

CFS Policy Convergence Process on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems

Call for Inputs

1. Which priority issues and policy-relevant areas should be addressed through this CFS policy convergence process and included in the policy recommendations?

1.1 Youth Engagement and Agency

To make interventions more responsive to the actual needs of young people, engagement mechanisms are pivotal to nurture young people's aspirations and embrace youth-led ideas. The youth population is diverse and its members face different challenges and opportunities depending on where they are situated along the rural-urban continuum, they are therefore the ones who can offer a unique perspective on context-specific issues that matter to them and are best placed to identify workable solutions for the implementation of youth-friendly policies and programming. Yet youth often lack access to the channels that would allow them to influence decision-making and are excluded from governance processes at the national, regional and global levels.

Evidences (IFAD 2019, Rural Development Report) show that the vast majority of approaches to the promotion of youth participation in developing countries are lacking targeted mechanisms for *rural* youth involvement.

Since sustainable agriculture is critical to feeding the world and averting climate and environmental crises, collaborating with young farmers and agripreneurs is essential in order to tap into their transformative potential.

1.2 Agribusiness development and decent green jobs offer opportunity for rural youth employment

Agribusiness development must take an integrated and dynamic approach that involves working holistically across three major streams within commodity chains: (i) market driven-production; (ii) agro-industry and; (iii) goods/services (financial inclusion, innovative extension services, input/output markets etc.). Against this backdrop, examining the state of the ecosystem for employment services, market access, technology transfer and financial services available for young agripreneurs becomes crucial to identify areas of opportunity.

Rural young people are increasingly concerned about the environment. Many of them work in sectors that are threatened by climate change, and they're well aware that their industry and food systems will need to become more resilient and sustainable than ever before.

The notion of green economy is nowadays intended broadly in the sense of a socio-economic model that combines long-term objectives of sustainable development and the promotion of social justice and decent work. However, in order to effectively reach the pursued goals, all strategies, policies, and programmes should form part of a new approach entailing the wide range of issues, processes, products, and services that relate to sustainability and the environment, including the broader dimensions of energy and resource efficiency, poverty eradication, social equity, and human wellbeing.

In this context, the creation of decent green jobs – those that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment – is increasingly being seen as a potential solution. Decent green jobs for rural youth is therefore an important pathway towards reduced rural poverty and counteracting the impacts of climate change. For many of these young people, the rural economy and the agricultural sector need to take a leading role in simultaneously addressing demographic developments and climate change, thus contributing to job security as much as food security.

Dialogues with young people are of paramount importance to provide evidence of their perceptions towards green and decent jobs. However, there are few of these. In 2020, IFAD conducted a dialogue and provided some anecdotal evidence into the aspirations of young people for green jobs. They highlighted a set of challenges when it comes to promoting rewarding green jobs in rural areas, which well reflect the variety of different challenges they are facing. However, these dialogues drew a consensus that climate-smart solutions, public-private-producer partnership opportunities, peer to-peer learning and digital platforms provide key opportunities.

1.3 Partnership with the Private Sector

Engaging with the private sector, setting up new tools and policies to forge, nurture, and deepen partnerships across public and private sectors and civil society should score high in the policy agenda as a key strategy to support the growth of job opportunities for rural youth – and a sustainable future.

On this regard, there is the need to find innovative ways that strike a good balance between the logic of donors and market players, and between public and private sector. Policy-makers, donors, and development agencies should re-think the way they tackle rural youth issues across their operations, increase coherence and effective coordination, and support for building the capacity of national and local institutions.

2. *Do you have any suggestions for CFS meaningfully engaging youth constituencies in the policy convergence process?*

2.1 Increase Voice Inclusivity

To increase voice inclusivity and allow for a meaningful and substantial engagement of the youth constituencies, ensuring Language inclusivity is the first step to take.

The communication strategy should therefore include language strategy or strategy for distribution of the information in all UN official languages.

2.2 Ensure representation at grassroots and national level

Ensuring the representation of grass-roots and national youth organizations. In fact, rural youth are less connected, more isolated and often unable to cohesively articulate issues affecting them through existing regional and global youth councils and platforms.

2.3 Leverage on RBAs' constituencies and networks.