

# Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems

A report by the

High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition,  
science-policy interface of the CFS

**10 12 2021**

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**HLPE** 16  
REPORT



**PROMOTING YOUTH  
ENGAGEMENT AND  
EMPLOYMENT IN  
AGRICULTURE AND  
FOOD SYSTEMS**

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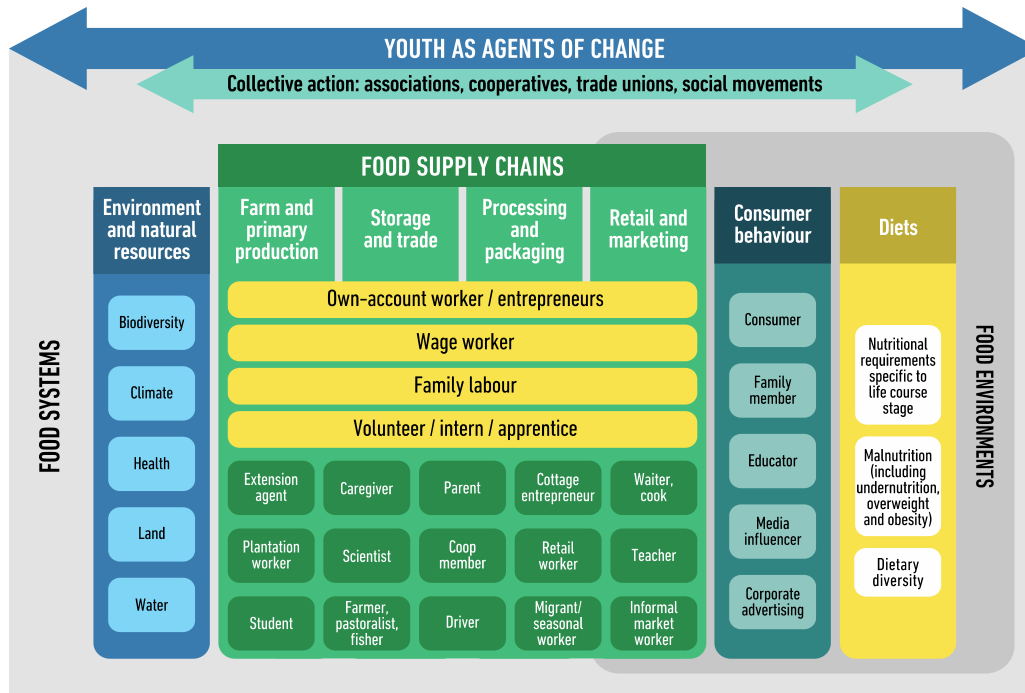
# “Youth” in food systems

Youth and children are **agents of change** across all dimensions of food systems.

They are important **actors** in the dynamic transformation of contemporary food systems.

Youth engagement and employment in sustainable food systems is to be supported as both a **goal** to be met in and of itself and **as a means** to realizing sustainable development.

# Youth as agents of change in food systems (p.8)



Source: Elaborated by authors based on HLPE 2017, 2020a

# Defining “Youth”

## BIOLOGICAL AGE – position in the life cycle

**UN:** “**childhood**” 0–17 years, “**youth**” 15–24 years  
(overlapping with “childhood” for three years during ages of 15–17)

**Country examples:** youth between 12-40

- Mexico: youth starting at age 12
- Bolivia: youth starting at age 18
- UK: youth ends at age 19
- Tanzania: youth ends at age 34
- Malaysia: youth ends at age 40

**General concept:** youth: aged between 15 and 24 years

## BOX 1: DEFINING "YOUTH"

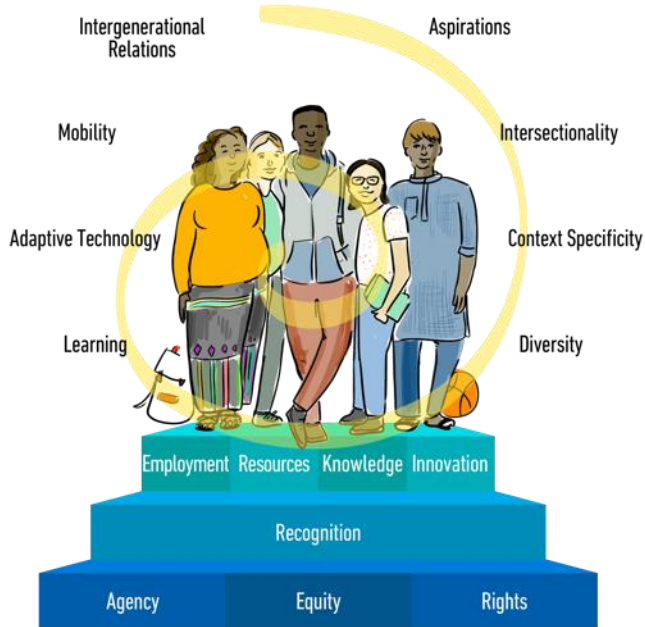
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For legal and administrative purposes, United Nations (UN) agencies, national governments and their legal systems define the life stages of childhood, youth and adulthood by chronological age. The UN, for example, defines "childhood" as ages 0–17 and "youth" as ages 15–24 (thus, overlapping with "childhood" for three years during ages of 15–17) (UN, undated).

There are, however, substantial differences between these global definitions and the ages at which "youth" is defined to begin and end in different countries' national youth laws and policies (Arulingam *et al.*, 2019). For example, youth status begins legally at 12 years old in Mexico, but at 18 in Bolivia; it ends at 19 in the United Kingdom but at 35 in Tanzania and 40 in Malaysia (Youth Policy Labs, undated). While fully recognizing the importance of chronological age in defining "youth", for analytical and policy purposes and for purposes of this report, relationality is the main defining feature of the concept of "youth".

Drawing on key ideas in generation studies (Huijsmans, 2016), childhood studies and youth studies (James and James, 2008b; Jones, 2009; Wells, 2009), and some that combine the two (Ansell, 2016a; Panelli, Punch and Robson, 2007), this report recognizes childhood and youth in relational terms, defined by their position in inter-generational relations and across the life-course. However, when citing data, generally youth are defined according to age as persons aged between 15 and 24 years of age, unless specified otherwise.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS



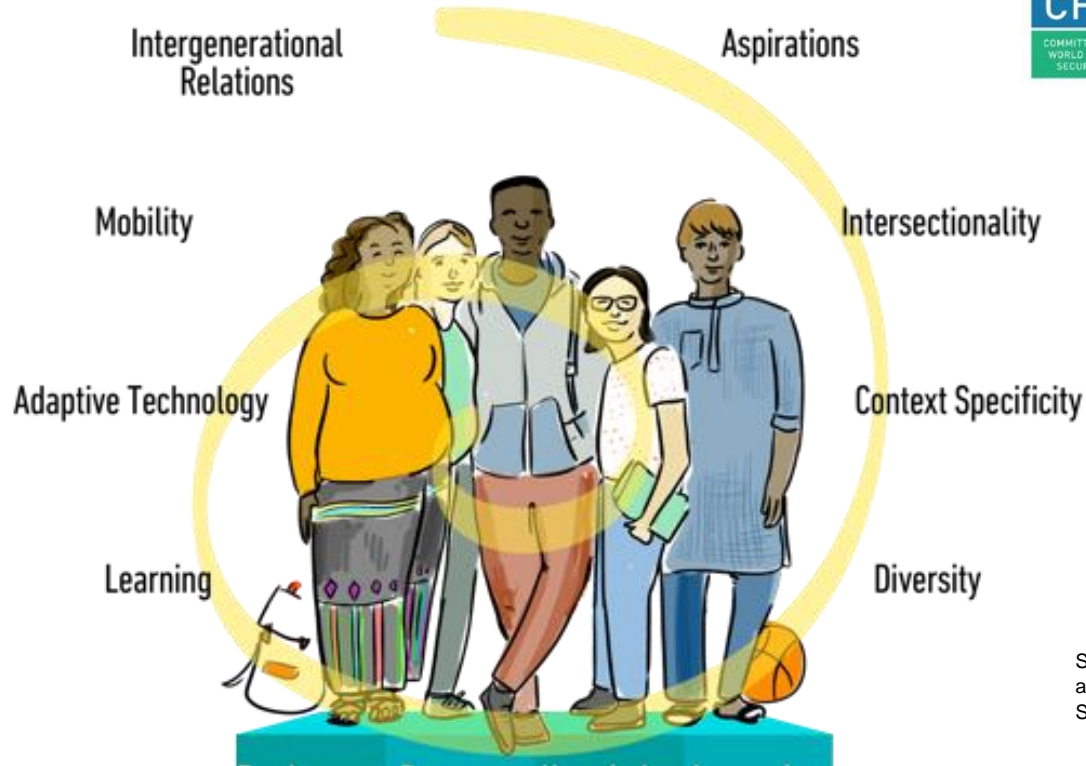
OUTCOMES

DYNAMIC  
STRUCTURES  
AND PROCESSES

KEY POLICY THEMES

FOUNDATIONS

Source: Elaborated by  
authors with illustration by  
Sam Bradd



Source: Elaborated by authors with illustration by Sam Bradd

# UNDERSTANDING YOUTH IN FOOD SYSTEMS



## Acknowledging youth **DIVERSITY** and as **HETEROGENOUS GROUP**

- Diverse, dynamically changing and multi-dimensional group made of people, who come from particular, geographic locations with different cultural backgrounds and socio-economic opportunities: **CONTEXT SPECIFICITY**

## Considering **INTERSECTIONALITY**

- Beyond age, one's relationship with food systems is uniquely shaped by specific intersections with multiple factors including gender, class, wealth, health, location, ethnicity, religious affiliation, migrant/non-migrant status, rural/urban location.

## Understanding youth in **RELATIONAL TERMS**

- Defined by their position in intergenerational relation and in their life cycle; the importance of maintaining balance between generations: **'GENERATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY'**



# UNDERSTANDING YOUTH IN FOOD SYSTEMS

Youth-related issues in food systems are **TRANSVERSAL**

- cut across many diverse problems and policy areas, and different activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food require specific, youth-targeted and youth-adapted response

Considering **MOBILITY**

- Young people's life-course today includes periods of mobility between places and sectors of employment, leaving and returning to places of origin in response to contextual factors.

From *defining* youth towards *understanding* and *conceptualizing* youth

# Philippines

## MAGNA CARTA OF YOUNG FARMERS

Promoting the Contributions of Young Women and Men Farmers to Family Farming

- Recognizes the strategic role and the aspirations of young women and men farmers so youth will opt to stay on the farms, make a decent living from agriculture and secure the food sufficiency of the country
- Protects the rights of young farmers aged 15-40 years;
- Promotes educational and other programs of learning;
- Empowers youth by providing access to technology and credit, and prioritization in land access;
- Ensure young farmers' representation in decision-making bodies;
- Preserves cultural identity and Indigenous farming traditions.

## NOSSA PRIMEIRA TERRA (NPT, “Our First Land”)

Programa Nacional de Crédito Fundiário (PNCF), National Program for Land Credit

- Amendment of the Programa Nacional de Crédito Fundiário (PNCF, “National Program for Land Credit”);
- To decrease youth exodus from rural areas - youth-specific land credit policy;
- Beneficiaries: youth aged 16 to 31 (initially 18 to 29) trained in agro-technical schools with a gross annual family income of BRL 15 000 (USD 7 250 (2003) to BRL 30 000 (USD 14 500);
- Supporting the preparation and processing of financing proposals, and the monitoring of the programme with youths (individually or as part of associations) while providing the necessary technical support.

# Austria

## Program: PERSPEKTIVE LANDWIRTSCHAFT (PERSPECTIVE AGRICULTURE)

### Extra-familial farm succession

- Exchange and match-making platform between elderly and young people
- To enhance the generational turnover in agriculture and to rejuvenate rural communities
- Opportunity for new entrance – both for young people with or without farming family background
- Similar examples in German, Switzerland, Canada, Netherlands

# Defining characteristics of youth for policy making purposes

- Age
- Gender
- Location
- Education
- Income
- Background
- Individual or group
- ?

# Thank you very much!

**Anna Korzenszky**

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# *The central role of human rights in fostering an enabling environment for youth in agriculture and food systems*

- Right to Food
- Right to Work
- Rights of the Child
- UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women
- Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas
- Right to a Healthy Environment



# Right to Food

## Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

- **Art 25:** Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food...

## International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966/1976)

- **Art 11:** The States, recognizing the fundamental **right of everyone to be free from hunger**, shall take...measures:
  - To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making **full use of technical and scientific knowledge**...and by developing or **reforming agrarian systems** in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;

## CFS Voluntary Guidelines for the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (2004)

- Good governance, holistic and comprehensive approach to hunger and poverty reduction, economic development, education

# Right to Food: Youth as a target for Policy and Practice



- **India:** food, social security and livelihood programs for youth and families are legal entitlements rather than benefits programs.
- **Brazil:** the right to food is implemented through the Zero Hunger program, including school meal programs, agrarian reform programs specific to youth, and social protection programs
- **United States:** school meal programs that featured healthier meal options for food insecure children improved school attendance; instituting nutrition standards for meals improved healthy eating habits.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa:** access to treatment for HIV/AIDS improves human capital and the agency to achieve food security via family labor inputs for growing food.

Sampson, D. *et al.* (2021). Food Sovereignty and Rights-Based Approaches Strengthen Food Security and Nutrition Across the Globe: A Systematic Review. *Frontiers Sustain Food Syst* **5**, 686492.

Knuth, L. & Vidar, M. (2011). *Constitutional and Legal Protection of the Right to Food around the World*. Rome: FAO.

# Right to Work

## Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

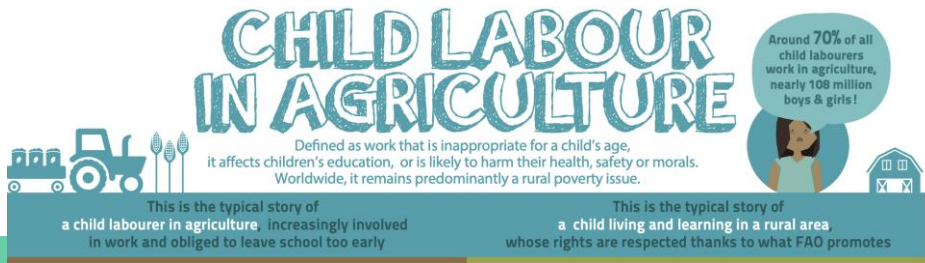
- Art. 23.1: Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
  - equal pay, fair wages, social protection, right to form unions, and the right to a vacation!

## International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

- Art 6: right to work; Art 7: fair wages and equal remuneration (esp for women); safe and healthy working conditions; rest and holidays; Art 10: **social protection for childbirth/maternity leave**; children and young persons should be protected from economic and social exploitation; context-specific age **limits for paid employment of child labour**.
- States as the primary duty-bearers are obliged to provide “**technical and vocational guidance and training programmes**” and “policies to achieve [...] full and productive employment” (ICESR, 1966, Part III, Art. 6).

# Right to Work: Policy and Practice

- Clarify **Minimum age of employment** and social protections for children and youth working in the informal economy in food systems.
- Clarify youth **rights to land** and other productive assets
- Clarify youth **rights to representation** in workers' unions or producers' groups
  - Some unions have age restrictions despite youth eligibility for employment
  - Emergence of new forms of representation and collective action for youth
- Update **labour legislation for agriculture and food systems** to include youth access to social protection and social security measures (ILO, 2020c).



## CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE

Defined as work that is inappropriate for a child's age, it affects children's education, or is likely to harm their health, safety or morals. Worldwide, it remains predominantly a rural poverty issue.

Around 70% of all child labourers work in agriculture, nearly 108 million boys & girls!

This is the typical story of a child labourer in agriculture, increasingly involved in work and obliged to leave school too early

This is the typical story of a child living and learning in a rural area whose rights are respected thanks to what FAO promotes

# Rights of the Child

## UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

- children and adolescents are entitled not only to various protections but also to progressively exercise their rights according to their evolving capacities; as children's capacities grow, so does their agency...

## Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

## International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

- Art 26/Art 13: Everyone has the right to education/.. **Technical and professional education** shall be made generally available accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.



# Rights of the Child: Policy and Practice

## Protecting Children's Right to a Healthy Food Environment




- At least 1 in 3 children under 5 are not growing well due to one or more forms of malnutrition
- School-feeding programs can combine multiple objectives of food literacy and food systems training for children and youth (e.g. garden-based programs)



<https://www.unicef.nl/files/Advocacy-brief-healthy-food-enviro-final.pdf>

# UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)

- Right to non-discrimination in education, employment, and economic and social activities.
- “special emphasis with regard to the situation of rural women, whose particular struggles and vital economic contributions warrant more attention in policy planning”



Women's Land Rights as a Tool for Building Climate Resilient Food Systems

A COP26 Side Event

Friday, 5 November 2021

13:15 - 14:30 UTC+1

Speakers:

- Mueni Mutinda, Canadian Foodgrains Bank
- Faith Alubbe, Kenya Land Alliance
- Panelist: Sara Omi Casama, Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests
- Moderated by Rachel McMonagle, Landesa

 Canadian Foodgrains Bank  
A Christian Response to Hunger

 Landesa

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>

# UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)

- Endorsed by 148 countries
- Art. 26: Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied, or otherwise used or acquired ... States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources.



<https://omdfortheplanet.com/blog/restoring-indigenous-food-sovereignty/>



# UN Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and other people working in Rural Areas (2018)

- Endorsed by 121 Countries
- **Art. 17:**
  - Peasants and other people living in rural areas have the right to land, individually and/or collectively [...] including the right to have access to, sustainably use and manage land and the water bodies, coastal seas, fisheries, pastures and forests therein.
  - Art. 17. Landless peasants, **young people**, small-scale fishers and other rural workers should be given priority in the allocation of public lands, fisheries and forests.



# *UNDRIP/UNDROP: Policy and Practice*

## **CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (2012)**

- “land, fisheries and forests are central for the realization of human rights, food security, poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, social stability, housing security, rural development, and social and economic growth”
- Address land consolidation and land grabbing

## **CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI) (2014)**

- grounded in the basic principle of “respect and recognition for human rights.”
- Principle 4: “engage and empower youth” via agricultural investment



# Right to a Healthy Environment (2021)

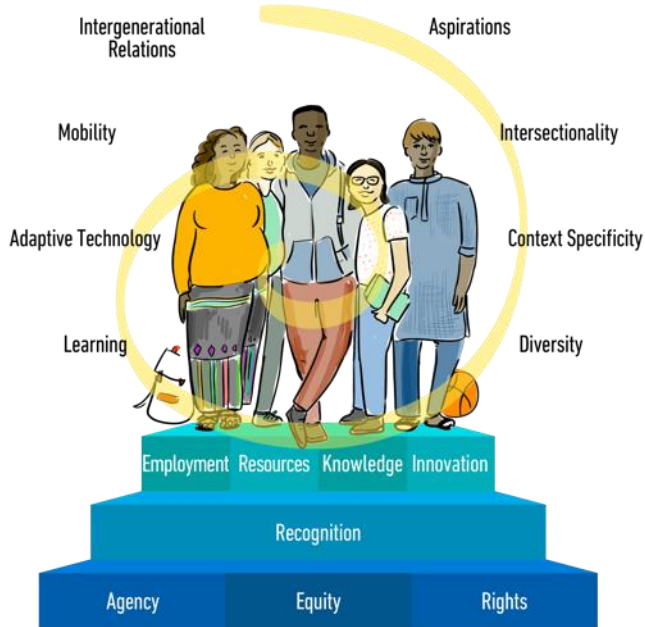
Access to a healthy environment, declared a human right by UN rights council

- Consistent with a holistic approach to sustainable food systems



© UNICEF/Josue Mulala | Trees are being planted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help fight climate change.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS



OUTCOMES

DYNAMIC  
STRUCTURES  
AND PROCESSES

KEY POLICY THEMES

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Source: Elaborated by  
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# Policy recommendations

1. **PROVIDING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR "YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE"**
2. **SECURING DIGNIFIED AND REWARDING LIVELIHOODS**
3. **INCREASING EQUITY AND RIGHTS TO RESOURCES**
4. **ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATION AND SKILLS**
5. **FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION**

# Thank you!



For more information:  
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[CFS-HLPE@fao.org](mailto:CFS-HLPE@fao.org)