



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

E

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Hundred and Thirtieth Session

22-26 March 2021

Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP)

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

Mr Benjamin Davis
Director

Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division

Tel: +39 06570 56812

Email: Benjamin.Davis@fao.org

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This document explains the rationale and origins of the development of the Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP), its nature, and the progress made since its endorsement by the 27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) (28 September – 2 October 2020).

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

- The Programme Committee is invited to review the progress made so far on the Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP) and provide guidance, as appropriate, to ensure that FAO has the capacity to integrate and address youth and youth-related elements in its programmes and initiatives.

Draft Advice

The Committee:

- encouraged FAO to integrate the RYAP into corporate mechanisms to adequately monitor the progress towards youth inclusiveness and to fully implement the five pillars of the Plan in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- stressed the importance for all FAO technical units and decentralized offices to fully support the adequate implementation and reporting of the Plan;
- invited the responsible unit to continue the promotion and enhancement of multi-stakeholders dialogues and exchanges with all the entities, including youth organizations, involved in the development and implementation of the Plan; and
- looked forward to a progress report on the development and implementation of the Plan in a future session.

I. Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP)

A. Rationale for the Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP)

1. There are currently 1.2 billion youth¹ in the world, with the majority in rural areas in developing countries. In these countries, the youth population is expected to increase by approximately 60 percent by 2050. Youth are not a homogeneous group; challenges differ for young women, younger youth, youth with disabilities, youth from poorer families, young refugees, displaced youth, or youth from excluded groups or indigenous peoples.

2. Many of the rural youth living in developing countries are unemployed or underemployed, lack education opportunities and access to essential services. Often rural job opportunities, especially in the agriculture sector, do not meet young people's needs or aspirations. This contributes to outward out-migration, rural social deterioration, as well as an increasing ageing farming community. These problems are further compounded by the degradation of natural resources, climate change, as well as a lack of resilience to shocks.

3. As the present and future holders of our ecosystems and food systems, rural youth need countries to invest in them so they become drivers of long-term economic development that is resilient to future crises and shocks and that contributes to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected and is still affecting all parts of society and livelihoods around the globe; yet, disadvantaged segments of populations, such as rural young women and men, will be impacted harder, with exacerbated gender inequalities.

B. Development and endorsement of the Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP)

4. The FAO Conference endorsed the call to develop a Rural Youth Action Plan² that addresses the importance of making rural areas more attractive for young women and men. At its 26th Session (2018), the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) discussed why and how young women and men in rural areas suffer from unemployment and lack of decent jobs, and how this contributes to an ageing farming community, out-migration and the economic, cultural and environmental decline of rural areas. COAG highlighted that supporting youth is essential to revitalizing rural areas and ensuring the realization of the SDGs, and further identified the territorial approach as an overall framework to revitalize rural areas and create decent job opportunities for youth.

5. The RYAP was then developed with the goal *to contribute to the realization of the SDGs by equally empowering rural young women and men, protecting children and other excluded youth groups, revitalizing rural areas through on-farm and off-farm activities and leaving no one behind*. The goal is aimed to be achieved through improved policy guidance, supporting governments and other stakeholders, and targeting FAO's normative and field programmes on youth-related issues with a view to strengthening youth participation in decision-making processes and access to education, decent employment and rural services.

¹ The United Nations defines "youth" as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member Nations.

² <http://www.fao.org/3/nd385en/nd385en.pdf>

6. The Plan, developed in consultation with numerous stakeholders, including the other Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) and youth organizations and networks³, contributes predominately to SDGs 1 (end poverty), 2 (end hunger) and 8 (sustainable economic growth and employment), as well as SDGs 4 (education), 5 (gender equality), 6 (water), 7 (energy), 13 (climate action), 10 (reduced inequalities), 11 (sustainable communities), and 14 and 15 (life on land and in water). Further, the Plan is in line with FAO's sustainable food and agriculture principles and its activities will be integrated into relevant FAO initiatives and approaches, such as climate smart agriculture, agroecology, Integrated Landscape Management, sustainable food value chain development, the Policy on Gender Equality, as well as FAO's Hand-in-Hand and 100 Territories Initiatives. RYAP also capitalizes, to the extent possible, on all FAO programmes and projects, in particular youth-related initiatives such as: the Decent Rural Employment programme; the Integrated Country Approach for boosting decent jobs for youth in the agrifood system; the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools, and the Ending Child Labour in Agriculture. Other related initiatives include: the Farmer Field Schools and Farmer Business Schools; the Digital Agriculture and Innovation Hubs; work on rural finance such as the Improving Capacity Building in Rural Finance Partnership, and the work on youth and responsible agricultural investments and sensitizing rural value chains.

7. The RYAP has been developed along five pillars that follow the five priority themes and main outcomes endorsed by COAG⁴ as indicated below:

- a) *Pillar 1: Support youth participation in rural development, within the context of integrated Landscape and Territorial Approaches.*
 - i. *Outcome 1.1:* Integrated Landscape and Territorial Approaches created that incorporate the needs and aspirations of young women and men.
 - ii. *Outcome 1.2:* Strengthened self-organization of youth within rural communities and interconnected urban areas.
- b) *Pillar 2: Foster youth employment in an inclusive green economy.*
 - i. *Outcome 2.1:* Promote government policies which ensure youth- and gender-sensitive transitions to the green economy.
 - ii. *Outcome 2.2:* Initiatives supported that allow young women and men to equally access sustainable jobs and participate in the bioeconomy.
- c) *Pillar 3: Strengthen rural youth capacities for the use of innovative approaches and technologies.*
 - i. *Outcome 3.1:* Youth and gender sensitive education and training programmes developed taking into consideration specific contexts and needs of youth constituencies such as disabled, indigenous, minorities and marginalized groups.

³ FAO undertook consultations with the Rome-based Agencies: the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as the International Labour Organization and several United Nations (UN) agencies: UN Convention to Combat Desertification; UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); UN High Commissioner for Refugees; UN Population Fund, UN Children's Fund, UN Industrial Development Organization, UN Women and the World Tourism Organization as joint members of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. Consultations were also made with: FAO divisional and regional children and youth focal points, the Young UN Network, the WFP Youth Network and other global and regional youth networks, such as the Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger, the Major Group of Children and Youth, and the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development. The outcomes of these consultations are reflected in the Plan.

⁴ FAO. COAG/2018/06

- ii. *Outcome 3.2:* Young men and women capacities developed through information and communication technologies, agribusiness support programmes, junior farmer field schools, education clubs and related mechanisms.
 - d) *Pillar 4: Promote rural services for youth and agripreneurs.*
 - i. *Outcome 4.1:* Youth entrepreneurship and decent jobs promoted, and investment strengthened.
 - ii. *Outcome 4.2:* Youth communities, organizations and networks supported in accessing rural services, including agricultural measures.
 - e) *Pillar 5: Building FAO institutional capacity to address rural youth areas of work.*
 - i. *Outcome 5.1:* FAO's capacity strengthened to strategically deal with rural youth issues by capitalizing on existing programmes and resources.
 - ii. *Outcome 5.2:* Partnerships established and youth participation in UN processes supported in view of establishing a specific youth engagement network/mechanism.
8. The RYAP 2021-25 was endorsed by COAG at its 27th Session with the understanding that it is a living document which can be updated to be aligned with FAO's Strategic Framework and emerging issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic. COAG further recommended that the Programme Committee reviewed the RYAP, at its 130th Session and at any other session as necessary.
9. Considering its transversal nature, the RYAP has been structured with a series of activities and integrative processes within existing programmes and, thus, would not require additional resources. Activities would be anchored within the regular programme and, where possible, strengthened with extrabudgetary resources.

C. RYAP progress

10. Since its endorsement, the RYAP has gained wide recognition as the first ever FAO instrument specifically dedicated to youth activities. Although the RYAP will be executed between 2021 and 2025, various results within the different pillars have been reported since its endorsement:
- a) *Pillar 1*
 - i. FAO partnered with at least 8 youth networks and organizations, strengthening their participation in rural decision-making processes, dialogues and *fora*, while fostering the role of youth as agents of change (see launch of the second round of the [Uganda Youth Champions Initiative](#) or [Kenya 47 Champions Initiative](#)).
 - ii. The centre for evaluation and development (C4ED) is carrying out a global "*Study on Generational Gaps - Assessing the inter-relations between early entry into work and future employment outcomes in agriculture*" for FAO. The research will document the interplay between children's development (children in education or child labour) and young people's educational attainment, health and employment status. The livelihoods and aspirations of rural youth formerly involved in agriculture work and those not formerly involved, with similar socio-economic status and access to education, will be compared in two selected countries where FAO has on-going projects. The findings will be finalized in November 2021.
 - iii. FAO recently launched (December 2020) the project: *Building Resilience in the Sahel Region through Job Creation for Youth*. Although at its initial stages, the project has initiated, via three main Letters of Agreement, an in-depth assessment and analysis of youth-related issues in the Sahel region to pave the way for building young people's resilience via job creation (both temporary and long-

term), while investing in their inclusiveness in being future service providers and active agents of peace.

b) *Pillar 2*

- i. FAO strengthened youth capacities in multiple countries by supporting governments in designing new curricula (e.g. 20 trainers and 85 local youth and returning migrants trained in Senegal in November-December 2020 on the *Modèle d'Insertion et d'installation des Jeunes Agripreneurs*' model of rural incubation platforms). Furthermore, a United Nations Joint Programme engaging FAO, UNESCO and the International Organization for Migration was funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund to support the capacity building and productive reintegration of young returning migrants in Guatemala.

c) *Pillar 4*

- i. Multiple studies were published (e.g. on youth-sensitive value chain analysis for [coffee in Uganda](#) and on youth access to finance in [Kenya](#) and [Guatemala](#)), which will inform the implementation of the RYAP in the coming years. Partnerships with private actors were also promoted to incentivize youth engagement in agricultural value chains. For example:
 - A letter of intent was signed in December 2020 with JR Farms, which enabled selected young Rwandan Agripreneurs to access the [Green Agribusiness Fund](#).
 - Approximately 190 young producers from Kenya connected to a global market for dried mangos, of which 40 are youth with disabilities, thanks to a partnership with Agricycle Global, which might be formalized through a letter of intent.
- ii. The *FAO-UNIDO Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA) Joint Programme* has finalized its Country Action Plans and is moving forward with its resource mobilization strategy at global, regional and country level in the 6 selected countries to further its implementation. Furthermore, the OYA programme has been featured and discussed, with a wide stakeholders' participation, including youth representatives, in November and December 2020. For example, within the [African Summit on Entrepreneurship and Innovation \(ASENTI\)](#) annual forum, FAO-UNIDO held a specific event in relation to: *Youth in Agribusiness and their adaptation through innovative solutions towards Africa's food security amid the COVID-19 pandemic*; and during the [Africa Industrialisation Week](#) a specific side event on "Youth in Agribusiness" was held, with the participation of Mr Li Yong, Director-General of UNIDO, and Ms Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General of FAO.

b) *Pillar 5*

- i. The institutional capacity of FAO decentralized offices and technical units has been strengthened with regard to the inter-relation between child labour in agriculture and rural youth employment, through information sessions on the use and operationalization of the FAO Framework on Ending Child Labour in Agriculture.
- ii. In December 2020, FAO strengthened its partnership with various youth organizations (e.g. Major Group of Children and Youth, YUNGA, etc.), along with youth desks of the RBAs, to start the drafting process of the Youth Declaration for the International Year of Plant Health, which will end with a joint declaration in 2021 (<https://www.ippc.int/en/calls/call-for-expression-of-interest-drafting-of-a-youth-declaration-for-the-international-year-of-plant-health-2020/>).

- iii. In December 2020, FAO further strengthened its working partnership with the Office of the UN Secretary-General Envoy on Youth and specifically with its Youth2030 working group, to further integrate young people and their various representatives in its way of working while initiating its 2020 reporting towards implementation of the *UN Strategy on Youth*.

11. Further results and strengthening of collaboration are expected during 2021 when execution of the Plan effectively begins, and will be reported upon in subsequent COAG and Programme Committee sessions.