

African youth as drivers for decent job creation in sustainable food systems

UN Food System Summit – Independent Dialogue
organized by the **Thematic Working Group on Rural Youth Employment (TWG RYE)**
of the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD)
Wednesday, 30th June 2021 – 14:00-16:00 CET

Objective: The Thematic Working Group on Rural Youth Employment of the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD) is organizing this Independent Dialogue to the UNFSS to highlight issues affecting rural youth and gather input for Game Changer solutions for decent jobs creation for rural youth in food systems.

The Independent dialogue will provide the opportunity for youth representatives from Africa, donors, development practitioners and public and private sector representatives to discuss their ideas to tackle specific challenges, and more importantly, share best practice experiences. The recommendations gathered will feed directly into the UNFSS discussions and the further development and cross-fertilization of youth centered Game Changer solutions submitted to the UNFSS.

Background: The future of agriculture and rural development depends on the young generation. Being young and living in rural areas equals a twofold challenge as young men and women face unique constraints that stem from rural settings. Decent work deficits are particularly severe for youth in rural areas, and these have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Equipping young people with the necessary skills and resources is crucial for them to leverage economic opportunities and to realize their potential as agents of change. The inclusion of young people in food systems transformation and productive activities is key to introduce greener and more sustainable practices into agri-food system, foster the just transition and vitality of rural areas, and ultimately unlock the significant untapped potential of this sizeable and growing demographic.

Agriculture is currently the biggest employer in most African countries, and the sector has the potential to create more decent jobs for youth, both as entrepreneurs and waged workers, in and off farm. For this to happen, the right mix of policies and investments by private and public sector as well as donors can play an important role to support agricultural and local value chain development that creates farm and non-farm employment for youth while achieving food security.

Including youth in social dialogue mechanisms and decision-making processes will allow them to participate effectively in the discussion on how enabling conditions for the promotion of decent work and quality employment in rural areas can be improved. It is important to promote active youth participation in relevant policy processes and the international discourse, notably the UN Food System Summit (UNFSS) that could contribute to advancing sustainable livelihoods and food systems. Moreover, giving visibility to youth champions leading change in the sector has proven inspiring for fellow youth and the older generations alike. Young women, together with other vulnerable youth groups such as indigenous youth, young migrants and youth with disabilities, need specific attention and targeted solutions to unlock their potential. Supporting a conducive environment and boosting youth agency to actively participate in food systems and their governance mechanisms (policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) is of central importance and demands mainstreaming of youth as crosscutting priority.

Agenda

Opening (30 min)

1. Welcome & Introduction

- Background on Rural Youth Employment (Peter Wobst, FAO)
- Context of Dialogue event (Frank Bertelmann, GIZ)

2. Keynote Statements

- Youth representative (Network for Youth Development Malawi)
- Dr. Janet Edeme (African Union Commission)
- Michelle Nun (CARE USA, UNFSS chairperson AT 4)

3. Technical Inputs

Pitches for UNFSS Game Changer prepositions

- Empowering youth as innovators and change makers for sustainable food systems (FAO)
- Launch a Coalition for Youth in African Agriculture (Nourishing Africa)

Discussion in breakout groups (60 min)

Participants will exchange experiences, gather best practice examples and concrete recommendations as input to the presented Game Changers.

Each breakout group will focus on a different aspect:

- 1) How to boost **youth agency** to actively participate and coordinate action in food systems and their governance mechanisms through partnerships & networks?
- 2) How to strengthen **youth capacities and skills** for inclusion in food systems development and productive activities (wage or self-employment, in and off farm)?
- 3) How to unpack the opportunities and constraints for **youth in local food system** models to take off and respond to local and regional food demands?
- 4) How to connect youth with opportunities in sustainable food systems by promoting **more and better jobs**?

Consolidation of discussion – Wrap-up (30 min)

1. Breakout group presentations – Q&A
2. Wrap-up and closing

TO REGISTER please follow this link:

<https://ifad.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0lcmorjgqHtVYiTOYcNYvyZhpaNySQnPs>

(Please note that English will be used in all session)

To familiarize with the two Game Changer solutions, follow the download links:

1. Empowering youth as innovators and change makers for sustainable food systems (AT 4)
https://foodsystems.community/?attachment=3682&document_type=document&download_document_file=1&document_file=428
2. Launch a Coalition for Youth in African Agriculture (AT 1)
https://foodsystems.community/?attachment=3562&document_type=document&download_document_file=1&document_file=372