



# Building resilience in the Sahel region through job creation for youth

*Innovatively supporting youth's access to  
decent employment and green jobs in agrifood systems*

## Context

The Sahel region is nowadays facing many challenges, including insecurity, rising extremism, lacking of economic prospects and decent employment opportunities, besides also experiencing poor access to education, vocational training and overall basic services. Within this context, climate change is weakening the whole region further.

The number of young people in the region is unprecedented, with over 60 percent of the population below 25 years of age. Two thirds of them live in rural areas, often lacking access to employment, skills, financial services, inputs and technology (World Bank, 2018). Although the region's youth population is expected to grow, and a youth bulge could potentially turn into a dividend, if employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth remain limited, young people will continue to remain in a vicious cycle of food insecurity and deep poverty.

Today the agricultural sector in the overall African context, attracts 1 percent of students, but employs 70 percent of all Africans and this overall percentage is also comparable to the

Sahel countries. The food sector is the backbone of the economy in the Sahel and it is the biggest employer, generating more than 80 percent of the jobs in various countries of the region. Of these jobs, three quarters are in agriculture specifically. Yet, while food production in the region is growing, the share of people exposed to food and nutrition insecurity remains high and it is increasing. Poverty levels remain among the highest in the world, and food prices, at comparable income levels, are also among the highest (OECD, 2021).

Another challenge assessed in most countries, including the G5 Sahel ones, is the increasing of the average age of farmers. The agricultural sector needs to rejuvenate and engage youth in its transformation, if global food production has to be increased by 60 percent by 2050 (FAO, 2012).

To reverse all these various challenges and trends and foster the creation of added value and jobs across the G5 Sahel countries, a profound process of change, while including young people in it, is urgent and essential.



# Project's approach

The overall aim of the project was to build resilience and social cohesion among youth through improving their livelihoods' stability and increase their access to decent employment opportunities in agrifood systems.

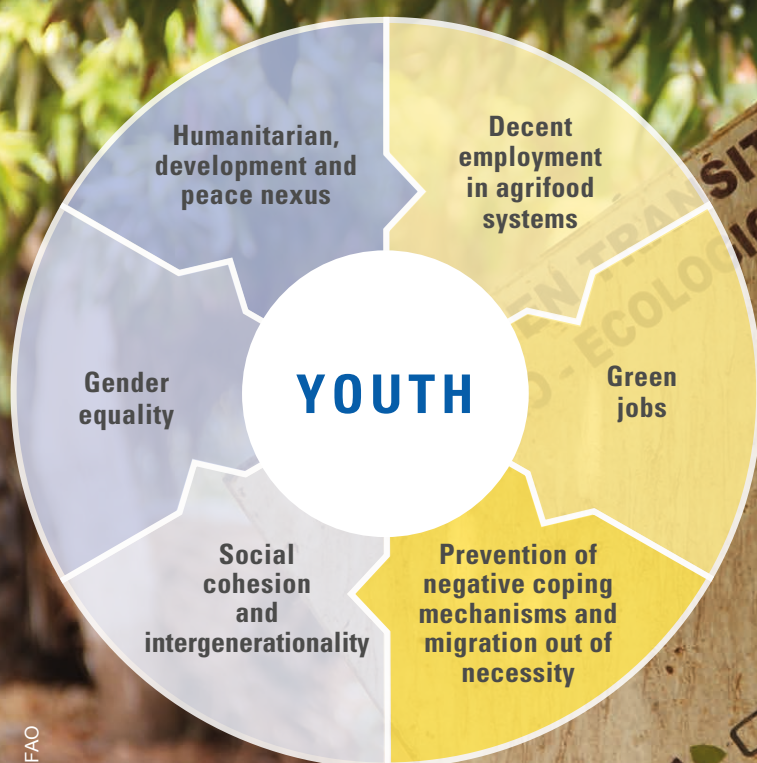
Given the region's extreme vulnerability to climate change, a strong emphasis has been given to **green jobs and green practices in agriculture**.

Further and central to the approach, in all its components, has been the **equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes, while also assuring the inclusiveness of concerns from various vulnerable or marginalized**

**youth groups, in line with the leave no one behind (LNOB) principle.**

The approach also aimed at bridging the **humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus** within project's activities, initiating both quick recovery and fastgain short-term employment schemes and more development-alike long-term ones. Further, social cohesion was also been embedded in the approach organizing regional fora and national youth dialogues where young people were provided a safe environment to discuss their needs, opportunities and express their grievances to their governments' officials.

## THEORY OF CHANGE OF THE APPROACH



### GIVEN...

Youth affected by lack of decent employment in rural areas

### IF...

Youth are supported through:

- Short-term employment schemes (for quick gains for youth "at risk")
- Long-term employment schemes for youth agropreneurs

Young women and men are included in policy, strategic and social dialogues and processes at national level

### THEN...

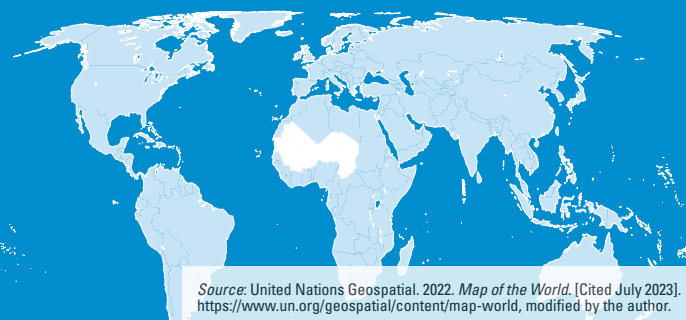
Decent employment opportunities will:

- Enhance equity and social cohesion
- Reduce poverty and youth unemployment
- Revive rural areas and agrifood systems

While addressing youth migration out of necessity and potential overall negative coping mechanisms

# GLOBAL COMPONENT

Contributing to the implementation of selected SDGs, global strategies, policies and frameworks related to food security, youth employment in agrifood systems and young people's engagement and leadership in dialogues.



## CONTRIBUTION TO SDGs IMPLEMENTATION



## CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL STRATEGIES

- [Youth2030 UN Strategy](#)
- [CFS Policy Recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems](#)

## CONTRIBUTION TO FAO'S CORPORATE STRATEGIES AND FRAMEWORKS

- [FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-2031](#)
- [Rural Youth Action Plan \(RYAP\)](#)
- [FAO migration framework](#)
- [FAO framework on ending child labour in agriculture](#)
- [FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020-2030](#)
- [Corporate framework to support sustainable peace in the Context of the 2030 Agenda](#)

In its global component, the project aimed at contributing to the implementation of selected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), global strategies, policies and frameworks related to food security, youth employment in agrifood systems and young people's engagement and leadership in dialogues. Specifically, the project contributed to the implementation of selected targets of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Further, the project also contributed to the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy, Youth2030.

The project also supported, via different activities, the implementation of all the recommendations of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Policy Recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems. Further, the project was in line, and contributing to, all of the five action areas highlighted by the United Nations Food Systems Summit, namely: i) nourish all people; ii) boost nature-based solutions; iii) advance equitable livelihoods, decent work and empowered communities; iv) build resilience to vulnerability, shocks and stresses; and, v) accelerating the means of implementation. Activities were also in line with the 2022 Global Food Security Roadmap.

# REGIONAL COMPONENT

## BURKINA FASO, CHAD, MALI, MAURITANIA AND THE NIGER

- Strengthening local, national and regional capacities, including by sharing experiences
- Engagement of youth and governments in dialogues
- Regional analysis and research

Source: United Nations Geospatial. 2022. *Map of the World*. [Cited July 2023]. <https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/map-world>, modified by the author.

### CONTRIBUTION TO REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND UN COUNTRY COOPERATION FRAMEWORKS

- European Union Integrated Strategy in the Sahel
- Rome-based agencies plan of action for the Sahel (2021–2027)
- United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel
- Sahel Alliance priority fields of actions
- Burkina Faso United Nations Development Assistance Framework
- Chad United Nations Development Assistance Framework
- Mali United Nations Development Assistance Framework
- Mauritania United Nations Development Assistance Framework
- Niger United Nations Development Assistance Framework

At regional level the project supported the implementation of selected strategies and frameworks, like the European Union integrated strategy in the Sahel, Sahel Alliance priority fields of actions, in particularly, the agriculture, rural development and food security one, and the education and youth employment, while also contributing to the field action related to energy and climate. Selected project's activities also contributed to the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the

Sahel (UNISS). Lastly, activities also supported the Rome-based agencies plan of action for the Sahel (2021–2027) and the implementation of all the five countries' UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) in several of their targets within.

In order to strengthen capacities on youth employment and resilience matters, at local, national and regional level, FAO organized in collaboration with Procasur, a **regional learning route**.

The learning route took place in Burkina Faso and Mauritania and gathered more than 80 participants from all the G5 Sahel countries. The Learning Route fostered a rich exchange between participants and local good practices' initiatives coordinators, and allowed to strengthen the capacities, innovations and ideas on different youth employment opportunities in agrifood systems in those local contexts.

Besides organizing the regional learning route, which also fostered dialogues among governments and youth of the G5 Sahel countries, a **regional forum** titled *Building resilience and social cohesion of Sahelian youth through their inclusion in agrifood systems*, was organized. The regional forum allowed a rich exchange while highlighting priorities for young people's most urgent needs in order to facilitate social cohesion and their inclusion in the rural development of their territories while identifying existing opportunities to strengthen youth inclusion in agrifood systems.



# COUNTRY COMPONENT

## MAURITANIA

- Capacity development and support to national programmes and government stakeholders
- Employment schemes and mentorship for rural youth
- Green jobs in agrifood systems
- Engagement of youth and government in dialogues at national level

Source: United Nations Geospatial. 2022. *Map of the World*. [Cited July 2023]. <https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/map-world>, modified by the author.

### CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND FRAMEWORKS

- Mauritania United Nations Development Assistance Framework
- Plan national de développement agricole
- Stratégie Nationale de Sécurité Alimentaire pour la Mauritanie aux horizons 2015 et vision 2030
- Stratégie définissant la politique nationale de la Jeunesse
- Stratégie nationale de l'emploi
- Strategie nationale de croissance acceleree et de prosperite partagee scapp 2016-2030
- Plan d'action de promotion des emplois verts et de transition vers la durabilité environnementale
- Stratégie nationale d'institutionnalisation du genre

The project's country component has been piloted in Mauritania, and supported the implementation of selected country policies, strategies and frameworks as per above.

The component had the overall aim of strengthening capacities of rural youth in selected value chains and green practices in agriculture, while facilitating their entrance in the markets. In order to do this, two employment schemes were initiated.

Further, at institutional level, selected national government officials from the ministries of agriculture and employment, national employment

agency and the national school of training and agricultural extension, were also supported in strengthening their capacities on matters related to agriculture and green jobs in order to adequately include them in national programmes specific for youth. As part of the country component, a national youth dialogue has also been organized to discuss with rural youth and their representatives their challenges, needs and role in the agrifood systems.

**Specific capacity development materials** on climate change adaptation and mitigation, agroecology and green practices in agriculture, were developed in collaboration with

Eco-développement (ECODEV) and Association Naforé pour la protection de l'environnement (Naforé), which also supported the trainings of rural youth and national institutions.

The **short-term employment scheme** aimed at providing quick gains to rural youth residing in territories which had been assessed by the Mauritanian government, as “at risk”, be it in respect of high levels of youth migration due to lack of economic opportunities, or with increasing rates of youth radicalization due to a variety of factors. Further, the selected territories of implementation were also being assessed as areas of with high rates of food insecurity and youth unemployment. The scheme, implemented in the municipality of Rosso, in the Trarza region, in collaboration with the ministries of agriculture and employment and vocational education through the Training center for rural producers (CFPR), **graduated 200 young women and men as part of the scheme (achieving a 50:50 gender inclusion ratio) and a spillover effect, thanks to youth sharing their knowledge to other young peers in their rural districts, to further 800 youth.**

The **long-term employment scheme** was designed and aimed for young people which are already in the market, hence have their own small agribusinesses and wish to strengthen their activities, so to also possibly create in the future further employment opportunities. This scheme was implemented in collaboration

with the ministries of agriculture and employment and vocational education, national employment agency (TECHGHIL) and the national school of training and agricultural extension (ENFVA). Trainings were undertaken with support from two local NGOs, Eco-développement (ECODEV) and Association Naforé pour la protection de l'environnement (Naforé). **The scheme supported the growth of 390 youth enterprises, 195 run by young women, with a spillover effect, due to youth sharing their knowledge to other young peers, to further 1 170 youth. The scheme also strengthened the capacities of 120 government facilitators** from nine regions of Mauritania: Assaba, Brakna, Hodh Ech Chargui, Hodh El Garbi, Gorgol, Guidimakha, Tagant, Trarza as well as Nouackchott.

In order to support young people's engagement in national processes, a **national youth dialogue** was organized in collaboration with the Mauritanian Government. The national dialogue gathered together over 30 youth representatives from different regions of Mauritania, as well as 20 representatives from the Mauritanian Government, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), ILO, UNDP, World Food Programme (WFP), and various experts on youth related matters from Mauritania and the G5 Sahel at large. The dialogue proved to be an excellent intergenerational platform, while also allowing participants to exchange views on how agricultural initiatives, when designed jointly with youth and not only for them, are more adequate to their needs.

# Conclusions

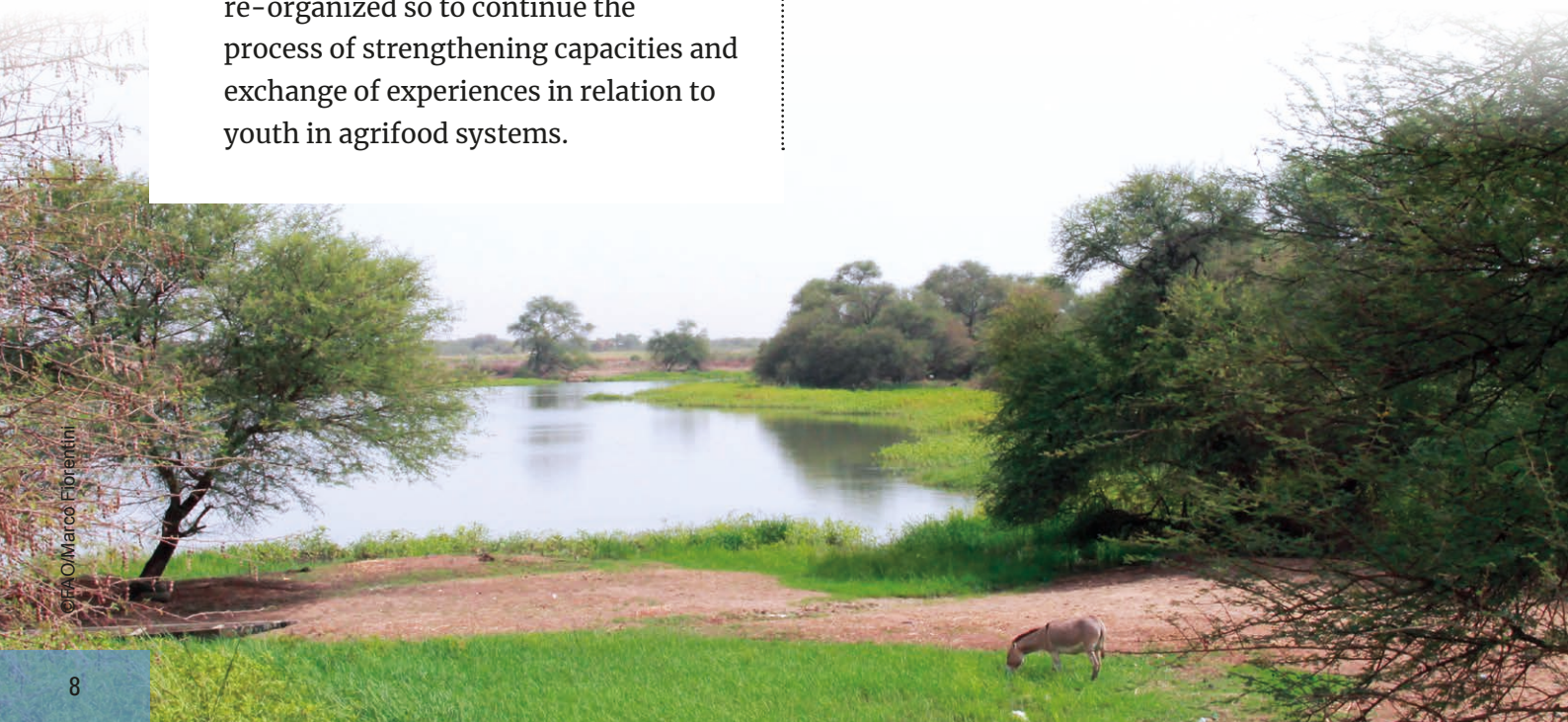
The implementation of the project provided a big body of lessons learned as well as good outcomes, and also different mitigation strategies in relation to challenges faced along the lifespan of activities. Overall the project's implementation, a pilot in its approach, reached all of the envisaged targets, while overachieving various ones. The project also used a fully integrated modus operandi to address different challenges in the countries.

Activities started its implementation during the initial major waive of the COVID-19 pandemic, furthermore the **instability** in the G5 Sahel is and remains a major threat, foremost to the populations of those countries, but also potentially to the implementation of activities. Albeit those major impediments, which could have hampered activities of the regional component, the project's implementation managed to run smoothly and activities were promptly re-organized so to continue the process of strengthening capacities and exchange of experiences in relation to youth in agrifood systems.

**Access to internet** remains a major issue in the G5 Sahel countries and out of reach rural youth, risk of remaining invisible due to the lack of connection in their areas. To overcome this, the project put in place different successful mitigation measures.

The project also managed to bridge the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus** within it, so to address the very urgent needs of young people in order to prevent certain negative coping mechanisms or youth migration due to lack economic opportunities, besides also addressing the more long-term development aims.

In relation to **gender**, activities not only achieved a 50:50 gender ratio, but also addressed various young women's constraints while providing agency for their concerns and discussions in regional and national debates.





**Exchanges and learning from best practices** in similar contexts, like in the regional learning route, has proven to be extremely successful and increased a sense of fragility to fragility (countries) cooperation in the G5 Sahel.

A further successful outcome of the project was also the **fostering of collaborations** between the ministries of agriculture, employment national employment agency and the national school of training and agricultural extension in the country.

Lastly, given youth's vulnerability to the ongoing insecurities of their territories, besides rural youth reduced opportunities to be part of regional and national debates, it is essential to integrate within activities, as done by the project, their adequate inclusion in **social cohesion** processes and overall strategic processes. Meaningful relationships based on mutual understanding between generations are also indispensable for social integration and cohesion. The project adopted an **intergenerational approach** within several of its activities. This resulted in continuous beneficial exchanges among the youth, their mentors, and elders in the villages. As assessed in the evaluation, this renewed in them a feeling of proudness and care for their territories, ancestral lands and also for local indigenous techniques, applied with new and innovative lenses, in their agribusiness activities.



# Products produced by the project

## Case studies



### **Building resilience in the Sahel region through job creation for youth** *Innovatively supporting youth's access to decent employment and green jobs in agrifood systems*

This case study outlines how the project Building resilience in the Sahel region through job creation for youth, strengthened the capacities of rural youth in their entrance in the agrifood system adopting green practices, while also empowering the national institutions tasked in supporting them. The case study provides all the lessons learned throughout its implementation as well as details of the project's evaluation.

**Link to the case study:**

[\*Building resilience in the Sahel region through job creation for youth\*](#)



### **Stimuler la création d'emplois pour les jeunes grâce à la route d'apprentissage du G5 Sahel** *Expériences au Burkina Faso et en Mauritanie*

The case study outlines the lessons learned from the organization of the Regional Learning Route in the Sahel and how it strengthened the capacities of youth and national Governments' representatives from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger on rural youth employment, green jobs and resilience matters.

**Link to the case study:**

[\*Stimuler la création d'emplois pour les jeunes grâce à la route d'apprentissage du G5 Sahel\*](#)

## Background studies



### **Green jobs in agrifood systems** *Setting a vision for youth in the Sahel*

For the five countries of the G5 Sahel, the study, developed with ODI in the framework of the FAO project Building resilience in the Sahel region through job creation for youth, aims to address the following questions: i) What employment can be created for youth, as agriculture and the agrifood value chains become environmentally sustainable as part of a rural green transition?; and ii) What policies, programmes and investments are needed to create these jobs and ensure that young women and men can access them?

**Link to the study:** [\*Green jobs in agrifood systems\*](#)



### **The intersection between socioeconomic conditions and youth radicalisation** *Implications for programming in the G5 Sahel countries*

This FAO-ODI study provides an evidence-based analysis of the drivers of youth radicalisation in the Sahel and distils what this means for programming which aims to address that concern. This report aims not only to uncover how socio-economic conditions interact with political dynamics to produce environments conducive to youth radicalisation, but also to provide recommendations on how regional employment programmes can be tailored so that they contribute towards reducing radicalisation.

**Link to the study:** [\*The intersection between socioeconomic conditions and youth radicalisation - Implications for programming in the G5 Sahel countries\*](#)

## Guidance note



### **Building resilience and social cohesion of Sahelian youth through their inclusion in agrifood systems** *With and for the youth*

The regional forum Building resilience and social cohesion of Sahelian youth through their inclusion in agrifood systems was organized by the FAO in collaboration with the G5 Sahel Secretariat and technically supported by the Mauritania Investment Promotion Agency (APIM), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This guidance note presents the proceedings and deliberations agreed at the regional forum while highlighting priorities for young people's most urgent needs in order to facilitate social cohesion and their inclusion in the rural development of their territories.

**Link to the guidance note:** [\*Building resilience and social cohesion of Sahelian youth through their inclusion in agrifood systems\*](#)

## Brochures



**Link to the brochure:**  
[\*Building resilience in the Sahel region through job creation for youth\*](#)



**Link to the brochure:**  
[\*Building resilience in the Sahel region through job creation for youth\*](#)



**Link to brochure:**  
[\*Improving Resilience, Stability and Social Cohesion through Employment Opportunities in the Sahel\*](#)

## Videos

### Learning route videos



**Link to video:**  
[\*Promouvoir des emplois décents pour les jeunes ruraux grâce à la Route de l'apprentissage du Sahel\*](#)



**Link to video:**  
[\*Renforcer la création d'emplois pour les jeunes à travers la route d'apprentissage au Sahel\*](#)

### Youth participants testimonies video



**Link to video:**  
[\*Green jobs as a way of fighting climate change\*](#)



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## Partners in selected activities

- ▶ Ministries of agriculture, livestock, labour, employment, environment and youth
- ▶ G5 Sahel Secretariat
- ▶ Regional authorities and national governmental agencies
- ▶ Youth organizations and young agripreneurs
- ▶ United Nations agencies, funds and programmes

## Financial partner



Federal Ministry  
of Food  
and Agriculture

### **Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division**

#### **Economic and Social Development Stream**

[www.fao.org/rural-employment](http://www.fao.org/rural-employment)

[Decent-Work@fao.org](mailto:Decent-Work@fao.org)

### **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

Rome, Italy



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