



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Boosting decent jobs for youth in the agrifood system



## Meeting the challenge

There are more **young people** on our planet today than ever before. Approximately 85 percent of youth live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, primarily in rural areas.

The exceptionally high number of youth represents an enormous opportunity for **inclusive rural transformation**, growth and for the rejuvenation of agrifood systems. The development of value chains and the shift from subsistence farming to market-oriented agriculture can generate significant employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

However, poor access to land and other natural resources, infrastructure, finance, technology, knowledge and support services – together with low remuneration – turn youth away from agrifood systems. Youth face higher unemployment rates than adults and are often overrepresented among the most vulnerable categories of workers. Addressing their needs is key to harness their full contribution to **agrifood systems development**.

## In action

Since 2011, FAO has been implementing the Integrated Country Approach (ICA) programme to assist countries in developing inclusive agrifood policies, strategies and programmes for the promotion of youth engagement and employment in agrifood systems. Strong emphasis is placed on **job creation**, but also on the quality of jobs in the agrifood sector.

The programme has primarily been funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and implemented in three phases (2011–2014, 2015–2018, and 2019–2023). The current phase is ongoing in Guatemala, Senegal, Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda.

The ICA approach embodies several **FAO core functions** in synergy, including knowledge generation, policy support, and capacity development. It directly contributes to the employment dimension of **inclusive rural transformation**, while also providing a youth lens to other social dimensions of rural development, including rural institutions, services, social protection, gender equality, tenure rights and the right to food.

## Looking at the evidence

**Youth** aged  
15–24 make up  
**1.2 billion** people.

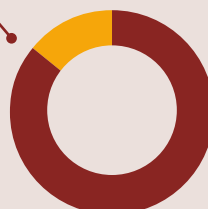
**16%** of the world's  
population



In Africa,  
**12 million**  
**youth**  
enter the  
**job**  
**market**  
annually



**14%**  
of employed youth were  
**working**  
**poor** in 2018,  
compared  
with 7% of adults



More than  
**95%**  
of youth in low- and  
middle-income  
countries work in the  
**informal**  
**economy**



# Comparative advantage

FAO responds to country and regional priorities through its work on boosting decent jobs for youth, such as those detailed in the regional [African Agribusiness Youth Strategy \(AAYS\)](#). FAO's interventions build on the widespread country presence of the Organization and its longstanding experience in strengthening the **entrepreneurial skills** and **employability of youth** in agrifood systems, as well as in fostering the development of inclusive national agrifood value chains.

In particular, the ICA programme directly contributes to the implementation of **normative products** related to youth and decent work, including: the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Policy Recommendations on Youth Engagement and Employment in agriculture and food systems, and [FAO's Rural Youth Action Plan \(RYAP\) 2021-2025](#).

ICA is embedded in the cross cutting theme on youth and under "**Better Life**" within the FAO Strategic Framework, directly contributing to the programme priority area on Resilient and Inclusive Rural Transformation.

“I have learned so much from the networks with other youths. Most of them are now helping me market my products.”

Nahurira Hillary  
Young Ugandan agripreneur

## Best practices and results

1

ICA has supported seven countries in developing national strategies or programmes for engaging youth in agrifood systems, like the [Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture in Uganda](#) or the [Rural Youth Strategy in Guatemala](#).

2

ICA has benefitted more than 5 000 young agripreneurs and cooperatives through replicable pilot models for access to training, mentorship and finance, such as the [MIJA agripreneurship platforms in Senegal](#) or the [Youth Inspiring Youth in Agriculture initiative](#) in Uganda.

3

To address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, ICA invested in digital platforms, like the [African Youth Agripreneurs platform](#) or [ChispaRural](#) in Guatemala.

## Expected results

- Promote transformative action to make new specific **value chains or sub-sectors more inclusive** for young people in rural areas, aiming at enhancing incomes and working conditions – for instance, by identifying and promoting youth inclusive business models and investments, profitable markets for value-added products, and youth-centred, public-private partnerships.
- Set the employment agenda and promote youth **engagement** in **policy-making** processes, through inclusive policy dialogues.
- Empower and create synergies among **youth networks** to help them become more inclusive and raise their voices.
- Design models and partnerships to strengthen the **agripreneurial skills** of rural youth and facilitate their access to finance, land and digital tools.

### Contact

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## Contribution to the SDGs



## Partnerships to scale up impact

- ministries of agriculture, labour, economy and youth;
- international financial institutions (the African Development Bank);
- youth, workers and producers' organizations;
- the private sector and business incubators; and
- the United Nations system (ILO, UNIDO, the World Bank and IFAD).



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