individuals worldwide to create and present food systems policies to international leaders and policy-makers. This educational endeavour aims to engage young changemakers in addressing complex agrifood systems challenges, and showcasing their capacity and expertise in co-creating policies for agrifood systems transformation.

Publication of the Second YSG Report

The YSG is preparing to release its second report in 2024, focusing on topics around agrifood systems that they identified in the first cohort's report.

The WFF's vision for the future underscores its commitment to empowering young people to drive positive transformation in agrifood systems and climate action on the local and global scales. With its multifaceted and ever-evolving approach, the WFF strives to make a lasting impact on the journey towards a more equitable and sustainable food future.

In 2024, the WFF will scale-up its efforts, grow its initiatives and expand its impact while continuing to collaborate across generations, sectors and cultures. Our efforts are as much about the future as they are about today. If we are to achieve a future without hunger, we must leverage the immense power of youth to influence policies, transform behaviours, accelerate technology and innovation, and guide investment priorities today. We must unleash the full potential of youth for a better food future for all.

Join us. The future of food is in our hands.



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