



CFS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROMOTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

ZERO DRAFT – JANUARY 2022

USG General Comment:

In general, the United States supports the approach of this Zero Draft and feels that it is balanced and targeted in covering its originally intended scope. While we have many line edits, we reiterate our belief that these policy recommendations are now headed in the right direction and may provide useful guidance to policy makers and implementers. The document appropriately covers a wide range of policy issues that relate to youth, employment, and agriculture and food systems, across approximately thirty different recommendations. These recommendations can be flexibly adapted to many types of interventions and contexts.

In general, the document could do more to acknowledge, at times, poor working conditions and a lack of decent work and social protection in agriculture in parts of the world, and the impact that may have on attracting and retaining employment of youth. It would also benefit from a more direct acknowledgment of climate. Climate adaptation may not be central to the objectives of the policy recommendations, but it is an omission to highlight youth turning away from agriculture jobs and choosing to migrate without recognizing that agricultural livelihoods are inextricably linked to climate and environment.

It is also important the document pay attention to the types of jobs youth are often leaving behind—jobs that often do not pay family sustaining wages. The document is therefore missing a recommendation(s) on ensuring agriculture is profitable in order to attract and retain youth.

Recognizing that gender is the focus of a separate, ongoing CFS workstream, the treatment of gender issues, with a focus on young women, is insufficiently addressed in the document. We suggest adding a paragraph that addresses the importance of ensuring the full and successful integration of young women into agriculture and food systems.

Finally, while it is mentioned a few times, “youth of legal working age” should be added throughout the document. It is important to explicitly mention the desire to decrease and prevent harmful child labor in agriculture and food systems. Line edits to the document follow.

RATIONALE

1. Young people are one of the keys to achieving sustainable development, in particular including in developing countries, where the vast majority of them reside, often in rural areas. There is a large untapped reservoir of employment opportunities in the agri-food sector. Yet, poor access to land, natural resources, infrastructure, finance, technology, knowledge, and poor remuneration for agricultural and food workers turn many youth away from agriculture and from remaining in rural areas. As a result, many feel that their best option is to migrate, either to urban

Commented [A1]: Young people are a key to sustainable development worldwide (including in the United States). CFS shouldn't limit this just to developing countries.

Commented [A2]: This should be understood to also include water, here and throughout the document, as access to water is often essential for agricultural success.

Commented [A3]: Suggest replacing “knowledge” with “training”, as it may make more sense in this context.

Commented [A4]: It is important to note that:

- 1) Youth are already big contributors to agriculture and many are not leaving rural areas - these realities should be acknowledged.
- 2) There is also quite a lot of mobility back and forth from urban and rural spaces. COVID-19 also saw urban-based youth return to rural areas and take up agriculture in some instances.
- 3) The paragraph implies in general that migration is bad and that the objective is to incentivize youth to stay in rural areas. Opportunities in the agri-food sector will not only involve on-farm production, they will involve mobility across spaces.

areas or internationally, overseas. Actions are needed to make the agri- food sector more attractive to young people and to promote their capacity to generate incomes.

Commented [A5]: Overseas does not account for intra-regional travel

2. The potential returns of investing in young people are considerable, boundless in terms of food security, poverty reduction, employment generation, as well as peace and political stability.

Commented [A6]: Boundless would imply no limit, which could lead to resources being taken from other important initiatives, like investing in gender equality.

3. As the average age of farmers worldwide approaches 60, it is essential to develop systems, policies, and programmes that engage more youth in agriculture, and agricultural professions, and food systems. Youth engagement and leadership are linked intrinsically to countless aspects of the achievement of food security and good nutrition for all. Among these aspects, interlinkages with gender equality and women's empowerment, the rural-urban continuum and innovative practices and technologies, including new uses of data and knowledge-sharing platforms, are particularly relevant.

Commented [A7]: This may be a better opening paragraph than paragraph 1.

Commented [A8]: This is not just agriculture, but also the food industry, which includes marketing, logistics, trade, processing, etc.

Commented [A9]: None of these "aspects" are explicitly linked to food security and good nutrition. It may be beneficial to add a sentence that explicitly states that without future farmers, future agriculture and food production will be severely constrained.

4. The following recommendations are addressed to Governments (relevant ministries, national, regional and local authorities and institutions, as appropriate) to pursue in consultation with intergovernmental organizations, producer organizations, the private sector (including micro, small and medium as well as larger-sized entities) and civil society.

Commented [A10]: Recommend broadening the discussion here about the opportunity to be more inclusive and diversify the agricultural sector through a gender equity lens. For example, "increase the ability for women/girls to engage in non-traditional types of training/roles such as training on big equipment or leadership positions/roles."

5. The policy recommendations that follow are envisioned as a focused, action-oriented document that will encourage public policies to foster enabling environments capable of tapping into the energy and skills of youth to improve agriculture, food, and water systems. In working towards this aim, the diversity, intersectionality, and context specificity of youth aspirations and experience across the globe should be recognized.

5-6. The Policy Recommendations are voluntary and non-binding.

Commented [A11]: Standard language used in the AOIA, and similar to VGFSyN and ongoing GEWE. Implementors and policy makers (readers) must be informed as to the nature of these recommendations.

1. PROVIDE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Commented [A12]: Suggest adding the word "Recommendation:" or adding a section title "Policy Recommendations" to improve clarity.

a) Contribute to the realization of the human rights of young persons, youth rights without any discrimination, by implementing existing global policy instruments that are relevant to youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems, as applicable, by supporting relevant policy processes and programmes, as well as by creating accountability mechanisms; (#Rights)

Commented [A13]: It is the view of the United States that human rights are universal, and we should avoid suggesting that young persons have different rights from others or that those rights are held by a collective.

b) Ensure that youth-oriented policies and programmes take heterogeneity of youth and intergenerational relationships and hierarchies into account, providing additional support to improve equity and distribution of resources across generations, gender, class, culture, ethnicity and citizenship status, with specific attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of youth; (#Intergenerational approach)

Commented [A14]: What "resources" are meant here? Request clarification.

c) Enhance youth's standards of living by ensuring their access to adequate education, health,

Commented [A15]: What is the intergenerational approach and does it cover all of the aspects highlighted here?

hygiene and nutrition; and reduce vulnerability of youth by ensuring their access to basic infrastructure and services and by implementing social protection and safety net programmes that contribute to meet children's and adolescents' specific food and nutrition needs; (#Social protection)

d) Support and encourage equal, non-discriminatory and active youth participation and leadership in relevant organizations, including through civil society, and private sector, and worker organizations, in governance mechanisms and decision-making fora at all levels, such as CFS, parliaments and other national and local policy-making spaces, as appropriate, and promote youth-led organizations and initiatives; (#Participation and governance)

e) Strengthen collection of labour market information and statistics to capture the diverse realities and heterogeneity of youth, their employment and working conditions in agriculture and food systems, as well as mobility and working time devoted to different activities; (#Data collection)

f) Improve the documentation of different forms of youth engagement in agriculture and food systems, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, to better understand youth needs and behaviours and inform policy development. (#Data collection)

2. SECURE DIGNIFIED AND REWARDING LIVELIHOODS

a) ~~Ensure that~~ Develop and safeguard employment and labour market policies and labour demand interventions that target young people, providing opportunities for dignified engagement and decent jobs for youth in agriculture and food systems that contribute to ~~preserving-conserving~~ or restoring the environment; (#Labour market policies)

b) Implement comprehensive labour market policies to increase youth employability in agriculture and food systems through interventions such as job assistance, employment services, training and skills development, job matching, management consulting, and entrepreneurship coaching and incubators; (#Labour market policies)

c) Implement labour demand-side measures for youth to promote more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food systems and investments, consistent with the CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI); (#Labour market policies)

d) Establish programmes to facilitate the transition from school to work, ensuring equitable access

Commented [A16]: Recommend adding access to quality training and educational opportunities

Commented [A17]: This section only considers social protection/nutritional needs for children and youth while they're young, and not the overarching problem that ag often doesn't provide access to social protection for workers throughout their working lives. If the aim is to get more youth into ag, access to comprehensive social protection is essential to making agricultural work sustainable as youth age, start and raise families, and retire.

Commented [A18]: Can CFS provide specific examples of what this support would look like?

Commented [A19]: Equal how?

Commented [A20]: If this is action oriented, it should be more specific in what is being suggested. If the policies and interventions do not exist, they should be developed. If they do, they should safeguarded.

Commented [A21]: What specific labor market policies would increase all of these for youth?

Also, what about apprenticeship models that engage youth and employers? Paragraph 2d could highlight this.

Commented [A22]: Suggest adding language that indicates that we want agriculture and food systems to actually provide safe, nutritious, affordable food - not just environmental benefits. Re-wording to say "sustainable agriculture and food systems" would cover both.

Commented [A23]: Unclear what an incubator is in this context. Internship?

Commented [A24]: Please expand on what measures you are referring to exactly. It may make more sense to move this reference to "2b".

to these programmes across gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and citizenship status; (#Labour market policies)

e) Develop labour laws and regulations, and associated adequate budgets, to guarantee enable living wages and enhance working conditions for youth, with particular attention to children of legal working age, in agriculture and food systems through reducing hazardous exposures, supporting occupational safety and

Commented [A25]: Recommend splitting this paragraph into two sentences to improve its clarity. Also, it would be good to clarify here that policies will also need to ensure that employers are responsible for providing safe working conditions and must comply with existing or new laws and regulations.

Commented [A26]: Guarantee could be read to seemingly commit governments to raising their minimum wage, which is outside the scope of this body.

health, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, providing personal protective equipment, safe hours and unemployment insurance; (#Employment legislation and governance)

f) ~~Develop social protection programmes that compensate youth's unpaid contribution to food systems, and that legitimize care work, especially that performed by young women, through the provision of public childcare, parental leave and other community services; (#Social protection)~~

g) Support labour inspection systems in agriculture and food systems sectors and occupations where young people are prevalent and and develop community-level monitoring of compliance to labour legislation and labour rights; (#Employment legislation and governance)

h) Promote, in line with existing CFS policy recommendations, agroecological and other innovative practices for inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agriculture and food systems to generate decent jobs for youth, by supporting the capacity of youth. ~~as well as by providing support and market opportunities for sustainable products; (#Incentives and social finance natural resources)~~

3. INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RESOURCES

a) Support rural youth equitable access, conservation and protection of land, seeds and biodiversity, fisheries and forests by adopting appropriate policies and programmes at the national level, consistent with the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (CFS-VGGT) and other relevant frameworks; (#Natural resources)

b) Develop legal measures, policies and regulations to facilitate inter-generational transfer of natural and productive resources and enterprises by supporting successions, start-ups and increased access to retirement systems; (#Natural and productive resources)

c) Support the establishment and functioning of cooperatives and other organizations to facilitate youth's access to productive assets and increase their capacity to manage agricultural land and business; (#Productive resources)

d) Promote youth financial literacy and, in collaboration with financial service providers, the development and availability of affordable and inclusive financial services and products tailored to the needs of youth engaged in agriculture and food systems; (#Finance)

e) Support youth entrepreneurship in agriculture and food systems, in both individual and collective enterprises, by providing flexible financing programmes, including through savings mobilization, crowdfunding, alternative forms of collateral to access and lower the cost of loans in rural areas, contract farming and other value chain finance arrangements, warehouse receipts, digital and mobile financial services, insurance, remittances investment products, improved supply of financial services, provision of seed capital grants, partnerships with financial institutions and risk sharing instruments; (#Finance)

f) Improve public infrastructure to increase access to markets for youth producers, entrepreneurs and traders and empower youth to contribute to better link urban and rural territories and communities for sustainable agriculture and food systems; (#Infrastructure)

Commented [A27]: Not sure what is meant by safe hours. Are there unsafe hours? Should be covered by safe working conditions?

Commented [A28]: How would these parameters be determined? This is too broad and much of what is described is covered in the concurrent Gender workstream.

While care work is important, this recommendation is outside the intended scope of this paper and may be more suitable to other CFS products, like the GEWE, or other fora all together.

Also, "public" would seem to indicate that Member States provide publicly-funded childcare, which is not necessarily true.

Commented [A29]: Need to be specific about the sectors we are discussing.

Commented [A30]: Suggest footnoting to AOIA and VGFSyN and then there is no need to include this awkward phrasing.

Commented [A31]: The sustainability of food systems is covered by the VGFSyN and AOIA. If the phrase is kept, we suggest the following edit to be consistent with previous guidance:

"as well as by providing market opportunities for products from sustainable food systems."

Removal of "support" in this bullet is to avoid implying endorsement of subsidies in an overarching sense.

Commented [A32]: It is inappropriate to imply that promoting innovative practices is strictly under a "incentives and social finance" framing.

Suggest reframing the parenthetical as "#natural resources" and moving this under section 3—as based on the content of this bullet, it is unclear why it is under the heading of "secure dignified and rewarding livelihoods"

Commented [A33]: It is unclear what "conservation and protection" means here.

Commented [A34]: Request clarification on what this refers to. Inheritance?

g) Support development of incubators and relevant programmes to enable youth entry and engagement in sustainable food supply chains and support youth engagement in voluntary price premium and certification systems which may support ~~could guarantee~~ better returns while contributing to more sustainable agriculture and food systems; (#Markets)

Commented [A35]: Unclear what this means in this context

Commented [A36]: We of course want food supply chains to be sustainable but they are also dynamic and sustainability is noted later in the same sentence.

h) Support the development of public procurement programmes in the agri-food sector, such as farm-to-school and public nutrition programmes that engage sustainable and youth-led enterprises, through ~~quotas~~ sensitization and technical support. (#Markets)

Commented [A37]: The word “voluntary” should be added when referencing certification systems, and the prescriptive text “could guarantee” should be replaced with “may support”. Both of these edits are necessary to avoid implying that this text supports mandatory certification schemes or non-market approaches (e.g., price fixation).

Commented [A38]: We do not support the inclusion of quotas in this context.

Commented [A39]: Request clarification: what is meant by sensitization?

4. ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

a) Ensure universal access to free and quality education, improving infrastructure to facilitate access to school, ensuring school continuity during emergencies through access to long-distance learning, ~~and ensuring~~ Following an emergency, ensure a safe and inclusive return to school without discrimination of any kind, and adopting multi- sectoral approaches to implement and enforce policies on girls' school attendance; (#Education)

Commented [A40]: Recommend splitting this up a little and making sure that the recommendation can pause when addressing discrimination and girls.

b) Support educational curriculum development in primary and secondary schools by including subjects related to sustainable agriculture and food systems, including with practical learning components to encourage and prepare ~~equip~~ young people that wish to pursue agricultural and rural livelihoods; (#Education)

In the second sentence, recommend being clear about what the gap is and how it is relevant to agriculture issues. For example, making the link to encouraging girls to continue schooling to be more participatory in the agriculture sector.

Commented [A41]: Suggest also acknowledging existing curricula that can be further utilized

c) Promote training and vocational programmes that develop youths' skills for ~~for professions and creation of jobs~~ in food systems, such as nutritionists, food educators, and extension and advisory service providers; (#Training)

Commented [A42]: Is there a specific recommendation of how to engage youth in research?

d) Engage youth in research related to sustainable agriculture and food systems, resource conservation, climate change mitigation, adaptation and environmental management, and strengthen opportunities for youth to participate in community-based research partnerships; (#Research)

e) Promote inter-generational and intra-generational exchange of information, knowledge and practices through mentorship and peer-to-peer engagement. (#Information and knowledge exchange)

5. FOSTER SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE INNOVATION

a) Support the key role of youth in promoting social innovation, through social and community enterprises, multi-stakeholder innovation platforms, community finance, and institutional innovations to link farmers to markets, taking into account inter-generational and indigenous knowledge related to sustainable food systems; (#Social innovation)

Commented [A43]: As a follow-on to our general comments, this may be the section to insert a paragraph on the need for agriculture to be profitable for it to attract and retain youth

b) Support the provision of rural and urban extension services and digital services tailored to youth needs and priorities while ensuring inclusive access to these services, including to close the gender digital divide; (#Extension and digital services)

Commented [A44]: Why just social innovation? This should be expanded to all innovation, including those involving cutting edge technologies, digital technologies, and genome editing - as well as those involving innovations in social, behavioral, managerial and institutional structures.

Commented [A45]: Recommend giving concrete examples here

c) Develop digital skills of young workers and of those transitioning from school to work, enhance their capacities in sustainable and innovative approaches and engage them in co-designing digital solutions; (#Digital skills)

d) Invest in digital infrastructure and promote digitalization to ensure connectivity in peri-urban, rural and remote areas as a means of strengthening and diversifying food systems, where appropriate, as well as creating job opportunities for youth. (*#Digital infrastructure*)