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Platform for
Rural Development

2024 ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

26-27 November 2024
IFAD HQ, Rome Italy and Zoom

DAY 1:
Youth Session

SESSION BY THE THEMATIC WORKING GROUP
ON RURAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

“Strengthening the role of rural youth entrepreneurs in agrifood systems transformation through innovative financing”

26th November 2024, 16:30-17:30h (1h) CET
Hybrid, IFAD HQ, Rome and online

1. Background

Innovative financing approaches are emerging as a solution to address the unique challenges faced by rural young entrepreneurs and the agrifood system. Approaches such as blended finance, impact investing, and results-based financing are gaining traction in the agrifood sector. They mobilize private capital, development finance, and philanthropic funding to support sustainable agricultural practices and agrifood system innovations. For these mechanisms to be effective, they need to be youth-sensitive. Between now and 2050, Africa will see 76 million young people enter the labour market¹, half of whom reside in rural areas. How to create decent jobs for so many young people in the next two decades is a global concern. Innovative financing schemes could play a catalytic role in supporting young entrepreneurs in agri-businesses as well as small and medium enterprises in the agrifood sector to create jobs for youth.

¹ ILO, 2024. [Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024](#)

While rural youth, particularly in developing countries, are often a sizeable and dynamic segment in local agrifood systems, their transformative potential remains largely untapped²³. Young women and men are often at the heart of agricultural production, and their inclusion in the financial system is crucial for the sustainable transformation of agrifood systems. Access to financial services is not only a path to individual empowerment but also a cornerstone for agrifood systems transformation and creating decent jobs, particularly in rural areas. For young agripreneurs especially, access to quality financial services can provide them with – among other things – the seed capital, savings channels and risk-mitigation mechanisms that are essential to kickstart and grow their business ideas. Targeted and tailored financing can encourage and promote youth-led innovation in agriculture, supporting the development of agricultural small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that lean more on technological innovation, have better connections to domestic and international markets, and are engaged in high-value transformation processes⁴.

However, rural young people face significant and specific challenges when seeking financial resources. These include limited financial education, lack of collateral and financial history, low social capital, as well as unstable incomes and informal employment. Combined with weak financial infrastructure and digital connectivity in rural areas, these youth are unlikely to access any innovative financial services. Lack of financing can hinder young entrepreneurs from launching new ventures or scaling up existing businesses, which are key to enhancing productivity, improving food security, creating decent jobs and building sustainable food systems.

Overcoming these barriers is essential to empower rural youth and young agripreneurs and generate virtuous cycles in agrifood systems and rural areas. First, young farmers and agripreneurs need access to finance to invest in sustainable agricultural practices, including organic farming and agroecology. These investments are necessary to increase agricultural productivity while advancing the transition to environmentally sustainable agrifood systems. Second, access to financial services, such as small business loans, digital banking, and savings accounts, is essential for starting and sustaining businesses. These businesses, in turn, create jobs not only for the young entrepreneurs themselves but also for others within the community, catalyzing job creation and economic growth at the local level. And, third, access to financing enables rural youth to diversify their income streams and pursue entrepreneurial ventures along the agricultural value chain, from food production and processing, distribution to retail and services. This not only creates jobs but also strengthens the entire agrifood system by improving supply chain efficiency, reducing food waste, and promoting local production, thereby contributing to agrifood system resilience.

This session will focus on innovative financing models that cater to the needs of rural youth and young agripreneurs. By drawing lessons from various youth experiences, it aims to promote financial approaches that foster youth engagement, decent job creation, and economic growth, while supporting the global shift towards more sustainable and resilient agrifood systems.

² ILO, 2024. [Elevating the potential of rural youth: Paths to Decent Jobs and Sustainable Futures | International Labour Organization](#)

³ OECD, 2021. [Jobs for Rural Youth: The Role of Local Food Economies.](#)

⁴ FAO, 2022. [Promoting access to agricultural finance for youth in developing countries - A synthesis of lessons and experiences.](#)

2. Objective

This session aims to foster knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders to enhance financial inclusion for rural youth, focusing on innovative financing solutions that drive job-rich and sustainable agrifood systems transformation. Through interactive discussions, the session will build on the diverse experiences of rural young women and men entrepreneurs in accessing finance in the agri-food sector. By highlighting successful approaches and lessons learned, the event will provide a platform for identifying actionable strategies that empower rural youth to access financial services, create decent jobs, and contribute to more resilient and sustainable agrifood systems.

3. Provisional agenda

Agenda (1h)	
16:30 (5 min)	Welcome & introduction <u>Moderator:</u> Henry Bonsu , Journalist and Broadcaster
16:35 (35 min)	Panel discussion Jenice Achieng , Owner, Agnesa Bakery; Country Representative, YPARD Kenya Moreen Nyakato , CEO of Greco Organic Farm, Uganda Nsengiyumva Prosper , Chief Executive Officer, Avocado Oil Industries Ltd Vanessa Nzabamwita , Investment Lead, One Acre Fund
17:10 (15 min)	Reactions from the audience & takeaways of the discussion
17:25 (5 min)	Wrap-up & closing Moderator & TWG RYE Co-Chairs