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**Side event of World Food Forum Flagship Event  
Regional Youth Consultation**

*Who will stay then?*

*How digitalization can bring youth back to agriculture in Europe and Central Asia*

*Кто тогда останется?*

*Как цифровизация может вернуть молодежь в сельское хозяйство в Европе и Центральной Азии*

**12 PM, 20 October 2022**



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HEALTHY DIETS. HEALTHY PLANET.

## WHO WILL STAY THEN?

How digitalization can bring **youth** back to agriculture in Europe and Central Asia

**SERIES OF YOUTH CONSULTATIONS**  
IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

**Online  
consultation**  
20 October 2022  
12 a.m. (CEST)  
Zoom

**YOUTH**

## **Background**

Youth, across Europe and Central Asia, is leaving the rural areas thus the agricultural sector.

Challenges related to access to knowledge, markets, natural- and financial resources force the younger generation to leave the rural areas to the more urbanized parts of their countries, where there's a higher chance to find better working opportunities. This not only means that the rural areas are facing the consequences of the in-country migration, but the agricultural sector remains in the hand of the older generation, who often prefer and follow traditional practices and have a conservative attitude for digital solutions.

Amid the increasing demand for food, the deteriorating climate, and other challenges of today, we need the courage of youth, its enthusiasm, and idealism to address these challenges and build sustainable food systems for all.

Digital technology can address the challenge of youth migration and attract youth back to agriculture. Connectivity, mobile adoption, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies are opening doors to new opportunities, enhancing the performance of the sector and improving working conditions. However, they also pose certain risks, such as of digital divides between regions or businesses and between urban and rural areas.

The digital technology dividends are not automatic. Some rural areas in Europe and Central Asia are still falling behind when it comes to the adoption of new technologies due to for instance bottlenecks in the broadband infrastructure, affordability, awareness, digital skills, and regulatory issues. This means that the agricultural sector of the region does not take full advantage of scientific breakthroughs and technological advances that can address globally relevant challenges of the agriculture sector. The younger generation can serve as accelerators and champions to support the digital transformation of the rural areas.

The bet is on youth.

The Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia launched a series of youth consultations in December 2021, which also contributes to the regional aspirations of the World Food Forum. The first consultation was an overview session on Challenges and opportunities for rural youth. This current event is part of the series focusing on digitalization in agriculture.

## **Objective**

This Youth Consultation aims to provide a platform for young farmers, digital innovators and academia to share their success stories, experiences, approaches, and key challenges related to the application of digital technologies in agriculture. The event will advocate for youth's digital innovation, foster and strengthen the dialogues between stakeholders, and make youth's voices and concerns heard and considered.

As a result of engaging young speakers, the event is expected to challenge widespread knowledge about employment in agriculture and provide a platform to discuss the role of digital technologies in stimulating it.

The feedback gathered during the consultation will serve as a basis for *REU's Digital Agriculture Team* and *REU Regional Initiative on Empowering smallholders, family farms and youth* to facilitate rural livelihoods and poverty reduction and to plan further the work around the challenges and opportunities identified during the event. Moreover, the regional youth consultations will also contribute to the *Regional Youth Action Compendium* by listing the key priority areas for youth action in Europe and Central Asia.

## Expected outcomes

- Good examples of youths' engagement in agriculture are shared.
- Promising solutions focusing on smallholders and good practices on digital solutions in agriculture are presented.
- Linkages and entry points are identified for interventions of NGOs, academia and FAO.
- Ways and opportunities to lure the younger generation back to the rural areas are identified through local, national and regional initiatives.
- Opportunities and barriers for youth to be involved in the agricultural sector are identified.
- Participants have a better understanding of the concept of digital agriculture.

## Details

- Date and time: 12 PM, 20 October 2022
- Format: Virtual on Zoom
- Length: 90 minutes
- Languages: English, Russian. Interpretation will be provided.

## Please register here for online participation:

[https://fao.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_vTOkuCdrTb2kt73MmO6stA](https://fao.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_vTOkuCdrTb2kt73MmO6stA)

## Agenda of the event

<i>Time</i>	<i>Details</i>
12:00 – 12:10	Welcoming remarks – <b>Valentin Nagy and Veronika Sherova</b> Opening remarks and the importance of digitalization and youth involvement in the agriculture sector in the region - <b>Raimund Jehle</b> , Regional Programme Leader, FAO REU, and <b>Morten Hartvigsen</b> , Land Tenure Officer and Regional Initiative Coordinator, FAO REU
12:10 – 13:00	<b>Main discussion</b> Youth's perception of work in agriculture - <b>Doris Letina</b> , VP, European Council of Young Farmers Digital journeys of young innovators - <b>Josh Thomas</b> , Inventor of Pastoral, and <b>Endrit Ameti</b> , CEO, BioTech Agriculture The concept of Smart/Digital Villages, <b>Lucía Garrido</b> , Rural and Territorial Development Communications Manager, European Association for Innovation in Local Development Digital agriculture in educational programmes - <b>Gulnaz Iskakova</b> , PhD student, Kazakh National Agrarian Research University The role of digital technologies in daily life, barriers to adoption and opportunities - <b>Anka Babunashvili</b> , Digital Transformation Specialist, Georgian Farmers' Association
13:00 – 13:10	Cambridge-style debate with panellists
13:10 – 13:20	Questions & Answers
13:20 – 13:30	Closing remarks by <b>Daniela Di Gianantonio</b>

The consultation will be accompanied by active audience engagement.